Enhancing English Learning in an Islamic University Context: Identifying and Addressing Key Challenges

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Abstract  
This study explores the factors contributing to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning at the Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI) and identifies strategies to overcome these challenges. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive research design, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation with five fifth-semester students from the English Department. The findings reveal six critical barriers: lack of practice, vocabulary deficiency, environmental factors, lack of interest, low self-confidence, and pronunciation challenges. These factors significantly hinder students' English language proficiency, which is essential for their academic and professional success. The study suggests targeted interventions, including increasing practice opportunities, enhancing vocabulary instruction, creating supportive learning environments, tailoring materials to students' interests, building confidence, and improving pronunciation practice. The implications of these findings highlight the need for comprehensive and context-specific strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Future research should further investigate these areas, considering alternative interpretations and the long-term impact of these factors on language proficiency. By addressing these challenges, educators and policymakers can enhance English language education and support students in achieving their full potential.

Keyword: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language learning difficulties, Indonesian Islamic university

INTRODUCTION  
The ability to communicate effectively in English is crucial for students at all educational levels, including elementary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. As an international language, English facilitates scientific development, sociopolitical communication, economic transactions, and cultural exchanges, thereby enhancing students' academic and professional prospects. Recognizing its importance, government regulations...
mandate English as a compulsory subject across various fields of study in higher education institutions (Megawati, 2016). This mandate underscores the significance of English proficiency in equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate a globalized world.

In the context of Indonesian Islamic universities, the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) face unique challenges and opportunities. These institutions aim to integrate religious and secular education, preparing students to engage with both local and international communities. However, despite the institutional emphasis on English proficiency, students' mastery of the language remains suboptimal, particularly in private tertiary institutions. This discrepancy highlights a significant issue: the persistent low performance in English language exams from junior high through to tertiary education, with minimal improvement over time (Megawati, 2016; Santosa, 2017; Hermayawati, 2010). Understanding and addressing the factors contributing to this phenomenon is critical for improving educational outcomes.

English language proficiency is not only a subject of academic importance but also a vital tool for daily communication. For students in Indonesian Islamic universities, mastering English opens up numerous opportunities, including access to global scientific literature, participation in international conferences, and enhanced career prospects in various fields. The ability to communicate using English offers numerous benefits, including scientific development, sociopolitical communication, economic advancement, cultural exchange, and everyday interactions. Therefore, English is a mandatory subject for all students in various fields of study within these institutions, as mandated by government regulations. Mastery of English is crucial for academic success and career advancement (Megawati, 2016). According to Frank Smith, "One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way." This quote emphasizes the transformative power of multilingualism, particularly in the context of English proficiency.

However, despite its recognized importance, the reality on the ground reveals a concerning phenomenon: the low English proficiency among students in private tertiary institutions. Individual interest in learning English varies, with some students expressing a strong dislike for the language. This is evident in the consistently low exam results from junior high school to university, indicating a lack of significant improvement (Megawati, 2016; Santosa, 2017; Hermayawati, 2010). This persistent issue calls for a deeper examination of the factors contributing to students' difficulties in mastering English.

Several challenges impede students' English language proficiency. In speaking, students often struggle with vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, and grammar, making it difficult to initiate and sustain conversations. For instance, students may find it challenging to start a conversation due to limited vocabulary. Their hesitation to speak English is further compounded by a lack of knowledge about proper pronunciation, leading to reduced confidence. Additionally, grammatical errors can hinder effective communication, causing students to feel anxious about making mistakes.

Listening comprehension presents another significant challenge. Students often find it difficult to understand native speakers due to the perceived speed of their speech and unfamiliar accents. This difficulty is exacerbated by limited vocabulary, which restricts students' ability to interpret spoken words accurately. They may struggle to follow conversations or discussions, especially when they do not have the opportunity to use dictionaries or other reference tools in real-time.

In contrast, writing skills, while still challenging, tend to be less problematic than speaking and listening. When asked to write in English, students often have access to examples or illustrations that guide them in structuring their writing. Additionally, they can use dictionaries or translation tools to assist with vocabulary and grammar. Despite these aids, students still report difficulties in writing, particularly with grammatical accuracy.
The persistent difficulties experienced by students in mastering English necessitate ongoing efforts by educational institutions and English language instructors to devise effective strategies for enhancing English language learning. Both institutions, as academic rule-makers, and lecturers, who teach English courses, must continually seek solutions to address these challenges. Effective English language education is crucial not only for academic success but also for preparing students to engage with the broader global community.

