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FACTORS INFLUENCING SHARIA ECONOMICS STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AT IAIN PONTIANAK

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the various factors influencing the English language proficiency of Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak. A qualitative research methodology is used in this study to investigate the variables influencing these students' English language ability. The findings indicate that motivation, exposure to English, and teaching methods significantly impact students' proficiency levels. Motivation can be intrinsic, driven by personal interest, or extrinsic, such as the need to pass exams and better career prospects. Adequate language exposure outside the classroom, including reading, listening, and speaking in English, is essential for skill development. However, limited opportunities for practice outside of class impede their progress. Traditional teaching methods focusing on grammar and vocabulary are helpful for exams but do not prepare students for real-life communication. Additionally, motivational programs designed to link language learning with students' personal and professional goals are recommended to foster greater engagement and learning outcomes. Implementing these strategies is expected to support more effective English skill development, equipping students for future academic and professional success. This comprehensive approach emphasizes the need for interactive learning experiences and broader language use beyond the classroom.

Keywords: Factors, English proficiency, Sharia Economics' students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The English language is widely disseminated globally, where it is the major medium of cross-communication in international/intercultural contexts (Su, 2021). The issue addressed in this article is the low English proficiency among Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak, which is crucial for accessing global knowledge and professional opportunities. Despite its importance, many students face significant challenges in mastering English, potentially hindering their academic success and career advancement. This study aims to identify factors affecting English proficiency, such as motivation, language exposure, and teaching methods, to develop effective teaching strategies that support students' language development and proficiency improvement. By understanding these challenges, effective teaching strategies can be designed to support students' language development.

Understanding the factors that affect students' English language proficiency is vital for designing effective teaching and learning strategies. Previous research has shown that various elements, including motivation, language exposure, and teaching methods, play a significant role in language learning success. The success of learning depends on whether or not the learners are motivated (Jacob Filgona1* & D. M. Gwany1 and A. U. Okoronka, 2020). There are two motivations in language learning. They are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic (driven by personal satisfaction) and extrinsic (influenced by external rewards), is a key factor in determining how well a student can learn a new language. Without sufficient motivation, even the best teaching strategies may fall short. Intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation have been widely studied, and the distinction between them has shed important light on both developmental and educational practice (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Exposure to the target language is another important factor. Students need consistent and meaningful exposure to the language they are learning to develop their proficiency. This means not only engaging with the language in the classroom but also

outside of it, through reading, listening, and speaking activities. For many students at IAIN Pontianak, opportunities to practice English outside the classroom are limited. This can slow down their progress and make it harder for them to become proficient. Moreover, students are exposed most to the English language when they are at school or with the use of different media compared to when they are at home or communicating with friends (Domingo, 2020). Teaching methods also have a significant impact on language learning. Traditional approaches that focus on grammar and vocabulary drills may help students pass exams but often do not prepare them to use English in real-life situations. More interactive and communicative teaching methods, such as role-plays, group discussions, and task-based activities, can be more effective in helping students develop practical language skills. However, many schools and universities, including IAIN Pontianak, still rely on traditional methods that may not fully engage students or meet their learning needs.

This study aims to investigate the factors affecting the English language proficiency of Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak. By understanding these factors, educators and administrators can develop better strategies to support students' language learning. The study focuses on three key areas: motivation, exposure to English, and teaching methods. Using a sample of 90 students from three different classes, this research combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by students and potential solutions for improving their English skills.

(Fitriana, 2014) stated that many factors hinder the quality of English teaching and learning: uninteresting teaching style; insufficient time for communicative activities; grammar-driven teaching; unreasonable time-management; unclear instructions; large class sizes; teachers' limited ability in classroom organization; unequal students' English levels; inadequate lesson preparation; teachers' limited use of teaching aids and technology; and students' lack of confidence in using oral English in class activities. So, understanding the factors that influence English language proficiency is crucial for developing effective learning strategies. The literature on language learning emphasizes three main areas that significantly impact proficiency: motivation, language exposure, and teaching methods.

In either case, this first form of amotivation is based in a felt lack of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Motivation is one of the most researched aspects in the field of language learning. It is considered a powerful driving force that determines the effort and persistence a learner puts into acquiring a new language. Motivation can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the learner, driven by personal interest or a love for the language itself. Students who are intrinsically motivated often engage more actively in learning activities, as they find them enjoyable and rewarding. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors such as grades, career prospects, or societal pressure. Extrinsic motivation can be effective in the short term, combining it with intrinsic motivation leads to more sustained learning outcomes. For students in the Sharia Economics program at IAIN Pontianak, motivation may come from both sources—some may be driven by the prospect of better career opportunities, while others may struggle with finding personal interest in learning English. The teacher’s role emerged as one of the essential elements of student motivation, and yet the study did not reveal the strategies that would take care of the people who are essential in inspiring learning (Čėglytė, 2022).

Another critical factor that affects language proficiency is exposure to the target language. *Krashen's (2022)* input hypothesis suggests that the more learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input, the more likely they are to acquire the language effectively. This exposure needs to go beyond the classroom to include real-life language use. Exposure to a second language happens mostly at school and with the use of technology or when learners read books and other reading materials written in the second language or by listening to music (Domingo, 2020). Environments, such as IAIN Pontianak, face limited opportunities for language exposure.

Students who have access to English outside the classroom—through reading books, watching English-language media, or engaging in conversations—tend to show better language development.

