



FACTORS INHIBITING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A CASE STUDY AT SMP BABUL ISTIQAMAH

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the factors inhibiting English language acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah and to explore the students' efforts to overcome students' problems in learning English. This research employed a descriptive qualitative. The research participants consisted of 50 eighth-grade students. The data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving the students interviews with the English. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying, classifying, and interpreting the emerging themes. The findings revealed five major factors inhibiting English language acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah: limited vocabulary mastery, low self-confidence and speaking anxiety, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, an unsupportive teaching and learning environment, and low learning motivation. These factors affect to students' ability to develop their English language skills effectively. The study also found that the English students' have implemented several efforts to address these problems, including using interactive and student-centered teaching methods, motivating students and building their self-confidence, increasing students' vocabulary and providing more opportunities for language practice, providing individual guidance for students with greater learning difficulties, and creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages active participation without fear of making mistakes or being criticized. These findings suggest that overcoming students' English learning difficulties requires the integration of effective teaching strategies, meaningful language practice, and a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: *English language acquisition, learning difficulties, student's efforts*

INTRODUCTION

English plays a significant role as an international language used in communication, education, technology, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language starting from the early levels of formal education. Students are expected to develop communicative competence in the area of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through meaningful exposure to the language (Brown, 2024).

Language acquisition refers to the subconscious internalization of language through exposure to comprehensible input in acquiring a new language. Krashen (2025) stated that learners progress in acquiring language when they receive input that is slightly above their current competence level. Despite this theoretical framework, however, in many educational language learning programs, including SMP Babul Istiqamah, students encounter significant obstacles that impede the acquisition of English.

In line with this, English language learning is understood as a process of internalizing a language through exposure to comprehensible communication.

Krashen (2025), pointed out that students make progress when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. However, despite this well-established theoretical framework, students at SMP Babul Istiqamah still face significant challenges. These challenges often hinder students' ability to effectively acquire English.

Preliminary observations at SMP Babul Istiqamah show that most students do not reach the goals of learning English because the right conditions for learning are not fully available, both from the students themselves and from their environment. Many students have low motivation, limited vocabulary, and feel nervous or afraid when using English. According to Nani and Fathul (2025) stated that students can learn a language well when they receive clear and understandable input in a relaxed and low-stress situation. However, many students are afraid of making mistakes, so they choose to stay silent in class. Laili and Iqbal (2024) also explained that students need active practice and real communication to develop good language skills. In reality, teaching at the school often focuses more on grammar rules and translation than on speaking and interaction. Students also rarely use English outside the classroom, and learning materials are limited.

Based on the data of students' English scores obtained from the English teacher, the researcher classifies the students into three categories: high, medium, and low achievement. From 50 students, 35 students (40%) are classified as low achievers because they get scores below the minimum passing grade and show difficulties in understanding English materials, especially vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Meanwhile, 9 students (36%) are classified as medium achievers because they are able to understand basic materials but still experience some difficulties in speaking and writing English. The remaining 6 students (24%) are classified as high achievers.

English learning for foreign language learning is a complex process that involves both acquisition (natural exposure) and learning (formal study), as explained by Nana and Putri (2023). It is influenced by various internal and external factors, such as self-confidence, age, exposure, and teaching methods. Students with low confidence, high anxiety, or inhibition often struggle to participate actively, while lack of motivation, limited vocabulary, and poor listening skills further hinder their progress. In addition, external factors like family and rural background, excessive use of the mother tongue, and unequal classroom participation can negatively affect learning outcomes. Effective language acquisition also depends on proper exposure, supportive learning environments, qualified teachers, and adequate teaching facilities, all of which help learners practice and develop their communication skills more successfully.

