



GENERAL ENGLISH FOR ALL: PERSPECTIVES OF NON-ENGLISH EDUCATION MAJORS ON CLASSROOM LEARNING

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Abstract: English proficiency has become an essential competence for university students across academic disciplines in the era of globalization. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of non-English education major students regarding classroom learning in General English courses, identify the challenges they encounter during the learning process, and examine how teaching methods influence their engagement and participation. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving ten non-English major students from various departments at a private university in Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed three major themes. First, students perceived General English as a valuable skill that supports academic achievement, career development, and access to global information. Second, students experienced several challenges, including limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, fear of making grammatical mistakes, and speaking anxiety. Third, interactive and learner-centered teaching methods, such as group discussions, role-playing, presentations, and collaborative projects, positively influenced students' engagement and participation. Lecturer support and constructive feedback were also found to enhance students' confidence in using English. The study concludes that although non-English major students recognize the importance of English, their learning experiences are influenced by both linguistic and psychological factors. Therefore, creating supportive and interactive learning environments is essential for promoting engagement and improving English language learning outcomes.

Keywords : General English, non-English major students, student perceptions, classroom engagement, English language learning.

Abstrak: Kemampuan berbahasa Inggris telah menjadi kompetensi penting bagi mahasiswa dari berbagai disiplin ilmu di era globalisasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif mahasiswa non-program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris terhadap pembelajaran di kelas General English, mengidentifikasi tantangan yang mereka hadapi selama proses pembelajaran, serta mengkaji pengaruh metode pengajaran terhadap keterlibatan dan partisipasi mereka di kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan sepuluh mahasiswa non-bahasa Inggris dari berbagai program studi di sebuah universitas swasta di Indonesia. Partisipan dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling, sedangkan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga tema utama. Pertama, mahasiswa memandang General English sebagai keterampilan yang penting untuk mendukung keberhasilan akademik, pengembangan karier, dan akses terhadap informasi global. Kedua, mahasiswa menghadapi berbagai tantangan, seperti keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan pengucapan, ketakutan melakukan kesalahan tata bahasa, serta kecemasan saat berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris. Ketiga, metode pembelajaran yang interaktif dan berpusat pada mahasiswa, seperti diskusi kelompok, role-play, presentasi, dan proyek kolaboratif, terbukti meningkatkan keterlibatan dan partisipasi mahasiswa. Dukungan dosen serta umpan balik yang konstruktif juga membantu meningkatkan kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa non-bahasa Inggris

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menyadari pentingnya kemampuan berbahasa Inggris, pengalaman belajar mereka dipengaruhi oleh faktor linguistik dan psikologis. Oleh karena itu, lingkungan pembelajaran yang interaktif dan suportif perlu dikembangkan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan mahasiswa dan keberhasilan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris..

Kata kunci : General English, mahasiswa non-bahasa Inggris, persepsi mahasiswa, keterlibatan kelas, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

The role of English in the twenty-first century has expanded far beyond its traditional function as a foreign language. English is now widely recognized as a global lingua franca that facilitates communication across national, cultural, and professional boundaries. In the context of globalization, digital transformation, and international labor mobility, English proficiency has become an increasingly valuable asset for university graduates regardless of their academic disciplines. The ability to communicate effectively in English enables students to access international academic resources, participate in global knowledge exchange, and compete in an increasingly interconnected workforce (Rose & Galloway, 2023).

In higher education, the demand for English proficiency is no longer limited to students majoring in English language studies. Students from non-English disciplines such as Engineering, Nursing, Accounting, Information Technology, and Business Administration are also expected to possess adequate English communication skills. These competencies are particularly important because many professional sectors require employees to interact with international partners, understand technical documentation written in English, and participate in global professional networks (Mulyani & Suryani, 2024).

Within the Indonesian context, universities have responded to these demands by incorporating General English courses into the curricula of non-English departments. General English courses are designed to equip students with fundamental communicative competence that supports both academic success and professional development. However, despite the growing recognition of English as a critical employability skill, many Indonesian university students continue to face substantial challenges in learning English effectively (Rahman et al., 2023).

Research consistently demonstrates that non-English major students often experience difficulties related to limited vocabulary knowledge, inadequate exposure to authentic English communication, low speaking confidence, and high levels of language anxiety (Fitriani et al., 2022; MacIntyre, 2021). These challenges frequently result in passive classroom behavior, reluctance to participate in discussions, and reduced willingness to communicate in English. Such conditions are particularly problematic because active participation is widely regarded as a key factor contributing to successful language acquisition (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

Recent developments in second language acquisition research suggest that successful English learning is influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by psychological and social factors. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes the influence of emotions such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation on language acquisition. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance

of social interaction and collaborative learning in facilitating cognitive development. More recent studies have extended these perspectives by emphasizing student engagement, willingness to communicate (WTC), and collaborative learning as essential determinants of successful English language learning (Peng & Woodrow, 2024).

