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Indonesian Junior High School Students' Problem in Learning EFL

Faiz Maransha Andrian¹, Ernati^{2✉}

English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Bung Hatta University

Email: ernati@bunghatta.ac.id^{2✉}

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students face difficulties in learning English. The study involved 168 students from the 7th grade at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto, located in the West Sumatra Province. A questionnaire was used as the instrument for this descriptive study, which revealed two aspects of English learning problems. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a high reliability coefficient of 0.73. The data was categorized as either having or not having a problem based on the criterion of $\geq M$ and $< M$, respectively. The findings indicated that 88 students (52%) encountered problems in learning English, while 80 students (48%) did not. Therefore, it can be concluded that 7th-grade students are experiencing difficulties in learning English, primarily due to external factors. This study suggests that school leaders, teachers, and future researchers should collaborate to address and alleviate these problems faced by the students.

Keywords: Problem, learning, English, internal, external.

Abstract

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah siswa menghadapi kesulitan dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini melibatkan 168 siswa kelas 7 SMPN 2 Sawahlunto yang terletak di Provinsi Sumatera Barat. Kuesioner digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk studi deskriptif ini, yang mengungkap dua aspek masalah pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Reliabilitas kuesioner dinilai menggunakan Cronbach's alpha, menghasilkan koefisien reliabilitas yang tinggi sebesar 0,73. Data dikategorikan mengalami atau tidak mengalami masalah berdasarkan kriteria masing-masing $\geq M$ dan $< M$. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa 88 siswa (52%) mengalami masalah dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, sedangkan 80 siswa (48%) tidak. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa siswa kelas 7 mengalami kesulitan dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, terutama karena faktor eksternal. Studi ini menyarankan agar pimpinan sekolah, guru, dan peneliti masa depan harus berkolaborasi untuk mengatasi dan mengatasi masalah yang dihadapi oleh siswa.

Kata Kunci: Masalah, pembelajaran, *Bahasa Inggris*, *internal*, *eksternal*.

INTRODUCTION

English is the most widely spoken language in the world and is essential for connecting with the global community. English is also the only language that is universally recognized and used to communicate with people in various parts of the world (Nurlatifah & Mauriyat, 2020). As a developing country and part of the world community, Indonesia is aware of the importance of mastering English; therefore, teaching English is applied in Indonesian education and it is taught from junior high school to university. This is reflected in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 096/1967, dated December 12, 1967, concerning the Functions and Objectives of Teaching English in Advanced Schools (Nurkamto, 2003). In fact, English in the Indonesian educational system went through a few adjustments and developments. It can be seen from the transition of educational curriculum from *KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan)* to the 2013 curriculum that affects English as a school subject in Indonesia. Currently, the educational curriculum in the Indonesian educational system is *Kurikulum Merdeka*. However, English in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is not taught thoroughly at the elementary education level but only at *Sekolah Penggerak*.

The ability to comprehend English as a foreign language, either orally or in written form is one of the academic skills taught in Indonesian schools (Malik et al., 2021). The purpose of teaching English is to make students mastering English. However, students face a variety of

problems while learning English. The children's reactions when they learn foreign language for the first time is various, primarily because it is different from their native language (Hossain, 2018). Factors that influence learning problems are divided into two categories: internal problem (those that originate within the student) and external problem (those that originate outside the student) (Wulandari et al., 2020). Internal and external problems include physiology, psychology from internal and social, non – social environment from external problem. These problems make students find difficulties to adjust themselves in learning English.

Based on the issue above, it is undoubtedly a challenge for junior high school students who learn this subject from the ground up. Besides, the facts that these students have lack of basic skills are still unfamiliar with English subject that makes it difficult for them to understand during the learning process. This can be proven when the researcher taught English voluntarily to elementary school students in grades 4th to 6th and junior high school students at the Adinegoro library as part of a library-based inclusion program in Sawahlunto City.

As previously stated, since junior high school students learn English as their first time learning a new foreign language, the researcher was interested in conducting research regarding the 7th-grade junior high school students' problem in learning English as a foreign language at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto. The researcher formulated these research problems as follows:

1. Do the 7th grade junior high school students face internal problem in learning English as foreign language at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto?
2. Do the 7th grade junior high school students face external problem in learning English as foreign language at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto?

