

AN ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITAS PAHLAWAN TUANKU TAMBUSAI IN 2017/2018

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at figuring out the students' difficulties in learning English. Besides, it is also expected that the learning process become more meaningful. Subjects of the research are the enrolled odd semester students in academic year 2017/2018. The data collection method employed documentation, test, observation, and interview. Documentation was used to get the students' data as the subject of the research, the test was used to get the data on the students' achievement in learning English, the observation was used to get the objective condition in English learning processes and to expose the factors contribute to the learning process. The interview was used to explore the students' difficulties in learning English. The students' difficulties in learning English focused on the ability to speak and to listen. Mastering listening is the most difficult skills to be acquired by the students, it was found that the students' average score is 58.33 or 84% students cannot answer the question properly. The second problem is mastering speaking skills, it was found that the students' average score is 61.25 or 50% students cannot answer the question properly. The factors contribute to the students' difficulties were: (1) the less of English practice;(2) the students were not actively participate in the learning process; (3) the students were passive;(4) The students did not take a note on the students' explanation; (5) the students were not active in responding the teachers' question and shares the opinion.

Keywords: English Learning, Difficulties in Learning, Mathematic Students

INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that English takes role as a global language. It can be found that English is used as medium of communication in every side of the world. English is as second language for some countries, and native language for some others. English is commonly used as a medium of communication for various purposes in addition to other major foreign languages.(Setiadi & Piyakun, 2018) In It spreads out the use of English as medium of communication. The other idea of the reason of the spreading English as a mean of communication is International forum such as nation meetings, world class business meeting is used English language is considered by many as the international language(Akbari, 2015) English as their international medium of communication. Another important consideration is English is the language used as a science and part of technology.

Motivation and reasons for learning English are very important issues to address to enable one to design better curriculum materials or teaching strategies to stimulate students' motivation in learning science in the new curriculum reform movement. There is a need to consider students' motivation within the subject content and the classroom contexts of curriculum, instruction, and teachers.(Rifai, 2010)

English is a need today. A survey by UTMSPACE on 1299 respondents also provides important evidence on the need for retraining for English language in continuing education for 2009 and 2010 and its future trend.(Yunus, Raof, Rahman, & Amin, 2012) Being able to speak in English provides some opportunities for people to be encouraged for kinds of activities. It is possible thing to do, since the easiness access given. Internet, books, language institution are found easily. People have some accesses to improve their ability to use English as daily communication.

In the academic sphere, it is not only a disciplinary subject at different educational levels, but a lingua franca to achieve academic goals(Setiadi & Piyakun, 2018). English is one of the compulsory course should be taught to the students of Mathematics Education. It is decided to be learned by the students since the importance needs of being able in English as the daily communication and the scientific needs. The students are asked to do a research in which English is the importance role. Unfortunately, the students are not highly motivated to learn English. It was found that some students have to take the English course in the next following semester. The students got low achievement in understanding English.

The students' achievement is determined by the students learning style in acquiring the knowledge. There is a need to point out the importance of activating learners' motivation. Motivation involves the learners' reasons for attempting to acquire the second language.(Rifai, 2010) Preliminary research found that the students were not enthusiastically joined with the course. It proves by the students' attendance. It is about 80% students who were motivated to join with English Class.

The other fact is the students tended to accomplish the task as it is. There is no innovation and sense of creativity on the students' task. The goal of learning English is to help the students to be able to use English as the daily communication and the demanding of the use of English books or learning materials. Thus, it links with the students' difficulties in learning English,

whether intrinsic obstacles or extrinsic.

It was found that in the academic year 2016/2017, there were three students who were not achieve the standard criterion minimum. It is about 25% students got C on the course. It raises questions on the obstacles faced by the students in learning English. It was obtained from the observation that environment and the materials are the causes. Some students argue that the learning material is hardly to be understand, while some others states on the laziness for attending the class.

