



# Psychological Challenges Experienced by EFL Student in Learning English

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>psychology, challenges, EFL student, learning English.</i></p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.22437/jssh.v7i2.23916">http://dx.doi.org/10.22437/jssh.v7i2.23916</a></p> <p><b>Received:</b> February 23, 2023</p> <p><b>Reviewed:</b> December 3, 2023</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> December 4, 2023</p>	<p><i>This study aimed to look into the psychological challenges EFL students faced while learning English and the strategies they used. This research was conducted using a quantitative descriptive research design with a questionnaire as the instrument. The respondents of this research were 75 students from one of the public junior high schools in Kota Jambi. The data obtained were analyzed using statistics and descriptive methods. Students face three psychological challenges: self-belief, motivation, and Anxiety. For the learning strategy, there were eight indicators of the learning strategy that students used in learning English; 6 of them were the learning strategy that they used, such as cognitive strategies (underlining and memorizing) and behavioral strategies (test-taking, help-seeking, homework management, and note-taking skills).</i></p>

## 1. Introduction

The English language is one of the essential languages in this world. We communicate through speech. Time goes fast, and the earth has developed; everyone needs to make a more significant relationship. One of the ways is with language. We need one language that can represent the whole language in this world. And that the English language's role is. English is a universal language; we can relate to each other through this language. Even though with different countries, religions, cultures, and even races.

But only some countries in this world are categorized as English-speaking countries. In non-English speaking countries, which is the first language is not English. Learning the English language is a challenging thing to do. Because learning a language is difficult, every English foreign language (EFL) learner might find challenges and difficulties. Now, most of the country is put English as a compulsory subject at school. This is expected to prepare the student to be in a global situation.

English is also not Indonesian's mother tongue or first language in Indonesia. Since 2006, English as a foreign language has been involved in the school's elementary, junior, and Senior high school curriculum. In those school phases, the teacher doesn't teach

English in a specific skill. They expect the student to know the primary thing for every four essential skills in English, which are Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing. So, teachers teach general English to EFL students. Because the English language is included in the school curriculum, it's one of the subjects that could be considered an academic subject. And if students are successful in achieving the goal of learning English, it could be said that academic achievement.

EFL students learning English might face several challenges. One of the challenges that could influence a student in learning English is psychology. Psychology is the knowledge about the mind, attitude, and behavior. And it's something that comes to mind that could show the act. Therefore, with psychology, we can know someone's thoughts by their action.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

In learning English as a foreign language is not something easy to do. For EFL student, they might face some kind of challenges in the process of learning English. One of the aspects that could be the challenges in learning English for EFL student is Psychology. Psychology is defined as scientific study about behavior, as well as external visible action and internal thought<sup>1</sup>. Some expert defined that psychology is one of the important thing that could influence student academic achievement.

Psychological challenges has a connection with school performance and even could frequently limit success or the worst is could lead to failure<sup>2</sup>. It is equal with the theory from Lee & Shute (2010) that Psychological aspect could be considering as a crucial element in order to determine students' academic failure. They further stated that student with high or good engagement will tend to use a variety of learning strategy. In addition, Lee & Shute (2010) argue that in order to achieve academic success in learning, students should be engage in learning cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. Those three are the most relevant framework K-12 academic achievement related to student's engagement.

This research was built the theoretical framework from Lee & Shute (2010). There are 2 variables that influence student academic achievement, such as Personal factor and Social-contextual factor. Personal factor is the factor that comes from each individual themselves. And social-contextual factor is the factor that comes from outside of the individual. Psychology is considered as the personal factor; furthermore, this research focused on the personal factor as the implication of psychology. Lee & Shute defined two major groups of psychological construct in personal factor. There are student engagement and learning strategy. For the psychological factor, the researcher was discussing the student engagement first and for the learning strategy was in different sub content.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

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<sup>1</sup>Wortman, et.al. (1999). Psychology. McGraw-Hill, Boston.

<sup>2</sup> Zins, et.al. (2007). The Scientific Linking Social and Emotional Learning to School Success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*. DOI: 10.1080/10474410701413145.

