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Current Challenges of EFL Secondary Students: Exploring Students' Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores EFL students' challenges in the classroom, particularly those caused by the students themselves. The study used semi-structured interviews to determine how students perceived the problem with English subjects based on the student's engagement. Results showed that students felt lazy in the classroom, got quickly bored during lessons, paid less attention while learning, and hard-to-understand English lessons. Laziness is the biggest problem students mention, and students who perform poorly in school are more prone to Laziness—paying less attention. At the same time, learning can harm students' attitudes toward the learning process.

Keywords: *EFL students, issues in English teaching, students learning challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

The key topics explored in various global contexts are English teacher problems, students, assessments, curricula, textbooks, and numerous aspects that contribute to practical English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching (Noom-ura, 2013). The problems with English teaching have been carefully examined. For instance (Noom-ura, 2013) talked about the issue of teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand. They were based on studies from Bangladesh by (Islam et al., 2021) and South Africa by (Malebese & Tlali, 2019). A specific instance in Indonesia has a related issue (Noor et al., 2023; Utami & Astuti, 2021).

There are still too many serious issues at schools that require fixing. One can include internal and external problems and teachers' opinions of their challenges in teaching English as contributing factors. Lack of specific training in the subject area for instructors (Pennington & Richards, 2016), which the principal should support, the multiple tasks each instructor gives in the subject being studied, the ineffective study times, and the numerous students in the class making it unusable (Hidayati, 2018; Malik et al., 2021) Insufficient textbooks, curriculum, and other problems restrict instructors from using

cutting-edge teaching techniques in the classroom, which all lead to unproductive learning environments (Boy Jon et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2021; Noor et al., 2023).

The teaching-English issue has previously been examined in a few previous research studies on this topic, as noted by (Gultom, 2015; Sarihuddin, 2013), who revealed that various ELT issues, which include low motivation among students, Students feeling lazy in the classroom (Dautov, 2020), Students get quickly bored during lessons (Dumančić, 2018; Jati et al., 2019). They pay less attention while learning (Su & Swank, 2018). And the last hard-to-understand English lessons (Carmen Chirea-Ungureanu, 2015; Dumančić, 2018; Gentner, 2010). And regular instruction is present in the nation of Indonesia. Boy, Jon et al. (2021) used qualitative library methodology in their various examines to explain the English language education practiced in Indonesia. This required the author to gather the relevant object materials from earlier studies on related English language teaching. The English curriculum, English teaching techniques, student attitudes toward English, and instructors' difficulties teaching English in Indonesia are some of the materials used in this study. The study's findings show that students are rarely motivated to learn a language because of its complexity, lack of resources, and lack of opportunity for practice chances and time.

However, there were less studies that directly tackle the difficulties students have because of their classmates when learning English in a classroom. The authors of this study focus on examining problems with English learning in secondary school courses as a consequence, particularly those caused by students themselves. This study attempted to answer the issue of what challenges English teachers face in the classroom, particularly those caused by students themselves. This study's findings should explain students' difficulties in school, particularly those brought on by the pupils.

METHODS

This qualitative study explores how students perceive their problems with English subjects based on the student's engagement. The researcher utilized purposive sampling to find participants in this study. According to Campbell et al. (2020), Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to discover and select material based on the researcher's concerns and particular aims. Therefore, ten students in a secondary school in Medan, Indonesia, participated in this study after the authors became aware of some fascinating issues regarding the demands of English instructors for professional development. The participants were selected based on three factors: they were at a secondary school, had higher scores in English subjects, which the researcher learned from their own English teachers and indicates that they are engaged in English classes, and finally, they had to be willing to participate in the study and comprehend the research questions. According to the authors, most students believed that one of the issues with teaching English was due to the students themselves.

Additionally, the study discovered that English language learners underperformed academically compared to those in other subject areas. The challenges students confront when their problems affect how their pupils learn. Because they cannot give their all while learning English in the classroom, pupils who struggle with the language have a detrimental effect on their learning results. To explore the students' difficulties learning English and to hear their thoughts on the expectations placed on teachers' professional growth, the writers picked these institutions (Binmahboob, 2020; Hamad, 2017).

The authors used semi-structured interviews to find out how students felt about the issue of English language education in light of the students who were directly impacted because students' perspectives were the primary data source for this study. They were given An open-ended interview to learn students' opinions on the challenges of learning English in light of those engaged.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants in the study answered inquiries on the problem of learning English ased on students involved in an interview. It solely discusses the challenges students face in the classroom. Mention issues students have caused that they, as students, have when training kids in English! Commonalities judged noteworthy and helpful to this study surfaced after reviewing the interview replies. The problem with (1) Students feeling lazy in the classroom was one of the major concerns of this study. (2) Students get quickly bored during lessons. (3) Paying less attention while learning, and (4) Hard-to-understand English lessons.

Students Feel Lazy in the Classroom

A student who lacks the motivation to put in the effort required to achieve their full potential might be described as lazy. The result of this research shows that Laziness is the biggest problem mentioned by students. They explained that they suddenly felt Laziness while studying. According to the student, this feeling came from many factors, such as too noisy class, too many duties teachers gave, hard materials to understand, lack of exciting topics, etc. This result is also mentioned by (Dautov, 2020), who stressed that The most prominent reason for Laziness is that Students who perform poorly in school are more prone to Laziness. According to low-performing pupils, this is a lack of interest in the topic or activity itself. Cazan (2015) also explained in their study that Laziness indicates students' lack of motivation.

