

## **ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES OF STUDENTS AT MTS PONDOK PESANTREN DDI PATOBONG**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Learning difficulties have significant impacts on students' English learning capabilities. This study investigated students' difficulties in learning English and the factors contributing to these difficulties at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong. The methodology used in this research was qualitative descriptive design. The participants consisted of one English teacher and five students from class VIII.A. Data were collected through interviews and analysed using data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings showed that the students experienced difficulties in three main aspects. First, in the cognitive aspect, students had limited vocabulary, which hindered their understanding of English words and meanings. Second, in affective aspect, students experienced difficulties to finish task independently. Third, in the psychomotor aspect, students lacked self-confidence in speaking English and explaining the materials in English. The study further found that students' learning difficulties were influenced by internal factors, especially low intrinsic motivation, and external factors related to school environment. However, English learning activities conducted in the school environment also contributed positively to students' improvement in learning English.

**Keywords:** English Learning Difficulties, Learning Difficulty Factors

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a planned effort to enable students to reach their potential. Education is constantly changing, both in terms of frameworks and learning techniques (Demir, 2021). Various efforts are being made to improve facilities and infrastructure, as well as improve the quality of students in order to produce students with high potential. One of the most important aspects of education in Indonesia is language education (Hamied & Musthafa, 2019; Zein et al., 2020). English is one of the most important languages to learn because it is an international language that enables people to communicate with global communities and support Indonesia's development and progress. English has further developed into a medium for intellectual and social communication. Therefore, English has become a mandatory subject at all levels of

education in Indonesia, although many people still use English incorrectly or not in accordance with proper rules.

In addition, there are three language elements that play an important role in supporting these four skills, namely pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. To achieve optimal English language skills, professional language instructors are needed to produce quality students (Mohammaditabar et al., 2020). In addition, mastery of the material and practice must be provided in a balanced proportion. However, creating an ideal language class is not an easy task. Besides having sufficient mastery of the material, language teachers should know the level of language proficiency of each student (Ramdani et al., 2021). If all conditions are generalized, it will be difficult to achieve the expected learning objectives. This is because each student has different characteristics, including learning techniques and the level of their ability to understand the learning materials.

English is a comprehensive language because it involves four language skills, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. It also includes three important language components, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. All of these components play an important role in the process of learning English. However, in practice, there are still many people who do not understand or know how to use English properly, showing that that learning English involves various difficulties. Therefore, the researchers are interested in exploring the difficulties of learning English faced by students in the classroom contexts.

In the process of learning English, students often experienced obstacles in their learning. These obstacles can lead to less optimal learning outcomes. This can happen to students from both English and non-English study programs. Learning difficulties are common problems experienced by many students.. Several studies have shown that students experience problem in using correct grammar (Daskan, 2023; Ajaj, 2022). Additionally, a research conducted in Columbia found that there are many students made errors in their writing compositions (Fitria, 2020; Labicane & Oliva, 2022; Chaudhary & Al Zahrani, 2020). Furthermore, a study showed that English teachers in Indonesia still face many challenges in teaching process and therefore need to improve the quality of English teaching (Jon et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need for research on students learning difficulties to improve English learning in Indonesia.

Given these difficulties, it is important to investigate students' obstacles in learning English in different educational contexts. Each individual has different characteristics and learning styles that influence the learning process. One of the learning difficulties commonly

faced by students is limited vocabulary mastery. Therefore, this study aims to analyse students' difficulties in English learning at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore students' difficulties in learning English at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong. The study focused on identifying both internal and external factors that influenced students' learning difficulties, as well as the strategies used by students to overcome those challenges. The research was conducted over one month and involved one English teacher and five students from class VIII.A as the participants.

Data were collected through direct interviews with the teacher and students using a voice recorder to ensure accurate and detailed information. The collected data were analysed using the interactive model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and coded the data to focus on information relevant to the objectives of the study.

Subsequently, the data were organised systematically in the form of brief descriptions to make the findings easier to understand. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by examining consistent and valid evidence gathered. Through this process, the study aimed to produce credible findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of students' English learning difficulties within the studied context.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The students' difficulties in learning English at Mts Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong**

The primary difficulty identified among students at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong is a significant lack of vocabulary. This is consistent with a study showing that the lack of vocabulary hinders students' speaking ability (Machfudi & Afidah, 2022; Ismail et al., 2022). This often leads to a fear of making mistakes, which discourages students from actively participating in classroom activities. This was also observed by the English teacher:

"According to me, students learning is good, because sometimes students feel afraid to study English, they just afraid of making mistake at class because they don't know the vocabulary."

