

**THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT
MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH TEACHER EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

English is one of compulsory subjects that must be learned by students of elementary school to collage level. In fact, some students have difficulty in learning English. This study aims to describe the factors affect students' difficulties in learning English. The subjects of the study were 30 students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. This study applied a qualitative descriptive research with a questionnaire and observation instruments. The data analysis of this study used interview, observation, documentation and triangulation. The researchers found that there are two difficulties factors in learning English particularly internal factors and external factors, including 1) students' low motivation; 2) lack of understanding of the importance in learning English (3) lack of opportunities to learn English (4) Lack of environment supports such as parents, friends, etc.

Keywords: Learning difficulties, factors of difficulties in learning English

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a change of someone that happened because of experience. Learning difficulties can be interpreted as a condition and a learning process characterized by certain challenges to achieve learning outcomes. These learning challenges are not just an instructional or pedagogical problem, but refers to a problem psychological. Students who get challenges in the learning process will get less learning results (Dimiyati, 2006).

The phenomenon of learning difficulties is one of the impacts students' low learning achievement that comes from themselves and their environment. The cause of the students' difficulties in learning can be influenced by students' low learning motivation. The main factors affect learning difficulties of the students comes from internal factors of themselves.

Blastic and Jones in Sugihartono et al., (2007) state that students' learning difficulties indicate a gap or distance between expected academic achievement and actual academic achievement achieved by students. It can be concluded that learning difficulties are essentially a problem that causes a student are not be able to follow the learning process properly like other students in general due to certain factors so that he is late or even unable to achieve the expected learning goals. Every student has their own learning difficulties; one of the learning difficulties is learning language.

In general, language is considered a means of communication used by someone to relate to another person. Language as a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication (Owen, 1984). Sagala (2019) state that language is widely considered to be the most essential communication instrument to convey information. Remarkably, a feature of language meaning is not only related to the words selections, but also how the way to convey it. When the speaker cannot convey his/her message by using one language, the speaker

needs to change the language to be more understood (Sagala and Rezeki, 2018).

Language has several aspects, in terms of language skills, these aspects include listening, speaking, writing and reading. Based on the aspect of language components, language-learning difficulties can be defined as a disturbance or difficulty experienced by someone in obtaining the ability to hear, to speak, to read and to write, which includes mastery about the form, content and use of language.

The examples of language difficulties are the difficulty in conveying thoughts in the form of spoken language, the difficulty in distinguishing greeting words, the difficulty in writing what is desired appropriately, the difficulty in answering teacher's questions, the difficulty in speaking as well as difficulties in the form and use of language (Wardani, 1995).

English has a very important role in broadening horizons in the field of science and technology. The development of information that is increasingly rapid and up to date must be balanced with the ability to absorb that information effectively and efficiently. The development of technology and information is presented in international languages, especially English.

In fact, English has not shown brilliant results although the students have learned English from basic education to higher education. This happens because English is a foreign language in Indonesia. However, English is taught as a subject in schools with the aim of basic communication and mastering four language skills.

Improving the quality of learning English can be achieved if the background of learning difficulties is known. Hasan (2000) states that the difficulties faced by students in learning English can be seen from the four basic competencies in English, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. In reading competence, according to Rahmawati (2011), students' difficulties due to a

lack of knowledge about reading text comprehension and do not know how to connect ideas between sentences to another. In writing skills, according to Rukmini (2011), it is difficult because these activities require a complex and systematic thought process. For speaking skills, Megawati and Mandarani (2016) in their research found that the difficulty of students because of the lack of English vocabulary. In listening competence, students' difficulties due to their incomprehension of the spoken English.

The difficulties in learning English do not only occur for students at English Study Program but also for students at other study programs. This study was conducted to investigate the students' difficulties in learning English for students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program.

Learning difficulties are caused by several factors such as internal factors and external factors. Westwood (2008) interpreted that internal factors emphasize affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, self-esteem and attitudes. The second is external factors that come from socio-cultural elements such as teachers, learning tools, and culture in the classroom.

In addition, Hamalik (2004) states that the factors of learning difficulties can be classified into four namely 1) the factors that come from the students themselves which are called internal factors such as the students do not have goals of learning, lack of interest, factors of health, the ability of following the lessons, learning habits and lack of language mastery; 2) the factors that come from the school environment such as the process of teaching-learning, lack of reading materials, lack of media, learning materials are not in accordance with the ability and implementation of lessons; 3) the factors that come from the student's family environment, such as the condition of economy, family's problems, homesick especially for students from

outside region, visiting and receiving guests and lack of family supervision; 4) the factors from the community environment such as interference from friends, working while studying, being active in organizations, not being able to arrange recreational time and free time and do not have friends to study together.

Based on the phenomenon, the researchers were excited to do a research about the students' difficulties in learning English at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program.

II. METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative research that collected the data in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers (Moleong, 2005). This study described the phenomenon of the students' difficulties in learning English at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program.

The research subjects were students of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program in the first semester. The number of research subjects was 30 students.

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires and observation instruments. Questionnaires were given to research subjects to find out students' responses of learning English including the difficulties during the learning process. In addition, data collection was also obtained from the researchers' observation through the activities of the research subject when conducted group discussions to observe the students whether they were active or passive.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Data Analysis

The result of observations indicated that there was an indication of students' low understanding of learning English. It can be seen from the students' lack of knowledge about basic understanding of English such as Parts of Speech

(Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposition, and Interjection) although they have studied English from primary to secondary education.

The result of questionnaire indicated that students have high interest in learning English but unfortunately, they have low motivation to learn because of the difficulties.

From the result of observations that was taken from group discussion activities, it can also be concluded that only a few students actively participate in the process of teaching and learning activities. Of the 30 students, only about 10 students were active in giving questions, answering questions, and giving opinions. Meanwhile, other students were passive when group discussion activities were conducted.

From the result of interview which was conducted by the researchers to students, especially students who have difficulties in learning English, it was concluded that the difficulties of students in learning English were caused by several internal factors and external factor. The details could be seen in table 3.1

Table 3.1 Internal and External Factors of Students' Difficulties in Learning English

Internal Factors	External Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are afraid to learn English • Students are not confident to speak English • Students are difficult to express opinions in English because of the lack of vocabulary • Students have less opportunity to learn English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of environment supports such as parents, friends, etc.

From the result of the documentation, it can be seen from the routine assignments and formative test scores given by the lecturer to students. It was found that only a few students

passed with high scores. Of the 30 students, 7 students got 80-90, while the rest got various scores such as 70, 60 and even 50. The description could be seen in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Students' Achievement in Learning English

No.	Number of Students	Score	Percentage
1.	7	80-90	23 %
2.	18	60-70	60 %
3.	5	< 50	17 %
Total	30		100 %

The data analysis indicated that the students' difficulties in learning English at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education Study Program were influenced by internal factors and external factors from the students themselves. This can be seen from the statement of the students who were classified as active. They stated that learning English is very easy and fun because English is a foreign language that is important to learn as a basic for being able to understand the development of today's sophisticated science. In contrast, passive students thought that English is a difficult subject to be understood because of the lack of English knowledge although they have studied English from primary to secondary education.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings in this research, it can be concluded that there are two difficulties factors in learning particularly internal factors and external factors such as students' low motivation, lack of understanding of the importance in learning English, lack of opportunities to learn English and lack of environment supports such as parents, friends, etc.

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