

The Difficulties Faced by Students in Learning English at SMP Al Madinah Islamic Boarding School

Metria Dicky Putra¹, Septrida Fitra²

¹English Department, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and Cultures, Yogyakarta State University,

²English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Padang State University

Jl. Colombo No.1, Karang Malang, Caturtunggal, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281

Corresponding author

metriadicky.2024@student.uny.ac.id

Abstract: This research aims to describe students' difficulties while learning English and identify the factors contributing to these learning difficulties. It explores the broader environmental and systemic factors, such as time constraints and teaching methods, that may increase these difficulties. The method of this study is a descriptive research design, which allows for a detailed investigation and precise representation of the phenomena being studied. The subjects of this research were students at SMP Al Madinah Islamic Boarding School during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data collection techniques used in this study included interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. Interviews provided in-depth, qualitative insights into the students' experiences and perspectives. Questionnaires helped gather data from a larger group of students, offering a broader view of the difficulties encountered. The research data are analyzed using a qualitative approach, which allows for a deeper exploration of the patterns and themes that emerge from the students' experiences. The results indicate that student do not know the meaning of vocabulary, students' do not confident speak in English and the limited time in learns are the difficulties in learn English.

Keywords: Difficulties, English, Learning, SMP Al Madinah Islamic Boarding School.

Introduction

English is an international language that has an important role in the current era of globalization. As a global communication tool, English is used in various fields, such as education, business, technology and diplomacy. Mastering English not only helps someone to communicate with people from various countries, but also opens wider opportunities of work and education. Mastery of English requires students to improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. A strong command of the language not only grants access to scientific and technological information but also enables better interaction with peers worldwide. Learning difficulties pose significant barriers for students, presenting challenges that must be addressed to achieve success in language acquisition (Wiharno, 2018). This becomes

increasingly complex in the context of education in Islamic schools, especially those based on Islamic boarding schools

Islamic schools, especially those based on Islamic boarding schools, often face a dilemma between prioritizing religious education and paying sufficient attention to general education, including English language teaching. A curriculum that is dense with religious studies and focuses on Arabic as the main language for religious studies often means that time allocation for learning English is limited. In addition, there is still a view in some communities that foreign languages, such as English, are less relevant than mastery of religious languages. Many Islamic boarding schools now offer English study programs to enhance the quality of its graduates. Many research has been undertaken to observe how English learning is run in Islamic boarding schools to

achieve the goal of mastering English for the students (Shobaha, 2023).

SMP Al Madinah, one of the Islamic boarding school that seeks to integrate general and religious education, is an interesting example in this context. This school not only provides in-depth religious education, but also tries to prepare students to face the challenges of the modern world, one of which is by improving their English language skills. This integrated approach aims to equip students with the skills needed in the global world, without ignoring religious values which are the main foundation of Islamic boarding school education.

In the process, SMP Al Madinah faces the same challenges as many other Islamic schools, the challenges consist of the have a limited lexicon and lack the confidence to communicate in English, both with their peers and with their teachers. Moreover, family environmental factors can also play a role, where at home, students may not receive adequate support in learning English because their parents do not have formal education, do not master English, and some of them may be elderly (Suardi, 2017).

Based on this description, it is very clear that identifying and helping students overcome various learning difficulties, improve their learning outcomes, and develop their English language skills is a very important step. This condition is what encourages researchers to conduct research related to learning problems, especially those faced by Islamic boarding school students. As a result, the purpose of this study is to fill a gap by investigating the difficulties associated with learning English and the solutions that can be employed to overcome those challenges. The study addresses two research questions:

1. What are the difficulties that are faced by the students in learning English?
2. What are the solutions to overcome difficulties in learning English?

Materials and Methods

This research used in this study is qualitative research. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research is research that intends to understand the

phenomenon of what is experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others holistically and using descriptions in the form of words and language in an extraordinary natural context by utilizing various methods natural. According to Creswell (2020), qualitative research is a method used to investigate and comprehend the significance that people or communities attribute to a social issue. This research was conducted at SMP Al Madinah Islamic Boarding School. The participant was the student grade 9th of the 2024/2025 academic years.