An effective teacher knows several methods, some teacher-directed and others learner-directed. From among these methods, a teacher selects the one method or combination of methods most likely to achieve a particular lesson's objectives with a particular group of students (Naqvi, 2012). The way English is taught plays a significant role in how effectively students learn the language. Traditional methods, which often focus on grammar, vocabulary, and rote learning, may not adequately prepare students for real-world communication. Methods are beneficial for foundational learning; they do not promote fluency or active use of the language. Communicative language teaching (CLT) has been highlighted as a more effective approach for developing practical language skills. This method encourages activities such as role-plays, discussions, and task-based learning, which help students build confidence and use the language more spontaneously. Incorporating interactive methods leads to higher engagement and better retention of language skills compared to more passive learning approaches. The integration of technology into teaching methods has also gained attention in recent years. Digital tools and language-learning apps, such as Duolingo, Grammarly, and conversation platforms like Zoom, have been shown to enhance language practice and exposure.

II. METHODOLOGY

Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching is designed to provide a detailed account of major twentieth-century trends in language teaching (Guthrie, 1988). The study employed a qualitative case study approach involving 90 Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak. This method provided in-depth insights into student experiences with English learning. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling to reflect different proficiency levels, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of varied challenges. Semi-structured interviews, each lasting 30–45 minutes, focused on motivation, teaching methods, and exposure to English outside the classroom.

The primary method for data collection was semi-structured interviews, which allow for flexibility in exploring participants' responses while ensuring consistency in the main topics discussed. The interviews were conducted in-person and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes each. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses on key areas:

- Motivation for Learning English: Questions focused on understanding what drives students to learn English, including intrinsic factors (personal interest, enjoyment) and extrinsic factors (career prospects, academic requirements).
- Teaching Methods and Classroom Experience: Participants shared their perceptions of teaching methods, classroom activities, and how these support or hinder their language development.
- Exposure to English Outside the Classroom: Interviews included questions about how often students use or encounter English outside academic settings and the types of activities they engage in (e.g., media consumption, conversations, self-study).

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns and themes related to the factors affecting English language proficiency among Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak.
The key findings included:

- Motivation: Most students were driven by extrinsic motivations, such as the need to pass exams or improve career prospects. Few students showed strong intrinsic motivation, which affected their engagement with learning.

- Limited Exposure: The majority of students indicated that they rarely used English outside of their classes, limiting their ability to practice and reinforce what they learned.
- Teaching Methods: Students felt that traditional teaching methods, which focused heavily on grammar and vocabulary, were helpful for tests but did not prepare them for real-life communication. They appreciated classes that included discussions or group work, which helped them build confidence.

These three factors work together and synergistically to affect teaching satisfaction(Guo & Zeng, 2023). The thematic analysis revealed that motivation, exposure, and teaching methods are crucial factors that influence English language proficiency. The data suggested that students need more interactive and practical learning experiences, increased opportunities for language use outside the classroom, and motivation strategies that connect English learning to their personal and professional goals.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews with Economics students at IAIN Pontianak highlighted several key findings regarding the factors that affect their English language proficiency. These findings are summarized in the main themes below:

Motivation

The study revealed that motivation is a significant factor influencing English proficiency. Most students reported being driven by extrinsic motivations such as the need to pass exams and the prospect of better job opportunities. While these motivations were effective for short-term learning, they did not foster a deep, sustained interest in the language. Only a minority of students demonstrated intrinsic motivation, such as a genuine interest in English or a desire to access global resources. These students were more engaged in learning activities and reported a higher level of comfort with using English.

Limited Exposer

Limited exposure to English outside the classroom was identified as a major challenge. Most students mentioned that they only practiced English during class hours, and there were few opportunities for language use in their daily lives. Occasional activities, such as watching English videos or using social media, provided some exposure, but these were not consistent or structured enough to support significant language development. The lack of English-speaking environments and practice outside of academic settings limited students' ability to improve their fluency and comprehension. In addition, Victori and Lockhart (1995) and Wenden (2001) claim that the exposure to EE activities enhances the cognition of foreign language learning and encourages the students to proceed learning(Bala, 2020).

Teaching Method

Students expressed mixed views on teaching methods. While they appreciated learning grammar and vocabulary, many felt that the focus on traditional, teacher-centered instruction did not adequately prepare them for real-world communication. Students who experienced more interactive methods, such as group discussions and presentations, reported feeling more confident in using English. These methods encouraged participation and practical language use, which was perceived as more effective in developing speaking and listening skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that English language proficiency among Sharia Economics students at IAIN Pontianak is primarily influenced by motivation, exposure to English, and teaching methods. While extrinsic motivation, such as the need to pass exams and improve career prospects, was prevalent, it lacked the sustainability of intrinsic motivation, which leads to more meaningful engagement. Limited exposure outside the classroom hindered language practice, affecting students' ability to develop fluency and comprehension.

Traditional grammar-focused teaching methods, while useful for exams, did not sufficiently prepare students for real-life communication. Addressing these challenges requires a shift towards more interactive, practical learning experiences and increased opportunities for language use outside the classroom. Implementing these strategies can enhance English proficiency and better equip students for academic and professional success.

To achieve lasting improvements in English proficiency, it is crucial for educational institutions to foster a supportive language learning environment that integrates both academic and real-world applications of English. This can be accomplished by encouraging students to engage in extracurricular activities, such as English-speaking clubs or online language exchanges, and by utilizing digital tools to provide diverse language exposure. Additionally, aligning the curriculum with students' future career goals may increase their intrinsic motivation, creating a more purposeful and engaging learning experience. Through these efforts, students are likely to become more confident and competent English speakers, prepared to excel in their academic and professional endeavors.

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