Students acknowledged that their limited vocabulary hindered their ability to speak, write, and understand reading text. Furthermore, differences between English spelling and pronunciation created additional confusion. The following statements from students illustrate these difficulties:

"I fell enjoy to learn English but sometimes it also hard, because I don't know English."

"Yes, because I don't know the word in English, I used dictionary in the class also, because I don't know the meaning of the English when in the class."

"I difficult to understand the meaning English, because it different to be read and different to pronounce."

"Because the vocabulary, I don't know the meaning of the word, so I can't speak and write English, I don't know also understand the reading text if the teacher give the text and reading, because I don't know how to read English text."

Beyond cognitive barriers, students face affective difficulties, particularly in writing, where emotional barriers such as anxiety and self-doubt negatively impact their performance. However, students tend to perform better when they are provided with structured guidelines and specific tasks. The teacher noted:

"For affective difficulties cause for the students in writing English text also the students feel difficult sometimes, but the students are good when they asked to perform and also to submit their assailment."

Psychomotor difficulties, such as low self-confidence and fear of performing, also hinder students' willingness to speak. While they often feel nervous when performing individually, they tend to feel more comfortable speaking in front of their peers. One student expressed:

"I feel difficult and afraid to perform, because I don't know how to speak and also, I don't know English. I feel nervous."

## **2. The factors that affect English learning At Mts Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong**

The learning difficulties experienced by students at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong are influenced by both internal and external factors.

### **a. Internal Factor:**

Low motivation emerged as the most critical internal factor affecting students' English learning. Many students perceive English as inherently difficult, which reduces their enthusiasm and engagement during classroom activities. This finding is consistent with Sardi et al., (2022), who found that students showed limited responses during English learning activities. Other studies further strengthen the findings by highlighting that learning interest, perceived autonomy support, and student enthusiasm are negatively

associated with class-related boredom (Cui et al., 2024; Meliuh, 2020). In the interview, the teacher confirmed these issues, saying:

"Because of motivation mostly students get low motivation to learn English at class. It really impacts to their difficulties during English Learning."

"In my opinion, the most important factor is the students' learning motivation because English is perceived as difficult in their minds, which leads to a lack of enthusiasm for learning."

b. External Factors:

External factors include support from the school environment, family, and community.

- 1) School Environment and Peer Support: Although formal support may be perceived as limited, peer collaboration serves as a vital resource for overcoming challenges. Students rely heavily on sharing knowledge with classmates to complete tasks. In the interview, students showed how they collaborated with their peers, saying:

"For the school I learn with my friend and also sharing to the students also, if there is homework."

"There is also support from the friend sometimes help to study and to finish task together."

- 2) Family Support: Specific support for English learning from families was found to be generally low. Most families only provide support for students to study generally rather than providing language-specific assistance.

"No there is no support, because I learn only at class don't have homework, my family just give support for study at school."

- 3) Community Environment: The broader community context was not considered a major obstacle to English learning. Some students proactively sought additional learning opportunities through external English courses.

## CONCLUSION

Students at MTs Pondok Pesantren DDI Patobong experience several difficulties in learning English, particularly related to limited vocabulary mastery. This limitation directly hinders their ability to speak, write, and comprehend English texts effectively. Furthermore, affective and psychometric challenges—such as anxiety, self-doubt, and a lack of self-confidence—create emotional barriers that discourage students from actively using English.

These difficulties are heavily influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, low motivation was identified as the most influential factor, often stemming from the students' perception that English is an inherently difficult subject. Externally, while family

support specifically for English learning is identified as limited, the school environment offers a vital support system through peer collaboration. Students rely significantly on their friends to share knowledge and complete tasks, which helps mitigate some of their learning challenges.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that improving English proficiency requires a multifaceted approach. Teachers and schools should create a more supportive learning environment, strengthen students' motivation, and implement effective vocabulary development strategies to help them overcome their learning difficulties and improve their English skills.

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