Mariah (2024) stated that two main factors inhibit English language acquisition: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors come from the students themselves. These include low motivation, lack of interest in learning English, limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes. External factors come from outside the students. These include teaching methods that focus more on grammar and translation than communication, limited learning media and facilities, a lack of English practice outside the classroom, and minimal support from the environment. Students need active practice and real communication to develop their English skills. However, if classroom activities are

not interactive and students rarely use English in daily life, their language development slows. Therefore, both internal and external factors together inhibit English language acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the factors that inhibit English language acquisition among students, particularly by examining both internal and external influences that affect their learning process. The following research questions guide this study: (1) What are the factors inhibiting English language acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah?; (2) What are students' efforts to overcome the problems of English learning here?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive design. (Siregar, M. R., & Hidayat, A.(2024) A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of educational and social phenomena through direct interaction with participants in the field. Through a descriptive design, the study does not measure variables using numerical data or statistical analysis; instead, it focuses on interpreting meaning and presenting a rich, systematic account of the learning challenges faced by the students. Specifically, this study utilizes a case study strategy. The case study approach enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation into the English language mastery process within a specific, time- and place-bound context namely, among eighth-grade students at SMP Babul Istiqamah. The primary focus of this design is to explore and describe in detail the factors that hinder students' mastery of English, as well as the coping strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. The inhibiting factors explored encompass two main dimensions: internal factors and external factors.

This study uses Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a technique of data collection to obtain detailed information regarding students' experiences, perceptions, and opinions related to factor inhibit of learning English. FGD is guided by the researcher as moderator; students are encouraged to share their ideas openly and interact with one another. Data are collected through note-taking and audio recording of students' responses and interactions during the discussion process.

The participants in this study were drawn from a population of 50 eighth-grade students enrolled in two classes at SMP Babul Istiqamah. Using purposive sampling, the researcher selected 50 students who met the study's requirements. This sampling technique was deemed appropriate because the study focused on students with direct experience learning English through Focus Group Discussions. After identifying students who met these criteria, the researcher consulted class attendance lists to facilitate the selection process across the two classes. This procedure ensured that all participants were relevant to the study's objectives.

Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving all 50 eighth-grade students at SMP Babul Istiqamah. The FGD sessions were held in the eighth-grade classroom on June 20, 2026, with each session lasting approximately 45 minutes. To facilitate the discussion, students were divided into small groups, ensuring that every participant had the opportunity to share their experiences, opinions, and perspectives. The FGDs aimed to explore and gain in-

depth insight into the factors hindering English language mastery specifically the internal and external factors influencing the students' learning process. The researcher utilized an FGD guide to direct the discussion and asked follow-up questions as needed to clarify participants' responses and elicit more detailed information. Prior to the sessions, all participants provided their consent to participate, and the discussions were recorded with their permission to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and data analysis processes.

The data in this study were analyzed using triangulation techniques. Triangulation is employed to compare and combine data from various sources, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the findings (Moleong, 2021). In this study, the researcher compared results from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to identify common ideas, differences, and key themes regarding the factors hindering English language acquisition and the students' efforts to overcome them. The researcher first organized the data from the FGDs and interviews, then categorized the data based on the research questions. Subsequently, the researcher compared information from both techniques to ensure the findings were consistent and accurate. Through triangulation, the researcher was able to gain a deeper and more reliable understanding of the participants' experiences and opinions, as the data were derived from multiple techniques.

Data analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Interview data were transcribed verbatim, read repeatedly, and manually coded using Microsoft Word. Researchers identified key statements, developed codes, and grouped related codes into broader categories. These categories were then reviewed and refined to yield five major obstacles related to students' experiences specifically, a lack of vocabulary and the efforts students made to overcome these barriers. Additionally, the data underwent continuous review to ensure that the resulting categories and themes remained consistent and accurately represented the context of the original data.

RESULT

Factors Inhibiting English Language Acquisition At SMP Babul Istiqamah

Based on Table 1, there are five factors inhibiting english language acquisition and student's efforts to overcome hindering students from learning English at SMP Babul, which include:

Table 1

No.	Factors Inhibiting English language acquisition	Students to efforts overcome the problem of english learning
1	Lack of Vocabulary Mastery	Memorizing new vocabulary
2	Learning Anxiety	Using dictionaries Transalation Application .
3	Learning English Only In School	Asking The Teacher And Friends.
4	Low Learning Motivation	Watching English vidieos And Learning To English Songs.
5	Unsupportive Teaching and Learning Environment	Particing Speaking Despite Making Mistakes.