In addition, contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT) scholarship advocates for the adoption of communicative and learner-centered approaches that prioritize meaningful interaction rather than grammatical accuracy alone (Richards, 2023). Interactive activities such as role-playing, project-based learning, collaborative tasks, and peer discussions have been shown to increase learner engagement and reduce language anxiety among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Sari & Yusuf, 2024).

Although numerous studies have examined motivation, anxiety, and communicative language teaching, relatively few qualitative investigations have focused specifically on how non-English major students perceive their classroom learning experiences in General English courses. Most existing studies rely on quantitative surveys that may not fully capture students' lived experiences, emotions, and interpretations of classroom interactions. Consequently, there remains a need for in-depth qualitative research that explores how students construct meaning from their English learning experiences and how these experiences influence their participation and engagement in classroom activities.

Addressing this gap is particularly important in Indonesian higher education, where General English courses continue to play a significant role in preparing graduates for national and international employment opportunities. Understanding students' perspectives can help educators design more effective learning environments that respond to learners' needs, expectations, and challenges.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the perspectives of non-English education major students regarding classroom learning in General English courses. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do non-English education major students perceive General English classroom learning?
2. What challenges do students encounter during the learning process?
3. How do teaching methods influence students' engagement and participation in the classroom?

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to English language teaching in higher education. Theoretically, the study enriches understanding of learner perspectives within the context of General English instruction for non-English majors. Practically, the findings may provide valuable insights for English lecturers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions seeking to improve the effectiveness of General English programs in Indonesian universities..

LITERATURE REVIEW

General English in Higher Education

General English (GE) courses are designed to develop learners' overall communicative competence in English through the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In higher education contexts,

GE serves as a foundation for students from various academic disciplines who require English for academic and professional purposes. Unlike English for Specific Purposes (ESP), General English emphasizes broad language proficiency that can be applied across diverse contexts (Richards, 2023).

Recent studies indicate that General English courses play a significant role in enhancing students' employability and global competitiveness. As English continues to function as an international language, university graduates are increasingly expected to communicate effectively in multicultural and professional settings (Rose & Galloway, 2023). Consequently, universities have strengthened their General English programs to meet the evolving demands of globalization and the labor market.

Student Engagement in English Language Learning

Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, participation, emotional involvement, and commitment that learners demonstrate during the learning process. According to Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), engaged students are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, interact with peers, and achieve better learning outcomes.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, engagement is influenced by several factors, including teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, motivation, and learner confidence. Recent research suggests that interactive and collaborative learning activities can significantly increase student engagement by providing meaningful opportunities for communication and participation (Sari & Yusuf, 2024). Furthermore, supportive learning environments encourage learners to take risks in using English without fear of making mistakes.

Challenges Faced by Non-English Major Students

Non-English major students often encounter various obstacles in learning English. One of the most frequently reported challenges is limited vocabulary knowledge, which affects learners' ability to understand texts and communicate effectively. Additionally, students commonly experience language anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of negative evaluation when speaking English in front of others (Fitriani et al., 2022).

Research by Rahman et al. (2023) found that insufficient exposure to authentic English communication outside the classroom contributes to students' difficulties in developing communicative competence. Similarly, MacIntyre (2021) emphasizes that anxiety can reduce learners' willingness to communicate, thereby limiting opportunities for language practice and improvement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two major theories. First, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) argues that emotional variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety influence language acquisition. A low affective filter facilitates language learning, whereas high anxiety can hinder students from fully engaging in classroom activities.

Second, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction in learning. Knowledge is constructed through collaborative activities and communication with more knowledgeable peers or instructors. Within General English classrooms, collaborative learning activities provide opportunities for

students to practice language skills and develop confidence through social interaction.

These theoretical perspectives provide a framework for understanding how students perceive classroom learning experiences and how instructional practices influence their engagement and participation..

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Qualitative research was selected because it allows researchers to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations in depth. The design was particularly suitable for investigating students' perceptions of General English classroom learning.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted individually and lasted approximately 20–30 minutes each. Interview questions focused on students' perceptions of General English learning, challenges encountered during the learning process, and experiences with various teaching methods. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure participants could express their opinions comfortably and accurately. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). The analysis involved six stages:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts.
2. Generation of initial codes.
3. Identification of potential themes.
4. Review and refinement of themes.
5. Definition and naming of themes.
6. Production of the final report.