The context of this study is an Indonesian Islamic university, where students face unique challenges in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). These institutions aim to provide a balanced education that integrates religious and secular knowledge, preparing students to contribute to both local and global communities. The dual focus on religious and secular education adds a layer of complexity to English language learning, as students must navigate different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Several factors contribute to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning in this context. Firstly, the educational environment and resources available to students may vary significantly between private and public institutions. Private tertiary institutions may face constraints in terms of funding, access to qualified English instructors, and availability of learning materials. These constraints can impact the quality of English language instruction and the level of support provided to students.

Secondly, students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English play a crucial role in their language acquisition (Farida et al., 2024). In an Islamic university setting, students' religious and cultural backgrounds may influence their perceptions of the importance of English. While some students may view English proficiency as essential for their academic and professional development, others may prioritize religious studies or have limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

Thirdly, the teaching methodologies and instructional strategies used in English language courses can significantly affect students' learning experiences. Traditional teaching methods that focus on rote memorization and grammar-translation may not effectively address students' needs or promote communicative competence. Innovative and student-centered approaches, such as task-based learning and communicative language teaching, may be more effective in engaging students and enhancing their language skills.

This study aims to explore the specific factors contributing to students' challenges in learning English and propose actionable solutions to mitigate these issues. By examining the unique context of an Indonesian Islamic university, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the barriers and facilitators of English language learning in this setting.

By addressing these questions, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance English language education and support students in achieving their full potential. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader discourse on English language learning in EFL contexts, offering insights that can inform educational practices and policies in similar settings.

Obstacles in Learning English for Indonesian Students

Learning English, an international language of significant importance, poses various obstacles for Indonesian students. Despite the intense competition and educational demands that encourage students to develop their English skills, the process is fraught with challenges. English is not indigenous to Indonesia, necessitating substantial effort and practice for students to understand and apply it effectively in daily life.

Several studies have identified common obstacles faced by Indonesian students in learning English. These obstacles often result in suboptimal learning outcomes and hinder the overall effectiveness of English education. Three critical language elements that play an
essential role in supporting the four main language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

1. Pronunciation

   Pronunciation is vital for vocabulary development as it involves distinguishing between sounds that form words. Mispronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and unclear communication. According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), pronunciation is a significant barrier for EFL learners, affecting their ability to convey clear information. Indonesian students often struggle with English pronunciation due to differences in phonetic systems between English and their native languages.

2. Vocabulary

   Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to language learning. The larger the vocabulary a student possesses, the easier it is to learn and use the language. Thornbury (2002) emphasizes that vocabulary is a critical component in language learning, and a lack of sufficient vocabulary is a common challenge among EFL learners. For Indonesian students, building a robust vocabulary is essential for improving their English proficiency.

3. Grammar

   Grammar, or the structural rules governing language use, is another critical element. According to Celce-Murcia (2015), grammar involves a systematic description of language structures and usage patterns. Different linguistic backgrounds can influence students' ability to learn English grammar. For instance, Indonesian students, accustomed to their regional languages' grammatical structures, may find English grammar challenging.

4. Internal and External Factors Affecting English Learning

   Learning obstacles can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' attitudes towards learning, motivation, concentration, study habits, and confidence. Harmer (2007) highlights that students' intrinsic motivation significantly impacts their language learning success. Factors such as self-confidence, ability to process learning materials, and study habits also play crucial roles in learning outcomes.

   External factors encompass the educational environment, including teacher quality, social environment, school curriculum, and infrastructure. Brown (2007) notes that effective language learning requires a supportive environment facilitated by qualified teachers, adequate resources, and a well-structured curriculum. In many Indonesian schools, limitations in these areas contribute to the difficulties students face in learning English.

Overcoming Students' Difficulties in Learning English

   Addressing the challenges faced by students in learning English requires a multifaceted approach. Darsiana (2018) identifies several strategies to overcome these difficulties:

1. Creating a Comfortable and Supportive Environment

   An optimal learning environment is essential for effective language acquisition. A supportive environment reduces anxiety and encourages active participation. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that a low-stress environment enhances language learning by lowering the affective filter, thereby allowing more input to reach the language acquisition device.

