



ENGLISH AND ITS DIFFICULTIES: AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT RESPONSES

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Submission Track:

||Submitted: 24th October, 2024 ||Reviewed: 30th October, 2024 ||Published: 31st December, 2024

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the difficulties in learning English on the eighth-grade students at Advent Junior High School Manokwari. The research design utilized, a mixed-method design to identify students' difficulties and how students overcome the difficulties when learning English. There were 21 students as participants obtained using purposive sampling technique. The place of this research was Junior High School of Advent Manokwari. The research data were collected through survey and interview using questionnaire and a list of questions as instrument. The collected data were analyzed using percentage, descriptive statistic and content analysis. The finding shows that based on the mean score, most of the students had a positive enough perspective that learning English is difficult. The result of questionnaire was also confirmed by the result of interview that the students' faced difficulties in learning English, due to the lack of inspiration to learn English, difficult to pronounce English word, feel shy about speaking English, fear of making a mistake, lack of English vocabulary, do not know meaning in English conversation, and students cannot arrange English words to make sentences. This study will help the teacher in understanding how students overcome their difficulties when they learn English and in finding effective ways of learning to deal with the problems that students face.

Keywords: Analysis; Difficulties; Learning English; Students Response

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kesulitan belajar bahasa Inggris pada siswa kelas VIII di SMP Advent Manokwari. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah desain metode campuran untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan siswa dan bagaimana siswa mengatasi kesulitan tersebut ketika belajar bahasa Inggris. Peserta didik berjumlah 21 orang yang diperoleh dengan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Tempat penelitian ini adalah SMP Advent Manokwari. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui survei dan wawancara dengan menggunakan kuesioner dan daftar pertanyaan sebagai instrumen. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan persentase, statistik deskriptif, dan analisis isi. Temuannya menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan nilai rata-rata, sebagian besar siswa mempunyai pandangan yang cukup positif bahwa belajar bahasa Inggris itu sulit. Hasil kuisisioner juga dikonfirmasi oleh hasil wawancara bahwa siswa menghadapi kesulitan dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, karena kurangnya inspirasi untuk belajar bahasa Inggris, sulit mengucapkan kata bahasa Inggris, merasa malu berbicara bahasa Inggris, takut membuat kesalahan, kurangnya kosakata bahasa Inggris, tidak mengetahui arti percakapan bahasa Inggris, dan siswa tidak dapat menyusun kata-kata bahasa Inggris untuk membuat kalimat.

Kata Kunci: Analisis; Kesulitan; Belajar Bahasa Inggris; Respon Siswa



1. Introduction

English as a foreign language, refers to the use of English by speakers with different native languages. The researcher investigated the answer to the following question: why do students still have difficulties in learning English, even when their teachers do their best to help them achieve good results? The answer to this question lies in the fact that learning English or any other foreign language is difficult, not only for students but also for all native speakers. The researcher observed that although teachers and students in the English department put their best efforts, they faced difficulties in getting good results which make the researcher thinks that there is a reason behind the learning process and the students come from different mother tongues. According to Arlazarova & Arlazarova (2016), it is easy because of the supportive environment and lots of exposure to the language. However, learning a second language requires conscious effort to learn and exposure to the second language is limited in most cases.

As stated by Maruf (2020), Indonesian students have been learning English for years from elementary to university level. However, English language proficiency of most Indonesian students has not improved significantly. This means they do not know how exactly to learn it. It can also because they are lazy or they do not think it is important to study English. In learning English, students are expected to be more active in learning English by applying learning strategies. Using appropriate language learning strategies will help students to improve their English. Many experts have researched foreign language learning with reference to English, and some agree that the environment has a huge influence on the language learning process. It depends on the teachers plan in managing the class so that open discussion can build students confidence to apply the language independently and thus, improve their skills (Bingol, 2014).

