The Student's Obstacles in English Learning at Islamic Junior High School

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apa saja tantangan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris khususnya di sekolah menengah pertama. Konsep pengajaran bahasa Inggris selalu bersumber dari konsep pembelajaran yang dikembangkan sendiri. Pemahaman yang lebih baik khususnya terhadap perkembangan siswa dengan memberikan cara pandang konstruktivis dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologi, dimana seorang siswa berperan sebagai informan utama dan enam orang temannya sebagai informan pendukung. Hasil yang diperoleh dari penelitian kualitatif ini yang mempengaruhi hambatan siswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris adalah Durasi dan Keterlibatan dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Kode Etik dan Tata Krama dalam Interaksi Siswa, Interaksi Kelompok dan Kolaborasi, Dinamika Sosial dan Pengaruh Pengalaman Mengajar Teman serta Perannya Pendidik. Permasalahan dalam pembelajaran merupakan hambatan yang harus diatasi oleh siswa untuk mencapai hasil yang diinginkan.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Hambatan Siswa, Pengajaran

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Abstract

This research aims to find out what are the challenges in learning English especially in junior high school. The concept of teaching English has always been derived from the concept of self-developed learning. A better understanding, especially on student development, by providing a constructivist perspective in the learning process. This research uses a phenomenological qualitative approach, where a student acts as the main informant and six of his friends as supporting informants. The results obtained from this qualitative research that influence students' barriers in learning English are Duration and Involvement in English Learning, Code of Ethics and Manners in Student Interaction, Group Interaction and Collaboration, Social Dynamics and the Influence of Friends' Teaching Experience and the Role of Educators. Problems in learning are obstacles that must be overcome by students to achieve the desired results.

Keywords: English learning, Student's obstacles, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Learning English at Islamic Junior High School, should be joyful. the Students are expected to be unstressful. They are easy to understand the English lesson, they are encourage to interact each other in using English. They overcome problems collaboratively. They have high curiousity, they are skillful in communicating orally and in written. However, the situation describes above does not happen in the classroom yet today. Most of the students

are not interested in learning English. The teachers method are too monotonous, this makes them boring. Beside that, they always do not finish the homework given by the teachers.

Learning problems are barriers that students must overcome to get desired results. Where the learner may or may not face these problems. Obstacles to teaching and learning might be psychological, social, or physiological in character (Sugiyanto, 2014). Obstacles in learning English are a significant concern for many students, particularly those learning it as a second or foreign language. Several studies have identified various factors that hinder the successful study of English. A study of English majors' obstacles to learning English found that anxiety had a substantial influence on language acquisition. Researchers emphasised the need to prevent anxiety's harmful impact on learning outcomes (Chen-Shuqin, 2015). The book "Common Obstacles in Learning English" looked at immediate and remote linguistic issues that hamper non-native speakers' ability to learn English effectively. These aspects include variances in alphabetical systems, phonology, grammar, syntax, and semantics, which can lead to mistakes if not understood properly (Vitalis, 2014).

A case study in Pakistan discovered that students experience a variety of challenges when learning English, including weak communication skills, ineffective teaching techniques, and a lack of practice opportunities. The study concluded that changing teaching techniques and offering more practice chances might assist to overcome these challenges (Razan, Raza, Amir, Raza, Gul & Irshad, 2021). Another research on the issues and hurdles in learning English as a foreign language highlighted psychological and social variables such as fear of failure, lack of desire, and social pressure as important barriers to learning the language (Banditvilai, Cullen, 2018). Research on obstacles to learning English as a second language among intermediate students in Pakistan emphasised geographical and socioeconomic variables such as confusing educational policies, biassed attitudes towards English, and parental behaviour as barriers to learning English (Khan, 2016).