Review of Related Studies

First, the research was conducted by Rakhmaniar (2019), entitled "The Problems of Learning English Faced by The Students of SMPN 3 Petarukan". She found that the students struggle with internal problem, external problem, and learning strategies. Due to internal problem, 9th grade students struggle with language competence. For example, they struggle with all aspects of English proficiency, lack of vocabulary mastery, show no desire in learning the language, and are less confident.

The second research was conducted by Sari (2020), entitled "An Analysis of External Factors Causes Students Difficulties in Learning English in the Era Education 4.0 (A Case Study at Second Grade Students of SMK N 1 Kutasari, Purbalingga)". The study's findings were that family influences students' difficulties in learning English. It indicates that the student's family remains not concerned with their kids' education. According to the findings of the student interviews, many students still believe that families do not play a significant role in encouraging their kids to develop a passion for studying.

Third, the research conducted by Kudsiyah (2009), entitled "Analysis of Some Causal Factors Of Students' Problem In Learning English (A Case Study at Second Grade Students of SMP Al- Inayah, Karawang)". The finding discussed in this research is the causes of second grade junior high school students' difficulties in learning English. It found that family is the primarily cause of the second-grade English learning difficulties of SMP Al-Inayah students.

The differences between this research and the previous three studies are that only some focus on internal and external problems in learning English. They primarily analyze students' problems from the general aspect. However, the learning problem discussed in this research is in more detail description, the issues divide into four sub-aspects, physiology, and psychology, from internal problems, and social and non-social environments from external problems.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The design of this research is descriptive research. In a descriptive research the data are typically collected through a questionnaire survey, an interview or observation. The researcher used this method because the researcher describes 7th grade junior high school students' problem in learning English as foreign language at SMP N 2 Sawahlunto.

Population and Sample

According to Refnita (2018:74), the population is the intended audience for the study, or the group to which the researcher would like the study's findings to be generalized. The population of this research was the 7th grade junior high school students in SMP N 2 Sawahlunto. The sampling technique used in this research was total sampling which means, the number of the sample is the same as the research's population (Sugiyono, 2019). The total number of this research's sample was 168 students

Instrumentation

The data were collected through questionnaires to overview the 7th grade junior high school students' problem in learning English as foreign language. According to Arikunto (2010), a questionnaire is a set of written questions used to receive information from respondents in a report, usually about their privacy or things they know. The Likert scale was used as the measurement scale in this research to measure students' problems in learning English as a foreign language. To measure the instrument validity, the researcher asked expert judgment (Dra. Ernati, M.Pd) as the advisor to validate content validity of the instrument. Alpha formulation was used to determine the instrument's reliability. To find out the total number of variant items and the total number of variant scores is necessary before utilizing the Alpha formula. To find out the total variants item, the researcher used this formula;

$$\sum \sigma i^2 = \sum (x^2) - \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:

$\sum \sigma i^2$: Total of variants item

x : Students' score

n : Total sample

While to find the total variants score, the researcher used this formula;

$$\sigma t^2 = \sum (\sum xs)^2 - \frac{(\sum xs)^2}{n}$$

Where :

σt^2 : Total variants score

xs : Total score

n : Total sample

After finding total variants score and total variants item, the researcher used Cronbach alpha Formula to find the reliability, here is the formula;

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma i^2}{\sigma t^2} \right)$$

Where :

α : Reliability of the instrument

k : Total of items

$\sum \sigma_i^2$: Total of variants item

σ_t^2 : Total variants score

The result of the reliability index was 0.73. Based on the reliability index result, the instrument was reliable.

Technique of Collecting Data

The researcher collected the data on 7th grade junior high school students' problem by using questionnaire through some procedures as follows:

1. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the 7th grade students.
2. The researcher asked the 7th grade students to respond the questionnaire in 30 minutes.
3. The researcher collected the questionnaire that has been completed by the students.
4. The researcher read the 7th grade students responses.
5. The researcher gave each of the students' answer a score according to the criteria in the Likert scale classification.

Techniques of Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, the researcher used the following steps:

1. The researcher counted the total score of each the students' answer.
2. The researcher input the scores into table.
3. The researcher calculated the mean of the students' score from the total response and put it in the table. To find out mean, the researcher used the formula below:

$$M = \frac{\sum n}{N}$$

Where:

M = Mean score

$\sum n$ = Total score of the students

N = Number of students

- The researcher classified the students' score into having problem and no problem by using the following criteria below:

Table 1. Classification of Students' Problems

Criteria formula	Classification
$\geq M$	Have no problem
$< M$	Have problem

- The researcher counted the percentage of students who have and have no problem by using the following formula.

$$P = \frac{R}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = The percentage of 7th grade students

R = The number of 7th grade students who have or no problem

N = The amount of total 7th grade students

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The 7th Grade Students' Problems in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto.