Learning and teaching English occurs mostly in classrooms, rather than during daily communication. English learners in Indonesia do not have ready access to using English as a tool of communication during their daily lives outside the classroom. In a foreign language learning context, there are few opportunities for learners to employ the target language outside the classroom because English is not used as the main device of communication among people. As stated by Suryati (2013), when a target language is seldom used outside the classroom, input and language use in the classroom are essential. Furthermore, for speaking skill, speaking is one of the most important skills to acquire in learning a foreign language. For example, English is considered a core subject in private and public schools as well as universities. For this reason, it is necessary for students to master good speaking skills. According to Preece (2018), speaking as stated earlier, gains a considerable significance among other language skills. However, learning to speak is not an easy task because students usually face a number of problems that hinder them from speaking. These include five factors: (1) lack of exposure to language, (2) lack of motivation, (3) Students anxiety and lack of confidence, (4) limited knowledge of English, and (5) inefficient teaching methodology. The meanings of this factor is the encouragement and support that the student receives from his teachers, parents, and classmates to help and facilitate the learning process. Students achieve better if they are encouraged. It is generally admitted that students who are self- confident can learn better because they are brave and believe in their abilities. As stated by Bohem (2013) in fact pronunciation and memorization also act as the backbone of everything. This idea is quite reasonable because students, during language learning activities; Also practice pronouncing the words correctly. In this case, speaking is the mental aspect of putting the fourth thought into speech, and pronunciation is the physical aspect. This means that students have to remember everything from vocabulary to grammar rules in the learning process. This can cause some difficulties for students, especially since English is not their first or second language.

According to Asmawati (2017), listening skill poses a big challenge for Indonesian students because they are hardly exposed to native voices. In addition, Indonesian schools prefer to use the teachers voice to assist students in learning English listening skills rather than using native speakers voices as one of the most important skills in English as a foreign language. According to Renukadevi



(2014), listening has a significant part in English, since it is one of the four main strengths of language development. While other abilities, such as reading, communicating, and writing, are important to the growth of language skills, listening leads mainly to language competence. Listening aids use to know our environment and it is one of the term in successful communication (Gilakjani et al, 2019). In real contexts, the reality of learning listening is still far from the expectation. Listening is considered a big challenge for learners as they often face difficulties in understanding the meaning or the purpose of the sound. There are some reasons why students face difficulties in the listening aspect. English is a foreign language that is hardly used by students in their daily lives. Listening materials also mostly use different accents, different idioms, and uncommon vocabulary.

English as a foreign language, refers to the use of English by speakers with different native languages. The researcher investigated the answer to the following question: why do students still have difficulties in learning English, even when their teachers do their best to help them achieve good results? The answer to this question lies in the fact that learning English or any other foreign language is difficult, not only for students but also for all native speakers. The researcher observed that although teachers and students in the English department put their best efforts, they faced difficulties in getting good results which make the researcher thinks that there is a reason behind the learning process and the students come from different mother tongues. researcher

2. Method

This study utilized a mixed method. A mixed method is an integrating approach to investigate both quantitative and qualitative data for specific issue. It explored the data in qualitative way to develop an instrument and to identify variables to test in a quantitative study or to follow up a quantitative study with a qualitative to obtain more detail (Creswell, 2012). This research was conducted in the Junior High School of Advent Manokwari which is located on Karya Abri Street, Sanggeng, Manokwari City, West Papua. The data was collected from October to November 2023. The population of this study was the students at the Eighth Grade Students in Junior High School of Advent Manokwari. There are two classes of Eight Grade in Junior High School of Advent Manokwari; class VIII A and class VIII B. Since this research is focused on identifying the problems faced by students who learn English as a foreign language, not all students classified as target population will be included in this study. Only half of the population here be selected as the sample by using the purposive sampling technique. The samples selected based on characteristics of the objective of the study and also from the population. The sample of this research were students of class VIII B consisting of twenty-one students who take part in a questionnaire session. Furthermore, six of them became the participants in the interview session. There are three criteria for choosing these samples of the participants in the interview session explained by Spradley in Faisal (1990), considered by the researcher in this study as follows; 1). The sample knows well about the activity that became the purpose of this research, 2). The sample still has a relation and is active in the targeting environment, and 3). The sample has a lot of time and opportunity to share the information.