Cronbach in his book Educational Psychology states that “*learning is shown by a change in behavior as a result of experlence*”. The best way to learn is be experiencing the learning, and the common sense play role on it (Suryabrata, 2008) Jams (Wasty, 2006) states that learning is the process of changing behavior as the result of the learners’ interaction with the experience and the surroundings.

Based on the experts view on learning, it can be classified that learning has some characteristics, namely: first, learning in conscious activities or action. Second, learning happens because of the interaction between individual and surroundings. Third, the changing of behavior is the result of the learning process. Thus, learning is a conscious activity to change the behavior by handing on experience in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor to get a particular achievement.

Gagne (Abdurrahman, 1999) proposes an idea of learning by considering the balancing of behavior and cognitive. Gagne states that the way people thinking depend on:

1. The people’s psychometric
2. Hierarchy in accomplishing the tasks

Gagne views that there are two phenomena involves in the learning process, the better learning achievement the students have is along with the maturity and the learning experience they have, and the easiest way to have a good learning outcome is by involving cognitive strategy during the learning process.

Gagne classifies the learning outcome into five categories, namely:

1. Intellectual skills, or known as the procedural knowledge, subdivided into defined concept, rule, and problem-solving;
2. Cognitive strategy, learning strategy includes rehearsal, elaboration, and exploration the learning material;
3. Verbal Information, the ability to relate new information to what already exist in memory to make learning meaningful and memorable;
4. Motor Skills, sequences of motor movements which are combined into complex performances;
5. Attitude, a personal action over a person’s behavior in term of emotions, beliefs and intellectual.

English has been taught for many years in Indonesia. It is included as the compulsory subject. It started since 1960s. Today, English has been included as the material in Kindergarten. There are three consideration of learning English, namely:

The First is geographical factor. Indonesia is located among the countries in which English is used as the second language, such as Singapore, Malay, Philippine, Australia, and New Zealand. The desire to visit these countries is easier in case of people have a good English.

The second, English is the International language. To have a communication with people of different countries, English is highly needed. For example, during the flight the stewardess are use English in explaining the standard operational. It proves that English is not an alien.

The third, the many more books writes in English nowadays. It makes us easily to get the information from many sources. The students are easily to be accessed by the information since the availability of book in English.

Learning problems is defined as a situation signed by the emerging of the obstacles in achieving the learning outcome. It can be in form of psychology, sociology, and even physiology (Siti Mardiati, 1994:45)

The failed in achieving the standard criterion minimum in the learning process is the sign of the students experience difficulties in learning.

Generally, there are two classifications of learning difficulties, namely:

1. Developmental learning disabilities, it is marked by the disability in achieving the prerequisite skills, the ability to acquire the basic skill before acquiring the advance skill.
2. Academic learning disabilities. It involve the disability in acquiring reading skill, writing skill, and mathematics skill. It can be seen from the students' score (Mulyono Abdurrahman, 2008: 11-12)

Further, this research focuses on the academic learning disabilities, the students' ability in mastering speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. Due to the popularity of foreign language learning (FLL) and using the language meaningfully, the pedagogy of language learning has recently regarded the importance of willingness to communicate (WTC) in second and FLL and communication(Bergil, 2016).

Principally, learning difficulties comes from the components of learning. Burton (cites in (Syamsuddin, n.d.) divides two categories of learning difficulties, they are:

1. Internal factor , subdivided into:
 - a. Disability, inability of the students' five senses in term of function causes the obstacle in interaction;
 - b. Psychological side, some learners are psychologically has low motivation to be involved in the learning process. It can be seen from the low motivation of being encouraged in the learning process;
 - c. Emotional sides, the struggling of learners for being adapted with others, some learners are struggle for being situated in some situations. It causes feeling of afraid, hate, and antipathy;
 - d. The inability of mastering the basic skills
2. External Factor, subdivided into:
 - a. The curriculum, the mix match between the curriculum and the students' need.
 - b. The amount of the students
 - c. The
 - d. The bad relation between the teachers and the learners;
 - e. The learning model is not stimulated the students' enthusiasm in learning.
 - f. Family's support (in term of education, social economic status, daily needs, comfort

ability) (Syamsuddin, n.d.)

