

Student's obstacles in the English learning process for young learners at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan

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ABSTRACT

English, as a foreign language taught in schools, be considered difficult to learn by Indonesian students. The English language learning process for students at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan use of English as the language of instruction but in the implementation have the lack of understanding of English. This study aimed to the obstacles encountered by young learners in acquiring English language skills at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan. The study was a qualitative approach. The data analysis technique was carried out using a qualitative description, and inductive description. The result of this study shows the various obstacles encountered by young learners in the process of acquiring English language skills, ranging from vocabulary limitations and ineffective teaching methods to challenges in grammar mastery, spelling, and self-confidence. The study not only sheds light on the specific barriers faced by young English learners but also offers valuable recommendations for educators and stakeholders to enhance the language learning experience for students. The findings underscore the potential of engaging activities, interactive teaching approaches, simplified grammar rules, phonics-based learning methods, and the creation of a supportive classroom atmosphere in overcoming these obstacles.

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1. Introduction

Indonesia is known for its linguistic diversity, but many Indonesians use Bahasa Indonesia as an official language. With mother tongue and first language as first languages, it is natural for Indonesians to be fluent in more than two languages. With such diverse regional languages, learning a new language seems easy for Indonesians.

English, as a foreign language taught in schools, may be considered difficult to learn by Indonesian students. According to Acep (2015), students find it difficult to understand English because the structures of English and Indonesian are different. As a result, although students have been learning English for a long time, most of them still consider that English is difficult to understand. Endriyati, et al., (2019) said the challenges faced by teachers are mastery of teaching methods, lack of IT and teaching training.

In the Indonesian context, English is considered a foreign language. This is acceptable because Indonesian people use English on certain occasions. Cited in the Atikah's (2019) article, Richard and Renandya (2002) state that learning to speak a foreign language requires more than just knowing the rules of grammar and semantics rules. Learners must also learn how native speakers use the

language in the context of structured interpersonal exchanges, where many factors interact. Since English is a foreign language, it is a must to do the right implementation of appropriate learning for learners.

The English language learning process for students at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan can be challenging due to various factors, including the use of English as the language of instruction and the students' diverse language and cultural backgrounds. In the primary school context, English language learning usually involves the introduction of vocabulary, which is essential for effective communication.

However, research has shown that students' grammar ability, pronunciation, writing and speaking skills can hinder their learning progress. Jaelani and Zabidi (2020) in their research stated that most students have some difficulties in speaking due to lack of confidence and skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Likewise, the difficulty in listening is caused by students lack of vocabulary that leads to the difficulty in understanding conversations in English. In addition, the curriculum at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan aims to graduate students who can communicate effectively in English, but the implementation of the curriculum may face obstacles due to the lack of understanding of English, lack of motivation, and teachers' strategies during the learning process.

To overcome these obstacles, several strategies can be used, such as incorporating students' mother tongue into the learning process, providing targeted support for students with weak English skills, and utilizing available resources to improve the quality of English teaching. According to Aryanti (2024) there are some strategies to overcome the student's obstacle in English learning process, including role playing activities to practice speaking in various contexts and conversation practice with native speakers. But according to the English language teacher at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan, extracurricular activities such as the English Club can help improve students' English skills through fun and interesting activities. However, the effectiveness of this strategy in addressing general education issues remains unclear.

Based on previous research written by Widodo and Dewi (2019) with the title of the research is "Revealing Problems Faced by Teachers in Teaching English to Young Learners at Al-Azhar 55 Islamic Primary School Yogyakarta ". The document discusses the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English to young learners at Al-Azhar 55 Islamic Primary School in Yogyakarta. It highlights issues such as varying English abilities among students, lack of English-speaking environment at home, and the importance of creating a supportive classroom atmosphere to encourage English language learning.

The study utilized qualitative research methods to identify the problems faced by teachers in teaching English to young learners. It involved observations, interviews, and analysis of the teaching strategies employed at the school. The study identified several problems faced by teachers, stated in Songbatumis (2017), teachers may have misconceptions about the difficulty of English, leading to a lack of commitment and confidence in learning and teaching the language and the lack of providing adequate training, resources and support to teachers can improve their ability to teach English effectively and overcome the challenges they face. In addition, such as students' varying English abilities and the lack of English-speaking environment at home. To address these issues, teachers implemented strategies like providing preparation classes, using achievement boards, creating mixed-ability student groups, and utilizing the Class Dojo Application to involve parents in the learning process. These methods aimed to improve students' English skills and create a supportive English learning environment both in and out of the classroom.