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) tabel 1, findings showed that lack of vocabulary mastery is the first of the main factors inhibiting English language

acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah. Students acknowledged that limited vocabulary makes it difficult for them to understand lessons, express ideas, and communicate in English. Group 1 stated, *"We often do not know the meaning of English words, so we cannot understand the teacher's explanation well."* Group 2 stated, *"When we want to speak English, we cannot continue because we do not know the right vocabulary."* Group 3 stated, *"It is difficult to remember new vocabulary because we rarely use it in daily life."* Group 4 stated, *"We understand the lesson when the teacher explains it, but we quickly forget the vocabulary after class."* Group 5 stated, *"Limited vocabulary makes reading and speaking English very difficult."* These findings indicate that insufficient vocabulary knowledge hinders students from understanding learning materials and communicating effectively in English.

The second is learning anxiety. Students expressed feelings of nervousness and fear when they were required to speak English in front of their classmates. Group 1 stated, *"I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English."* Group 2 stated, *"I feel nervous because my pronunciation may be incorrect."* Group 3 stated, *"Sometimes I remain silent because I am not confident with my English."* Group 4 stated, *"I worry that my classmates will laugh at me if I make mistakes."* Group 5 stated, *"I understand some English, but I do not have enough confidence to speak in class."* These responses demonstrated that anxiety and lack of confidence discourage students from actively participating in English learning activities and reduce their opportunities to practice the language.

The third, limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Most students reported that they only learn and use English during English lessons at school. Group 1 stated, *"We only use English during English class."* Group 2 stated, *"Nobody speaks English at home or in our neighbourhood."* Group 3 stated, *"After school, we rarely read or watch anything in English."* Group 4 stated, *"There are very few opportunities to practice English outside the classroom."* Group 5 stated, *"Because English is not used in our daily activities, we easily forget what we have learned."* These findings indicate that the lack of authentic language exposure outside school limits students' opportunities to strengthen and retain their English language skills.

The fourth, low learning motivation emerged as another important factor affecting students' English language acquisition. Although students recognised the importance of English, many admitted that they lacked enthusiasm to study the language consistently. Group 1 stated, *"English is difficult, so sometimes I do not feel motivated to study it."* Group 2 stated, *"I only study English when there is homework or an examination."* Group 3 stated, *"I lose interest when I cannot understand the lesson."* Group 4 stated, *"I become more motivated when the teacher uses games or interesting activities."* Group 5 stated, *"I want to improve my English, but I do not know how to study effectively by myself."* These findings showed that students' motivation is strongly influenced by their learning experiences, classroom activities, and perceived success in learning English.

The last factor is the teaching and learning environment. Students believed that several classroom conditions reduced their opportunities to acquire English effectively. Group 1 stated, *"The English lesson is too short for us to practice speaking."* Group 2 stated, *"Sometimes the classroom is noisy, so it is difficult to*

concentrate." Group 3 stated, *"We need more videos, games, and interesting learning media during English lessons."* Group 4 stated, *"There are many students in one class, so not everyone has the opportunity to speak English."* Group 5 stated, *"Most classroom activities focus on reading the textbook, while speaking practice is still limited."* These findings indicate that limited instructional time, classroom conditions, insufficient learning media, and limited speaking opportunities contribute to an unsupportive learning environment, which inhibits students' English language acquisition.

Students' Efforts To Overcome The Problems Of English Learning

Students have various efforts to overcome their difficulties in learning English, the first is by improving their vocabulary mastery. Group 1 stated, *"We try to memorize new vocabulary every day so that we can understand English lessons more easily."* Group 2 stated, *"We write new words in a notebook and review them repeatedly."* Group 3 stated, *"When we learn new vocabulary, we try to use it in simple sentences."* Group 4 stated, *"We memorize vocabulary before English class because it helps us understand the lesson."* Group 5 stated, *"Learning new words little by little makes us more confident when reading and speaking English."* These responses indicate that students recognize vocabulary mastery as the foundation of English language acquisition. Memorizing vocabulary enables them to understand classroom instruction, improve reading comprehension, and communicate more effectively in English.

Second, the use of dictionaries and translation applications. Group 1 stated, *"When we do not know the meaning of a word, we immediately open an online dictionary."* Group 2 stated, *"Google Translate helps us understand difficult words and sentences."* Group 3 stated, *"We use dictionary applications on our mobile phones when doing English assignments."* Group 4 stated, *"Translation applications make it easier for us to understand English texts."* Group 5 stated, *"If we cannot understand a lesson, we search for the meaning of unfamiliar words using online dictionaries."* These findings can that digital resources have become important learning tools that enable students to learn independently and overcome vocabulary limitations outside the classroom.