The research instrument used questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was conducted with class 9th in October 2024 to determine the challenges that they experienced while learning English. The interview was performed to gather more detail information from the students about those challenges. The data analysis process for the systematically searching and compiling.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this research is to determine what challenges that students have when learning English. The researchers obtain the data through questionnaire and interview. According to findings of researchers, student face several challenges when learning English. Students encounter greater challenges than students at other schools. The detail will be elaborated below:

Research Question 1: What are the difficulties that are students face in learning English?

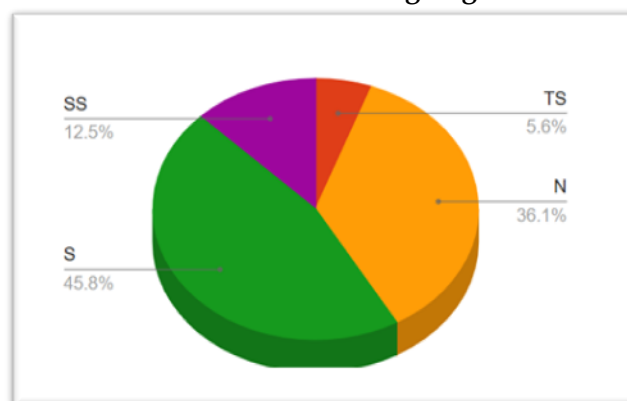


Figure 1. Students' vocabulary

One of the students' difficulties is that students do not know the meaning of vocabulary. From the data presented, 53,3% of students found it difficult to know the meaning of vocabulary. The difficulty experienced by students is difficulty in knowing the meaning of a sentence in learning. There are many reasons that make it difficult for students to remember the vocabulary taught in class. There are several reasons why students do not know the meaning of vocabulary, including students having difficulty remembering the vocabulary taught due to lack of practice, low student interest in learning English, this can be caused by the monotonous methods used by teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, students are lazy to look for the meaning of their vocabulary in the dictionary (Kusumawati, F. P., et al 2024).

"Saya kesulitan dalam mengetahui arti setiap kosakata yang saya temui ketika belajar. Saya sering lupa kosakata karena kurangnya praktek dalam menggunakan kosakata itu"

"I have difficulty knowing the meaning of every vocabulary word that I encounter when studying. I often forget vocabulary because of lack of practice in using that vocabulary."

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that there are still deficiencies in the application of vocabulary acquired by students at school. Even though students already have sufficient vocabulary, they are not yet able to practice it well.

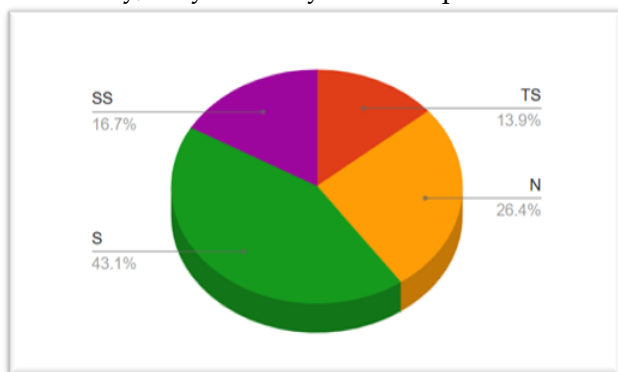


Figure 2 Students' Speaking

In learning English, students are not confident in speaking English. Based on the data above, there are 59.8% of students experiencing difficulties in speaking. There are several factors that influence students' speaking, including students' limited vocabulary, students still having difficulty pronouncing words correctly in English and

students' poor knowledge of grammar (Maji, E, et al 2022)

"Saya mengalami kesulitan dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris karena kosakata yang saya miliki masih kurang. Saya malu ketika berbicara dengan teman sebangku, karena saya takut salah dalam mengucapkan kosakata yang saya miliki"

"I have difficulty speaking English because my vocabulary is still lacking. I am embarrassed when talking to my classmates, because I am afraid of pronouncing the wrong vocabulary"

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that students still have difficulty in speaking because their vocabulary is limited and students are afraid of pronouncing vocabulary incorrectly, thus making students tend to be reluctant to speak English.

