



Vocabulary Improvement for Language Learner: A Challenge and Perceptions

Yuliana^{1*}, Ariya Agustin², Evi Agustinasari³, M Bambang Purwanto⁴

¹STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagaram, Indonesia

³Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya Palembang, Indonesia

^{2,4}Politeknik Prasetiya Mandiri Bogor, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: M Bambang Purwanto

mbambangpurwanto@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Improving,
Vocabulary, Challenge,
Perceptions.

Received : 5, May

Revised : 25, June

Accepted : 28, July

©2024 Yuliana, Agustin, Agustinasari,
Purwanto: This is an open-access
article distributed under the terms of the
[Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0
Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

English language education at the college student level is an important aspect of global higher education today. However, college students face various challenges that affect the effectiveness of English language learning. This research aims to find out the various challenges experienced by students to master English in an academic environment. Ten students enrolled in the D3 Hospitality study program for the third semester were interviewed for this study, which was carried out utilizing qualitative methodologies. The results revealed a number of challenges experienced by students in learning English such as difficulty understanding the material, complicated grammar pronounced and difficult to remember, lack of vocabulary mastered, differences between writing and pronunciation of English and feeling less confident when speaking English. The study also identified several strategies that can help address these challenges in hopes of improving English learning outcomes at the Polytechnics.

INTRODUCTION

English language skills are very important in the era of globalization. A good command of English gives the opportunity to be able to learn science and technology from other more advanced countries (Schleischer, 2015). In addition, the ability to communicate in English can open opportunities for cross-border cooperation (Kessler, 2018). Therefore, English language skills play an important role in the progress of a nation.

In learning English, vocabulary is very important to master because it will affect other English skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Agustinasari et al., 2022). If students do not master vocabulary, it will be difficult for them to understand conversations and readings in English. In addition, they will find it difficult to communicate orally and in writing in English (Purwanto, 2023). Thus, vocabulary mastery is a priority in order to have good English skills.

English language learning is learning that is a subject including local even for most schools it is made a compulsory subject at the elementary school level (Purwanto, 2022). English is a subject studied by students ranging from elementary school to college students. English today has become a much-needed need to face the future for each student (Purwanto & Agustin, 2022). The skills of students in English language education are seen as able to support everyday life in the field of communication skills and support in international education. However, the need for English skills at this time has become a mandatory requirement to get a job. Learning English is very complex because English has four basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing and has additional skills namely language structure, vocabulary and pronunciation (Afini et al., 2023).

All basic and additional skills are important and you must learn them all if you want to master a language, including English. In English language education, there are many problems experienced by students that become obstacles to the development of their English language skills, one of the difficult problems that is often faced is the problem of pronunciation in dialogue skills (Aisyah et al., 2024). Dialogue skills are also one of the meaningful things to find the learning outcomes of students who state the success or failure of someone in mastering a language (Astirini Swarastuti et al., 2024). English language learning at this time has an innovative, very diverse and IT/ICT-based character that is influenced by information and technology (Budiyanto et al., 2024). However, despite the fact that English is now taught in classrooms from elementary schools to colleges, not all students are able to finish modules and speak the language correctly. This is because they face a variety of learning obstacles, including inefficient teaching methods, difficult-to-pronounce grammar, and the distinction between oral and written English pronunciation. At the university level, there are now many barriers to English learning. (Bambang & Ariya Agustin, 2022; Bonar Siagian & M Bambang Purwanto, 2023). These challenges make it difficult for students to master the module and speak English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Can you imagine what if a language lacks vocabulary? As part or component of a language, vocabulary plays an important role and cannot be

separated from other components, such as phonology, structure or grammar. A collection of multiple words combined to give them significance is called a vocabulary. It is impossible to isolate this vocabulary from the four language abilities of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. (L. Zhang, 2013, p. 156).

It was further said by McCarten (2007) That Learning vocabulary is a crucial aspect of acquiring a foreign language; in order to expand their vocabulary, pupils must be able to comprehend every word in the language. It follows that mastering a large vocabulary will undoubtedly increase pupils' ability to speak fluently in any language, especially English. Reading texts or listening to stories spoken in English is one of the strategies Fries recommended for helping kids' vocabulary grow and expand. In terms of terminology, Lessard-Clouston (2013, p. 130) Express three levels of difficulty in vocabulary, namely: easy vocabulary, normal vocabulary, and special vocabulary (difficult).

The impact of hearing words, pronouncing them, reading them, practicing interpretation and then expressing them (practice from meaning to expression), and writing the words (writing the words) are some of the factors that contribute to students' struggles with learning foreign vocabulary. It should be mentioned that students are urged to practice using language in everyday situations and on a regular and continuous basis. It is not certain that a learner will become fluent and master a foreign language if they merely study and practice it in the classroom. (Bambang Purwanto & Hidayad, 2022; Ghaemi & Golshan, 2017; H. Zhang et al., 2016).