2. Memorization and Vocabulary Expansion
Regular memorization of new vocabulary is crucial. Schmitt (2000) argues that vocabulary learning is incremental and requires repeated exposure and practice. Students should be encouraged to expand their vocabulary through various activities, such as reading, listening to English media, and using flashcards.

3. **Frequent Practice**
   Consistent practice is vital for language proficiency. Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of producing language (speaking and writing) in addition to receiving input (listening and reading). Students should engage in regular practice, including speaking English with peers, participating in language clubs, and using English in everyday situations.

4. **Utilizing Technology and Media**
   Modern technology offers numerous tools for language learning. Apps, online courses, and language learning software can provide interactive and engaging ways to practice English. Warschauer and Healey (1998) highlight the potential of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to enhance language instruction.

5. **Addressing Resource Limitations**
   Schools must address resource limitations, such as inadequate teaching materials and lack of language laboratories. Providing teachers with necessary resources and professional development opportunities can improve the quality of English instruction. Additionally, establishing well-equipped libraries and language labs can create a more conducive learning environment.

**METHOD**

**Research Design**
This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this research as it aims to provide an in-depth explanation of the challenges faced by students in the fifth semester of the English Department at Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI). This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

**Participants**
The research was conducted in the Faculty of Letters, English Department at UMI, located on Jl. Urip Sumohardjo, Makassar. The study spanned two weeks and involved five participants, specifically fifth-semester students from the English Department. These students were selected based on their active participation in the English courses offered at the university, ensuring that they had substantial exposure to the learning environment and relevant experiences to share.

**Instruments**
The study utilized a combination of qualitative data collection instruments, including observations, interviews, and documentation. These tools were selected to gather comprehensive data on the students' difficulties in learning English.

1. **Observation**
Observations were conducted to gain direct insights into the learning environment and
conditions in the field. This method involved the researcher observing the participants' interactions, behaviors, and the overall classroom dynamics during English lessons.

2. **Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to gather detailed information about their experiences and challenges in learning English. The interviews included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their thoughts freely. The interview questions focused on identifying specific difficulties encountered and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

3. **Documentation**

Documentation provided supplementary data to support the observations and interviews. This included collecting relevant documents such as personal journals, photos, and other materials that could provide additional context and insights into the participants' learning experiences.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process in this study followed the Interactive Analysis Model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2019), which includes four main steps: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

1. **Data Collection**

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. All recorded and observational data were transcribed and organized. The researcher identified key themes and patterns related to students' difficulties in learning English.

2. **Data Reduction**

Data reduction involved systematically selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the collected data. This process helped in organizing the data into manageable units by categorizing and coding the information related to the students' challenges and strategies for overcoming them.

3. **Data Presentation**

The reduced data were then presented in a structured format to facilitate understanding and interpretation. The primary mode of data presentation was narrative text, which allowed the researcher to describe the findings in detail. The narrative text provided a coherent and comprehensive account of the students' difficulties and the contextual factors influencing their learning experiences.

4. **Drawing Conclusions**

The final step involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings. The researcher synthesized the information gathered from the data collection and analysis stages to formulate conclusions. These conclusions addressed the research questions and provided insights into the factors contributing to students' difficulties in learning English and potential solutions.

By employing this qualitative descriptive research design and utilizing a combination of data collection and analysis techniques, the study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by EFL students in an Indonesian Islamic university context. The findings will inform educators and policymakers on effective strategies to enhance English language learning outcomes for students in similar settings.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study was conducted on October 14, 2023, at the Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI). The research involved observations, interviews, and documentation with five fifth-semester students from the English Department of the Faculty of Letters at UMI. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method, enabling the researcher to describe and interpret the collected data.

