
LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR NEW STUDENT AT IAI AL-AZIS

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ABSTRACT

Language proficiency plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic success and personal development in higher education. As a global lingua franca, English proficiency is an essential skill for students worldwide, including those at Islamic higher education institutions such as IAI AL-AZIS. Recognizing the importance of English, IAI AL-AZIS integrates English language courses as a core component of its curriculum to enable students to connect with broader academic and professional networks. However, learning English as a second language (ESL) poses unique challenges for students in non-English speaking countries, influenced by cultural differences, limited exposure, and psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes or low self-esteem. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of freshmen at IAI AL-AZIS toward learning English as a second language, focusing on their attitudes, motivations, and challenges. By analyzing these perceptions, the research seeks to identify key factors affecting their ESL learning experience and to align teaching strategies with students' needs and expectations. The findings will contribute to enhancing the institution's efforts to create a supportive and effective learning environment, ultimately promoting students' language proficiency and academic excellence.

Keywords: *English As A Second Language (ESL), Student Perceptions, Higher Education.*

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, language proficiency is essential for shaping students' academic performance and personal growth. As English remains a global language, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill for students around the world. In institutions such as Islamic colleges and universities, such as IAI AL-AZIS, mastery of English is often a key requirement in the curriculum, allowing students to connect with wider academic and professional networks.

Recent research has shown that students' perceptions of language learning, especially in countries where English is not the primary language, greatly affect their motivation, attitude and success in learning English as a second language (ESL). Many students experience difficulties in learning English due to factors such as cultural differences, limited language exposure, and psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes or low self-esteem. These challenges can affect their learning experience and academic performance in English.

IAI AL-AZIS, committed to fostering academic excellence, offers English language courses that are a core part of its educational offerings. Understanding how new students perceive learning English as a second language is crucial to recognizing potential challenges and designing effective teaching methods. By researching these perceptions, institutions can create a more supportive learning environment that meets the needs and expectations of its students.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how freshmen at IAI AL-AZIS perceive learning English as a second language. The results will provide valuable insights into the factors that influence their attitudes, motivations and challenges, and how these perceptions align with the broader goals of ESL education at the institution.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research aims to find meaning or a deep understanding of the problem at hand. Data collection was carried out using interviews, observations, and questionnaires (Questioner). The three techniques were carried out over a period of time at each data collection.

According to David Williams (1995) Qualitative research involves collecting data in natural settings, using natural methods, and is conducted by individuals or researchers who have a genuine interest in the subject. This definition highlights that qualitative research emphasizes natural environments, natural methods, and is performed by those who have an inherent concern for the topic (J. Moleong, Lexy 2007: 5). From the above definition, what is observed in this study is the management of the management of sports recreation rides at Wisata Water Blaster Semarang as the object of research and the management of sports recreation rides and visitors at the place as research subjects (Firdiansyah, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of English in IAI AL-AZIS Student Learning

English as a second language has an important role in the student learning process at IAI AL-AZIS. Mastery of English is not only limited to the lecture process, but also affects other things in learning. In this case, English is a means of obtaining information from various sources, including scientific journals, textbooks, and articles, some of which are written in English. Therefore, English proficiency will help students expand their knowledge.

There have been many studies and researches on English language teaching and learning in Indonesia. Various factors are deemed crucial for the success of English language teaching. These factors encompass teachers, students, curriculum, teaching materials, and learning facilities. Discussing students as a crucial learning element inevitably involves the topic of motivation. Student motivation is considered a key factor in determining the success

of their learning. Research on motivation in foreign language learning indicates that learner motivation is the primary driver of success in acquiring a foreign language (Santosa, 2017).

Attitudes and Motivations of New Students at IAI AL-AZIS towards Learning English as a Second Language

The attitude of new students at IAI AL-AZIS towards learning English varies. Some students see English as an important skill to support their studies and careers, due to the increasingly globalized world of work. However, there are also those who find it difficult to learn this language, especially those who have an educational background with limited foreign language teaching. Social environmental factors also play a role, where those who come from backgrounds that are less supportive of the use of English tend to have a more negative attitude towards learning this language.

Motivation for learning English according to (Santosa, 2017). The study of motivation in learning and acquiring a second (foreign) language has been largely influenced by Gardner's theory, which categorizes motivation into two types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation involves students having a positive attitude towards the speakers of the target language and their culture. In contrast, instrumental motivation is driven by the learners' perception that mastering the target language is essential for achieving significant life goals, such as obtaining a good education or securing a future job.

One key finding from Gardner's research is that integrative motivation significantly impacts language acquisition. The higher the level of integrative motivation, the more effective the foreign language acquisition. Moreover, students with integrative motivation tend to achieve better language acquisition compared to those with instrumental motivation. Students with integrative motivation often exhibit positive and conducive attitudes and behaviors. They tend to be more active in class, more enthusiastic, hardworking, persistent, and continuously strive to master the foreign language. On the other hand, students who are instrumentally motivated show characteristics that are less supportive of the language learning process. They see foreign language solely as a tool to fulfill practical needs (e.g. to get a good job), not as a means to get closer to the culture of other nations. Therefore, they tend to learn "just enough". Once their needs are met, their interest or enthusiasm for learning fades. Because they are not encouraged to continue improving themselves, their command of the language is very limited and shows the general characteristics found in pidgin languages.