As a result, it is strongly advised to practice pronouncing new words correctly and to use them regularly in regular speech. In this instance, it may be claimed that students, who are the primary subject of language learning, are crucial to the mastery of foreign vocabulary learned during learning (Purwanto & Despita, 2022). Furthermore, it must be bolstered by the student's active use and accurate pronunciation. Shiva's ability to learn words rests not only on the instructor but also on the pupils' drive, aspirations, and aptitude.

The Importance of Increasing Vocabulary

Learning a language is frequently linked to being able to speak well-constructed sentences. Many people desire to be able to communicate and talk fluently in the language they are learning, but rarely do they consider that mastering the language's vocabulary is more crucial to learn and acquire (Ahmed, 1989; Nam, 2010), Ultimately, developing a broad vocabulary is essential to being able to talk and write coherently.

Schmitt & McCarthy (1998) It is also said that frequently viewing and listening to conversations with mobile media, TV, or laptops and really paying attention to the conversation will increase proficiency in learning the language. That's true, but again it would be better if there is experience in mastering vocabulary before, so it will be more realistic to learn using mobile media, TV, or laptops.

Pay attention to how to translate foreign languages! Someone will translate the most difficult vocabulary words first before translating them all or at least one paragraph. In that one paragraph, a person will really look for the

meaning of vocabulary *that* is rarely used or difficult to understand. Once all of the challenging terminology has been grasped, each sentence in a paragraph can be accurately translated in light of the discussion's context.(Altalhab, 2023). A paragraph cannot be accurately translated if even one word in the lexicon is difficult to understand, particularly given the context of the debate. Continue translating the following paragraphs.

However, vocabulary learning *is* still interpreted as less important. Many people are lazy to memorize vocabulary even though they already know the impact (Handayani, 2021; Nattinger, 2018). So, one of the strategies in mastering vocabulary is that vocabulary learning in the classroom must be really entertaining, unique and others that are done repeatedly until the learner masters it, further until the student is able to say the vocabulary learned with the correct intonation according to the culture of the language learned.

If so, then the ability of those who learn foreign languages, for example English, is in accordance with learning in their original country. They, the British, understand the language for the first time from those closest to them who say the correct vocabulary according to their culture over and over again. Vocabulary learning is easy. Therefore, multiply vocabulary mastery with the correct intonation according to the culture of the language being studied in a repetitive way.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approaches are employed in this study. Ten D3 Hospitality study program students were interviewed in order to gather data, and a survey of the literature was also done. One way to get data for qualitative research processes is through interviews, which can be conducted individually or in groups. The technical application of interviews is typically attempted by the interviewer submitting problems to be later answered by sources or informants. A literature review is an approach to gather information by closely examining books, reports, and novels that are related to the issue that needs to be resolved.

RESEARCH RESULT

In the learning process, there must be challenges or obstacles both in learning English and other learning that can cause the results of the learning process to be less than optimal. Based on the results of research on 10 students of the D3 Hospitality study program experienced various challenges in the English learning process such as difficulty mastering English learning modules, complicated grammar spoken, lack of vocabulary possessed, differences between writing and pronunciation of English and feelings of lack of confidence in themselves when communicating using English.

1. Challenges in English Language Learning

A few factors contribute to the difficulty in mastering the English module: learning processes that use English exclusively without translating into Indonesian; students' limited vocabulary; English's complex grammatical rules, which can be challenging for some to learn and retain; and students' unfamiliarity with English-language conversations in daily life. Students find it challenging to grasp the English module because of these characteristics. If

English is not used frequently in daily life, studying it will be challenging and tough to master.

2. Solutions to overcome challenges in English language learning

Lecturers really need to build an efficient learning environment and foster student fun and curiosity, and must be able to deliver English modules in a language that is easy to understand. Do not let students be in a learning environment that makes them depressed because if they feel pressured it will affect students' understanding of the learning material delivered and the learning outcomes will be less than optimal. Pupils should not put off studying, and they should ask questions if they have any questions about what the instructor has said. Expand your vocabulary because doing so will enable us to converse more easily with English-speaking people.

3. Perception in vocabulary learning

Student perceptions of vocabulary learning can vary depending on several factors, including teaching methods, individual needs, learning environment, and motivation. Here are some perceptions that students may have regarding vocabulary learning: 1) The Importance of Vocabulary**: Some students may realize how important it is to have a rich vocabulary in their language skills. They may see vocabulary as a necessary foundation for good comprehension in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. 2). Challenge**: For some college students, learning vocabulary can be challenging. They may face difficulties in remembering new words or finding effective strategies to expand their vocabulary. 3) Learning Methods**: Student perceptions are also influenced by the learning methods used in teaching vocabulary. Engaging and interactive methods may be preferred because they can increase engagement and facilitate the understanding and retention of new vocabulary. It is important for teachers to understand these perceptions and try to develop learning strategies that suit students' needs and preferences to maximize the effectiveness of vocabulary learning.