The third, students seek assistance from teachers and classmates when they experience learning difficulties. Group 1 stated, *"We ask the teacher to explain the lesson again if we do not understand."* Group 2 stated, *"We discuss difficult materials with our friends after class."* Group 3 stated, *"Sometimes our classmates explain the lesson using simpler words."* Group 4 stated, *"We are not afraid to ask the teacher when we cannot answer an English question."* Group 5 stated, *"Learning together with friends helps us understand English more easily."* These responses indicated that collaborative learning and teacher support play an important role in helping students solve learning problems and improve their understanding of English.

Furthermore, students reported that they learn English through digital media, especially by watching English videos and listening to English songs. Group 1 stated, *"We watch English videos on YouTube to improve our listening skills."* Group 2 stated, *"English songs help us learn new vocabulary and pronunciation."* Group 3 stated, *"Watching English movies with subtitles makes learning more enjoyable."* Group 4 stated, *"We often use social media to find*

English learning videos." Group 5 stated, "Learning English through videos is easier because we can hear the pronunciation directly." It means that students use authentic digital resources to increase their exposure to English, making learning more interesting while improving listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Finally, the FGD findings revealed that students continue practicing speaking English despite their fear of making mistakes. Group 1 stated, *"We keep trying to speak English even if our grammar is not correct."* Group 2 stated, *"Making mistakes is normal because we are still learning."* Group 3 stated, *"We practice speaking with our friends during English lessons."* Group 4 stated, *"The more we practice speaking, the more confident we become."* Group 5 stated, *"We believe that speaking frequently is the best way to improve our English."* These findings indicate that students understand the importance of continuous speaking practice in developing their communicative competence. Although many students still experience anxiety and lack confidence, they realize that regular practice and a willingness to make mistakes are essential for successful English language acquisition.

DISCUSSION

Factors Inhibiting English Language Acquisition At SMP Babul Istiqamah

Based on the results of data collection, five factors inhibit English language acquisition for students at SMP Babul Istiqamah. These factors include a lack of vocabulary mastery, anxiety, limited English learning outside the classroom, low learning motivation, and limitations in the teaching and learning environment. These factors are interconnected and collectively affect students' ability to acquire English effectively.

Lack Of Vocabulary Mastery

Limited vocabulary mastery was identified as one of the major factors inhibiting English language acquisition among students at SMP Babul Istiqamah. Students experienced difficulty understanding the meanings of English words, which affected their ability to follow classroom instruction, comprehend learning materials, and understand English texts. As a result, their participation in classroom activities was limited. These findings are consistent with Astika and Kurniawan (2021) and Rahmawati and Nurhayati (2022), who reported that inadequate vocabulary mastery is a major obstacle for Indonesian junior high school students in understanding English lessons and actively participating in classroom learning.

Furthermore, limited vocabulary prevented students from expressing their ideas effectively in English. Although they knew what they wanted to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia, they often could not find appropriate English words to convey their thoughts. This situation caused students to hesitate when speaking, reduced their participation in classroom discussions, and lowered their confidence in communicating. Similar findings were reported by Sari and Marlina (2020) and Yuliana and Fitriani (2023), who found that insufficient vocabulary significantly limits students' speaking performance and their ability to communicate ideas fluently.

The findings indicated that vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of English language acquisition. Without adequate vocabulary, students experience difficulties in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills because

vocabulary provides the foundation for language comprehension and communication. This result supports the findings of Sari et al. (2022) and Handayani and Syafrizal (2021), who concluded that continuous vocabulary development through meaningful practice and contextual learning plays a crucial role in improving English proficiency among Indonesian EFL learners.

Learning Anxiety

Anxiety can inhibit English language acquisition at SMP Babul. Students experience feelings of nervousness, fear, and discomfort whenever they are required to communicate in English, particularly during speaking activities in the classroom. This anxiety reduces their willingness to participate actively in learning and limits their opportunities to practice the language. As a result, students are unable to develop their English communication skills effectively because language acquisition requires frequent practice and interaction. However, Prihatini and Isna (2023) stated that the main reason for the anxiety is when speaking English in front of the class, they are afraid of receiving negative comments from the teacher and other students, and they are afraid of being corrected by the teacher in front of other students.

