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ANALYZING THE GAP BETWEEN STUDENTS' ENTHUSIASM AND ENGLISH SKILLS IN GRADE 5 AT YAYASAN PENDIDIKAN MIS IKHWANUL MUSLIMIN

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Abstrak: Studi ini menggambarkan situasi siswa Kelas 5 di MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin yang menunjukkan antusiasme yang sangat tinggi dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, tetapi masih memiliki kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang rendah. Para siswa selalu terlihat bersemangat selama pelajaran bahasa Inggris, dan mereka senang menjawab pertanyaan, mempelajari kosakata baru, dan berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan sederhana. Namun, kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka tidak sebanding dengan antusiasme mereka. Berdasarkan wawancara dengan wali kelas, hanya sekitar 40% siswa yang dapat memahami kosakata dasar dan mengikuti instruksi sederhana, dan sebagian besar siswa ini juga mengikuti les bahasa Inggris tambahan di luar sekolah. Siswa lainnya masih kesulitan membaca kata-kata sederhana, mengingat kosakata, mengucapkan kata-kata bahasa Inggris dengan benar, dan memahami materi baru, sehingga guru seringkali perlu mengulang pelajaran berkali-kali. Masalah ini terjadi terutama karena bahasa Inggris hanya diajarkan dua kali seminggu dan pelajaran diajarkan oleh wali kelas yang bukan ahli bahasa Inggris, sehingga sulit untuk menjelaskan materi secara jelas dan memberikan contoh yang lebih mendalam. Akibatnya, siswa hanya menerima pembelajaran tingkat permukaan dan tidak mendapatkan latihan yang cukup untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mereka. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa antusiasme saja tidak cukup untuk membantu siswa berkembang dalam bahasa Inggris. Siswa membutuhkan lebih banyak latihan, lebih banyak paparan terhadap bahasa Inggris, strategi pengajaran yang lebih baik, dan guru dengan kompetensi bahasa Inggris yang lebih kuat. Studi ini menyarankan peningkatan keterampilan guru melalui pelatihan bahasa Inggris dasar dan penggunaan media sederhana seperti video, kartu flash, dan ungkapan-ungkapan di kelas untuk membantu siswa belajar langkah demi langkah dan mengubah antusiasme mereka menjadi kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang sesungguhnya.

Kata Kunci: Antusiasme Siswa, Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris, Siswa Sekolah Dasar, Kompetensi Guru, Tantangan Pembelajaran.

Abstract: *This study describes the situation of Grade 5 students at MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin who show very high enthusiasm for learning English but still have low English ability. The students always look excited during English lessons, and they enjoy answering questions, learning new vocabulary, and participating in simple activities. However, their English skills*

do not match their enthusiasm. Based on the interview with the homeroom teacher, only about 40% of the students can understand basic vocabulary and follow simple instructions, and most of these students also take extra English lessons outside of school. The remaining students still struggle to read simple words, remember vocabulary, pronounce English words correctly, and understand new material, so the teacher often needs to repeat the lesson many times. This problem happens mainly because English is only taught twice a week and the lesson is taught by a homeroom teacher who is not an English specialist, which makes it difficult to explain the material clearly and give deeper examples. As a result, students only receive surface-level learning and do not get enough practice to improve their skills. This study shows that enthusiasm alone is not enough to help students progress in English. Students need more practice, more exposure to English, better teaching strategies, and a teacher with stronger English competence. The study suggests improving the teacher's skills through basic English training and using simple media such as videos, flashcards, and classroom expressions to help students learn step by step and turn their enthusiasm into real English ability.
Keywords: *Student Enthusiasm, English Ability, Elementary Students, Teacher Competence, Instructional Challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English in elementary school is the first important step to introduce a foreign language to children. At this level, students are usually curious and can learn new things more easily, including a language different from their daily language. This also happens in Grade 5 at Yayasan Pendidikan MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin. Based on the teacher's observation and interview results, the students in this class show very high enthusiasm whenever they join English lessons. They look excited, often raise their hands to answer questions, and seem to enjoy the learning process even though the material is still very basic. Some students even wait for the English lesson because they think it is fun. But behind this enthusiasm, there is an important problem. The students' English skills are still low. An interview with the class teacher, Mrs. Wahyuni, S.Pd, showed that out of 20 students, only about 40 percent have fairly good skills in understanding simple vocabulary and following basic instructions. Most of these students join extra English lessons outside school, so they get more practice than other students. The other 60 percent still struggle to remember vocabulary, get confused when reading simple words, and need more time to understand new material. The teacher often has to repeat the material in different meetings because the students forget quickly.

This problem does not happen because of low interest. It happens more because of the learning condition at school. English lessons are only given twice a week, so the time is limited.