This lazy behaviour impacts students' learning performance. The negative impact itself involves not only the lazy one but also the others around. According to the interview result, no difference exists between students with high and low academic performance. Both feel lazy in English classrooms as well. One of the students said that Laziness does not come to students every single time or class. It only happened sometimes. It is in line with a study by Li et al. (2021), which found that Laziness was a variable of students' personality. And deflected any responsibility for its occurrence, according to Bilmas's study, which was criticized by Qi and Shu (2017) in their research, and Laziness caused by silencing students in the classroom. Being lazy is part of human nature, and this feeling should be a concern for English teachers to minimize problems during the learning process.

Students Get Quickly Bored during Lessons

Boredom happens because the teaching method is not exciting, or students do not know what to do in the classroom. Being quickly bored during studying is a problem many students have at school; boredom happens when students struggle to comprehend the material as they learn it. They display this type of student emotion, which can be challenging for students to manage. When students are bored, they may continue to follow teachers' instructions but lose focus, fail to comprehend lessons, or even not want to participate in class activities. It can have a detrimental effect on student's attitudes

toward the learning process. This result is in line with Jati et al. (2019) result, which mentioned that there could be no forward movement for students in terms of knowledge and skills if they are bored while learning English. It is because the system of the brain will not function as expected, with the impact of boredom lowering the enthusiasm of students regarding activities for learning students' confidence regarding learning activities.

Students show many examples when they get bored in the classroom. The most significant was their body language. In this case, students did not hide their attitudes, such as sleeping in school, playing with their friends, going to the toilet, going out of class, etc. Based on the result of this interview data, students mentioned that it was hard to understand English lessons because the teacher only taught grammar in the class, making them feel bored. It is related to a result of the study (Dumančić, 2018), which revealed that grammatical tasks were the most boring cause agreed by teachers. According to one of the students, boredom comes naturally when he gets grammar tasks with the same mistakes every single task, such as simple presents-es in the third person singular. The teacher itself should call things like this more concern.

Paying Less Attention while Learning

Attention is students' awareness and concentration when learning in the classroom. In this result, the less attention students assign to the school meant the next problem that students mentioned. Students explained when the teachers presented the lessons, and they ignored the teachers' presentations. Some students also said they were not focused on the class and the learning process. This result is in line with Su and Swank (2018) study, which revealed that most participants in their result study have attention problems when learning. Even though the students are funny, intelligent, and athletic, they tease students and appear oblivious to how their actions affect others, such as being inattentive, upsetting, and talking too much.

Students cannot pay attention for a complete one- or two-hour class. However, boosting instructors' and students' attention awareness may help them control the classroom environment. The study results indicate how long pupils can pay attention. For example, in the case of teacher-centred activities, pupils' awareness is commonly assumed to be retained for roughly fifteen minutes. However, this varies significantly among individuals. One of the students explained that the case happened because of too many subjects that students have to learn a day, so when English is put in the last time, they have been tired in the afternoon, so they have no more attention to pay. It is related to research from Marriam Bashir et al. (2016), who clarified that teachers have to give more attention no students because the majority, 62%, were never focused on English. In this case, teachers must be concerned about class activity and students' boredom with teaching method innovation and games in the classroom that the English teacher itself should develop.

Hard to understand English lessons

Understanding means students have a clear, complete idea of English material that teachers give in the classroom in secondary school. English is still a foreign language. Students with parents who cannot speak English will not care about English, so learning English was difficult for them to understand. The biggest problem related to this issue was grammar, but it was not only grammar but also reading, speaking, listening, and

pronunciation. Students explained in this result that every single part was hard enough to catch. Understanding what they meant here was giving feedback in class, but they said only to keep silent. However, because they had never heard about English before, as I mentioned above in Dumančić (2018) study: when students got grammatical tasks, e.g., simple presents-es in the third person singular, V2 for simple past (+), it is identical to Gentner's (2010) study which stressed verbs are hard to learn, it is more challenging than nouns. They feel hard to understand because they make some mistakes repeatedly, not only in grammar but also pronunciation. One of the students mentioned that it was hard to pronounce English because students need to think first before speaking, which is in line with the result of Carmen Chirea-Ungureanu's (2015) study that offered some reasons to think before you want to speak English to others.

According to Chirea-Ungureanu's study (2015), the reasons why English is hard to learn is that it has the same word but different meanings and various disciplines and may be utilized in other situations as distinct components of speech. These were what students felt in every single English class. Teachers seldom explain the topic clearly, and students are not active when teaching and learning in a classroom. Every part of English should be conducted in different ways as reading skills should be available for reading practice to increase, speaking also should be practiced every time to reach the fluency, it causes listening skill better, so any single part is connecting each other, making English as a habit is the most excellent way to improve English ability for students in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Students' challenges in the learning process should be a concern for teachers. Teachers must pay more attention to EFL students' challenges for better classroom learning results. Such as students' motivation, Laziness, boredom, focus attention, and materials. This study revealed many problems that students faced by themselves when learning English that related in further previous various studies. Students in secondary school still need to be controlled by their teachers and parents to learn English because English is a new insight for them. Further research is hoped to answer how to escape these problems in detail, so there will be the most fantastic solution for all English teachers to handle their English classes in secondary school.

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