This research is recognizes as quantitative research. Quantitative research is aims to examining the objective theories through relationship of the variables<sup>3</sup>. The variables could be calculated on the instrument then the numbered will be analyzed using statistical procedures. It means that this research would be in numeric basis. This research used quantitative research design with descriptive approach, in order to describe, examine, predict or have a charge of the phenomena that is discussed in this research based on the statistic and numerical data<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

The target population was the EFL students at one of public Junior High School in Kota Jambi. The populations consist of 7th grade, 8th grade, and 9th grade. The total number of the population is 590 students. This research used cluster random sampling in order to select the sample. For each class, 25 students were selected to be the participant of the research. So, 75 students are selected for the actual sample.

Table 1. Sample

Class	Number of Students
VII.F	25
VIII.B	25
IX.A	25
IX.B	25
TOTAL	100

### 3.3 Research Instrument

This research used questionnaire. Questionnaire is the research instrument that the respondents provide written response to the questions or mark items that signify their responses. The researcher used the Linkert Scale Questionnaire. The questionnaire also inspired of the article by Ilyas et al. (2021)<sup>5</sup>. There are 39 items of statements which consist of 2 main variables which are Students engagement and Learning achievement. The type of the questionnaire is the closed-ended statement. So the respondent should have to give the check mark (✓) on the column that had been provided.

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<sup>3</sup> Cresswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>4</sup> Gay, L.R., Mills, G.E. and Airasian, P.W. (2012) *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. 10th Edition, Pearson, Upper Saddle River.

<sup>5</sup> Ilyas et al., (2021). Psychological Problems Encountered by EFL Students in Speaking Class at Universitas Islam Riau. *Journal of English for Academic*, Vol.8, No.2.

Table 2. Student's Engagement Indicators

Aspect	Indicators	Number of Statement
Behavioral Engagement	Attending the class	1
	Following the rules	2
	Participating in School activity	3
Cognitive- motivational Engagement	Preference for challenge	4, 5
	Intrinsic motivation	6
	Investment in Learning	7, 8, 9
	Academic self-beliefs	10, 11, 12, 13
Emotional Engagement	Interest	14
	Curiosity	15, 16
	Sense of belonging	17
	Affective states of feeling	18, 19, 20

Table 3. Learning Strategies Indicators

Aspect	Indicator	Number of Statement
Cognitive Strategies	Underlining	21
	Mind-mapping	22
	Memorizing	23
Behavioral Strategies	Time management	27, 28
	Test-taking strategy	29, 30, 31, 32, 33
	Help seeking	24, 25, 26, 27
	Homework management	34, 35, 36
	Note-taking skill	37, 38, 39

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

In this research, there was a test or a trial of the questionnaire in order to check the validity. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to process the validity. The data considering valid if the value of  $r$  is bigger than  $r$  table. The numbers of invalid statements are number 1, 5, 8, 17, 22, 23, 24, 40, and 43. The invalid statements had been fixed and it has been tested again until all of the statements become valid. Reliability has been defined as the

constantly of measurement over a variety of situations in which the result should be obtained. This research using Cronbach’s Alpha formula for calculated the reliability of the questionnaire. From the test result shows that the value of the Cronbach’s Alpha is 0,883. The questionnaire coefficients must be higher or equal to 0,6 so that it could be said as reliable<sup>6</sup>. In analyzing the data obtained, the researcher used descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to analyze and summarized the data by describing the relationship from each variables in a sample or population<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 4. Findings

No. of Statement	Mean	Range	Max of Percentage	Frequency
Statement 5	3,10667	Neither/Nor Agree	30.7%	23
Statement 11	2,85333	Neither/Nor Agree	28%	21
Statement 16	3,226667	Neither/Nor Agree	29.3%	22
Statement 20	2,92	Neither/Nor Agree	36%	27
Statement 22	2,853333	Neither/Nor Agree	28%	21
Statement 36	2,746667	Neither/Nor Agree	26.7%	20

#### What are the dominant psychological challenges that experienced by EFL students in Learning English?

Psychology is considered one of the important factors in Education. Psychology affects Education in every field of teaching and learning process<sup>8</sup>. In learning English as a foreign language, EFL students do have difficulties and challenges.

