

Problems in learning English of non-English department students

Tyas Alhim Mubarok¹, Siti Rofi'ah²

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Blitar^{1,2}

¹email: tyasalhim@gmail.com

²email: sitiروفiah.unublitar@gmail.com

Abstract - This study aims to investigate what kinds of problems are faced by non-English department students in learning English. The data were gained by observing and giving questionnaires to the non-English department students. The observation was conducted through a learning processes during the semester. Observation was conducted during the learning and teaching process for 7 meetings. Researchers participated in observation as a lecturer that teaches English to non -English department students. The collected data from the questionnaire were analyzed to generate the difficulties faced by the non-English department students. Results from the data obtained then described narratively or descriptively. The result shows that non-English department students mostly find difficulties in almost English skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Therefore it is needed more efforts for lecturers to teach non-English department students well by selecting the appropriate teaching methods.

Keywords: learning English, non-English department students, problems of learning English

1. Introduction

Global competition in various fields demands quality improvement human resources including students/alumni. College output must be truly qualified to be competitive and have a position high bargaining. One attempt to realize the above is to improve the quality of the students by giving an understanding of English as an international language. English course become an obligation course for all university students including at NU University of Blitar. There is an English Profession Course that must be taken by all students from all majors in the third semester. This course is aimed to prepare the students entering to the real world when they work after graduation. Every jobs/companies require an employee who has English ability both passive and active. Therefore, this course consists of four English skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

According to Harmer (2010, cited in Lubis, 2017) states that people who learn English have different goals. For university students the reason is commonly for ESP (English for Specific Purpose). They must take this course that is served by university. In learning foreign language, people will have difficulties due to learning foreign language is not only knowing vocabulary but rather how used language as its need and its goals. According to Krashen and Tarrel (cited in Richard and Rodgers, 1986: 131). Acquiring language naturally divided into two terms they are learning and acquisition. Students acquire foreign language by learning in formal institution. Brown (2000) stated that there are some variables influencing the student's abilities in learning second/foreign language, He defined it into two facets of affective domain of second language acquisition. The first is the intrinsic side. This is the internal factor that comes within an individual in learning a language. Furthermore, the second facet is the extrinsic factors. This is the factors which arrive from sociocultural variable around the learners.

Communication can be realized if someone masters the four skills language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This happens too in the process of learning English called listening and reading as receptive skills, while reading and speaking are productive skills. People often say that only by mastering speaking, that person can be considered to be proficient in the language. This is not entirely true, written language is also important to master. In addition, there are three elements of language that play an important role to support the four skills, namely pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. To achieve optimal English language skills, a qualified language instructor is required professionals in order to produce quality students. Besides that, Mastery of the material and practice must be given in a balanced portion. However, to realize the ideal language class is not an easy thing. In addition, having sufficient mastery of the material, a language teacher should know the level of language mastery of each student. If all conditions are generalized, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of expected learning. Because of basically every student has different characteristics including the learning technique and the portion of the absorption of the material lessons such as the concept of multiple intelligences (Stanford, 2003).

Uno (2006) argues that students' characteristic is one of variables that influences teaching and learning process. Variable as the aspect or quality of students for instance is willingness or motivation, attitude, learning motivation, learning style, ability to think, and the beginning ability. Related to the motivation, there are two factors that influence process of acquiring language; those are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from its individual that is related to the reason in learning language while extrinsic motivation deals with motivation that comes from the outside of individual such as facilities that support process of acquiring language. It depends on the individuals' environment such as teacher, method, class, technique of teaching, community or equipment in supporting learning language. When one of motivation is not achieved yet, the problems will come out in learning language. According to Hermayati (2010) there are five difficulties in learning language: (1) feeling under pressure; (2) lack of understanding basic concept; (3) unsupported environment; (4) forgetful (less intensive); (5) lack of chance to trying.