English language proficiency has a huge influence on many elements of life, such as immigrant healthcare access, usage, and results, as well as economic development and academic achievement. Immigrants' English language skills has a substantial impact on their healthcare access and results. A qualitative study discovered that immigrants with higher English proficiency have better healthcare outcomes and access to resources. This demonstrates the importance of language abilities in maintaining good communication with healthcare practitioners and comprehending medical instructions, which leads to better health results (Pandey, Maina, Amoyaw, Kamrul, Michaels & Maroof, 2021). Economic growth also benefits from English language proficiency, as demonstrated by the situation in the Philippines. Regular practice and use of English are crucial for the country's economic development, though there is still a need for grammatical improvements. Additionally, maintaining a balance between English education and preserving local and cultural languages is vital for protecting cultural identity while promoting economic advancement (Santo, Fernandez, Ilustre, R. A. M. I. L, 2022).

In academia, English language proficiency significantly affects student performance, especially in English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs. A study of Japanese undergraduate students in an EMI program found that English proficiency is a key factor in the challenges they face. Although no specific proficiency threshold was identified, differences in perceived ease of study influenced the reported challenges. Other factors, such as prior content knowledge, motivation, and the classroom learning environment, also played a role in the students' experiences and outcomes (Aizawa, Rose, Thompso, & Curle, 2020). For older migrants in Australia, proficiency in English is crucial for better healthcare outcomes and social integration. A study covering the period from 2016 to 2046 highlighted the importance of language skills in enabling older migrants to access healthcare services effectively and integrate into the community, thus enhancing their quality of life and overall well-being (Temple, Wilson, Brijnath, Utomo & Mcdonald, 2022). In the USA, English language proficiency impacts disparities in health insurance coverage and access to care. Research conducted from 2006 to 2016 found that immigrants with limited English proficiency are more likely to face disparities in healthcare access and coverage. These findings highlight the need for targeted

efforts to address language barriers and ensure equitable access to healthcare services for everyone, regardless of their language abilities (Lu & Myerson, 2020).

According to Borsetto (2021), an English course can be challenging for several reasons, The complexities and intricacies of English grammar and syntax can make it challenging for pupils to understand and apply the rules appropriately. For example, understanding verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence construction needs considerable work and practice. Another problem is English's broad and diverse vocabulary. Students may become overwhelmed by the sheer amount of words and their diverse meanings, implications, and proper contextual usage. Building a solid vocabulary is crucial, but it may be a difficult undertaking.

Idioms and colloquialisms provide an extra degree of complexity. English is rich in idiomatic idioms and colloquial language, which are frequently influenced by cultural context and common knowledge. Non-native speakers may struggle to comprehend and apply these terms since they are not always clear. Reading and writing in English provide extra obstacles. These abilities need pupils to understand, analyse, and communicate themselves clearly and effectively. Reading and analysing complicated materials may be difficult, as can conveying ideas coherently in writing.

The cultural and historical backdrop incorporated in English might also provide challenges. Students who are unfamiliar with the cultural and historical context may struggle to appreciate the language's intricacies. This knowledge is critical for effective communication and can be a considerable challenge for many students. Non-native speakers frequently struggle with pronunciation. English contains distinct sounds, intonation patterns, and stress patterns, which can be challenging to learn. Proper pronunciation is critical for clear communication and typically necessitates much practice.

Homophones and homographs hinder the process of learning English. Words that sound the same but have various meanings (homophones) or are spelt the same but have different meanings (homographs) can cause confusion and mistakes, making the language more difficult to learn. Contextual awareness is equally important in English. The language frequently depends greatly on context, which can be difficult for pupils unfamiliar with the cultural, historical, or social contexts in which it is utilised. This dependency on context may make comprehension and appropriate usage more challenging.

Time management and organisation are essential skills for success in English classes. These courses sometimes require substantial reading, writing, and studying, which can be burdensome for students who struggle to manage their time efficiently. Good organisation skills are required to keep up with the coursework. Finally, self-directed learning is often required in English classes. Students must frequently work alone and accept responsibility for their own education. This might be difficult for students who are not used to managing their study schedules and learning processes without continual supervision.