DISCUSSION

English language learning, especially the mastery of vocabulary or vocabulary carried out by teachers so far has been going well, but in the learning process students have not shown serious attention and are still not active in learning. Teachers still use handbooks as learning resources (Hidayad et al., 2023; Melinda Puspita Sari Jaya et al., 2023). In the learning process, teachers have not used media so that children are less enthusiastic about learning English vocabulary, moreover there are some students who think that vocabulary is difficult to learn. With the use of media in the learning process, it is hoped that an increase in student abilities can be achieved (Purwanto, 2020).

Some factors that become obstacles in mastering vocabulary are: 1) Lazy, lazy is our common enemy. Laziness not only hinders learning; laziness hinders all things including learning vocabulary. Even though we already know the importance of vocabulary in the success of our communication, sometimes we are still lazy in learning and increasing our vocabulary. In addition to learning vocabulary is very broad because the amount of vocabulary is very large, new

words also continue to appear, new terms that have new meanings continue to appear. For example, maybe 20 years ago we were not familiar with the term selfie, or selfie stick. But now we have often heard the term and has its own meaning even though it may not have been translated into the dictionary. So, if we are lazy to add and learn vocabulary, it is certain that our English skills will not develop. 2) Difficult to pronounce, the factor that makes vocabulary difficult to learn next is difficult to pronounce. Words that are difficult to pronounce are usually difficult to remember, this makes the word not last long in our memory.

3) Difficult to spell, the characteristics of English are very different from Indonesian. In Indonesian, the word written is written exactly the same as the word is written. But in English the way of writing and pronunciation of a word is very different. The composition of the letters contained in a word is usually not exactly the same as the word itself is pronounced. This can sometimes be confusing and makes English vocabulary difficult to learn. 4) Never used, once we already know and remember a word, the best thing we can do to keep the word in mind is to use it. Trying to make sentences containing the word will make us recognize and understand very well how the word should be used. And vice versa, when we never use the word, then over time the word will disappear from our memory. 5) Do not want to open the dictionary, this factor is related to no 1. Keep in mind that we don't live in an environment where English is used in everyday conversation. We have not heard and repeated English words in our daily lives since we were babies until now. The only way we get a new word is by opening a dictionary. So, when we are lazy to open the dictionary, we will never get any vocabulary.

All the factors that become obstacles above, should not make us become lazier in learning vocabulary. Conversely, knowing these factors is expected to help us overcome and improve our way of learning. Do not make the above factors really become a barrier for us in achieving the goals we want to achieve. Keep trying and don't give up easily. Whatever the outcome is as long as we have tried and done our best, it is the best way to live this life.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

English language education cannot be separated from challenges or obstacles. The emergence of various challenges or obstacles that occur in the learning process, especially in students. The study's findings suggest that each student's level of comprehension of the language affects how challenging it is to learn English in order to meet overall language competency. This is demonstrated by the research subjects' explanations of the difficulties associated with communicating in English (speaking), as well as the language's difficult-to-understand vocabulary and grammar. There are several strategies to eliminate challenges in English education, namely creating an effective classroom atmosphere and creating fun, do not be lazy to add new vocabulary, practice communicating English in the environment every day, and motivate yourself to continue learning.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Setiap penelitian tentu memiliki keterbatasan. Keterbatasan dalam artian keterbatasan penelitian yang memengaruhi kemampuan peneliti dalam menggali data yang di kaji, keterbatasan data yang tersedia, atau faktor-faktor eksternal penelitian seperti keterbatasan waktu dan sumber daya. Sehingga di perlukan penelitian lanjutan untuk kesempurnaan penelitian ini.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

- Afini, V., Suratni, S., Kumalasari, C., Novia, F., & Purwanto, M. B. (2023). Language Learning Approaches: A Study Meta-Analysis of Vocabulary Mastery in EFL Learners. *Journal of Language Development and Linguistics*, 2(2), 111-126. <https://doi.org/10.55927/jldl.v2i2.5805>
- Agustinasari, E., Simanjuntak, T., & Purwanto, M. B. (2022). A Review on Error Analysis Stages in Teaching English Structure. *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 14(1), 253-268. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v14i1.1702>
- Ahmed, M. O. (1989). Vocabulary Learning Strategies: In Beyond Words, 3-14. *Paul Meara (Ed)*.
- Aisyah, A., Hidayad, F., & Purwanto, M. B. (2024). Effect of Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) in Language Learning: Case Study on Vocational High School Students in Determining Proficiency Levels. *Wiralodra English Journal (WEJ)*, 8(1 SE-Articles), 141-153. <https://doi.org/10.31943/wej.v8i1.281>
- Altalhab, S. (2023). Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Saudi University Students in Pair Work. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 11(1), 44-49. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.11n.1p.44>
- Astirini Swarastuti, Budiyanto, B., & M Bambang Purwanto. (2024). Management Of English Learning To Improve Digital-Based Language Literacy Skills. *International Journal of Education, Vocational and Social Science* , 3(01 SE-Articles), 202-215. <https://doi.org/10.99075/ijevss.v3i01.672>