Students' anxiety is mainly related to their fear of making mistakes in pronunciation and grammar. They worry that they will produce incorrect sentences or pronounce words inaccurately when speaking English. This fear makes them hesitant to answer questions, express their opinions, or participate in classroom discussions. Instead of using English, they often choose to remain silent because they believe that making mistakes will lead to negative responses from others.

Another reason for students' anxiety is the fear of being laughed at or corrected by their classmates. The possibility of receiving negative comments or embarrassment lowers their self-confidence and creates psychological pressure during English lessons. Consequently, students become less willing to take risks in using the language, even when they already know the correct answer. This condition prevents them from practicing English consistently, which is an essential process in language acquisition.

Learning English Only In School

The students at SMP Babul Istiqamah have very limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making it one of the major factors inhibiting English language acquisition. Sari and Wahyuni (2022), who found that Indonesian EFL students who receive English exposure only during classroom learning tend to develop their language skills more slowly due to the lack of meaningful interaction with English outside school.

The study also found that students communicate almost entirely in Indonesian or their local language with family, friends, and members of their community. Moreover, they rarely engage with English learning resources such as books, videos, songs, or other digital media outside school. Consequently, the vocabulary and language knowledge learned in class are not reinforced through regular practice and are therefore easily forgotten. These findings are consistent with Pratiwi and Fitriani (2021), who reported that the dominance of the mother tongue limits students' opportunities to practice English, and Nurhayati and Yuliana (2023), who emphasized that students who frequently access English learning resources outside school demonstrate better language proficiency.

Low Learning Motivation

Low learning motivation has a significant influence on students' English language acquisition. Students with low motivation tend to pay less attention during classroom instruction, participate less actively in learning activities, and spend little time practicing English independently. These conditions reduce meaningful language exposure and communicative practice, both of which are essential for successful language acquisition. Similar findings were reported by Yuliana and Imperiani (2023), who concluded that highly motivated students were more willing to participate in classroom interaction, practice speaking, and develop their English proficiency, whereas students with low motivation showed passive learning behaviors and limited engagement during English lessons. Likewise, Sari (2024) found that learning motivation significantly influences students' willingness to communicate in English and encourages them to seek additional learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, the present findings suggest that motivation is closely related to students' confidence and learning persistence. Students who lack motivation are more likely to give up when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or complex grammatical structures. Instead of attempting to solve these difficulties, they often become passive and rely solely on classroom instruction. This finding supports the research of Astuti and Lammers (2024), which reported that motivated learners demonstrate greater persistence in overcoming learning challenges, actively search for learning resources, and practice English more frequently. In contrast, students with low motivation are less likely to engage in independent learning, resulting in slower progress in acquiring English.

Unsupportive Teaching And Learning Environment

The findings of this study indicate that the teaching and learning environment is one of the major factors influencing English language acquisition at SMP Babul Istiqamah. A supportive classroom environment enables students to receive comprehensible input, interact with teachers and classmates, and practice English in meaningful situations. However, the findings reveal that several classroom conditions, including limited learning time and an unconducive classroom atmosphere, restrict students' opportunities to develop their English proficiency. These findings are consistent with Yusnita and Helmanda (2022) and Sari and Fitriani (2021), who reported that a positive classroom environment significantly enhances students' engagement and English learning achievement.

The study found that noisy classroom conditions, limited instructional media, and overcrowded classrooms negatively affect students' English learning. Students experienced difficulties concentrating during lessons, while the limited use of interactive media such as videos, games, and digital resources reduced their motivation and interest in learning English. Moreover, large class sizes limited students' opportunities to participate actively and practice speaking English. These findings support previous studies by Rahman and Mulyadi (2021), Yuliana et al. (2023), Putri and Hidayati (2022), and Sulastris and Anwar (2021), which emphasized that conducive classroom conditions, interactive learning media, and active classroom participation are essential for successful English language acquisition.

