ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES FOR ENGLISH SUBJECT IN THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT STIT AQIDAH USYMUNI SUMENEP

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Abstract *"This study aims to identify the difficulties of PAI study program students in studying English courses. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to describe and analyze in depth the difficulties faced by students in taking English courses. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants based on specific criteria, such as semester level and English learning experience. Data collection was carried out through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. It can be concluded that students of the Islamic Education Department Study Program at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep face various difficulties in taking English courses. These difficulties include aspects of basic language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the main obstacles being limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammar, and low self-confidence in communicating orally. The factors causing these difficulties come from internal aspects such as low motivation, minimal background in previous English language learning, and learning anxiety, as well as from external factors such as less varied teaching methods, limited learning media, and lack of language practice environments"*

Keywords: *Students Difficulties, English Subject, Islamic Education Department*

Abstrak *"Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan yang dialami mahasiswa program studi PAI dalam mempelajari mata kuliah bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif, yang bertujuan untuk menggambarkan dan menganalisis secara mendalam kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam mengikuti perkuliahan bahasa Inggris. Teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah purposive sampling, yaitu pemilihan informan berdasarkan kriteria tertentu, seperti tingkat semester dan pengalaman belajar bahasa Inggris. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep menghadapi berbagai kesulitan dalam mengikuti perkuliahan bahasa Inggris. Kesulitan tersebut mencakup aspek keterampilan dasar berbahasa, yaitu menyimak, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis, dengan hambatan utama berupa keterbatasan kosakata, kurangnya pemahaman tata bahasa, serta rendahnya rasa percaya diri dalam berkomunikasi lisan. Faktor penyebab kesulitan tersebut berasal dari aspek internal, seperti rendahnya motivasi, latar belakang pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebelumnya yang minim, serta kecemasan dalam belajar. Selain itu, terdapat pula faktor eksternal, antara lain metode*

pengajaran yang kurang bervariasi, keterbatasan media pembelajaran, dan minimnya lingkungan praktik berbahasa.
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Kata kunci: *Kesulitan Mahasiswa, Mata Kuliah Bahasa Inggris, Pendidikan Agama Islam*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that plays a very important role in various aspects of life, including in the world of education. As a global communication tool, mastery of English is an unavoidable necessity in this era of globalization. This does not only apply to students of science or technology-based study programs but also students of religious study programs such as Islamic Education Department (PAI). In this context, English language skills are very important to open access to international literature, broaden Islamic insights from a global perspective, and increase the competitiveness of graduates in an increasingly competitive world of work.[1].

However, the reality in the field shows that not all students, especially in the Islamic Education Department study program, have sufficient interest and ability to master English. At STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep, for example, there are indications that many students experience various difficulties in following English courses.

According to Richard, these difficulties can come from various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors can be low motivation to learn, lack of basic knowledge of English from previous levels of education, or negative perceptions of this course. Meanwhile, external factors can include ineffective teaching methods, limited learning media, and a less supportive learning environment.[2]

As an Islamic-based higher education institution, STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep has its challenges in integrating English language skills with Islamic religious knowledge competencies. PAI students are generally more accustomed to mastering Arabic because that language is the main language in Islamic teaching sources.

As a result, the focus of language learning tends to be centered on Arabic and causes English language proficiency to be marginalized. In fact, in the context of modern Islamic scholarship, much contemporary Islamic literature and studies are written in English.

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[1] Moh Zainol Kamal, Hodairiyah, and Moh Wardi, "The Correlation between Students' Anxiety and Speaking Achievement," *Journal of Education and Learning* 19, no. 3 (2025): 1392–1400, https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i3.21740.
[2] Ni Made Dita Sintadewi, Ni Putu Juni Artini, and Irwan Febryan, "Analysis of English Learning Difficulty of Students in Elementary School," *International Journal of Elementary Education* 4, no. 3 SE-Article (October 6, 2020): 431–38, https://doi.org/10.23887/ijee.v4i3.28524.

English language proficiency is very important to bridge students' understanding of Islamic discourse in the global arena. Furthermore, based on initial observations and brief interviews with several students, it was found that they faced various difficulties in four aspects of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.[3]

In the listening aspect, students complain about the difficulty of understanding English conversations delivered at normal speed. In speaking, many students feel less confident and afraid of making mistakes. In the reading and writing aspects, they often experience difficulties in understanding sentence structure and vocabulary. These difficulties indicate an urgent need to analyze the causal factors in more depth so that appropriate solutions can be found to improve the quality of English learning.

