



Problems Faced by Business Administration Students in English Language Skills at Politeknik Kotabaru

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the problems faced by Business Administration students in mastering English language skills. English proficiency is an important competency that Business Administration students must possess to support academic and professional needs in the era of globalization. However, many students still encounter various difficulties in learning English. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. The participants consisted of 30 fourth-semester Business Administration students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that students experienced difficulties in speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The most dominant problems were limited vocabulary mastery, lack of self-confidence in speaking, difficulties in understanding English conversations, pronunciation errors, and weak grammatical competence. The factors influencing these problems were categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors included low learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, and limited vocabulary, while external factors included limited opportunities to practice English, lack of a supportive English-speaking environment, and less varied teaching methods. The study concludes that difficulties in mastering English skills remain a significant challenge for Business Administration students. Therefore, improvements are needed through more communicative learning approaches, continuous practice, and a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Business Administration Students; English Language Skills; English Proficiency; Problems; Qualitative Research.

1. BACKGROUND

English is an international language that plays an important role in education, business, technology, and global communication. English proficiency has become one of the essential skills required by university students, especially Business Administration students, as it is closely related to communication skills in an increasingly competitive and internationally oriented work environment. Good English proficiency can help students access information, establish business communication, and increase their future employment opportunities.

According to Harmer (2007), there are four main skills in English that language learners should master, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are interconnected and serve as the foundation for effective communication. However, in the learning process, many students still experience difficulties in mastering these skills.

Furthermore, Brown (2004) states that success in learning English is influenced by various factors, such as motivation, self-confidence, learning environment, teaching methods, and opportunities to use the language in daily life. If these factors are not

adequately fulfilled, students may encounter obstacles in developing their English language proficiency.

In the context of higher education, Business Administration students are required to possess adequate English skills because many business, management, marketing, and administrative terms are commonly expressed in English. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), English proficiency functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for acquiring knowledge and developing professional competencies in the era of globalization.

Nevertheless, the reality shows that many Business Administration students still face various challenges in mastering English language skills. Common difficulties include limited vocabulary, low speaking ability, pronunciation errors, weak grammar comprehension, and difficulties in understanding English conversations or learning materials. These conditions may hinder the learning process and reduce students' readiness to enter the workforce.

According to Nation (2011), vocabulary mastery is one of the most important aspects of language learning because it serves as the foundation for the development of other language skills. Meanwhile, Ur (1996) argues that fear of making mistakes and a lack of self-confidence are often the main causes of students' low speaking ability in English.

Based on preliminary observations of Business Administration students, it was found that some students still experience difficulties in using English, both orally and in written form. They tend to feel less confident when speaking, have limited vocabulary, and face difficulties in understanding English-language materials. These problems indicate that there are still various factors affecting students' ability to master English language skills.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Problems refer to various difficulties or obstacles faced by individuals in achieving certain goals. In the context of education, learning problems are various challenges that arise during the learning process and may affect students' learning outcomes. According to Slameto (2015), learning difficulties are conditions that prevent students from learning optimally due to internal and external factors. Internal factors include motivation, interest, basic abilities, and self-confidence, while external factors include the learning environment, teaching methods, and supporting facilities.

In English language learning, the problems experienced by students may include difficulties in understanding learning materials, low communication skills, limited vocabulary,

and a lack of opportunities to use English in daily life. According to Brown (2004), success in language learning is influenced by affective factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence. Therefore, students with high levels of anxiety tend to experience obstacles in developing their English language proficiency.

According to Harmer (2007), there are four main English language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are interconnected and serve as indicators of a person's ability to use English effectively.

Listening is the ability to understand information conveyed through spoken language. According to Rost (2011), listening is the process of receiving, understanding, and interpreting spoken messages. Listening skills are very important because they form the foundation for the development of other language skills.

Speaking is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and information orally using English. According to Nunan (2003), speaking is a productive skill that requires the simultaneous use of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency.

Reading is the ability to understand and interpret information contained in written texts. According to Grabe (2009), reading is the process of constructing meaning from a text through the interaction between the reader's knowledge and the information presented in the text.

Writing is the ability to convey ideas or information in written form. According to Hyland (2003), writing is the process of producing structured and meaningful texts by paying attention to grammar, vocabulary, organization of ideas, and writing mechanics.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2022), descriptive research aims to describe and explain a phenomenon systematically, factually, and accurately based on data obtained from the field. Data collection techniques in qualitative research can be conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted with fourth-semester Business Administration students, it was found that most students still

experience various problems in mastering English language skills. These problems include speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

The interview results revealed that most students encounter difficulties in speaking English. They admitted that they lack confidence when speaking in front of the class or engaging in conversations in English. They are afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation and grammar.