Overall, the findings suggest that limited instructional time, inadequate classroom conditions, insufficient use of interactive learning media, and limited opportunities for communication collectively inhibit students' English language acquisition. These results are in line with Fitriani et al. (2023) and Kurniawati and Wahyuni (2022), who concluded that improving classroom management, implementing student-centered learning, utilizing engaging instructional media, and providing more opportunities for communicative practice significantly enhance students' English learning outcomes. Therefore, creating a supportive and interactive learning environment is essential to facilitate more effective English language acquisition.

Students' Efforts To Overcome The Problems Of English Learning

Based on the data collection results, there are five student efforts to overcome problems in English learning at Babul Istqiamah Middle School. These efforts are: memorizing new vocabulary, using dictionary translation applications, asking the teacher and friends, watching English videos and learning English songs, and participating in speaking despite making mistakes.

Memorizing New Vocabulary

During the FGD, students explained that they intentionally memorized English words every day, recorded unfamiliar vocabulary in notebooks, and repeatedly reviewed the words before English lessons. They also attempted to use newly learned vocabulary in simple sentences and classroom conversations. These efforts indicate that students recognize vocabulary mastery as the foundation of English language acquisition because limited vocabulary prevents them from understanding texts, expressing ideas, and participating actively in classroom communication.

Vocabulary memorization plays a significant role in developing students' English proficiency. Students believed that learning vocabulary gradually enabled them to understand teachers' explanations more easily and increased their confidence when reading, writing, and speaking English. Since English is learned as a foreign language in Indonesia, vocabulary acquisition becomes an essential prerequisite for mastering the four language skills. Continuous vocabulary memorization also provides students with greater opportunities to recognize and recall English words during communication, thereby facilitating language acquisition.

The findings are supported by Agustianti, Delfi, and Dahnilsyah (2021) found that students who employed effective vocabulary learning strategies achieved significantly higher vocabulary mastery than those who relied on limited learning strategies. The study concluded that regular vocabulary learning activities, including memorization and repeated review, positively contribute to students' English proficiency. Likewise, Ramli and Rivaldin (2021) reported that systematic vocabulary learning strategies significantly improved junior high school students' vocabulary mastery because students were able to retain and recall vocabulary more effectively during classroom communication.

Similarly, Sofeny and Muamanah (2021) demonstrated that the Keyword Mnemonic technique effectively enhanced young learners' vocabulary memorization and long-term retention. Their study indicated that students who practiced vocabulary memorization through meaningful associations showed better

vocabulary achievement and greater learning motivation. More recently, Zalsabilla, Jefry, and Amin (2024) also found that although students experienced difficulties in memorizing English vocabulary, they attempted to overcome these problems by repeatedly reviewing vocabulary, practicing independently, and applying various memorization strategies. These findings strengthen the present study by showing that vocabulary memorization remains one of the most effective strategies employed by Indonesian learners to overcome English learning difficulties.

Therefore, the findings can be summarized that memorizing vocabulary is not merely a mechanical learning activity but an important strategy for facilitating English language acquisition. By consistently expanding their vocabulary knowledge, students become more capable of understanding English input and expressing their ideas in meaningful communication. Consequently, teachers should continue encouraging vocabulary-building activities through interactive exercises, contextual learning, digital applications, and communicative practice to support students' long-term English language development.

Using Dictionaries Translation Application

Students also use dictionary to overcome difficulty. The findings of this study showed that many students rely on printed dictionaries, online dictionaries, and Google Translate whenever they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or difficult English sentences. Students considered these tools practical because they help them understand classroom materials, complete assignments, and increase their vocabulary. The use of translation applications also enables students to learn independently outside the classroom, especially when immediate assistance from the teacher is unavailable. Through these digital resources, students can access word meanings, pronunciation, and example sentences, which facilitate their understanding of English texts.

The findings indicate that dictionaries and translation applications function as learning aids rather than merely translation tools. Students use them to verify the meanings of unfamiliar words, understand grammatical structures, and improve their comprehension of reading materials. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Iftitah and Kuswardani (2021), which found students perceived Google Translate as a practical tool for understanding English texts and solving vocabulary-related problems. However, the study also emphasized that students should evaluate translation results carefully because automatic translations may contain grammatical inaccuracies or inappropriate word choices. Therefore, translation applications are most beneficial when used together with students' own language knowledge and teacher guidance.