1. The Factors that become students’ Difficulties in Achieving Effective English Learning.

Based on the interviews conducted with the five participants, several factors were identified as contributing to students' difficulties in learning English effectively at UMI:

a. Lack of Practice

Participant 1 highlighted the lack of practice as a significant factor affecting English learning. The participant noted that not regularly revisiting and practicing the learned material hindered progress. Participant 1 (A)(B): "In my opinion, the lack of practice, such as not reviewing the material that has been learned, and also difficulty remembering vocabulary because there are often changes in a single word."

b. Vocabulary Deficiency

Participants 1 and 2 identified a lack of vocabulary as a critical obstacle. They emphasized that the constant emergence of new terms and slang made it challenging to build and retain a robust vocabulary. As stated by Participant 1 (B): "In my opinion, the lack of practice, such as not reviewing the material that has been learned, and also difficulty remembering vocabulary because there are often changes in a single word." And Participant 2 (B)(D): "In my opinion, students' lack of interest in certain materials makes them quickly bored and tired when learning English. I find it difficult to memorize vocabulary because new terms and slang always appear."

c. Environmental Factors

Participants 3 and 5 pointed out that the lack of an English-speaking environment posed a considerable challenge. The absence of peers and surroundings that encourage English usage makes practicing the language difficult. Participant 3 (C)(E) stated "In my opinion, what makes learning English difficult is the lack of an environment that understands and uses English, making it difficult to use English. Another factor is self-confidence, as sometimes we are afraid or not confident in using English for fear of making mistakes or not matching the grammar." While Participant 5 (F) mentioned "A supportive environment is very important because it is difficult to learn or interact in English if the environment is not supportive."

d. Lack of Interest

Participant 2 mentioned a lack of interest in certain English materials as a demotivating factor. This disinterest led to boredom and reduced engagement with the learning process. Participant 2 (B)(D): "In my opinion, students' lack of interest in certain
materials makes them quickly bored and tired when learning English. I find it difficult to memorize vocabulary because new terms and slang always appear."

e. **Low Self-Confidence**

Participants 3 and 4 highlighted low self-confidence as a significant barrier. They expressed fear of making mistakes, particularly regarding grammar and pronunciation, which hindered their willingness to use English. • **Participant 3 (C)(E):** "In my opinion, what makes learning English difficult is the lack of an environment that understands and uses English, making it difficult to use English. Another factor is self-confidence, as sometimes we are afraid or not confident in using English for fear of making mistakes or not matching the grammar.". And **Participant 4 (E)(F):** "Not confident in using English because there are still many pronunciation and grammar mistakes, so it's embarrassing if wrong."

f. **Pronunciation Challenges**

Participant 4 identified pronunciation difficulties as a barrier to effective English learning. Mispronunciation can lead to misunderstandings and embarrassment, discouraging students from practicing the language. **Participant 4 (E)(F):** "Not confident in using English because there are still many pronunciation and grammar mistakes, so it's embarrassing if wrong."

The table below summarizes the factors identified by the participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>FACTORS DIFFICULTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Practice (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P1,P2</td>
<td>Vocabulary (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>P3,P5</td>
<td>Environmental (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Not Interested (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>P3,P4</td>
<td>Not Confident (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Pronunciation (F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from this research were that the total number of participants was five people. Participant 1 said that the factor that causes students difficulties in learning English is lack of practice. Two participants, namely participant 1, participant 2, have the same opinion that the factor that causes students difficulties is lack of vocabulary. The two participants, namely participant 3, and participant 5, had the same opinion that the factors that make it difficult for students to learn English effectively are environmental factors. Participant 2 has an opinion about the factors that cause difficulties for students, namely the factor of not being interested in certain material in English. Two participants, namely Participant 3 and Participant 4, give the same opinion that the factor that causes difficulties for students is the factor of not being confident, and Participants, namely participant 4, stated that the factor that caused students difficulties was the factor in pronouncing word.

2. **The Way of Overcoming Students’ Difficulties in Achieving Effective English Learning.**
On this occasion we conducted interviews with five Students in fifth semester of English department of faculty of letters at the Indonesia Muslim University. The participants also provided insights into how they overcome these difficulties.

a. **Expanding Vocabulary**
Participants 1 and 2 addressed vocabulary deficiencies by setting daily vocabulary goals and using sticky notes to memorize new words. They also utilized language learning applications like Duolingo to practice vocabulary in a gamified manner. **Participant 1 (A)(B)** said "My way to overcome it is by determining the number of vocabulary words to memorize each day, including the changes in each word, and setting aside a little time every day to practice my English." While **Participant 2 (A)(B)** stated "I overcome it by making sticky notes of vocabulary words I want to memorize and sticking them on the wall of my room. I also practice using applications so I can learn wherever I am, such as playing games in English, for example, Duolingo."