Some common signs of learning difficulties are as follows:

1. The students' learning outcome is low;
2. The students' learning outcome is not along with the students' struggle in learning. The students are struggle in learning, the learning outcome is low on the contrary;
3. The students are not highly competitive than the others;
4. The students do not care on the learning process and even the learning outcome;
5. Having bad attitude such as skipping, coming late and do not assigning the task, disturbing the friends, etc.
6. Showing the mad, such as moody, sensitive, bad-tempered, etc (Wakitri, 1990)

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive research, used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied (Nurul, 2007). It employed qualitative design, used to gain the information on the particular data holistically, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action by saying in words in natural circumstance (Moleong, 2010)

This research was conducted in the academic year 2017/2018 on the odd semester. The Mathematics students of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai University were the subject of the research. It is located at Tuanku Tambusai No. 23 Bangkinang, Kampar-Riau.

Analytic Descriptive design is used since the research explored the phenomenon holistically, systematically, and accurately in natural circumstances. Dealing with the research design, the data obtained comes from the factual condition. It is in line with Ratna (2006:53) states that analytic descriptive is designed used by describing the findings and following by the analysis of the findings itself. The findings come from the result of the analysis based on the related theory.

Subject of the research is the first semester students of Mathematic Education program, while the object is English course. Due to the students are still struggle in learning English, proved by the low achievement of the students' learning outcome.

The focus of the research is the students' difficulties in term of the following aspects:

1. Listening
2. Speaking
3. Writing

The steps of the research are classified into two steps, preparation and data collection. Generally, the data collection techniques used in this research are as follows:

1. Observation

It deals with observing and capturing the phenomenon being studied systematically (Sudijono, 2006). It is used to obtain the factual data and the factors contribute on the learning process during the English class.

2. Documentation

It deals with obtaining the data from documents such as archives, and the related books (Margono, 2000)

3. Written Test

It is used to find out the students' understanding on the learning topic.

4. Interview

It deals with question-answer activity whether direct or indirect on the source of data (Sujana, 2008). It is used to validate the data obtained from the other technique. It is in form of essay.

5. The Data Collection

After collecting the data, the researcher did analysis. The results of the analysis are grouped into the category in term of kurang, cukup, baik dan sangat baik.

The technique and the criteria used to get the findings are:

- a. Observation sheet on the teachers' activity It involves the lecturers' competence on the learning process. The formula used is as follow:

$$\text{percentage}(\%) = \frac{\text{total score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100\%$$

- b. Observation sheet on the students' activity

It is used to gain the data on the students' activeness during the learning process, involves four aspects: listening on the teachers' explanation, taking a note, asking and answering question, and accomplishing the assignment. These aspects were analyzed by using the following formula

$$\text{percentage}(\%) = \frac{\text{total score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100\%$$

6. Analyzing the essay test

It is used to figure out the students' level of difficulties in acquiring speaking, listening, and writing skills.

- a. Calculating the amount of the students experienced difficulties, the following formula is used: $P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$

- b. Analyzing the students' focus of difficulties in English learning.

Classifying the students' level of difficulties by analyzing the students' essay test in term of speaking, listening and writing.

- c. Determining the selected students as the informant.

The total of the mathematic education students of the first semester in academic year 2017/2018 is 12 students. These students were decided to be the informant of the research.

- d. Analyzing factors contributes to the student learning difficulties. The data obtained from the observation and the interview process.