Copland et al. (2014) in their research entitled "Challenges in Teaching English to Young Learners: Global Perspectives and Local Realities" mentioned that a number of challenges emerged as affecting large numbers of teachers in different educational contexts, namely, teaching speaking, motivation, differentiating learning, teaching large classes, discipline, teaching writing, and teaching grammar and other challenges are more localised, such as developing teachers' English competence.

Meanwhile the other research that written by Hapsari (2018), with the title "Student's Difficulties in Learning English at a State Vocational School". However, the research focuses on the difficulties faced by students in learning English. The difficulties identified in the research include lack of motivation, lack of vocabulary, difficulty in memorizing vocabulary, lack of grammar mastery, anxiety, unsupportive environment, spelling problems, listening difficulties, and misintonation. The

instrument used in the research is not explicitly mentioned in the provided text. However, the population of the study consists of students who are learning English. The results of the research indicate that students face various challenges in learning English, including difficulties related to motivation, vocabulary, grammar, anxiety, environment, spelling, listening, and intonation. The study also highlights the need for additional research to understand the difficulties faced by students and to develop strategies to overcome these challenges.

Therefore, based on several descriptions that have been stated above, researchers consider it necessary to find out more about the obstacles faced by young learners and the solutions to these problems. In this research will discuss the various obstacles faced by students in the English learning process at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan.

2. Method

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study's purposes. Moleong (2010) defines descriptive qualitative research as a holistic understanding of a subject's behavior, perception, motivation, and action, as well as the use of language to describe the results. Existing data are in the form of field notes, observations, and qualitatively described interview results. This study is being conducted with students from Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan Primary School in Yogyakarta during the academic year 2023/2024. The information is gathered through observation, documentation, and interviews. The research participants are chosen on purpose based on the criteria established by the researcher. There are ten students participating. The data analysis technique is carried out using a qualitative description, and inductive description is used to describe the systematic, factual, and accurate data by implementing the Miles and Habermas model of analysis, which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and data analysis.

The technique of data analysis is carried out using a qualitative description, and inductive description is used to describe the systematic, factual, and accurate data by implementing the model of analysis proposed by Miles and Habermas, which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The test of data validity is conducted by extending the observation, increasing the intensity of perseverance, discussing with others, analyzing negative cases, member check, and applying confirmability test.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

a. The Obstacles

Researcher : Hi Miss, I'm researcher, and I'd like to discuss some students' obstacle in learning English. Can you tell me what you think are the main difficulties you encounter?

Teacher (DA) : Hi, researcher. I think the biggest problem for the students' is not knowing enough vocabulary. Sometimes they don't understand the words in the text, and it makes it hard for them to read.

Researcher : That's a great point. Vocabulary is indeed crucial for understanding English. Do you think there are any other issues that make it difficult for them to learn English?

Teacher (DA) : Yeah, sometimes the teaching methods we use are not very engaging. I feel like we just do the same things over and over, and it gets boring. I wish we could do more interactive activities.

Researcher : I understand. Lack of engaging teaching methods can definitely make learning less enjoyable. Have you ever struggled with teaching the grammar rules? Do you feel like you have a good grasp of them?

Teacher (DA) : Honestly, they still get confused with grammar. Sometimes they get confused about the rules, and it makes it hard for them to write or speak correctly.

- Researcher : That's okay. Grammar can be tricky. Do you think they have any trouble with spelling? Do you find it hard for them to remember how to spell certain words?
- Teacher (DA) : Yeah, they do. Sometimes they get words mixed up, and it's frustrating. I wish we could practice spelling more often together.
- Researcher : I understand. Spelling can be challenging. Lastly, do you ever feel they get nervous or hesitant to speak English? Do you feel like they're not good enough?
- Teacher (DA) : Yeah, sometimes they do. I feel like that they're still get shy, and it makes them nervous to speak in front of others. I wish they could be more confident.
- Researcher : I completely understand. Lack of confidence can be a significant barrier to learning. But don't worry, we can work on all these areas together. We can practice vocabulary, use more interactive teaching methods, focus on grammar and spelling, and even work on building their confidence in speaking.
- Researcher : Okay, Miss. Thank you for the time to helping me answering my question about some obstacles that student faced in learning English. I feel more motivated now to learn how to teach English and be a better teacher.
- Teacher (DA) : That's great to hear. I'm here to support you, and I know you can do it. Let's get started on our plan and make progress together.

The findings reported in this research will be presented in two categories, namely obstacles faced by young learners and solutions to these problems. Through the data collected, it is known that Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan Elementary School students have the lack of understanding of English, among them are lack of vocabulary, lack of teaching methods, lack of mastery of grammar, spelling problems and lack of confidence in speaking.