Similarly, research conducted by Sagita, Jamaliah, and Balqis (2021) reported that students had positive perceptions of Google Translate because it is fast, easy to use, and helpful in completing English assignments. The researchers concluded that Google Translate can support English learning by helping students understand vocabulary and sentence meanings more efficiently. Nevertheless, they also suggested that students should not depend entirely on machine translation because excessive reliance may reduce opportunities to develop independent language skills. Instead, translation applications should be used as supporting learning media while students continue practicing reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

This finding indicates that using dictionaries and translation applications has become an important learning strategy for students at SMP Babul Istiqamah. These tools help students overcome vocabulary limitations, improve reading comprehension, and increase their confidence when learning English independently. However, the findings also indicate that digital translation tools should be integrated with teacher guidance, classroom interaction, and regular language practice. By combining technology with communicative learning activities, students can use dictionaries and translation applications effectively while continuing to develop their overall English language proficiency.

Asking The Teacher And Friends

Asking the teacher enables students to receive immediate feedback and clearer explanations. During the learning process, students often experience difficulties in understanding new vocabulary, sentence structures, or classroom instructions. By asking questions, they are able to clarify misunderstandings and strengthen their comprehension of the lesson. Teacher guidance also encourages students to become more confident in expressing their ideas and participating in classroom activities. Effective teacher questioning and feedback provide students with greater opportunities to produce vocabulary and participate actively in English learning, thereby facilitating language development.

Besides seeking help from the teacher, students also rely on their classmates when they encounter learning difficulties. Peer discussion allows students to exchange ideas, explain concepts using simpler language, and solve problems collaboratively. Students often feel less anxious when asking questions to their friends because they are in the same learning situation. Through collaborative learning, they receive both academic and emotional support, making them more confident in learning English. This finding is consistent with Asti and Rosalinah (2022), who found that collaborative discussion helps Indonesian EFL learners construct knowledge together, improve vocabulary acquisition, and increase confidence through interactions among peers.

The findings further indicate that teacher support and peer interaction complement each other in facilitating English language acquisition. Teachers provide instructional guidance and corrective feedback, whereas classmates provide opportunities for discussion and collaborative problem-solving. Such interaction creates meaningful learning experiences because students actively negotiate meaning instead of passively receiving information. Similarly, Herdiana and Munir (2023) reported that teacher scaffolding combined with peer scaffolding significantly improves Indonesian students' vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Their study emphasizes that assistance from both teachers and peers enables students to solve learning problems more effectively while gradually becoming independent learners.

Asking the teacher and friends is an effective strategy for overcoming difficulties in English learning. Through active interaction with teachers and classmates, students gain clearer explanations, immediate feedback, emotional support, and greater confidence in using English. These collaborative learning experiences help students develop their language skills more effectively while creating a supportive learning environment. Therefore, teachers should continue encouraging students to ask questions, participate in collaborative learning

activities, and engage in peer discussions as part of the English learning process.

Watching English Videos And Learning English Songs

The use of English videos and songs also increases students' motivation to learn English because the learning process becomes more enjoyable and less stressful. Consequently, students become more interested in learning and are encouraged to continue practicing independently outside the classroom. This finding supports the study conducted by Oktapiani et al. (2024), which concluded that English-subtitled videos significantly improve learners' vocabulary, listening comprehension, and speaking ability because they provide authentic language exposure in meaningful contexts.

English songs help students memorize new vocabulary and improve pronunciation. The rhythm, repetition, and melody contained in songs make new words easier to remember than vocabulary learned through memorization alone. In addition, students unconsciously practice listening while following song lyrics, allowing them to recognize pronunciation, stress, and intonation more naturally. This finding is consistent with the study by Pratiwi and Yaw-kan (2024), who found that the use of English songs significantly improved Indonesian junior high school students' listening comprehension, vocabulary recognition, and learning motivation. The researchers argued that songs create a relaxed learning atmosphere that encourages students to participate more actively in English learning.