The lesson is also not taught by a special English teacher, but by the homeroom teacher who only has basic English skills. Mrs. Wahyuni explained that she tries her best to teach with the skills she has, but because she is not an English specialist, she sometimes finds it hard to pronounce some words correctly or explain the material deeply. This makes the teaching focus mostly on surface level learning, like simple vocabulary without context or examples of how to use it in sentences. Students with lower ability find it harder to follow the lessons. The mismatch between students' enthusiasm and their skills becomes an important problem to notice. If this continues, the students' enthusiasm which should be a valuable strength may decrease because it is not supported by successful learning experiences. Students may stay excited, but their skills may not grow because the teaching does not meet their learning needs. Teachers who are not confident with the material also tend to give simple and repeated activities, so students' skills do not develop well. Because of this situation, this small research was done to understand more about how this problem happens from the teacher's point of view in the class. The purpose of this research is to know the factors that cause the mismatch between students' enthusiasm and their skills, and to find realistic solutions that fit the condition of the school. This research is based on an interview with the homeroom teacher, so the results show what really happens in the classroom. By understanding this problem better, the school can take steps to improve the teaching process, so students' enthusiasm can turn into better English skills that support their development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses several theoretical concepts that form the basis of this research, including students' enthusiasm in learning English, elementary school students' English ability, the role of the teacher in developing these abilities, and the factors that cause a mismatch between enthusiasm and actual English performance. Together, these ideas help explain why students may appear enthusiastic during English lessons but still show low proficiency.

Students' learning enthusiasm refers to the condition in which learners show interest, curiosity, and willingness to participate actively during the learning process. Enthusiasm is expressed through attention, participation, readiness to learn, and positive responses toward classroom activities. In elementary English learning, enthusiasm often emerges naturally because English is perceived as a new and enjoyable subject. Students commonly encounter

English in media, music, and games, making the learning process exciting for them. According to Indasari and Amaliati (2023), students' motivation and enthusiasm are crucial factors that increase engagement in learning, and fun learning strategies can help maintain motivation and improve ability. Similarly, Aminah and Nugraha (2021) emphasize that enthusiasm is closely tied to intrinsic motivation, noting that intrinsically motivated students tend to make independent efforts to improve their English skills. However, despite its importance, enthusiasm alone is not enough to develop real English ability without proper teaching support and classroom management.

English ability at the elementary school level generally includes the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For young learners, listening and speaking are usually emphasized because they are more accessible. However, many studies indicate that English proficiency among Indonesian elementary students remains low. Kusumayasa (2022) highlights that students' English ability is highly influenced by teachers' pedagogical competence. Teachers who can manage the classroom effectively and present materials clearly tend to produce better learning outcomes. This suggests that even when students show high enthusiasm, their skills may not progress if the instructional process is not structured or developmentally appropriate. In addition, research by Iswindarti et al. (2021) shows that self-confidence contributes significantly to English learning success. Their findings reveal that conversational activities and confidence levels affect students' English achievement. This explains why students may appear enthusiastic but hesitate when speaking—excitement does not always translate into confidence.

The teacher plays a central role in transforming students' enthusiasm into actual language skill. In elementary English learning, teachers must choose child-appropriate approaches, maintain a safe and supportive classroom, and provide consistent opportunities for practice. According to Sari, Hasanah, and Sartika (2021), pedagogical competence is essential for effective English instruction, and professional development through induction programs and training strengthens teaching quality. Without adequate training, teachers may struggle to deliver English lessons effectively, especially when they are not English specialists. This is relevant to the context of this study, where English is taught not by a specialized English teacher but by the classroom teacher, Mrs. Wahyuni, S.Pd. Limited mastery of English material may restrict the teacher's ability to maximize students' enthusiasm into meaningful learning

outcomes.

A mismatch between students' high enthusiasm and low English proficiency is common in Indonesian elementary schools. Interest in English may encourage participation, but it does not automatically lead to improved skills. Ability develops only when learning involves appropriate strategies, structured practice, and sufficient learning time. Based on previous studies, several factors contribute to this mismatch, including (1) suboptimal learning methods, (2) limited pedagogical competence of the teacher, (3) lack of student confidence, (4) learning environments that do not fully support English practice, and (5) very limited instructional time for English. Considering these issues, this research explores how the mismatch appears in Grade 5 of Yayasan Pendidikan MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin. By interviewing the classroom teacher, this study seeks to identify the contributing factors and examine how students' enthusiasm interacts with their actual English ability. This theoretical foundation supports the analysis and interpretation of findings presented in later sections

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method because the aim is to describe the real classroom condition regarding students' enthusiasm and their English ability. Qualitative research focuses on understanding a phenomenon naturally. As stated by Sugiyono (2019), "metode penelitian kualitatif digunakan untuk meneliti kondisi objek yang alamiah, di mana peneliti berperan sebagai instrumen kunci." Therefore, this approach is appropriate for examining the reasons behind the mismatch between students' enthusiasm and their English proficiency without giving any treatment or manipulation.

The research subject is Mrs. Wahyuni, S.Pd, the homeroom and English teacher of Grade 5 at Yayasan Pendidikan MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin. She is selected because she teaches the students daily, understands their abilities, and experiences firsthand the challenges of teaching English as a non-specialist teacher. The research location is the school itself, where all learning activities take place. Factors such as limited English schedule, learning facilities, and classroom atmosphere help provide a natural context for understanding the issue.