To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review summaries of their interview responses. Additionally, peer debriefing was employed to ensure the credibility and consistency of data interpretation.

The population of this study consisted of non-English education major students enrolled in General English courses at a private university in Indonesia during the 2024/2025 academic year. The students came from various departments, including Business Administration, Information Technology, Accounting, and Nursing.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had direct experience with General English classroom learning. Ten students were selected based on the following criteria: (1) enrollment in a General English course, (2) willingness to participate in interviews, and (3) representation of different academic disciplines. The participants included six female students and four male students aged between 18 and 22 years. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain rich and relevant information from participants who could provide detailed insights into their learning experiences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed three major themes related to students' perceptions of General English classroom

learning.

Theme 1: Positive Perceptions of General English as a Valuable Skill

Most participants perceived English as an important skill for academic and professional development. Students believed that English proficiency would enhance their future career opportunities and enable them to access international information sources.

Several participants stated that General English courses helped them improve their confidence in using English and broadened their understanding of global communication. These findings support Rose and Galloway's (2023) argument that English has become a critical competency in the globalized workforce.

Theme 2: Challenges in Learning English

Participants reported several difficulties during the learning process. The most common challenges included limited vocabulary, fear of making grammatical mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and anxiety when speaking in front of classmates.

Many students indicated that they lacked opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. As a result, they felt hesitant to participate in discussions and oral presentations. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that language anxiety and limited exposure negatively affect students' willingness to communicate (Fitriani et al., 2022; MacIntyre, 2021).

The findings also support Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that anxiety can hinder language acquisition by reducing learners' confidence and participation.

Theme 3: The Influence of Interactive Teaching Methods on Engagement

Participants expressed strong preferences for interactive learning activities such as group discussions, role-playing, presentations, and collaborative projects. They reported that these activities created a more enjoyable learning environment and encouraged active participation.

Students noted that lecturer support and constructive feedback increased their confidence to communicate in English. Interactive activities also provided opportunities to learn from peers and practice language skills in meaningful contexts.

These findings align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. They also support recent research demonstrating that communicative and learner-centered approaches contribute to higher levels of engagement and participation among EFL learners (Sari & Yusuf, 2024; Richards, 2023).

Overall, the findings suggest that while non-English major students recognize the importance of English, they continue to face linguistic and psychological barriers. Effective teaching strategies that prioritize interaction, collaboration, and supportive classroom environments can help overcome these challenges and foster greater student engagement.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

This study explored the perspectives of non-English education major students regarding classroom learning in General English courses at a private university in Indonesia. The findings revealed that students generally viewed General English as an important subject that contributes to both academic success and future career opportunities. Participants recognized the significance of English proficiency in accessing global information, improving employability, and communicating in international contexts.

Despite these positive perceptions, students encountered several challenges during the learning process. Limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, fear of making grammatical mistakes, and speaking anxiety emerged as the most common obstacles. In addition, insufficient opportunities to practice English outside the classroom further hindered students' confidence and willingness to communicate.

The study also found that teaching methods played a crucial role in influencing students' engagement and participation. Interactive and learner-centered activities, such as group discussions, role-playing, presentations, and collaborative projects, were perceived positively by students because they created a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. Lecturer encouragement and constructive feedback further enhanced students' confidence and motivation to participate actively in classroom activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that while non-English major students are aware of the importance of English, their learning experiences are significantly influenced by both psychological factors and instructional practices. Therefore, creating interactive, supportive, and communicative learning environments is essential for improving student engagement and facilitating successful English language learning.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed.

First, English lecturers should implement more interactive and student-centered teaching approaches that encourage active participation and meaningful communication. Activities such as collaborative projects, role-playing, pair work, and group discussions can help reduce language anxiety and increase students' confidence in using English.

Second, lecturers should provide continuous encouragement and constructive feedback to create a supportive classroom atmosphere. A positive learning environment can help students overcome their fear of making mistakes and improve their willingness to communicate in English.

Third, universities should provide additional opportunities for English practice beyond the classroom, such as English clubs, speaking communities, language exchange programs, and extracurricular activities. These opportunities can help students develop their communicative competence through authentic language use.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies involving larger and more diverse participant groups from different universities. Further research may also examine the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies in enhancing engagement, reducing language anxiety, and improving English proficiency among non-English major students.

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