

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. **Research Background**

English has become an essential international language, playing a pivotal role in global communication across multiple sectors, including education, technology, business, diplomacy, and tourism. Its dominance as a global lingua franca makes it a critical subject in the educational systems of many countries, including Indonesia. In response to the increasing demands of globalization, the Indonesian government has integrated English into the national curriculum, extending from elementary education to higher education institutions. The primary goal is to ensure that students acquire sufficient English proficiency to support academic success, career advancement, and cross-cultural communication. However, despite years of instruction, many students at the university level continue to face challenges in mastering the English language, particularly in practical communication and the application of language skills in real-life academic or professional contexts. This gap between instructional exposure and actual competence raises important concerns about the effectiveness of English language education in Indonesian higher education.

The process of learning English as a foreign language at the tertiary level remains complex, involving not only the mastery of vocabulary and grammar, but also the development of the four essential language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In practice, university students often focus more on reading comprehension and grammar due to their relevance in academic texts and exams, while productive skills such as speaking and listening receive less attention. This imbalance can result in students who are able to understand written English but struggle to communicate effectively in spoken interactions or comprehend spoken discourse. Additionally, English grammar presents inherent difficulties, such as the use of various verb tenses, irregularities, and syntactic structures that differ

considerably from Bahasa Indonesia, leading to confusion and frequent errors among learners.

Beyond linguistic challenges, psychological and cultural factors play a significant role in influencing students' English learning experiences. University students may suffer from low self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation, or anxiety, particularly during presentations or discussions in English. These affective barriers often hinder active participation and reduce opportunities to practice the language in meaningful settings. Culturally, English incorporates idiomatic expressions, humor, and context-specific meanings rooted in Western traditions, which are often unfamiliar to Indonesian learners. This cultural distance can impede comprehension and limit students' ability to engage deeply with English-language content.

Moreover, external factors such as limited access to authentic language resources, insufficient exposure to English speaking environments, and traditional lecture-based teaching methods further hinder English language acquisition at the university level. Many higher education institutions still rely on teacher-centered approaches that emphasize memorization and grammar drills, rather than fostering student-centered, communicative learning. The lack of opportunities to interact with native or proficient speakers, the minimal use of multimedia tools, and the absence of immersive learning contexts contribute to a learning environment that does not fully support language development. In rural or less-developed areas, these issues are often magnified by limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified English lecturers, and minimal access to English enrichment programs or technological support

The challenges described above were evident during the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher with students of the 2nd semester in the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa. Many students were found to struggle with basic language components such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. A significant number of them had

entered the program with weak or limited English foundations from their previous educational background, making it difficult to keep up with the demands of university level English instruction. Some students also expressed low motivation to learn English, perceiving it as a difficult subject, particularly when they lacked practical opportunities to use the language in everyday contexts. In addition, several external challenges were identified, such as limited access to learning resources like dictionaries and digital tools, time constraints during class sessions, and the lack of varied or engaging instructional methods. These findings highlight the urgent need to examine the specific types of difficulties students face and the internal and external factors that hinder their English learning process.

Given these challenges, this research aims to conduct a thorough analysis of the English learning difficulties faced by 2nd semester students in the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa. By identifying the nature and causes of these difficulties, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform more effective teaching strategies and educational interventions. Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to the improvement of English language instruction in teacher education programs and support students in becoming more competent and confident users of English in both academic and real-world contexts. For this reason, the study is entitled “An Analysis of Students’ Difficulties in Learning English in the 8th Cohort of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa.”

B. Research Question

This research was proposed to study the following problem:

1. What difficulties do student face in learning English in the Second semester of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang?

2. What factors that causing Students' Difficulties In Learning English in the Second semester of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang?

C. Research Purpose

Based on problem statement, the researcher finds the objective of this research as follow:

1. To find out what difficulties do student face in learning English in the 2nd semester of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang
2. To find out what factors that causing students' difficulties in learning English in the 2nd semester of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang

D. Research Significance

This research is expected to give contributions and provide some informative inputs as follows:

1. **For the English Education Program**, it is expected that this study can contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning quality in the program, in line with the goals of producing competent English educators. The findings may also support curriculum evaluation and development efforts to meet the National Education Standards.
2. **For lecturers**, it is expected that this study can help lecturers identify the learning difficulties experienced by students, so that they can apply more effective teaching methods and provide appropriate support to address those challenges.

3. **For students**, this study is expected to help them become more aware of the factors affecting their learning process and motivate them to improve their academic outcomes and English proficiency.
4. **For researchers**, this study is expected to enrich their knowledge, experience, and insight as prospective educators, especially in understanding learning difficulties in English language education.
5. **For STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang**, this research is expected to serve as an additional reference for future in-depth studies. The results may also become a valuable source for students and lecturers in writing theses and improving the teaching and learning of English

E. Limitation of the Research

This research has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to students from the 8th cohort of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa, which means the findings may not be generalizable to other cohorts, study programs, or institutions. Second, the data collected through interviews and questionnaires may be subject to subjective bias, as some students might feel uncomfortable or hesitant to openly discuss their learning difficulties. Additionally, due to time constraints, this study was unable to observe students' progress or changes in learning behavior over an extended period.

F. Terminology

1. English

English is an international language that serves not only as a native or official language in certain countries, but also as a global medium of communication across nations, cultures, and disciplines. It functions as a bridge for international exchange in education, business, technology, and diplomacy. As a dynamic and evolving language, English adapts to social

and cultural developments, making it one of the most widely learned and used languages in the world today.

2. Learning

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, or competencies through experience, study, or teaching. It may occur formally through instruction or informally through observation and interaction.

3. Difficulties

Difficulties refer to challenges, obstacles, or problems that make a task, process, or situation harder to achieve, understand, or manage. In the context of this research, difficulties refer to the internal and external barriers students face in learning English effectively.

4. Second Semester Students of the English Education Program at STKIP
Persada Khatulistiwa

This refers to the group of students currently enrolled in the second semester of the English Education Program at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa. These students are the main subjects of this research, and their experiences, perspectives, and challenges in learning English form the focus of the study.