Other difficulties according to Makmun (2011) are (1) difficulty case with the background lacking of motivation and learning willingness. (2) difficulty case with the background negative attitude toward teacher, course, and learning situation. (3) Difficulty case with the background the wrong learning habit. (4) difficulty case with the background un-matching between objective condition of the different individual itself with the objective condition of instrumentals' impulse and environment.

On the other hand, Thursan (2002) and Brown (2001) added some characteristics or indications of learning difficulties as follows. (1) Having poor reading ability or poor comprehension; (2) often misreading information; (3) having problems with syntax or grammar; having difficulty writing ideas and/or organizing thoughts on paper; (4) having problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics and organization; (5) acquiring English skills slowly; (6) having difficulty to memorize information about English; (7) unable to repeat what has just been said; (8) having short attention span or be impulsive; (9) Problems with attention (e.g., difficulty concentrating on a task, changing activities, or handling disruptions to routines; poor task persistence); (10) Pronunciation problems in the classroom learning; (11) Students' current achievements do not match with their intelligence ability; (12) The student consciously tells his problem in learning to teacher, parent, counselor, psychologist, etc. (Thursan, 2002 & Brown, 2001).

Difficulty is related to the motivation due to the meaning of "difficult" can become "challenge" if individual motivation is bigger than obstructions that is faced. Motivation is an encouragement or support that can trigger spirits and also can change individuals' attitude to be better.

According to (Sari, 2019) there are some factors that cause learning difficulties for students; they are internal and external factors. The internal factors are the level of intelligence is generally low, talent for English courses is low, lack of interest in learning and low learning motivation as well. They attend and complete assignments only as an obligation and to get good grades not to master English as an international language which is very important today. The external factors that affect students experiencing difficulties in learning English are the environment where there is a lack of support for using English at home or in the community and the limited or lack of opportunities to use English outside the classroom. They do not use English in daily conversation that is why they are not accustomed speaking English.

Based on intensive observation during teaching and learning process, non-English department students do not master or understand English. It showed by lacking of vocabulary, writing/spelling, grammar, listening, and speaking/pronouncing ability. Thus, the ability in using English is still low for non-English department students. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate the factors that caused problems in learning English. When the problems and difficulties had by non-English department students are revealed, it eases the lecturer to find out the best teaching method to increase their ability in learning English. Moreover, this study is salient to know their problems in learning English so that the lecturer can improve their strategy, method, or media to help students to master English courses. This study is limited only to what dominant skills that is the most difficult for students and why it is so. It is expected that after having the information about their difficulties, it can be used by the lecturer as a base to determine an appropriate strategy, methods, and materials related to the students' need.

2. Method

The method used in this study is descriptive quantitative. The subject of this study was non-English department students of the third semester. The data were gained by having questionnaires and observation from the non-English department students in NU University of Blitar. There were four classes with a total number of 80 students. There were eight questions about the kind of difficulties related to the language skill in learning English. On the other hand, observation was conducted during the learning and teaching process for 7 meetings. Researchers participated in observation as a lecturer that teaches English to non-English

department students. The collected data from the questionnaire were analyzed to generate the difficulties faced by the non-English department students. Results from the data obtained then described narratively or descriptively.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the table below, the first question is about reading English text. 51.1% considered that students less agree that reading English text is easy. It means that reading English text is quite difficult for them. In addition, 8.9% is considered that they do not agree and 6.7% said that they really do not agree. While 26.7% said that reading English text is easy and 6.7% said that they really agree. In sum, most of them do not agree that reading English text is easy.