The present findings also reveal that students use digital media as part of their independent learning strategies. Most students stated that they watched YouTube educational videos to learn new vocabulary, understand grammar, and improve pronunciation outside classroom hours. This indicates that students are no longer dependent solely on classroom instruction but actively seek additional learning resources through technology. Similar findings were reported by Hapsari and Adi (2023), who found that Indonesian vocational school students perceived YouTube educational videos as an effective medium for learning vocabulary because the videos improved not only vocabulary mastery but also speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Their study also showed that students considered YouTube an engaging platform that increased their learning motivation.

The findings showed that watching English videos and listening to English songs constitute effective self-directed learning strategies for overcoming English learning difficulties. These activities increase students' exposure to authentic English, enrich vocabulary, improve listening comprehension and pronunciation, and strengthen learning motivation. Since one of the major problems identified in this study is limited exposure to English outside the classroom, integrating digital media into daily learning provides additional opportunities for students to practice English independently. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to incorporate videos and songs into classroom instruction while motivating students to continue using these digital resources outside school as part of continuous English language acquisition.

Participing Speaking Despite Making Mistakes

The findings of this study revealed that one of the most important strategies adopted by students to overcome difficulties in learning English is continuing to practice speaking despite making mistakes. This finding is consistent with recent Indonesian research. Fadillah, Hamid, and Halim (2025) found that fear of making

mistakes is one of the main causes of low self-confidence and limited participation in English speaking activities. However, their study also reported that students who received continuous encouragement from teachers and peers gradually became more willing to speak English even when they were unsure of their accuracy. Positive classroom support and regular speaking opportunities helped students reduce their anxiety and improve their engagement in English learning.

The present findings are also supported by Prayogo and Hikmat (2024), who reported that Indonesian EFL learners experience speaking anxiety due to fear of making mistakes, low English proficiency, and lack of preparation. Nevertheless, students who actively practiced speaking and adopted positive coping strategies, such as peer support and positive thinking, were better able to reduce their anxiety. The researchers concluded that regular communication practice enables students to build confidence gradually and increases their willingness to participate in classroom speaking activities. Similar conditions were found at SMP Babul Istiqamah, where students recognized that continuous speaking practice was necessary even though they still experienced nervousness and hesitation.

Tyana, Maulina, and Setyobudi (2022) reported that students' speaking anxiety is commonly caused by limited vocabulary, fear of incorrect pronunciation, and grammatical errors. Their review suggested that frequent speaking practice, classroom presentations, English conversations, and exposure to authentic English materials can significantly reduce students' anxiety and improve their confidence. This supports the findings of the present study, in which students believed that continuous practice helped them become more confident and gradually improved their English speaking skills.

This finding showed that practicing speaking despite making mistakes is an effective strategy for overcoming barriers to English language acquisition. Students who consistently engage in speaking activities gradually develop greater confidence, reduce their fear of negative evaluation, and improve their communicative competence. Therefore, English teachers should continue providing communicative classroom activities and establish a supportive learning environment where making mistakes is accepted as a normal and valuable part of the language learning process. Such an environment encourages students to use English more frequently and contributes positively to successful English language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of data from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), it can be concluded that students at SMP Babul have demonstrated commendable initiative and independence (student agency) in overcoming obstacles to learning English. To compensate for linguistic limitations and manage anxiety, the students rely on five key strategies: independently memorizing new vocabulary, utilizing dictionaries and digital translation apps, seeking assistance from teachers and peers, expanding language exposure through audiovisual media (such as music and videos), and summoning the courage to practice speaking despite making mistakes.

Nevertheless, research findings and discussions confirm that independent student efforts cannot stand alone. Students' successful mastery of English relies heavily and is directly proportional to the efforts and teaching strategies employed



by teachers. Student motivation and study habits outside the classroom must be complemented by a transformation of in-class teaching methods. Teachers are expected to move away from conventional "reading-based" methods and instead begin integrating interactive technologies, such as smartboards and audiovisual learning media.

Furthermore, to bridge the gap between students' passive knowledge and active language proficiency, the learning process needs to extend beyond the classroom walls. Through relevant, structured take-home assignments and the creation of a flexible, interactive learning environment, students are afforded greater time and space to engage with the English language. Thus, the collaboration between students' independent initiative and teachers' pedagogical innovation becomes the key to overcoming obstacles and sustainably enhancing students' English language competence.

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