Based on the result of the questionnaire from the answer given by the respondent, statements number 11 indicates that most of the students consider English hard for them. It can be said that most of the students don’t have self-belief. Self-belief is also related to self-efficacy which is explained as the individual’s self-belief in their potential to gain

<sup>6</sup> Williams dan Sawyer. 2003. Using Information Technology: A Practical Introduction to Computers and Communications. London: *CareerEducation*.

<sup>7</sup> Kaur P, Stoltzfus J, Yellapu V. Descriptive statistics. *Int J Acad Med* 2018;4:60-3

<sup>8</sup> Nezhad, A. S., & Vahedi, M. (2011). The role of educational psychology in teacher education programs. *In Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Vol. 30, pp. 327–330). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.064>

knowledge<sup>9</sup>. They barely believe in themselves, confidence is very important. Students should be confident in their potential and capability to be successful significantly and academically (Demirel & Epcacan, 2011). It can be concluded that students don't have enough confidence related to their self-belief to be knowledgeable in academics. And it was confirmed that students who are having high self-belief will succeed in Education.

The second psychological challenge experienced by EFL students was shown in the data of statements number 16. In statement number 16, it is defined that most of the students do not like to ask questions during the learning English process. It means that students do not have much more curiosity in learning English. Curiosity is a part of intrinsic motivation that has a huge potential to increase students' willingness in learning<sup>10</sup>. But, based on the statistical data, most of the students barely lost their curiosity in learning English and it could give a bad impact on language achievement. Curiosity has an important role in students' success in learning<sup>11</sup>. Otherwise, if the students lack curiosity, it could negatively influence students' success in learning. More curiosity is equal to high motivation. It is related to the previous study argued by Mustikasari (2021) the most psychological barrier that influence the students is motivation aspect<sup>12</sup>.

The third psychological challenge experienced by students is Anxiety. The answer to statement number 19 and 20, shows that they feel pressure in the process of learning English. The students get nervous and confused while learning. In this situation, it refers to the student's affective reaction and feelings in learning. Anxiety could be one of the factors that play important role in language learning. One of the crucial factors that could predict student achievement in learning is affective factors<sup>13</sup>. So, if the students can't manage their emotions or feeling, it could influence the resulting study of the achievement of students. Anxiety is one of the biggest psychological problems that were found in learning English. And it completely supported the discussion above<sup>14</sup>.

### **What strategies do EFL students use to face the psychological challenges?**

From the result of the data obtained, the researcher analyzed it by the mean from each statement in questionnaire. From 19 statements that represented the learning strategies indicator, 6 of them are below the range score of the mean which is under 2.33.

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<sup>9</sup> Bandura, A. (1986). The Explanatory and Predictive Scope of Self-efficacy Theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol.4, No.3, 1986, pp, 359-373.

<sup>10</sup> Pluck, G. and Johnson, H. L. (2011) Stimulating curiosity to enhance learning. *GESJ: Education Sciences and Psychology*, 2 (19). ISSN 1512-1801

<sup>11</sup> Zion, M. I., & Sadeh, I. (2007). Curiosity and open inquiry learning. *Journal of Biological Education*, 41(4), 162-169.

<sup>12</sup> Mustikasari, M. (2021). Psychological Barriers in Reading Comprehension Encountered by The Students at Fourth Semester of English Education Study Program of University of Muhammadiyah Kotabumi Academic Year 2019/2020. *Jurnal Griya Cendikia*, Vol. 6, No. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Liu, M., & Huang, W. (2011). An Exploration of Foreign Language Anxiety and English Learning Motivation. *Education Research International*, 2011, 1-8.

<sup>14</sup> Dewi et al. (2021). Psychological Problems Faced by Nutical Students of Politeknik Bumi Akpelni Semarang in Speaking Maritime English. *English Educational Journal (EEJ)*, 550-557.