Several factors influence attitudes and motivation according to (Santosa, 2017). Factors that make learning English difficult for students include the low ability of speaking skills due to unfamiliarity, the unwillingness of some students to speak in English, even they tend to shut up when invited to speak. In fact, if seen from the mastery of vocabulary, students should already be able to speak even in very simple sentences. In addition, many students find it difficult to speak English so that they cannot communicate fluently.

English learning at IAI AL-AZIS is very important in preparing students for their work and continuing education. Students who master English have a greater chance of competing in the international job market. Therefore, motivation to achieve academic and career goals encourages students to overcome challenges in learning English. Overall, the attitudes and motivations of new students at IAI AL-AZIS are influenced by many factors. Understanding this can help the campus in designing more effective learning to support English language acquisition among students.

How to Learn a Second Language (English) Effectively

To learn English effectively, it is important to set clear learning goals and make a structured plan, such as setting study times each day and focusing on specific aspects such as listening, speaking, reading or writing. Improving listening skills can be done by watching movies or listening to podcasts in English, which also helps enrich vocabulary. Vocabulary is one of the important factors in learning English. In the vocabulary learning process, one does

not only need to know the meaning of a particular word, but all aspects of the word also need to be understood. According to Schmitt (1997), there are seven levels of word understanding: knowledge of word frequency in the language, knowledge of word register, knowledge of collocation, knowledge of morphology, knowledge of semantics, knowledge of polysemy, and knowledge of word equivalents in the native language. When learning a new word, some language learners struggle to select the appropriate word. Additionally, when they aim to convey a specific meaning, they may find it challenging to choose the correct word. (Ortalisje & Metboki, 2020).

Practicing speaking regularly, either through study groups or self-recording, can improve confidence and communication skills. In addition, reading reading materials in English such as books or articles, as well as using apps to expand vocabulary, is very effective for strengthening language comprehension. To improve writing skills, writing journals or essays in English can improve grammar and sentence structure. Learning grammar gradually, by practicing it in a conversational context, is also very important. Using technology such as language learning apps or taking online classes can speed up the learning process. Finally, patience and consistency in learning, as well as accepting mistakes as part of the process, will help in mastering English effectively.

Student Challenges and Solutions in English Language Learning on Campus

Challenges and solutions faced by students in learning English according to (Nursyahida et al., 2024). Speaking in English is a major challenge for students because in the learning process, they are required to be able to communicate in English fluently and correctly. The ability to speak, read and write in English is an important part of this learning. However, many students face difficulties in speaking English due to the limited vocabulary they have and the lack of use of English outside of academic contexts or daily life. As a country where English is not the primary language, Indonesia faces various challenges in mastering English language skills, one of which is the lack of opportunities to use English as a means of communication outside the academic environment. Students are used to communicating in Indonesian, and this habit makes them feel that communicating in English is a difficult thing to do. In learning English, vocabulary mastery is very important, and students will find it difficult to understand learning materials if their vocabulary is limited.

Based on the challenges faced, the solution for students is to have the enthusiasm to learn and not be lazy, and not hesitate to ask questions if there are things that are not understood from the lecturer's explanation. In addition, students need to increase their vocabulary, because the more vocabulary they master, the easier it is to communicate using English with anyone. Continuing to practice speaking English by getting used to communicating in English in the daily environment and taking English language training, such as tutoring or TOEFL tests, is also very important. Students must also motivate themselves to continue learning English, because this ability will open up various opportunities, such as making it easier to get a job. Support and motivation from lecturers is also needed to increase students' enthusiasm in learning English.

CONCLUSION

Learning English as a second language on the IAI AL-AZIS campus has a very important role in improving students' communication skills, both in the academic and professional fields. Although many new students face various challenges, such as difficulties in speaking or understanding grammatical structures, learning English remains an important part of preparing students to compete in the global world. Students' attitudes and motivation in learning English are influenced by a number of factors, such as previous experience, the quality of teaching provided, and social support from the campus environment. Therefore, it is important for the campus to adjust teaching methods to be more effective in enhancing

students' English proficiency.

Suggestion

As advice, new students at IAI AL-AZIS are advised to practice speaking and listening to English more often, through daily conversations, media such as movies or music, as well as participating in extracurricular activities that involve English. Setting clear goals in learning English is also very important, such as improving speaking skills or increasing vocabulary. In addition, students are advised to utilize various learning resources, such as language apps and other media, to further explore grammar. Students also need to be confident and accept mistakes as part of the learning process, as this will accelerate their ability to master English. With the right approach, learning English at IAI AL-AZIS can be more effective and enjoyable.

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