- e. Drawing conclusion descriptively

It described the students' difficulties in learning English and factor contributes to the students' difficulties.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Observation on the Teaching and Learning Process

The observations were conducted from April 2th up to May 7th, 2018. It was conducted in five times. The findings on observation described in the following table:

Table 5.1 Recapitulation on Observation of Students' Taching and Learning Activities

No	Students' Activities	The 1 st meeting	The 2 nd meeting	The 3 rd meeting	The 4 th meeting	The 5 th meeting
1	Assigning the Task	9	12	12	11	12
2	Interaction with the Learning Resources	2	2	4	6	3
3	Interaction with the Learning Material	11	12	12	11	12
4	Interaction among the classmates	11	7	12	10	11
5	Taking a note	10	12	8	8	9
6	Responsible	12	12	12	12	11
7	Joking in the classroom	3	2	7	6	3
8	Out of Class	0	4	2	4	2
9	Neglecting the Teacher's Explanation	1	0	4	3	2
10	Responding on the Teachers' Questions	12	2	5	4	4
11	Asking A	5	1	2	1	4

	Question					
12	Coming Late	2	2	1	1	2
13	Being Passive in the Classroom Activity	2	2	2	1	2

It can be seen from the table above that the good effort showed by the students in assigning the task. The students were asked to memorized some vocabularies and did it. On the contrary the students were not motivated for having the source book for learning. A few students have the book. The book used was provided by the language center. The other findings showed that the interaction between the students and the learning materials are good. The teacher used Power Point in the teaching and learning process to stimulate the students' activeness. Furthermore, the teacher applied discussion technique as the method of teaching. The situation stimulates a good interaction among the students. It was found that the students' interaction among themselves are good. Unfortunately, the students' activity on taking note during the learning process is decreased in every meetings. No matter how hard the teacher tries, students' passivity is found everywhere in the whole process .Most teachers generalize that students are lack motivation.(Zhou, 2012)

Observation on the Teacher's Activity

Similarly on the observation of teacher's activity, the observations were conducted from April 2th up to May 7th, 2018. It was conducted in five times. The findings on observation described in the following table:

Table 5.1 Recapitulation on the Observation of the Teacher's Activities

No	Teacher's Activity	The 1 st meeting	The 2 nd meeting	The 3 rd meeting	The 4 th meeting	The 5 th meeting
1	The teacher takes the students' attendance lists stimulate the students' motivation on learning.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Giving Aperception	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Telling the students on the Learning Goal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
4	Preparing the	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Learning Materials/Media					
5	Informing the Students' Learning Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Using Teaching Aids	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Highlighting the appropriateness between the learning topic and media	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8	Stimulating the Students to Give A Question	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Being Facilitator	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	Activating Discussion Forum	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
11	Assisting the students' Difficulties in Learning	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	Assisting the Students in Taking A note during the learning process	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
13	Assigning the Task	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
14	Doing Learning Reflection	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Holistically, the teacher's activity stimulates the students' activeness in learning. The use of media and teaching aids in the learning process activates the students. Some students were active in the learning process. It enables them to be easier in understanding the learning topics.

Questionnaire Overview

To get the further explanation on the students' difficulties in English learning, the researcher distributes a questionnaire . The questionnaire consists of several questions on the English Teaching and Learning process. The results of the questionnaire described in the following table:

Table 5.3 Recapitulation on the Results of the Questionnaire

No	Students' Response					Note
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Fairly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	4	3	4	1	0	
2	4	4	3	1	0	
3	3	2	1	6	0	The Opposite
4	0	7	1	4	0	
5	1	2	2	7	0	
6	1	7	3	1	0	
7	0	5	3	3	1	
8	0	3	4	5	0	
9	1	0	1	9	1	
10	1	4	0	5	2	
11	0	3	2	7	0	The Opposite
12	1	4	5	2	0	
13	1	4	2	3	2	
14	1	2	0	9	0	
15	0	0	0	6	6	The Opposite

16	0	4	5	2	1	
17	0	0	0	1	11	The Opposite
18	1	1	1	5	4	
19	4	6	1	1	0	
20	8	2	1	1	0	

It is 60% instead of 100% responses given by the students were positive. The students respond positively on the first, the second, the sixth, the seventh, the eleventh, the twelfth, the fifteenth, the sixteenth, the seventeenth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth question. The rests of the question were respond negatively. It is 40% students were not agree or fairly agree on the statement on the questionnaire.