Bambang, M., & Ariya Agustin. (2022). Workshop Online Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris: Strategi Belajar Grammar dan Structure Bagi EFL. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia*, 1(2 SE-Articles), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jpmi.v1i2.185>

Bambang Purwanto, M., & Hidayad, F. (2022). English Learning Strategies for Vocabulary Mastery. *English Education: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 7(2 SE-), 178–189. <https://doi.org/10.29407/jetar.v7i2.18457>

Bonar Siagian, & M Bambang Purwanto. (2023). Lextutor English Learning Pronunciation and Vocabulary: A Language Data Base Program . *PUSTAKA: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Pendidikan*, 4(1 SE-Articles), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.56910/pustaka.v4i1.1062>

Budiyanto, Kabri, K., Harapan, E., & Purwanto, M. B. (2024). 21st Century English Learning: a Revolution in Skills, Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Visual Communication. *Asian Journal of Applied Education (AJAE)*, 3(1 SE-Articles), 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ajae.v3i1.7841>

Ghaemi, F., & Golshan, N. S. (2017). The impact of telegram as a social network on teaching English vocabulary among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. *International Journal of Information and Communication Sciences*, 2(5), 86–92.

Handayani, K. (2021). The Effect of Using Kahoot Game on Students' Vocabulary. In *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists* (Vol. 5, Issue 2, pp. 88–100). Universitas Merdeka Malang.

Hidayad, F., Umar, U., Agustin, A., Despita, D., & Purwanto, M. B. (2023). The Effectiveness of Online Assessment Platforms in EFL Classroom: A Students' perception On Using Kahoot Application. *Jurnal Scientia*, 12(01), 87–97.

- Kessler, G. (2018). Technology and the future of language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 205–218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12318>
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (2013). *Teaching Vocabulary*. Longman.
- McCarten, J. (2007). Teaching vocabulary. *Lessons from the Corpus. Lessons from the Classroom*.
- Melinda Puspita Sari Jaya, Santa Idayana Sinaga, & Bambang Purwanto, M. (2023). Parents' Perceptions Of Learning English For Early Children. *JELLT (Journal of English Language and Language Teaching)*, 7(2 SE-), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.36597/jellt.v7i2.14563>
- Nam, J. (2010). Linking Research and Practice: Effective Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary in the ESL Classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, 28(1), 127. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v28i1.1064>
- Nattinger, J. (2018). Some current trends in vocabulary teaching. *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*, 1(1), 62–82.
- Purwanto, M. B. (2020). Teaching Prefixes as Part of Teaching Vocabulary by Using Flip-A-Chip to The Eleventh Grade Students of Senior High School Aisyiyah 1 of Palembang. *Esteem Journal of English Education Study Programme*, 3(1), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.31851/esteem.v3i1.4667>
- Purwanto, M. B. (2022). Learning Community in Learning English Speaking Skills. *Language and Education Journal*, 7(2), 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.52237/lej.v7i2.383>

- Purwanto, M. B. (2023). The Implementation of English Online Learning in Rural-Area. *Channing: Journal of English Language Education and Literature*, 8(1), 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.30599/channing.v8i1>
- Purwanto, M. B., & Agustin, A. (2022). Reviewing on Grammar Learning Strategy Use: A Case Study of EFL Darussalam Polytechnic. *JELLT (Journal of English Language and Language Teaching)*, 6(2), 43-57. <https://doi.org/10.36597/jellt.v6i2.13029>
- Purwanto, M. B., & Despita, D. (2022). Review on Vocabulary Teaching Strategies: Study Case: Effect of Learners' Lexical Recall. *Journal of English Education, Literature and Linguistics*, 5(2), 60-68. <https://doi.org/10.31540/jeell.v5i2.1934>
- Schleischer, A. (2015). Education for the 21st Century. Retrieved from Internet *Bigthink. Com/Bigthinkgesf/Educating-for-the-21st-Century-2*.
- Schmitt, N., & McCarthy, M. (1998). *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy*. Cambridge university press.
- Zhang, H., Li, J., Jiao, L., Ma, W., & Guan, C. (2016). The Adjustment and Effects of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies in Flipped Classroom. *Creative Education*, 07(14), 1966-1973. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2016.714199>
- Zhang, L. (2013). Theory and Practice in Language Studies. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(5), 805-809.