b. **Increasing Practice**
Participants 1, 2, and 3 emphasized the importance of consistent practice. They engaged in daily English practice through various means, such as conversations with friends, listening to English songs, watching movies, and playing English-language games. **Participant 1 (A)(B):** "My way to overcome it is by determining the number of vocabulary words to memorize each day, including the changes in each word, and setting aside a little time every day to practice my English." **Participant 2 (A)(B):** "I overcome it by making sticky notes of vocabulary words I want to memorize and sticking them on the wall of my room. I also practice using applications so I can learn wherever I am, such as playing games in English, for example, Duolingo." And **Participant 3 (B)(C):** "To overcome it, I look for friends who also want to learn English so we can practice conversation all the time. Because learning without practice cannot make us fluent and confident in using and learning English. Sometimes I also practice using English by listening to songs, watching movies, and using many learning media on YouTube."

c. **Finding a Training Partner**
Participants 3 and 5 highlighted the benefits of finding a training partner. Practicing with a friend who is also learning English can significantly enhance conversational skills and build confidence. **Participant 3 (B)(C):** "To overcome it, I look for friends who also want to learn English so we can practice conversation all the time. Because learning without practice cannot make us fluent and confident in using and learning English. Sometimes I also practice using English by listening to songs, watching movies, and using many learning media on YouTube." **Participant 5 (C):** "Studying with friends who also want to learn English so we can practice together and not be shy."

d. **Boosting Learning Motivation**
Participant 4 suggested that increasing motivation to learn English is crucial. They recommended setting personal goals, seeking inspiration from successful English learners, and understanding the long-term benefits of English proficiency. **Participant 4 (D)(E):** "The way is by increasing the motivation to learn English, which is important to learn and has good prospects in the future, so we are more motivated to study. Also, by increasing self-confidence, we will find it easier to learn. No need to be afraid of making mistakes in using English."
c. Enhancing Self-Confidence

Participant 4 also mentioned the importance of boosting self-confidence. They suggested practicing speaking in front of a mirror, recording oneself, and seeking feedback from peers to improve pronunciation and reduce anxiety. **Participant 4 (D)(E):** "The way is by increasing the motivation to learn English, which is important to learn and has good prospects in the future, so we are more motivated to study. Also, by increasing self-confidence, we will find it easier to learn. No need to be afraid of making mistakes in using English."

The table below summarizes the strategies identified by the participants:

**Table 2. Strategies Used by the Students.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>OBSTACLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>P1, P2</td>
<td>Expand Vocabulary (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3</td>
<td>Practice More (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>P3, P5</td>
<td>Looking for a Training Partner (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Increase Learning Motivation (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Increase Self Confidence (E)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the research results, it was found that the way to overcome students' difficulties in learning English effectively is to increase vocabulary, increase practice, look for partners, increase learning motivation, and increase self-confidence. This was expressed by 5 participants studying in the 5th semester of the English Literature Faculty at the Indonesian Muslim University. Participant 1 and participant 2 said that the way to overcome students' difficulties was to increase their vocabulary. Participant 1, participant 2 and participant 3 said that the way to overcome student difficulties is by increasing practice. Participant 3 and Participant 5 revealed that the way to overcome student difficulties is to find training partners. Participant 4 revealed that the way to overcome student difficulties is to increase learning motivation. The last way to overcome student difficulties is to increase self Confidence which was expressed. The last obstacle was the lack of training which was expressed by participant 4.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the factors contributing to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning at the Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI) and to explore strategies for overcoming these challenges. This research sought to answer the following questions: What factors contribute to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning? How can these difficulties be overcome to improve students' English language proficiency?

One significant finding was that a lack of practice impedes students' progress in learning English. This is consistent with theories emphasizing the importance of regular practice in language acquisition. Practice helps internalize language skills and improves fluency and accuracy. The implication of this finding is critical: without consistent practice, students are unlikely to achieve the proficiency required for academic and professional success. Educators should, therefore, incorporate more practice opportunities within and outside the classroom to enhance students' language skills.