METHODS

This study adopts a phenomenological qualitative approach, where a student plays the role of the main informant and six of her friends as the supporting informant. This approach allows researchers to explore in depth students' subjective experiences and perspectives related to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

The students selected as key informants were considered based on their in-depth understanding and experience related to the phenomenon being studied, while six female students provided additional in-depth perspectives on the same topic. The interview instrument used was a semi-structural interview recorded using a smartphone. This approach ensures that the interview process is conducted alternately with pre-prepared questions to ensure consistency and focus in data collection (Patton, 2002).

The data collected from the interviews are carefully recorded and transcribed to maintain data integrity (Merriam, 2009). This data was then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which allowed researchers to identify key patterns and themes that emerged from

the conversation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allows for the development of a deep understanding of the unwritten code or rules that students follow in their daily interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In a series of interviews conducted with several students in an Islamic high school, several important aspects of the interaction between students and teachers in the educational environment can be observed, as well as the dynamics of relationships between classmates. These conversations reflect students' different perspectives and experiences regarding English language learning and their interactions with fellow students.

Duration and Engagement in English Language Learning

Long learning durations, such as seven years, are typically expected to give students enough time to develop English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Krashen (1982) stated that the longer students are exposed to a second language, the more likely they are to achieve a high level of fluency. Krashen also emphasized the importance of comprehensible input as a key factor in the acquisition of a second language.

However, long learning durations do not always guarantee uniform results among all students. Lightbown and Spada (2013) noted that in addition to learning time, learning quality, motivation, and teaching methods also play a big role in determining students' success in mastering English. In this study, it was found that there was a variation in the level of English proficiency among students. Ellis (2008) showed that students who are more often involved in activities using English, such as watching movies, listening to music, or interacting with native speakers, tend to have better abilities. Intrinsic motivation also plays an important role in the success of language learning. Dörnyei (2001) explains that students with high motivation for personal reasons, such as an interest in English-speaking culture or a desire to study or work in an English-speaking country, usually perform better compared to students who learn a language simply because of academic obligations.

The presence of students who stand out in English can have a positive impact on classroom dynamics and overall language learning. More proficient students often serve as role models for their peers, demonstrating effective practices in learning English. Vygotsky (1978) notes that social interaction with more proficient individuals can help other students achieve a higher level of mastery through the process of "scaffolding." However, it is also important to ensure that differences in ability levels do not hinder the participation of other students. Teachers need to create an inclusive and supportive environment, where all students feel valued and motivated to actively participate in learning activities. The long duration of learning can have a positive impact on students' English language skills. However, variations in mastery levels suggest that duration alone is not enough. Factors such as the quality and intensity of interaction with the language, intrinsic motivation, and teaching methods play a crucial role in student success. Teachers need to consider these factors and implement inclusive and effective learning strategies to help all students reach their full potential in English language mastery.

Code of Ethics and Manners in Student Interaction

One important aspect of this code is the desire of students to remain objective when discussing classmates. According to Tannen (1993), objectivity in communication is the key to maintaining harmony and mutual understanding in a group. Students strive to keep assessments fair and unbiased to create a supportive learning environment. Maintaining the privacy of assignment answers is also part of this code of conduct. Goffman (1967) emphasized the importance of maintaining face or self-esteem in social interactions, which reflects respect for the efforts and work of each individual.

This code of conduct helps create a positive and inclusive learning environment. Respecting individual efforts and maintaining objectivity helps reduce conflict and encourage cooperation between students. Cohen and Lotan (2014) stated that a cooperative learning environment in which students feel valued tends to result in positive educational outcomes and

greater student engagement. According to Hargie (2011), good communication skills, including maintaining privacy and objectivity, are essential in many aspects of life, including education.

Despite the awareness of the importance of this code of conduct, students often face social pressures and competition that can affect their compliance with the rules. Wentzel (1991) found that peer pressure and the desire to excel academically can cause students to violate this code of conduct, for example by sharing assignment answers to get better grades. Teachers have an important role in enforcing the code of ethics in the classroom. By emphasizing the importance of ethics and manners and setting examples of good behavior, teachers can help students understand and practice these values. Bandura (1977) in his theory of social learning emphasizes that students learn through observation and imitation. Therefore, ethical and professional behavior of teachers is very important in shaping student attitudes and behaviors.