The first finding the researcher found that students have a lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary is very important in language use. Nanda (2016) learning vocabulary does not only understand the meaning and form, but students also have to know how to use the vocabulary in accordance with the context of the sentence they made. Lack of vocabulary also produces difficulty for the students in reading in English text. This can make the students have difficulty in understanding the text. That way, the students need to understand enough about vocabulary knowledge in order to understand the text. To make students easier in understanding the text, the great quality of vocabulary knowledge is needed.

Lack of vocabulary also becomes the difficulties faced by the students in listening skill. In a study conducted by Ardila (2013), it mentioned that the lack of vocabulary delays the students' listening skill. Besides, the participants in Ardila's research have the same difficulties in listening because they do not know the keywords. Further, when the participants sense an unknown word, they start to think about the meaning of the words and sometimes miss the following part of the listening because they stop to listen. Hence, lack of vocabulary will make students have difficulties in listening skill. Also, the students will miss the information in the following part if they only think about the meaning of unknown words. In conclusion, a lack of vocabulary affects students' listening skills.

The second problem that researcher found a lack of teaching methods, the lack of effective teaching methods is a common challenge faced by teachers. According to Setiowati (2019) challenge that teacher faced in teaching methods is English teachers don't use the appropriate teaching methods in classroom. Teachers may lack didactic and pedagogical skills, time management skills, and the ability to use a variety of instructional materials. Poor teaching methods can have lifelong impacts on students, including limited vocabulary, lack of motivation, and poor classroom management. Teachers may also face obstacles in choosing the right teaching methods, such as confusion over learning goals and difficulties in implementing innovative teaching methods. Lack of funding is another issue that can affect teaching quality. The most common teaching method in secondary classes is asking closed questions, which can hinder interactive learning. To overcome these obstacles, teachers may need to receive more training and support, have access to better resources, and be encouraged to use more innovative and interactive teaching methods.

The third problem the researcher found was students' difficulties in grammar mastery. Stated in Sultra & Baharudin (2020) the mastery of vocabulary and grammar is identified as the two biggest problems in learning English. Students struggle with the correct use of grammar and vocabulary, which hampers their ability to communicate effectively in English and Pronunciation. Words with silent letters, phrasal verbs, and complex consonant clusters can be particularly hard to learn and pronounce correctly. The lack of grammar mastery can significantly impact students' writing, reading, and speaking abilities. The phrase "lack of grammar" in the context of teaching young learners refers to the idea that young children may not have a strong understanding of formal grammar rules when they start learning a language. Their language abilities are still developing, and they may not be able to use complex sentence structures or apply grammatical rules correctly. In this research, the goal is to create a language-rich environment where young learners are exposed to meaningful and contextualized language input. They engage in activities that promote communication and understanding, rather than solely focusing on grammatical accuracy. Through exposure to the language and opportunities for practice, young learners naturally acquire grammar patterns and structures.

The fourth problem the students have difficulty spelling, "Lack of spelling" in elementary school refers to students who struggle with spelling, which can impact their overall language skills and academic performance. As stated in Agustina (2013) spelling difficulties contribute to the challenges in mastering English vocabulary. Words with silent letters, phrasal verbs, and complex consonant clusters can be particularly hard to learn and pronounce correctly. Spelling difficulties can be caused by various factors, including underlying conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD/ADD, and hearing impairment, obstacles in language learning, and weaknesses in foundational skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics. To address these obstacles, it is important to provide tailored support and instruction to students, such as implementing effective teaching methods, offering sufficient practice opportunities, and utilizing online teaching and learning platforms. Additionally, identifying and addressing individual learning needs is essential for helping students overcome spelling difficulties.

The last problem the researcher found was a lack of self-confidence to speak, Students lack confidence in expressing themselves in English. Stated in Nadila (2021) shyness and social factors, such as feeling intimidated by classmates' abilities or fearing that their opinions will not be understood, can also contribute to students' lack of self-confidence They appear to experience pressure and nervousness when attempting to engage in spoken practice. This situation results in a significant waste of time for practice, as well as a reluctance to speak due to fear. According to Leo (2013), students may lose their self-confidence permanently if they feel embarrassed, unappreciated, disappointed, frustrated, or subjected to judgment by their peers or instructors. The situation becomes more detrimental when negative feedback is provided. Consequently, students miss valuable opportunities to practice, despite having a genuine desire to develop their English-speaking skills.