This research is important and relevant because it can provide a clear picture of the types and levels of difficulties faced by students, as well as the factors that influence them. The results of this study are expected to be used as evaluation material for lecturers in charge of English courses in designing learning strategies that are more effective, contextual, and according to the characteristics of PAI students. In addition, this study can also be the basis for making academic policies by institutions in order to improve the quality of English learning, both in terms of curriculum, methods, and other supporting facilities.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on analyzing students' difficulties in learning English within the Islamic Education Department at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep, a context that has not been widely explored in previous studies. While many earlier studies have discussed general challenges in English learning, very few have investigated the unique difficulties faced by students in Islamic higher education institutions, where learners often come from non-English backgrounds and prioritize religious studies. This study provides new insights into how linguistic, motivational, and contextual factors interact in shaping students' struggles with English, thereby contributing fresh perspectives to both English language education and Islamic higher education research.

This research is expected to find strategic solutions that can help PAI students at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep overcome difficulties in learning English. This will not only improve the individual competence of students but also contribute to producing graduates who have global communication skills, without leaving their Islamic identity.

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[3] Elisa Dewi Sultra and Baharudin Baharudin, "ANALYSIS OF STUDENT'S DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT SMA NEGERI 1 BATAUGA," *English Education Journal* 6, no. 2 SE- (November 15, 2020): 65–75, https://doi.org/10.55340/e2j.v6i2.364.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To support this research, there are several concepts and theories that are the basis for analyzing students' difficulties in learning English. This literature review will systematically review various theories and previous research results related to the definition and urgency of learning English, Difficulties in learning English, and Factors causing learning difficulties.

1. **Definition and Urgency of Learning English**

English is an international language that is widely used in various fields of life, including education, economics, politics, and technology. Harmer, In the context of higher education, mastery of English is an important capital to access global sources of knowledge that are mostly written in that language. According to Richards & Rodgers, English learning in higher education should be directed to develop communicative skills that include listening, speaking, reading, and writing.[4].

In the Islamic Education Department study program, English language skills are not only a general communication tool but also a means to expand Islamic insight and global academic involvement. Brown, emphasizes the importance of integrating language learning with the context of students' fields of study so that there is relevance and motivation in learning.[5].

2. **Learning Difficulties**

Learning difficulties are conditions when someone experiences obstacles in understanding and mastering learning materials, which are characterized by low learning outcomes and slow understanding processes.[6]. In the context of English, learning difficulties can occur in various aspects of language, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse comprehension.

According to Nunan, English learning difficulties are generally related to four main skills: Listening: Difficulty understanding conversations, especially due to native speakers' speaking speed and varying accents. Speaking: Fear of speaking due to lack of vocabulary and correct sentence structure. Reading: Challenges in understanding texts due to limited academic and foreign cultural vocabulary in the text. Writing: Difficulty in organizing ideas

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[4] Moh. Zainol Kamal and Ahmad Effendi, "The Principles of Teaching Reading Skill for Educational Section," *Tafhim Al-'Ilmi* 12, no. 2 (2021): 301–14, https://doi.org/10.37459/tafhim.v12i2.5028.

[5] Cahya Wulandari, Monika Widyastuti Surtikanti, and Antonius Setyawan Sugeng Nur Agung, "A Case Study of Internal and External Factors on the Difficulties in Learning English," *JOEEL: Journal of English Education and Literature* 1, no. 2 (2020): 43–48, https://doi.org/10.38114/joeel.v1i2.81.

[6] Novia Arnanda and Harpain Harpain, "An Analysis Of Students' Difficulties In Speaking English At Grade X Of SMA Persada Bandar Lampung," *Linguistika: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Bandar Lampung* 8, no. 2 (2017).

and writing grammatically correct sentences[7].

3. Factors Causing Difficulty in Learning English

There are various factors that influence difficulties in learning English, which can be grouped into internal and external factors.

Internal factors include: Motivation to learn: Students with low motivation tend to have greater difficulty. Language anxiety: Fear of making mistakes often hinders speaking ability. Previous educational background: Students from schools that do not emphasize English learning tend to lag behind[8].

External factors, including Teaching methods: Non-interactive approaches make students less active and quickly bored. Learning media: Limited technology or teaching materials become obstacles to the learning process. Social environment: Lack of an environment that supports English language practice outside the classroom.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method because it aims to describe and analyze in depth the difficulties faced by students in taking English courses.[9]. This approach was chosen so that researchers can gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of the experiences, views, and obstacles experienced by students in the learning process. The subjects of this study were 35 students from the first semester of the Islamic Education Department (PAI) Study Program at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep who have or are taking English courses.

The sampling technique used purposive sampling, which is selecting informants based on certain criteria such as lack of their ability and English learning experience. Data collection was carried out through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the learning process in the classroom, while interviews were conducted to dig deeper into information about the difficulties felt by students, as well as the factors that influence them. Documentation in the form of syllabi, attendance lists, and assignment results were used as supporting data.[10].