Group Interaction and Collaboration

One point that frequently arises in interview results is regarding group work. One student mentioned never having worked in the same group with several respondents, indicating that grouping in assignments may not be consistent or structured. However, some respondents mentioned having worked in groups with a student who is very interested in English, albeit infrequently. This suggests flexible group work dynamics that depend on instructor instructions.

Inconsistency in grouping can create challenges in ensuring that all students have a fair opportunity to interact and work with different classmates. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), consistent and planned grouping can enhance the effectiveness of group work, improve group cohesion, and ensure even distribution of skills and knowledge among students. On the other hand, flexibility in grouping also has its advantages. It allows instructors to organize groups based on specific task needs or to address changing class dynamics. Slavin (2011) notes that flexibility in group formation can accommodate different learning styles and enable students to learn from various perspectives.

The role of the instructor is crucial in determining how groups are formed and how group dynamics unfold. Instructors need to consider various factors such as academic ability, personality, and social dynamics when grouping students. Cohen (1994) emphasizes that careful planning in grouping can help prevent issues such as one student dominating the group or marginalizing other students. The dynamics of group work in the classroom reflect a combination of inconsistency and flexibility in grouping. Despite challenges in ensuring consistent grouping, flexibility can provide benefits in creating diverse and dynamic learning experiences. The instructor's role is vital in strategically organizing groups to maximize the benefits of group work for all students.

Academic Achievement and English Proficiency

One of the students was described as a student who had good English skills, even the most prominent in his class. He is often referred to as the best in English, both in understanding the material, doing assignments, and explaining in front of the class. However, there are also notes that he may feel nervous or nervous when speaking in front of the class, although this does not detract from the quality of his explanations. This shows that despite having good academic ability, emotional and psychological factors still affect students' performance in the classroom.

Superior academic ability in these students shows good learning effectiveness and mastery of the material. According to Gardner (1983), success in certain academic fields, such as English, is often influenced by high linguistic intelligence. Students with good linguistic intelligence tend to understand language structures, vocabulary, and grammatical rules more quickly, which facilitates outstanding academic achievement.

Despite having good academic abilities, emotional factors such as nervousness or nervousness still affect students' performance in class. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) in their study on second language anxiety mentioned that anxiety can affect the ability to speak

in public, even if students have good mastery of the material. This anxiety can be caused by a variety of factors, including fear of negative judgment and a lack of self-confidence. To overcome anxiety in public speaking, various strategies can be used. For example, Lucas (2011) suggests techniques such as more frequent speaking exercises, the use of relaxation methods, and constructive feedback from teachers. With the right support, students can develop better confidence and reduce their anxiety levels when speaking in front of the class.

Teachers have an important role in supporting students who show anxiety when speaking. Teachers can create a supportive and non-discriminatory environment, which allows students to feel more comfortable and safe in expressing themselves. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that the motivation and support of teachers is essential in helping students overcome emotional barriers and reach their full potential.

Despite having good academic abilities, emotional and psychological factors such as nervousness can affect students' performance in class. It is important for teachers to recognize and support students in coping with their anxiety, so that they can perform more confidently and effectively. With a combination of good academic ability and the right emotional support, students can achieve optimal achievement in English language learning.

Response to Assignments and Teacher Instructions

From the interview results, we understand that one student always reads the instructions before starting assignments and consistently completes homework given. This demonstrates discipline and attention to detail, which are crucial qualities in the learning process. However, there are other respondents who admitted to occasionally doing assignments without reading the instructions first, possibly due to lack of interest or rushing.

Discipline, such as always reading instructions before starting assignments and completing homework, is a key indicator of academic success. According to Duckworth and Seligman (2005), self-discipline correlates strongly with high academic achievement. Disciplined students tend to be more organized, have consistent study habits, and are better able to manage their academic tasks effectively. Attention to detail, such as carefully reading instructions, helps students avoid mistakes and ensures that they fully understand what is required in the assignment. Zimmerman (2002) shows that self-regulated learners, who can manage their own learning process, often exhibit greater attention to detail and instructions, contributing to the quality of their work. There are also students who admit that they sometimes do assignments without reading the instructions first. This could be due to various factors, including lack of interest in the task or rushing to complete the work. According to Schunk and Pajares (2005), intrinsic motivation and good time management are crucial in ensuring that students approach their academic tasks carefully.