3. Result and Discussion

The data in this study was obtained from a questionnaire distributed to the participant. The participants are the Eighth Grade Students in Junior High School of Advent Manokwari specific information that can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Language Skills and Aspect Reflected in Questionnaire

Students Gender	Language Skills and Aspect Reflected in questionnaire					
	R	S	L	W	V	LP
Male	6	6	6	6	6	6
Female	15	15	15	15	15	15
Total	21	21	21	21	21	21

The table shows the data of participants on the Eighth Grade Students in Junior High School of Advent Manokwari. There are 6 male students and 15 female students with a total of 21 students. Also, all of the students answered the statements given by the researcher regarding language aspect and skills such as Reading (R), Speaking (S), Listening (L), Writing (W), Vocabulary (V) and Learners' Psychology (LP).

3.1 Difficulties in Relation to Language Characteristics and Learners Psychology

This section explained the difficulties in relation to Language Characteristics (Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, Vocabulary) and Learners' Psychology. Reading has an important role because it helps students to understand the meaning of the text that they read and trains the brain to think more critically and analyze problems presented in what they read. In identifying the problem of reading, 3 items in the questionnaire were used, there are; R1. Students not interested in reading English text, R2. Students do not like reading English texts with long sentences, R3. Students mostly do not understand what they read in English. The result can be seen in

Table 2. Characteristics and Learners Psychology

Items	SA	A	D	SD
R1	14%	38%	29%	19%
R2	5%	52%	19%	24%
R3	14%	81%	5%	0%

The table 2 illustrates percentage of difficulties faced by the students in reading skills. From the three items, the highest percentage (81%) is that most of the students who choose agree if they mostly do not understand what they read in English. Also the students feel difficulties in English class because the students are not like and not interest for reading English text. The result of this data inline with the statement from Sahid (2023) stated that, there is relation between students' achievement in the class in learning language and students' personality.

3.2 Difficulties in Relation to Speaking

Speaking skills are important in order to be able to provide information to others to expand students' knowledge in various fields. In identifying speaking problems, there are 3 items in the questionnaire were used; S4. Students do not know how to say things in English, S5. Students do not feel confident when speaking English in front of the class, S6. Students feel afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. The result can be seen in the table 3.

Table 3. Speaking Difficulties

Items	SA	A	D	SD
S4	9%	48%	29%	14%
S5	24%	47%	24%	5%
S6	24%	62%	5%	9%

The table 3 shows the highest percentages (62%) of students choose agree if they afraid of making mistakes when speaking. Students feel difficulties in speaking English because they also do not know how to speak in English, especially for speaking in front of the class, also the students feel afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. The finding of this data related to the finding from Sahid (2022) stated speaking still become one of the main problem faced by students in the class because most of the lesson in the class focus on reading text and speaking sometime avoided. Beside that Sahid (2023) also stated that beside personality problem. The influence of first language is also affected students' ability in speaking.

3.4 Difficulties in Relation to Listening

Listening skills is important because listening can help students understand exactly what is being conveyed by the speaker and can build effective communication and mutual understanding. Asmawati (2027), in her research explain that most of the students faced problem in asses the native voice. In identifying the problem of listening skill, there are 3 items in the questionnaire were used; L7. Students do not understand when heard people speaking English, L8. Students think English is difficult because it has many accents, L9. Students think English is difficult because it has different words and sounds. The result can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. Listening Difficulties

Items	SA	A	D	SD
L7	19%	62%	9%	10%
L8	5%	47%	43%	5%
L9	19%	38%	33%	10%

The table 4 shows difficulties faced by the students in listening skills. From the table, the highest percentage is students who choose agree (62%) that students feel difficulties when learning English in listening skill because they do not understand when heard people speaking English. Students feel difficulties also because English has many accents and the different between the words and how the sounds heard.

3.5 Difficulties in Relation to Writing

Writing skills can help students to convey messages that cannot be said and will enable students to interact with people from all over the world. In identifying the problem of writing, there are 3 items; W10. Students feel difficult to find ideas when writing English texts, W11. Students cannot construct words correctly when writing English texts, W12. Students cannot write English texts correctly. The result can be seen in the table 5.