Listening was identified as one of the most challenging skills for students. The findings showed that students have difficulty understanding English conversations, especially those spoken by native speakers. These difficulties are caused by the speed of speech, differences in accents, and students' limited vocabulary. In addition, students admitted that they rarely practice listening to English audio or watching English-language videos outside the classroom.

In terms of reading skills, some students experience difficulties in understanding English texts due to the large number of unfamiliar vocabulary items. Students often require a considerable amount of time to translate reading materials before they can understand the overall meaning of the text.

Reading difficulties are also influenced by students' limited understanding of grammar, making it difficult for them to identify the meanings of complex sentences

The results of the study also indicated that students experience difficulties in constructing English sentences and paragraphs. Common errors include the use of tenses, vocabulary selection, sentence structure, and punctuation. Some students admitted that they often translate sentences directly from Indonesian into English, resulting in inaccurate sentence structures.

Students experience difficulties not only in understanding written texts, listening to conversations, and speaking in English, but also in pronouncing English words correctly. Furthermore, they often feel less confident when communicating in English. Students also reported confusion regarding the use of tenses, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and the construction of sentences in accordance with English grammatical rules.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that students experience difficulties in speaking skills due to low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited vocabulary. These findings are consistent with Ur's (1996) view that the main barriers to speaking proficiency are a lack of self-confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes when communicating in a foreign language.

The study also found that students have difficulty understanding English conversations because of the speed of native speakers' speech, differences in accents, and limited vocabulary.

The lack of practice in listening to English-language materials also contributes to students' low listening proficiency. The less exposure students have to English, the lower their ability to comprehend spoken conversations.

The findings reveal that limited vocabulary and inadequate grammar knowledge are the main causes of students' reading difficulties. Students with restricted vocabulary tend to have difficulty understanding the information presented in texts, making the reading process less effective.

In terms of writing skills, students encounter difficulties in constructing sentences according to English language rules. Common errors include the incorrect use of tenses, sentence structure, and vocabulary selection.

Vocabulary emerged as the most dominant problem identified in this study. Students experience difficulties in remembering and using the vocabulary they have learned. According to Nation (2011), vocabulary is the fundamental foundation of language learning because it plays a crucial role in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Poor vocabulary mastery directly affects students' communication abilities.

The study also indicates that students still face difficulties in English pronunciation. Pronunciation errors generally occur due to the influence of the mother tongue and a lack of speaking practice.

Grammar is another aspect that students find particularly challenging. The greatest difficulties are related to the use of tenses and sentence construction. According to Thornbury (1999), grammar is a system of rules that governs sentence formation in a language. Insufficient grammar knowledge can lead to errors in both spoken and written communication.

Based on the findings of this study and the theories proposed by experts, it can be concluded that the main problems faced by Business Administration students in mastering English language skills are limited vocabulary, low self-confidence in speaking, difficulties in listening comprehension, weak grammar proficiency, and a lack of opportunities to practice English. These factors are interconnected and significantly influence students' ability to develop the English competencies required to support their readiness for careers in the fields of administration and business.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study regarding the problems faced by Business Administration students in mastering English language skills, it can be concluded that students still encounter various challenges in developing their English proficiency, particularly in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

The most dominant problems identified were limited vocabulary mastery, low self-confidence in speaking, difficulties in understanding English conversations (listening), and weak grammar proficiency. These conditions create obstacles for students in communicating effectively, understanding learning materials, and constructing English sentences both orally and in written form.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the factors influencing these problems consist of both internal and external factors. Internal factors include low learning motivation, lack of self-confidence, anxiety when using English, and limited vocabulary knowledge. Meanwhile, external factors include the lack of an environment that supports the use of English, limited opportunities for English language practice, less varied teaching methods, and the limited use of learning media.

The findings of this study are consistent with Brown's (2004) view that success in language learning is influenced by motivation, self-confidence, the learning environment, and opportunities to use the language in daily life. Furthermore, Nation (2011) emphasizes that vocabulary mastery is the primary foundation for the development of all language skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that the problems faced by Business Administration students in mastering English language skills result from a combination of interconnected factors and require attention from students, lecturers, and educational institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students are expected to be more active in improving their English language skills through independent learning activities, such as reading more English-language articles, listening to English podcasts or videos, and practicing speaking regularly. According to Harmer (2007), continuous and intensive practice can significantly improve language proficiency. Students also need to build greater self-confidence and should not be afraid of making mistakes when using English, as mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

Furthermore, lecturers are expected to implement more interactive and communicative teaching methods so that students have greater opportunities to practice English. According to

Richards and Renandya (2002), language learning that focuses on communicative activities can improve students' language skills more effectively than instruction that primarily emphasizes theoretical knowledge.

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