Table 1 Result of students' difficulties in learning English

Num	Questions	SS	S	KS	TS	STS
1	Easy to Read English Text	6.7%	26.7%	51.1%	8.9%	6.7%
2	Easy to Comprehend English text	4.5%	45.4%	49.9%	0	0
3	Difficult to Communicate Using English	21.9%	58.9%	16.4%	1.9%	1.9%
4	Easy to have Presentation Using English	3.7%	10.9%	52.7%	14.5%	18.1%
5	Easy to Spell or Pronounce English	3.7%	18.5%	64.8%	11.1%	1.8%
6	Difficult to Write English Text	24.4%	55.5%	15.5%	4.4%	0
7	Difficult to Translate into/from English	23%	55.8%	21.1	1.9%	3.8%
8	Difficult to Listen English	20%	63.6%	14.5%	1.8%	0

SS :Really Agree
 S : Agree
 KS : Less Agree
 TS : Not Agree
 STS : Really Not Agree

The second question is about comprehending English text. It is not only about how to read text in English but also includes the understanding the content of the text. 49.9% argued that they less agree that comprehending English text is easy. On the other hand, 45.4% said that they agree and 4.5% really agree considering comprehending English text is easy. In reality, most of them are difficult to understand an English text.

The third question is about speaking in English that is communicating using English. 58.9% agree that communicating using English is difficult and 21.9% really agree. In contrast, there are 16.4% less agree saying that communication using English is difficult and 1.9% do not agree and really do not agree. It is concluded that most of them have difficulty in speaking or communicating using English.

The fourth question is about having presentation using English, 52.7% less agree that having presentation using English is easy. In addition, 10.9% agree and 3.7% really do agree that having presentation using English is easy. On the other hand, 14.5% do not agree and 18.1% really not agree that having presentation using English is difficult.

The fifth question is about how to spell and pronounce English. There are 64.8% said that they less agree that spelling or pronouncing English is easy. In addition, 11.1% do not agree and 1.8% really do not agree. In contrast, 18.5% agree and 37% really agree considering spelling or pronouncing English is easy.

The sixth question is about difficulties in writing English. 55.5% agree that writing in English is difficult and 24.4% really agree. While 15.5% less agree and 4.4% do not agree that writing in English is difficult.

The seventh question is about the difficulty to translate into/from English. 55.8% agree and 23% really agree that translating into/from English is difficult. While 21.1% less agree, 1.9% do not agree and 3.8% really do not agree.

The last question is about difficulty to listen English. 63.6% agree that listening English is difficult, 20% really agree. 14.5% less agree and 1.8% do not agree.

Those finding was in line with the reality in the class based on the observation. Non-English department students have problems in almost all language skills/competencies including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Moreover, the most difficult one is pronunciation/speaking. They have problems in presentation or when reading a text. It is because they are not accustomed to using it. Pronunciation is very important in vocabulary development because involves the distinction between sounds that combine to form words. If a student is used to mispronouncing a word, there is a tendency for him cannot to give clear information (Sofiyanti, 2014). This is in line with Susanti (2021) that students in learning English always are having trouble with pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar therefore, they must create a learning environment comfortable, diligent in memorizing vocabulary, get used to speaking English starting from conversation every day and practice repeatedly to get used to it.

In addition, writing is considered as the second hardest skill by non-English department students. It is because they are lack of vocabulary and understanding of English structure. This is in line with (Wigati, 2014) lack of ability in vocabulary and grammar provoke problems in writing paragraphs. Thus, their writing is influenced by their first language structure. That is similar to listening skills. They only use/listen to English most often in the class. There are so many factors that the students find it difficult when learning Listening Comprehension in English, for example: the material is too fast to listen to so they forget what they have heard, do not recognize the meaning of words in English spoken or listened to because of the limited English vocabulary they have, do not concentrate on the material being taught, and many more (Ummah, 2012). In contrast, reading skill is considered easier than the other three language skills mentioned before. It is not difficult to comprehend a simple text for them.