The statements number 21 until 23 which are categorized as cognitive strategy aspect, only one statement that under the range score of mean. It is statement number 22 with mean score is 1.82. For the cognitive strategy, the students usually underline the important point to help them to understand the material. And the researcher found that the students usually use their memory to memorize new words by visualizing with certain memorable situation. According to The use of cognitive strategy is very helpful for students in Improve their achievement in English.

In the aspect of behavioral strategy, the first one is help seeking strategy. This indicator could find in the statement of 24 until 26. From 3 of those statements, only statement number 24 that below the scale of mean score. In this indicator, students frequently discuss with their classmates regarding confusing material. Help-seeking strategy is categorizes as a beneficial and sometimes consider it as a positive learning process because it has been linked with the motivation aspect<sup>15</sup>. Students with help- seeking strategy, it means they have motivation to learn.

The next indicator, it is time management. It is about how they manage their time in learning English. This indicator can be found in statement 27 and 28. And surprisingly, those two statements are under of mean score scale. So it is indicate that the students are lack of maintaining the time in learning English.

The next indicator is test-taking strategy; this indicator refers to the strategy that students usually use for the test. There are 5 numbers of statements that represented this indicator. From 5 statements, only one statement that below the scale score of mean. In this indicator, students are likely to have studying before the day of the test. During the test, the students always remember the material that had been learned and they are usually answering easy question first and the difficult question in the last. The students believe that they are able to pass the test. A meta-analysis combining 24 published studies, it was examined that there were positive effect of test-taking skills on academic achievement<sup>16</sup>. And it was in line with this research, from 5 indicators only 1 indicator that below the average. And it means that the students have a good test-taking skill strategy.

The indicator of homework management is refers to how the students manage and handle their homework. As the result, the researcher found that the students are always doing the homework at home before the deadline. And they always feel like they have a responsibility to finished the homework that given by teacher. This indicator could be finding in the statement number 34 and 35. Homework management indicated that it has an important role in the development of achievement motivation<sup>17</sup>. Hence, it could be defined that students with a good homework management is probably having a good learning motivation.

The last indicator is note-taking skills; it was discovered in the statement number of 37 through 39. In this indicator, the researcher found that the students always pay attention to the teacher while teacher explaining the material. And the usually take a note

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<sup>15</sup> Newman, R. S. (2008). Adaptive and nonadaptive help seeking with peer harassment: An integrative perspective of coping and self-regulation. *Ed-ucational Psychologist*, 43, 1–15.

<sup>16</sup> Samson, G. E. (1985). Effects of training in test-taking skills on achieve- ment test performance: A quantitative synthesis. *Journal of Educational Research*, 78, 261–266.

<sup>17</sup> Bempechat, J. (2004). The motivational benefits of homework: A social- cognitive perspective.

*Theory Into Practice*, 43, 189–196.

to every important point that teacher said. An experimental study examined by Farber et al. (2000) found that students with good note-taking skills significantly have a good score in academic. Thus, note-taking strategy is one of important strategy in learning English.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings and the discussion from the previous chapter, the researcher arranged the conclusion as shown down below:

From the result of the data statistic obtained, it was found that there are 4 statements and 3 indicators that considering as psychological challenges that experienced by students. Psychological challenges experienced by EFL students are lack of self-beliefs, lack of curiosity, and anxiety. In sum, there are 11 indicators for student engagement and there are only 3 indicators that defined as the psychological challenges.

From the data obtained, this research found that the students having a good learning strategy. The students use a good cognitive strategy and behavioral strategy (test-taking strategy, help seeking, they have a good homework management, and also have a good note-taking skill). But, students do not a good time management; they are lack of managing the time in learning English. Furthermore, from 8 indicators there are only 2 indicators that students tend to not use. Hence, this research is in line with the theory from Lee & Shute (2010). In order to success in academic, students should have a good engagement. And students with a good engagement tend to always use a variety of learning strategies.

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