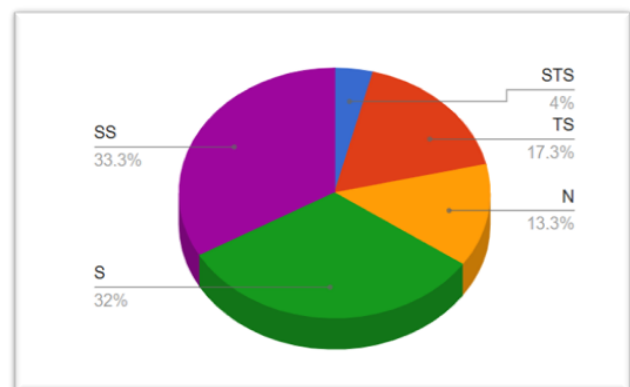


Figure 3. Time in learning English

One of the other difficulties faced by students in the classroom is limited learning time at learn in the class. Before starting learning, there are several religious-based activities that students must carry out, thus making learning time limited. Data shows that 65.3% of students feel that they don't have enough time to learn English in class.

"Saya merasa sangat kurang waktunya untuk belajar Bahasa Inggris didalam kelas, sering kali materi yang diajarkan belum selesai, tetapi waktunya sudah habis, dan dilanjutkan minggu depan. Minggu depannya terjadi hal yang sama lagi, karena harus mengulang materi minggu ini dulu"

"I feel that there is very limited time to study English in class, often the material taught is not finished, but the time is up, and it will be continued next week. Next week the same thing happens again, because we have to repeat this week's material first."

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the limited time in learning English in the classroom makes it a little difficult for students to maximize their abilities in learning English. This limited time limits students from understanding English in depth.

Research Question 2: What are the Solutions to Overcome Difficulties in Learning English?

Based on the results of interview, the researchers discovered that difficulties that student address in limited time to learn in class. The following are solutions that can be employed to overcome the difficulties faced by students in learning English.

Creating interactive learning media

The use of creative learning media makes it easy for students to understand learning. Interactive learning media are seen relevant today as students, being millennials, are already adept with technology, which prevents boredom throughout the learning process (Sahronih, et al 2020). This previous experience allows quick adaptation to new learning instruments, minimizing the learning curve and enhancing intuitiveness in the process. Students engaged with interactive media are less likely to experience bored or disconnection from the subject topic, a common difficulty associated with traditional teaching approaches.

Time management

Effective time management in the classroom is an essential ability that every educator must have to enable the successful attainment of each learning objective. Given the constrained duration of each class session, educators must properly organize and administer learning activities to ensure that each instructional component is communicated effectively and that students remain actively engaged throughout the educational experience. The good of time management from teachers, student performance can be improved (Ayodele, 2015).

Conclusions

Learning English is not easy, and students face difficulties while they learn. Student do not know the meaning of vocabulary, students' do not confident speak in English and the limited time in learns are the difficulties faced in learn. One of solution that may be adopted in school is the time management in teaching. After that, the teacher uses interactive learning media to teach. Those ideas can be implemented not only by the teacher in this school but also by the other school.

The findings of this study are important, particularly for those that surround the students. It is because those people can assist students in overcoming difficulties, so the students can study effectively. Since this research approach is only qualitative, future researchers may employ quantitative methods to assess the level of the difficulties that students face in learning English. Future researchers can include people from other schools. In other words, it can be said that future researchers can compare the challenges of students in learning English at two or more schools. As a result, the researchers can determine the differences and similarities in students' difficulties as well as the impacts and solutions that students require.

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