Based on the classification, it was found that there are 88 students (52%) who have a problem in learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto, and 80 students (48%) have no problem in learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto. Specifically, students also found internal and external problem in learning English. 88 students (52%) found internal problem, meanwhile, 94 students (56%) have external problem in learning English. In order to be clear, see table 6 below.

Table 1 The Students' Problems in Learning English

Students' Problem	Number of Student		Percentage	
	Have Problem	Have No Problem	Have Problem	Have No Problem
Problem in Learning English	88	80	52%	48%
Internal Problem	88	80	52%	48%
External Problem	94	74	56%	44%

The 7th Grade Students' Internal Problems in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto.

The result of the classification analysis showed that 88 students (52%) have internal problem in learning English as a foreign language, while 80 students (48%) have no internal problem in learning English. Furthermore, the internal problem is categorized into physiology and psychology aspects. As for the physiology aspects, 119 students (71%) have problems, and 49 students (29%) have no problems. In psychology, 93 students (55%) have problems, and 75 students (45%) have no problems. See table below for detailed information about internal problem aspects.

Table 2. The Students' Internal Problems in Learning English

Students' Problem	Number of Student		Percentage	
	Have Problem	Have No Problem	Have Problem	Have No Problem
Internal Problem	88	80	52%	48%
Physiology	119	49	71%	29%
Psychology	93	75	55%	45%

The 7th Grade Students' External Problem in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto

The result of the classification analysis showed that 94 students (56%) have an external problem in learning English as a foreign language, while 74 students (44%) have no external problem in learning English. The external problem is categorized into two: social environment and non-social environment aspects. As for the social environment aspects, the highest and lowest scores were 22 and 10. 107 students (64%) have problems, and 61 students (36%) have no problems with the social environment aspects. On the non-social environment aspect, the highest and lowest score was 25 and 7. There are 89 students (53%) who have problems, and 79 students (47%) have no problem in the non-social environment aspects. For detailed information of the external problem aspects, see table below.

Table 3. The Students' External Problems in Learning English

Students' Problem	Number of Student		Percentage	
	Have Problem	Have No Problem	Have Problem	Have No Problem
External Problem	94	74	56%	44%

Social Environment	107	61	64%	36%
Non-social Environment	89	79	53%	47%

Discussion

The 7th Grade Students' Problem in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto.

Based on the data from the questionnaire, students' problems were commonly from the external problem aspects, it is referring to the item of the questionnaire. Students faced external problem in learning English, including social and non-social environment aspects.

The 7th Grade Students' Internal Problem in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto.

Based on the students' scores from the questionnaire, the physiological aspect became the main problem that the students face. Students face learning problems if they feel unfit and have issues regarding their physical health. The feeling mentioned chiefly came from their anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence and skills while learning a new language. From the results, this research is in line with Rakhmaniar (2019), who found that students have an internal problem with their proficiency.

The 7th Grade Students' External Problem in Learning English at SMPN 2 Sawahlunto.

Based on their scores from the questionnaire, the main problem comes from the social environment aspect. They do not have a friend or society that supports them to be their partner in learning English. However, the result of this research is different from the previous research conducted by Kudsiyah (2009), in which the result showed that family is the dominant aspect of the learning problem that the students faced in learning English as a foreign language. However, the problems mostly came from the learning materials that have few variations. As a result, according to the student's scores on the questionnaire, the students cannot understand enough of the lessons if they only use books as the lesson's reference.

CONCLUSION

The 7th grade students of SMPN 2 Sawahlunto have problems in learning English with percentage 52% in term of external problem as the main problem (56%). 52% seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Sawahlunto have an internal problem in learning English as a foreign language, especially physiological aspects (71%). 56% of seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Sawahlunto faced an external problem in learning English as a foreign language. Social environment as the main problem (64%). Since the result of this research showed that the external problem is as the main problem, the leaders of the school, especially the Headmaster of SMPN 2 Sawahlunto suggested to provide a school environment that supports a good atmosphere for practicing English language. As for the English teacher, they ought to create a learning atmosphere that supports students in practicing English language learning in the classroom, school environment, and society. Lastly, the future researchers are suggested to implement similar research at other levels of education, different problems, and perhaps in different cities.

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