Based on the explanation above, researchers conclude that the difficulties students face in learning English are students having difficulty with vocabulary, lack of teaching methods, lack of grammar mastery, spelling problems and lack of self-confidence to speak. Students who like learning English try to learn English, but students who don't like it will feel that English is a difficult lesson to learn.

b. The Strategies

Students frequently face a variety of challenges when learning English vocabulary, and several strategies have been developed to assist them in overcoming these obstacles. One effective strategy is to use dictionaries and memorization techniques. Students can use dictionaries to look up the definitions of new words and then memorize them through repetition and practice. Peer practice, listening to music, and watching English videos can all be beneficial. These methods encourage students to engage with the language in a more interactive and enjoyable manner, resulting in a more effective learning process (Rionaldi & Saputra, 2016).

Another significant issue is the lack of effective teaching methods. Many students struggle with the traditional methods of teaching, which often focus on grammar rules and vocabulary lists without providing practical applications. This can lead to a lack of engagement and

motivation among students. To address this, teachers can incorporate more interactive and contextual learning methods, such as role-playing, storytelling, and group discussions. These approaches help students to see the relevance of the language in real-life situations, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable.

Grammar mastery is another critical area where students often face difficulties. According to Brown (2001), the complexity of English grammar rules and structures can be overwhelming for many learners. To overcome this, teachers can use visual aids, such as diagrams and charts, to explain grammar concepts in a more intuitive way. Additionally, providing students with opportunities to practice speaking and writing in a supportive environment can help them build confidence in their grammar skills. This can be achieved through regular writing assignments, group discussions, and peer feedback.

According to Thornbury (2002) spelling problems are a common issue for many English learners. The correct spelling of words is essential for effective communication, but it can be challenging due to the irregularities in English spelling. To address this, students can use various strategies such as breaking down words into smaller parts, using mnemonic devices, and practicing regularly. Teachers can also provide additional support by offering extra practice sessions or using technology-based tools to help students improve their spelling skills.

The last is a lack of self-confidence to speak English is a significant obstacle for many students. This can stem from fear of making mistakes or fear of being judged by their peers. To overcome this, teachers can create a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable speaking without fear of criticism. Role-playing and group discussions can help students build confidence by providing opportunities to practice speaking in a low-stakes setting. Additionally, encouraging students to share their thoughts and ideas in class can help them develop a sense of ownership and confidence in their language abilities (Harmer, 2007).

3.2. Discussion

From the analysis above, learning English might be hard, but there are so many methods and strategies that will help to get better and overcome the obstacles. Start by focusing on the basics of English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Take time to understand the main rules and structures of the language. Even though students have different levels of English skills, they all agree that learning English authentically through real media can help them be more creative (Nanda, 2020; Perkasa, 2022). After analyzing the research results, researchers discovered that learners struggled to learn English. However, short-term teaching programs and practices cannot address all problems. The learners lacked confidence to practice speaking English. The learners' lack of speaking ability can be attributed to a focus on main competencies over supporting competencies, which can hinder success. While English may be tough to learn, dedication, practice, and good learning strategies can help you overcome difficulties. Being patient, persistent, and having a positive attitude towards learning will greatly help you become proficient in English.

There are some strategies that will help teachers and student to overcome this include engaging activities for vocabulary, interactive methods for teaching methods, simplifying grammar rules, providing practice opportunities, and constructive feedback. Spelling problems can be addressed through phonics-based approaches and regular practice. Moller et al. (2021) in their research stated that integrated spelling may improve systematic phonics for children at risk of early reading difficulties, and that activities that encourage letter-sound production may be more beneficial than those which only require letter-sound recognition. Beside it, speaking confidence can be improved through a supportive classroom environment, positive reinforcement, and practice in less risky situations. These strategies can significantly improve young learners' English learning outcomes and foster lifelong proficiency

4. Conclusion

The study delves into the various obstacles encountered by young learners in the process of acquiring English language skills, ranging from vocabulary limitations and ineffective teaching methods to challenges in grammar mastery, spelling, and self-confidence. To address these hurdles, strategic interventions are proposed, including the implementation of effective teaching techniques, vocabulary enhancement initiatives, and confidence-building strategies. The research underscores the

significance of dedication, consistent practice, and the adoption of sound learning methodologies in empowering students to attain proficiency in English.

By emphasizing the need for targeted interventions by educators, the study underscores the importance of providing tailored support to facilitate the language learning journey of young learners. Moreover, the findings underscore the potential of engaging activities, interactive teaching approaches, simplified grammar rules, phonics-based learning methods, and the creation of a supportive classroom atmosphere in overcoming these obstacles. Ultimately, through a combination of perseverance, practice, and effective learning strategies, students can surmount these challenges and achieve language proficiency. The study not only sheds light on the specific barriers faced by young English learners but also offers valuable recommendations for educators and stakeholders to enhance the language learning experience for students.

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