Table 5. Writing Difficulties

Items	SA	A	D	SD
W10	5%	76%	14%	5%
W11	15%	40%	40%	5%
W12	5%	57%	29%	9%

Table 5 illustrates difficulties faced by the students in writing skills. The highest percentage is (76%) students who choose agree, that means the students faced difficulties when learning English in writing skill because the students feel difficult to find ideas when writing English texts. Also they cannot construct words correctly which make they cannot write English text.



3.6 Difficulties in Relation to Vocabulary

Learning another language cannot be separated from learning new vocabulary. Vocabulary plays a crucial role as it helps learners to understand the meaning of the message conveyed by the speaker and assists the learners in coding the message into the comprehensible message. In identifying the problem of vocabulary, 3 items in the questionnaire were used, there are; V13. Students do not know much English vocabulary, V14. Students do not understand the word that they read, V15. Students feel worried about pronouncing English words incorrectly. The result can be seen in table 6.

Table 6. Vocabulary Difficulties

Items	SA	A	D	SD
V13	14%	57%	24%	5%
V14	10%	38%	33%	19%
V15	38%	52%	10%	0%

Table 6 shows difficulties faced by the students in the vocabulary aspect. There are three items with highest percentage (57%) that students choose agree which they faced difficulties in vocabulary aspect because they do not know much English vocabulary. Also the students do not understand word that they read, and they feel worried about pronounce English words incorrectly. Fitriyansyah (2022) in his research investigate the effectiveness way in increasing students' vocabulary using attractive media it is caused by lack of students vocabulary. The research showed that most the students faced problem in understanding text because of the lack of vocabulary.

3.5 Difficulties in Relation to Learners Psychology

Most of the students still show increasing levels of anxiety when speaking English for the purpose of oral communication. Also, there are some problems with their psychology, beliefs, confidence, and strong feelings for themselves. It was in line with the research from Sahid (2018) Stated that anxiety is one of the factor that influence students' performance. Most of the psychological factors affecting students English are expressed in such expressions as fear of making mistakes, shyness, hesitation, lack of confidence, lack of motivation to learn, low interest, and nervousness. In identifying the problem of learners' psychology, there are 5 items in the questionnaire were used; LP16. Students feel bored in class when learning English, LP17. Students feel lazy when doing English assignments, LP18. Students learn English when someone asks them, LP19. Students think English is not really important, LP20. Students feel shy for asking the teacher if they have difficulty in learning English. The result can be seen in the table below.

Items	SA	A	D	SD
LP16	19%	38%	29%	14%
LP17	10%	19%	71%	0%
LP18	10%	43%	33%	14%
LP19	9%	10%	48%	33%
LP20	19%	24%	33%	24%

Table shows difficulties faced by the students in the learners' psychology factor. The highest percentage (71%) for students who choose disagree that the students felt Learners Psychology is not one of the factor that make students feel difficult when learning English because they are not feel lazy when doing English assignments. Also, the (43%) students choose agree if they learn English just when someone asks them. The student also feels bored in English class. However, (48%) students choose disagree in statement LP19 because they think that learning English is important.



3.7 The comparison of Learning Difficulties for all language aspects and skills

Table 7. Data Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Deviation	Variance
Gender	21	1	1	2	36	1,71	4,63	2,14
Reading	21	2	2	4	56	2,65	6,10	3,72
Speaking	21	2,00	1,67	3,67	59,00	2,81	4,66	2,17
Listening	21	2,00	1,67	3,67	56,67	2,70	5,95	3,54
Writing	21	2,33	1,33	3,67	5,67	2,65	5,53	3,05
Vocabulary	21	2,00	2,00	4,00	59,33	2,83	5,54	3,07
Student Psychology	21	2,60	1,40	4,00	49,60	2,36	6,47	4,18

The table shows descriptive statistics about the data from 21 students. Based on the data obtained in the field especially the result of the questionnaire it can be concluded that the Eighth Grade Students in Junior High School of Advent Manokwari faced difficulties in learning English. It is indicated by the highest mean score for difficulties faced by students when learning English is in vocabulary skills which is 2,83. This score is included in the positive enough category which means that the students found difficulties when learning English. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score is in learners' psychology which is 2,36. This score is included into negative category which means that the learners psychology is not one of the factors that make students feel difficult when learning English.