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[7] Jing Chen and Hyun-Ju Kim, "The Relationship Between Chinese EFL Learners' Learning Anxiety and Enjoyment in a Blended Learning Environment," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 14 (March 2, 2023): 340–48, https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1402.09.

[8] Siti Sahara, "Students' Speaking Problems In English Presentation," *Channing: Journal of English Language Education and Literature* 6, no. 1 SE-Articles (n.d.): 18–23, https://journal.unuha.ac.id/index.php/Channing/article/view/1135.

[9] John W. Creswell, *A Mixed-Method Approach*, *Writing Center Talk over Time*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469237-3.

[10] Arikunto Suharsimi, "Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik," *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta* 134 (2006): 252.

The data obtained were then analyzed using the qualitative analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data validity is maintained through source and technique triangulation techniques, namely by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation simultaneously. With this method, it is hoped that the study can provide a comprehensive picture of various forms of English learning difficulties and their causal factors so that it can be the basis for improving the learning process in the future.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. Result

Based on the results of the study conducted through observation, interviews, and distributing questionnaires to students of the Islamic Education Department Study Program (PAI) STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep, it was found that most students experienced various significant difficulties in following English courses. These difficulties include cognitive, affective, and learning environment aspects. From the cognitive aspect, the majority of students admitted to having difficulty understanding basic materials such as tenses, sentence structures, and vocabulary.

They stated that the lack of vocabulary mastery is the main obstacle to understanding reading texts or composing sentences in writing. In addition, most students admitted that they did not understand the use of grammar well, so they often felt confused when doing assignments such as writing paragraphs or translating sentences.

In terms of language skills, the most dominant difficulties are found in speaking and listening skills. Many students feel insecure when they have to speak English in front of the class. They are afraid of making pronunciation mistakes, choosing the wrong words, or not being able to construct sentences with the correct structure. This is exacerbated by their previous negative experiences in secondary education, where English learning focused more on memorization and written exams, rather than active speaking practice. Meanwhile, in the listening aspect, students often have difficulty understanding conversations or audio materials due to the speaker's unfamiliar accent, the speaking speed being too fast, and the limited listening practice they get in class.

The affective aspect also plays a big role in the difficulties they experience. Many students admit that they do not have a high interest in English lessons. They tend to think that this course is not relevant to their field of study, namely the Islamic Education Department. This shows a misperception of the importance of English in the development

of Islamic knowledge globally.

Some students also experience excessive anxiety (language anxiety) when facing this course, which causes them to be passive in the learning process. When asked to participate, they feel pressured and choose to remain silent. This anxiety has a direct impact on their low self-confidence and ability to develop language skills to the maximum.

On the other hand, external factors are also causes that cannot be ignored. Based on the results of interviews with several students, it is known that the learning methods used in lectures still tend to be conventional and less interactive. Lecturers use more lecture approaches or text translations without providing sufficient opportunities for students to actively speak or listen in a meaningful context. In addition, supporting facilities such as language laboratories,

Access to audio-visual materials or the use of digital media is still very limited. Students also complain about the lack of time and opportunity to practice outside of class hours, both because of the tight schedule of classes and the lack of an English-speaking environment on campus.

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire showed that 78% of students stated that English courses were one of the most difficult courses, and 65% admitted that they had difficulty understanding the material taught even though it had been explained repeatedly. As many as 72% stated that they had never communicated in English outside of class, and only 10% felt confident speaking English in front of others. These findings strengthen the suspicion that English learning in the PAI Study Program environment has not been fully effective in building comprehensive language skills.

The difficulties of Islamic Education Department students in following English courses at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep are multidimensional and interrelated between one factor and another. The difficulties are not only caused by the shortcomings of individual students, but also by learning approaches that are not yet appropriate, limited supporting facilities, and weak integration between English language competency and the context of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, innovation is needed in learning methods, improved facilities, and a change in student paradigms regarding the importance of English language proficiency in today's academic and religious world.

2. Analysis

Based on the results of data collection through observation, interviews, and questionnaires distributed to students of the Islamic Education Department Study Program of STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep, it was found that the majority of students had difficulty in following English courses. These difficulties appeared predominantly in four aspects of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, psychological factors and the learning environment also have a significant influence on the level of student success in understanding learning materials. This analysis is supported by various theories and relevant previous research findings.

First, in the listening aspect, students admitted to having difficulty in understanding English conversations delivered at normal speed, especially when the speaker uses a foreign accent that is unfamiliar to them. This is in line with Nunan's opinion (2003) which states that understanding speech in a foreign language is highly dependent on speaking speed, pronunciation, and context.[11].

The students' unfamiliarity with listening to English material since high school is the main factor in their weak listening skills. This is also reinforced by the research results of Tomoko, which states that one of the main difficulties of non-English students is in listening skills, due to low exposure to listening materials outside the classroom.[12].