Megawati (2016) states that the process of learning English cannot be separated from the emergence of various difficulties that occur, especially for students. These difficulties can be seen from each language skill or language skill overall. In class conditions that have high language competence, different, the difficulties faced also varied. In her research, students showed difficulty learning English in four skills in order from hardest to easiest as following Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing. Factors that cause learning difficulties English is greatly influenced by the level of mastery of each language student. Active students tend to choose writing. However, for passive students tend to choose speaking as a difficult thing to be practiced. The results show that students are active and less actively able to carry out the final task well in terms of confidence and governance language. But for passive students, the results show that students are less confident and unable to describe fluently.

4. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that the problems faced by non-English department students is related to four language competence (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) that they have. They have difficulty in mastering those four competences much more than English department students. It is because non-English department students do not accustom to learn and use English in their everyday life. Therefore, it also needs lecturers' contribution to enhance students' ability in learning English. There are some ways they can practice. Some of them are by creating comfortable learning and teaching process, creating interesting learning and teaching process, trying to use English in daily life, often listening English song or watching movie with English subtitle, and reading English book aloud. The most important thing is practice harder because language need to be practiced rather than studied.

References

- Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). NY: Addison Wesley Longman.Inc.
- Hermayati. (2010). “Analisis Kesulitan Belajar Bahasa Inggris Mahasiswa”, Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FKIP UMBY.
- Khunaifi, A’am Rifaldi. (2013). Kesulitan-kesulitan Siswa Dalam Belajar Speaking English. *Anterior Jurnal*, Volume 12 Nomor 2, Juni 2013, Hal 21 – 28
- Lubis, Tasnim. (2017). Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kesulitan Mahasiswa Dalam Menyelesaikan Daily English Vocabulary. *Jurnal Bisnis Administrasi*. Volume 06, Nomor 01, 2017, 29-36
- Makmun, AB. 2011. *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi
- Megawati, Fika. (2016). Kesulitan Mahasiswa Dalam Mencapai Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Secara Efektif. *JURNAL PEDAGOGIA*. Volume. 5, No. 2, Agustus 2016
- Richards, Jack C. dan Rogers, Theodore S. (1986). *Approaches and Methods in. Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge
- Sari, Indah. (2019). Kesulitan Mahasiswa Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. *JURNAL Manajemen Tools*. Vol 11 No 1 (2019)
- Sofiyanti, Y. (2014). Upaya Meningkatkan Kemampuan Pengucapan Bahasa Inggris dengan Media Pembelajaran Online English Pronunciation- *Jurnal Wawasan Ilmiah*, 2014
- Stanford, P. (2003). Multiple intelligence for every classroom. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 39(2), 80-85. Peranan Bahasa Inggris
- Sugiyono. (2008). *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta
- Susanti, I Gusti Ayu Agung Dian. (2021). Kendala Dalam Belajar Bahasa Inggris Dan Cara Mengatasinya. *Linguistic Community Service Journal* | Vol. 1, No. 2, 2021
- Thursan, H. (2002). *Belajar Secara Efektif*. Jakarta: Pustaka Pembangunan Swadaya Nusantara
- Ummah, Sumihatus S. (2012). Problematika Dalam Belajar Listening Comprehension Yang Dihadapi Oleh Mahasiswa Semester III Tadris Bahasa Inggris Stain Pamekasan. *Nuansa: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Keagamaan Islam* VOL. 9 NO. 1 (2012)
- Uno, Hamzah B. (2006). *Teori Motivasi dan Pengukurannya Analisis Di Bidang. Pendidikan*. Jakarta : Bumi Aksara
- Wigati, Fikri Asih. (2014). KESULITAN PADA ASPEK-ASPEK WRITING MAHASISWA DENGAN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS YANG BERBEDA. *Jurnal Ilmiah Solusi* Vol.1 No. 3 September - Nopember 2014: 46-61
- Yuliantini, Ni Nyoman. (2013). Studi Tentang Faktor-Faktor Penghambat Proses Belajar-Mengajar Bahasa Inggris Di Kelas II Smpn 1 Kuta Utara Dan Smp Budi Utama Kerobokan Berdasarkan Kurikulum 2004. *Soshum Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Juli 2013.