Ignoring instructions can lead to errors in completing assignments, results that do not meet expectations, and frustration for both students and teachers. Anderson (2000) notes that proper understanding of instructions is a crucial first step in problem-solving and applying knowledge. Discipline and attention to detail in reading instructions before starting assignments are important qualities that support students' academic success. However, there are challenges faced by students who lack interest or rush through assignments, which can result in suboptimal work outcomes. Teachers need to emphasize the importance of reading instructions carefully and help students develop self-discipline and good time management to achieve better academic performance.

Social Dynamics and Influence of Friends

The interactions between students also reflect how they influence and support each other in learning. There are respondents who want to see the answers of one of the students to make sure their answer is correct, indicating that there is an interdependence in terms of learning. However, the student is also described as someone who is selective in sharing answers, perhaps to maintain justice and prevent excessive dependence from his peers.

Interdependence in learning can have a positive impact, such as improving understanding and providing emotional support. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009),

cooperation in learning can increase motivation, achievement, and positive attitudes towards lessons. Viewing a friend's answer to verify one's own answers is a clear example of a collaborative learning strategy where students help each other to ensure accuracy and understanding of the material. However, selectivity in sharing answers is also important to maintain fairness and prevent over-dependence. If a student shares their answers too often, his or her peers may become too dependent and not learn to understand the material on their own. Slavin (1996) mentioned that in group work, it is important to strike a balance between providing support and encouraging learning independence. This way, students can learn to rely on themselves while still benefiting from the interaction and support of classmates.

Teachers have an important role in regulating the dynamics of learning in the classroom to ensure that cooperation between students is constructive. Teachers can establish rules that encourage students to share thoughts and strategies without providing direct answers. Vygotsky (1978) in his theory of social learning emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, but also emphasizes the need for structure and guidance from teachers to ensure that learning takes place effectively. Interactions between students in terms of influencing each other and supporting learning reflect the complex dynamics between interdependence and independence. Selectivity in sharing answers can help maintain fairness and encourage students to learn independently. The role of the teacher is crucial in regulating and facilitating these dynamics to ensure that all students get the maximum benefit from social interaction in the learning process.

Teaching Experience and the Role of Educators

The findings from interviews highlight the pivotal role of an English teacher in the learning process. This influence is evident in how students engage with instructions and perceive their assigned tasks. The teacher is described as actively assigning group projects and prompting students to present their work in front of the class, strategies that effectively enhance students' understanding and communication skills.

By actively assigning group projects, teachers can foster collaboration and interaction among students. Slavin (2011) suggests that well-structured group work can significantly boost academic performance by facilitating peer learning and mutual support. Group tasks also enable students to share ideas, develop social competencies, and collectively enhance problem-solving abilities. Encouraging students to present their work in class effectively cultivates communication skills and self-assurance. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning, highlighting how class presentations can aid students in developing public speaking skills and promoting learning through peer discussion and feedback.

Teaching methods involving discussions and class presentations not only improve communication skills but also deepen students' comprehension of subject matter. According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), well-facilitated discussions enrich the learning experience by encouraging critical thinking, prompting questions, and encouraging students to explain concepts to their peers.The role of the English teacher in language education is pivotal in shaping students' learning journeys. Through assigning group tasks and facilitating class presentations, teachers can enhance collaboration, communication skills, and students' grasp of academic content. These approaches also foster positive social interactions, which are integral to effective learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

Learning English in an Islamic Junior High School should be a pleasant experience for students. They are expected to learn without pressure, easily understand English lessons and are encouraged to interact in the language. They solve problems collaboratively and have high curiosity and communication skills both verbally and in writing. However, this expected situation did not happen in the current class. Most students are less interested in learning English because of monotonous teaching methods and often unfinished assignments. Problems in learning are obstacles that students must overcome to achieve the desired results.

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