The Result of the Interview

To gain the depth data on the students' difficulties in learning English the interview technique employed. The open-ended interview was used to enable the students to answer the questions as expand as possible. The findings of the interview described in the following table:

Table 5.4 Students' Interview

No	Questions	Description on the Students' Answer
1	In your mind, do you think English is the most Difficult Course?	Six students confirmed that English is not difficult, Three other students confirmed that English is Fairly Difficult, and the Three other students confirmed that English is difficult.
2	What are your difficulties in Learning English?	Two students confirmed that they have no difficulties in learning English. Six students admitted that the difficulty on the way to create a sentence, and the other four students confirmed that they

		have difficulty on memorizing the vocabularies.
3	In your mind, which are the most difficult skill to be acquired among Speaking, Listening, and Writing? Why?	Seven students confirmed that Listening is the most difficult skill in Learning English. The pronunciation of the speaker is hardly to be understand. The other five students confirmed that Speaking is the most difficult. Lack of Vocabulary
4	Would you mind to give the solution on the students' difficulties in learning English? Does the teacher have to change the teaching method/model?	The changing on the teaching method/model was highly needed. The appropriateness on the matches between the skill and the method of teaching have to be considered seriously. The practice task should be involved in Speaking, while the students have to be familiarized by the some media of listening.

5	Would you please to share your opinion on the way of the teacher in the teaching and learning? Is it boring or interesting?	Seven students confirmed that the English learning applied by the students were interesting, the three students said that the English Teaching and Learning were not interesting. Meawhile, the other three students confirmed that the learning process is not vary.
6	Does the teacher try to activate the students' activeness in the learning?	The 10 students respond on the question, while the other two students were not. The ten students said that the teacher has effort to activate the students to be an active learner.

7	Does the teacher applied monotonous or various learning model?	Seven students experienced monotonous learning. The teacher focuses on Leatoring Method by using Guided Teacher's Book. On the contrary, the other five students experienced various learning activities. The teacher applied different learning models on different learning topics.
8	What is the most often Teaching Media used by the Teacher?	The variation answer were found. Two students said that the teacher used Whiteboard and the Guided Book as the Teaching Media. Furthermore, the other ten students saud that the teacher in the learning process were also used OHP and laptop.
9	What are the learning materials used by the Teacher?	Seven students admitted that the teacher used Guided Book and Module in the learning process. In addition, the other five students admitted that the teacher used online resources as the additional learning materials.
10	Are you an active student?	Nine students said that they were actively participate in the learning especially in doing discussion, while the other three students said that they were passively contributed.

The students' Achievement Test

To diagnose the students' difficulties in learning English, the test was administered. The test involved Speaking, Listening and Writing. The following table was the students' achievement in English Learning:

Table 5.4 The Students' Difficulties in Learning English

No	Students' Name	Score			Average Score
		Speaking	Listening	Writing	
1	DR	70	50	70	64
2	MR	75	50	70	65
3	AM	70	45	75	64
4	MH	50	70	75	65

5	AF	50	70	65	62
6	PL	65	45	50	54
7	DS	70	50	78	66
8	PU	75	50	75	67
9	MA	45	75	70	64
10	WM	45	70	75	64
11	NR	70	50	70	64
12	MG	50	75	70	65
Total Score		735	700	843	759
Average Score		61,25	58,33	70,25	63

It was found that the students' achievement on speaking is 61.25, the students' achievement in listening is 58.33, and the students' writing achievement is 70.25. Listening skill is the most difficult skill experienced by the students in learning English. Furthermore, the further analysis on the students' difficulties in speaking, listening and writing are explained as follows:

a. Speaking Skill

The result of the analysis found that the students' difficulties in speaking focused on creating the phrase. Half of students, 6 instead of 12 (50%) students could not answer the question in form of phrase.

b. Listening Skill

The students' inability in recognizing the pronunciation of the unfamiliar words. It was 7 instead of 12 (84%) students were struggle to answer the questions.

c. Writing Skill

It is 2 instead of 12 (17%) students experienced difficulties in English writing only. These students experienced problem in composing a good sentence in a good grammar. The students were able to create simple sentences, but were not able to create complex sentences.