3.8 Data obtained from Interview

For collecting data in interview sessions. The researcher chooses 6 students out of the 21 students. There are three criteria for choosing the participants in the interview session explained by Spradley in Faisal (1990), considered by the researcher in this study as follows; 1). The sample knows well about the activity that became the purpose of this research, 2). The sample still has a relation and is active in the targeting environment, and 3). The sample has a lot of time and opportunity to share the information.

Sahid (2023),Fitriyah (2022), Sahid (2024), in their research students still have problem in four English skill (listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing). Furthermore, first language and students' anxiety still affected their performance in learning English as foreign language. Based on the interview sessions. There are some difficulties in learning English faced by the Eighth Grade Students of Junior High School of Advent Manokwari. The data will be presented as follows:

- a. Lack of inspiration for writing English text
From the result of the interviews. Three students face difficulty in learning English because they need to find ideas or inspiration for writing English text which makes it a challenge for students. To overcome this, students look for inspiration from the internet, books, or even discussions with friends or teachers as a source of inspiration for writing English texts. Several sample of interviews:
Student 3: "Susah karena tidak tau apa yang mau ditulis" (It is difficult because I do not know what I want to write).
Student 1: "Saya sulit temukan ide, kadang masih menggunakan Internet" (I find it difficult to find ideas, sometimes I still use the internet).
- b. Fear of making a mistake is one of the reasons why students find it difficult to learn English. Students feel they have to be perfect in speaking English and worry about being judged. Students need to realize that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. To overcome this, students have to practice a lot, often communicate using English or join English conversations with other people, and develop a mindset that learn through mistakes. Several sample of interviews:



Students 4: “*Ada kesulitan saat ingin berbicara bahasa inggris yaitu saya merasa takut salah*” (There is difficulty when learning English, which I am afraid of making mistake).

Student 5: “*Biasanya pertama-tama saya suka latihan didepan kaca agar tidak salah lagi*” (Usually I like to practice in front of the mirror so I do not make mistakes again).

- c. Lack of English vocabulary when learning English, students often feel frustrated and feel unable to communicate effectively in English. That is why students think that lack of vocabulary is one of the difficulties when learning English. To overcome this, students increase their vocabulary by reading a dictionary, practicing remembering new vocabulary, and also listening to English music.

Several sample of interviews:

Student 5: “*Banyak kosakata bahasa inggris yang saya tidak tau*” (There are a lot of English vocabulary that I do not know).

Student 4: “*Saya akan buka kamus untuk melihat kosakata baru yang saya tidak tau*” (I will open the dictionary to check new vocabulary).

4. Conclusion

Behind the difficulties that the students faced in learning English. There are several ways from the students to overcome their difficulties. For students who feel lack of inspiration, the students can look for inspiration from the internet, books, or even discuss with their friends or teachers as a source of inspiration for writing English texts. For difficult in pronouncing English word, the students can listen to the sound carefully so they can try to pronounce the word correctly. Also, the students can use Google Voice as a useful device to help them. For students who feel shy to speak English, they have to out of their comfort zone so they can realize that mistakes can be lessons for improvement. Students also can continue to practice, and self-confidence will develop so that students communicate using English more easily and confidently. The students can practice a lot, often communicate using English or join English conversations with other people, and develop a mindset that learn through mistakes. The students also can increase their vocabulary by reading a dictionary, practicing remembering new vocabulary, and also listening to English music. the study will give more information about how to overcome the difficulties when learning English. They can be used to assist them to overcome problems that they face when learn English. For example, if they are lacking basic English vocabulary, or unable to understand what they hear from English videos. Beside it can be as a reference. In the future, if somebody wants to study a similar topic, then this research will be a helpful reference for him or her.

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