Second, in speaking, the majority of students stated that they felt insecure when they had to speak in English. Fear of making mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, and limited vocabulary, were the main obstacles that caused students to be reluctant to speak. This condition can be explained through the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen, where anxiety, lack of motivation, and low self-confidence became affective filters that inhibited the language acquisition process. Islamic Education Department students, who have been more accustomed to using Arabic in the context of religious learning, often consider English as an additional burden that is difficult and irrelevant, thus reducing their enthusiasm to actively speak.[13].

Third, in reading skills, many students have difficulty understanding the contents of English readings, especially academic texts or texts related to Islamic studies in a global

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[11] Rodesa Nauli Harianja et al., "The Students' Listening Problems For Senior High School in Pematangsiantar," *Edunesia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 3, no. 2 (2022): 168–76, https://doi.org/10.51276/edu.v3i2.244.

[12] Tomoko Yabukoshi, "Self-Regulation and Self-Efficacy for the Improvement of Listening Proficiency Outside the Classroom," *The Language Learning Journal* 49, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 27–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2018.1472626.

[13] Kamal, Hodairiyah, and Wardi, "The Correlation between Students' Anxiety and Speaking Achievement."

context. Students admit that they often have difficulty understanding the meaning of new words, idioms, and complex sentence structures commonly found in academic texts.

Research by Firda also shows that reading difficulties in non-English language students are caused by low mastery of vocabulary and effective reading strategies. In this case, the unfamiliarity of Islamic Education Department students in reading English references makes them dependent on translations or explanations from lecturers, so that reading skills do not develop independently.[14].

Fourth, in writing, students tend to have difficulty in constructing grammatically correct and coherent sentences. Lack of writing practice and minimal constructive feedback from teachers cause students to not have enough ability to express their ideas in writing. This shows that teaching writing has not received enough attention, even though writing skills are important competencies in the academic and professional world. As stated by Harmer, writing skills require repeated practice and intensive guidance so that students can develop good and logical writing structures.[15].

In addition to the difficulties in these linguistic aspects, the results of the study also indicate that there are external factors that also influence the level of student difficulties. For example, the teaching methods used tend to be conventional and non-contextual, where lecturers act more as providers of material than as facilitators. This reduces the active involvement of students in the learning process. As explained by Brown, a communicative and needs-based learning approach will be more effective in improving students' language skills.[16].

Riyaz's research also revealed that the low variation in teaching methods was one of the main factors in the weak English skills of PAI students. The learning environment that does not support English language practice is also an obstacle. Students do not have a space or community that encourages the use of English in daily activities, both on campus and outside. This strengthens the findings of Richards & Rodgers who stated that a second language will not develop optimally if it is not actively used in social life. The lack of supporting facilities such as language laboratories, audio-visual media, and access to

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[14] Oktari Firda Hibatullah, "The Challenges of International EFL Students to Learn English in a Non-English Speaking Country," *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning* 4, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.18196/ftl.4240.

[15] Sultra and Baharudin, "ANALYSIS OF STUDENT'S DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT SMA NEGERI 1 BATAUGA."

[16] Kaharuddin Kaharuddin, "Needs Analysis-Based Teaching Materials Development for English Speaking Skill Course in Tertiary Level of Education," *Journal of Education Review Provision* 5, no. 1 SE- (January 31, 2025): 37–52, https://doi.org/10.55885/jerp.v5i1.490.

digital learning resources also worsens the situation.[17].

From previous theories and research, it can be concluded that students' difficulties in following English courses are not solely caused by individual incompetence, but rather the result of a complex interaction between internal factors (motivation, self-confidence, educational background) and external factors (teaching methods, facilities, learning environment). Therefore, the solutions offered must also be comprehensive and contextual, such as strengthening practice-based learning methods, increasing lecturer training in modern teaching approaches, providing interactive learning media, and creating a campus environment that encourages students to interact using English actively and meaningfully.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that students of the Islamic Education Department Study Program at STIT Aqidah Usymuni Sumenep face various difficulties in taking English courses. These difficulties include aspects of basic language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the main obstacles being limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammar, and low self-confidence in communicating orally. The factors causing these difficulties come from internal aspects such as low motivation, minimal background in previous English language learning, and learning anxiety, as well as from external factors such as less varied teaching methods, limited learning media, and lack of language practice environments. These findings indicate the need for improvements in English learning strategies that are more contextual, interactive, and in accordance with the characteristics of Islamic Education Department students so that they can overcome learning obstacles and improve their English language skills gradually and sustainably.

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[17] Aejaz Mohammed Sheikh and Hafsa Riyaz, "An Empirical Study of Proficiency in General English and Functional English Students at Higher Secondary Level in Srinagar," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics* 8 (2015): 141–61.

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