Another critical factor identified was vocabulary deficiency. The participants noted that the constant emergence of new terms and slang made it challenging to build and retain a
robust vocabulary. This finding aligns with Schmitt's (2000) assertion that vocabulary acquisition is incremental and requires repeated exposure. Addressing this gap is essential, as a rich vocabulary is foundational for effective communication. Language instructors should employ strategies such as vocabulary lists, flashcards, and language games to facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

The lack of an English-speaking environment was also highlighted as a significant barrier. Participants expressed that without a supportive environment, it is difficult to practice and use English. This finding is supported by Hughes et al.'s (2007) emphasis on the importance of a conducive learning environment. Creating an immersive English-speaking environment, both within educational institutions and through extracurricular activities, can significantly enhance language learning outcomes.

The lack of interest in certain English materials emerged as another obstacle. Harmer (2007) suggests that intrinsic motivation is crucial for language learning success. This finding indicates that educators need to make learning materials more engaging and relevant to students' interests. Tailoring content to students' preferences can increase engagement and improve learning outcomes.

Low self-confidence was identified as a barrier that prevents students from using English. According to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, anxiety and low self-esteem can block language acquisition. This finding highlights the need for supportive teaching practices that build students' confidence. Providing positive feedback, creating a safe learning environment, and encouraging risk-taking in language use can help overcome this barrier.

Pronunciation difficulties were also noted as a significant issue. Celce-Murcia (2015) emphasize that accurate pronunciation is crucial for intelligibility and confidence. This finding suggests that pronunciation practice should be an integral part of English language instruction. Utilizing tools such as language labs, pronunciation software, and peer feedback can help improve students' pronunciation skills.

The findings of this study address several critical gaps in the field of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education. By identifying specific factors that hinder effective English learning, this research provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers. The study highlights the need for more practice opportunities, enhanced vocabulary instruction, supportive learning environments, engaging materials, confidence-building strategies, and pronunciation practice. Implementing these strategies can help bridge the gap between current educational practices and the needs of EFL students.

The results of this study are consistent with findings from similar studies in the field. For instance, previous research by Thornbury (2002) and Adolphs & Schmitt (2003) also emphasizes the importance of vocabulary acquisition in language learning. Additionally, studies by Harmer (2007) and Krashen (1982) highlight the significance of motivation and self-confidence in language acquisition. This study adds to the existing literature by providing specific insights from the context of an Indonesian Islamic university.

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights, it is important to consider alternative interpretations. For instance, the lack of practice identified by participants could be influenced by factors such as limited access to resources or inadequate teaching methods. Similarly, vocabulary deficiency might be attributed to students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Considering these alternative interpretations can provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by EFL students.

Future research should explore these alternative interpretations and examine other factors that may influence English learning, such as cultural attitudes towards language learning and the role of technology in language acquisition. Additionally, longitudinal
studies could provide deeper insights into how these factors evolve over time and their long-term impact on language proficiency.

In conclusion, this study identifies several key factors that contribute to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning at UMI and suggests strategies for overcoming these challenges. By addressing these issues, educators and policymakers can enhance the quality of English language education and support students in achieving their full potential. The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on EFL education and provide a foundation for future research in this field.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and understand the factors contributing to students' difficulties in achieving effective English learning at the Muslim University of Indonesia (UMI) and to explore strategies for overcoming these challenges. The findings highlight several critical barriers, including lack of practice, vocabulary deficiency, environmental factors, lack of interest, low self-confidence, and pronunciation challenges. These factors significantly impede students' ability to achieve proficiency in English, which is essential for their academic and professional success.

The importance of these findings lies in their implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. By understanding the specific challenges faced by students, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to enhance English language learning outcomes. Implementing strategies such as increasing practice opportunities, enhancing vocabulary instruction, creating supportive learning environments, tailoring materials to students' interests, building confidence, and improving pronunciation practice can address these barriers and support students in achieving their full potential (Arham & Ariani, 2020).

Future research should continue to explore these areas, considering alternative interpretations and examining additional factors that may influence English learning. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how these factors evolve over time and their long-term impact on language proficiency. Moreover, investigating the role of cultural attitudes towards language learning and the integration of technology in language acquisition could further enrich our understanding of effective EFL education.

Overall, this study contributes to the broader discourse on EFL education by providing specific insights from the context of an Indonesian Islamic university. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive and context-specific strategies to address the challenges faced by EFL students. By addressing these issues, we can enhance the quality of English language education, support students in their academic and professional pursuits, and ultimately contribute to the development of a more globally competent and linguistically proficient workforce.

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