Problem Solving

The students experienced various kinds of difficulties in learning English. The students' difficulties were as follows:

- a. The students' style in learning causes the students' difficulties in achieving the learning goal. Firstly, the students were passive in learning even they have no idea on the learning topic. Secondly, the students were reluctant to give the questions to the teacher. Thirdly, the students did not take a note while learning. The following suggestions are expected to be a solution to the students' difficulties in learning, namely:
- 1) The teacher takes the role as a motivator in learning, motivating and stimulating the students in the learning process. The teachers' admitted on the students' ability is importance. It increases the students' motivation due to a good appreciation given by the teacher. Sharing on the students' learning style. The teacher invited the students to share their learning style to enable them finding out the effective way in learning English. In case of the students' learning style is not effective, the teacher advices them to change the learning style.
 - 2) Encouraging the students by experiencing various learning activities, such as experiencing different learning model, creating group work activities, asking and giving answer, problem solving activities, etc. According to some of the students, they liked learning English using ICT because it was fun and enjoyable, and they were able to understand the lesson quite well. (Amjah, 2014)

- 3) The students-center approach is a good learning approach to be used. The more active the students, the better learning experienced they have.
 - 4) Applying inquiry method as a method of teaching is a good activity. The students formulate their own concept on the learning topic. The students gained the information on a topic and found the concept and the related materials on the topic. Guiding and assisting the students on inquiry method enable them to be a better learner.
- b. The students were lack of motivation and desire in learning English. This is an intrinsic motivation. The students were not motivated to learn English. Thus, the following ideas are the possibly suggestion for this condition:
- 1) The use of a good learning method and learning approach had to take into account while the teacher designed the lesson plan.
 - 2) Do not use the negative expression during the learning; judging the students' ability should be avoided.
 - 3) The learning activity should be encouraged the students' competitiveness.
 - 4) Providing a discussion forum to let the students have an opportunity for sharing the idea.
 - 5) Giving feedback is important.
 - 6) Acknowledging the benefit of learning English.
- c. The students' difficulties in assigning the speaking task, the solutions are as follows:
- 1) The importance to share the tips for learning speaking as well as the way to communicate English orally.
 - 2) The teacher should create a learning process which is trying to invite the students' activeness in speaking such as dialogue, etc. The students were given opportunity for performing the dialogue.
- d. The students' difficulties in listening, the solutions are as follows:
- 1) The importance for teaching the students to recognize the sounding words in English.
 - 2) The more listening practice is needed to help the students to be familiarized with the English sounds.

Conclusion

Dealing with the findings of the research, it can be concluded that:

1. The learning topics and the learning activities are the source of the students' difficulties in learning English. The most difficult skills to be acquired are listening and speaking. The students' achievement in listening is 58.33 while in speaking is 61.25.
2. Factors contribute to the students' difficulties in learning English are:
 - a. The lack of speaking practice by the students.
 - b. The students do not use English as a medium of communication during the classroom process.

- c. The students were reluctant to ask the teacher when they have no idea on understand.
- d. The students do not take a note while learning.
- e. The students are passive

Suggestions

This research is expected to give several suggestions to improve the educational quality, especially for the mathematic teachers, they are:

1. Students
 - a. The students' mindset on the need to be struggle to learn English should be changed.
 - b. The students must be active.
 - c. The students should be active to expand themselves by having various learning resources.
2. Teacher
 - a. The teacher has to motivate the students to keep learning English
 - b. The teacher is expected to select the appropriate teaching method to stimulate the students to learn English better.
 - c. The students' evaluation should be based on the material given.
3. University
 - a. The university provides several activities might improve the teachers' competence.
 - b. The need to support the learning process by given a good facilities and infrastructures.
 - c. The university takes role as the facilitator to support the need of teaching media in English learning particularly.

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