The data collection technique used is an in-depth interview. This technique allows the researcher to explore the teacher's experiences more deeply. The interview is conducted face-to-face, using open-ended questions so the teacher can explain the situation freely. During the interview, the researcher takes detailed notes, including expressions or additional explanations

that support the accuracy of the data. To guide the interview, the researcher uses an interview guide containing key questions such as students' behavior during English lessons, their level of enthusiasm, their ability to understand material, differences between students who join extra courses and those who do not, and difficulties faced by the teacher. The guide keeps the interview focused but flexible so the teacher can add relevant information.

The data analysis technique follows several simple steps:

1. Rereading all interview notes to ensure completeness,
2. Grouping information into themes such as enthusiasm, ability, and challenges,
3. Writing the findings into a clear narrative, and
4. Preparing the analyzed data for discussion in the next chapter.

Through these steps, the researcher organizes the information into meaningful findings that explain the mismatch between students' enthusiasm and their English ability in a clear and structured way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal important insights into the English learning conditions of fifth-grade students at Yayasan Pendidikan MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin. Based on an in-depth interview with the homeroom teacher, Mrs. Wahyuni, S.Pd, it was found that the students show very high enthusiasm in learning English. Nearly all students display strong motivation at the beginning of the lesson. They appear active, curious, and brave in asking questions. Their excitement increases when the teacher introduces new vocabulary or simple activities such as naming objects in the classroom using English. Some students even eagerly anticipate English class because they consider it enjoyable and interesting.

However, despite their strong enthusiasm, the students' actual English abilities are relatively low. According to the teacher, out of 20 students, only about 40 percent have good English skills, most of these students attend additional English lessons outside of school. Meanwhile, the remaining 60 percent still struggle with basic competencies such as reading, pronouncing simple words, and understanding short instructions in English. Students often forget previously taught material and require more time to understand new vocabulary. This mismatch between enthusiasm and ability indicates that their internal motivation has not yet transformed into substantial learning outcomes.

One key factor contributing to this gap is that the English subject is not taught by a specialist English teacher. Instead, it is handled by the homeroom teacher, whose English proficiency remains limited. Although she has tried her best to teach using simple methods, she admitted that she is still learning the content herself. This situation sometimes makes instruction less effective, especially regarding correct pronunciation, selection of appropriate media, and the provision of meaningful practice. In addition, English lessons are only conducted twice a week, leaving very limited time for reinforcing materials and building strong vocabulary foundations. These conditions lead to learning challenges in the classroom. Students with higher abilities often feel the material is too easy, while those at the basic level struggle to keep up. The teacher also needs to repeat materials frequently to ensure comprehension, which slows down the progression of the lessons. Meanwhile, the lack of varied teaching media, such as audio, videos, or interactive tools. At the primary level, such media are essential for supporting pronunciation accuracy and vocabulary retention.

Overall, the discussion highlights that the students' enthusiasm is not the primary problem. Their motivation is evident and strong. Instead, the challenges arise from external factors, such as teacher competence, limited instructional time, and the absence of effective learning strategies. These factors hinder students from transforming their interest into actual language ability. Therefore, improving the quality of teaching becomes the central focus for resolving this mismatch.

One of the most impactful solutions identified in this study is enhancing the teacher's competence in teaching English. Since Mrs. Wahyuni, S.Pd is not an English specialist, she faces challenges in pronunciation, method selection, and material explanation. Teacher competence is crucial because teachers act as the main facilitators of learning. Without adequate mastery, even highly motivated students cannot reach their full potential. Improving teacher competence can be done gradually, such as through basic English training, workshops, or free online courses widely available on the internet. Additionally, teachers can begin incorporating simple yet effective media like educational videos, vocabulary apps, or flashcards.

Besides strengthening teacher competence, a complementary and practical solution is the introduction of English Buddy Cards, a simple vocabulary-learning tool designed to maximize student interaction and independent learning. English Buddy Cards emphasize vocabulary

building, which is the foundation for young learners. A study by Putra and Lestari (2021) highlights that "vocabulary mastery is the first and most important step for young learners to understand other language skills." The activity encourages students to practice with peers, making learning more natural, enjoyable, and consistently reinforced through repetition. This aligns with Sari (2022), who found that "peer-learning makes students more active and helps them feel more comfortable when practicing a new language."

The English Buddy Cards method is particularly suitable for the current classroom conditions. It does not require advanced English proficiency from the teacher and can be implemented easily. The teacher only needs to prepare vocabulary lists, monitor students' progress, and rotate the cards weekly. Previous research also supports the effectiveness of this simple method. Pratiwi (2020) reported that "simple visual media like vocabulary cards help students remember words more easily." Rahmawati (2023) added that repeated exposure to vocabulary through small games improves memory retention because the activity feels enjoyable and relaxed.

How to Make English Buddy Cards:

1. Prepare thick paper or HVS cut into one-fourth of A4, and writing tools.
2. Choose a simple theme for the week, like animals, colors, or fruits.
3. Select 5 easy vocabulary words based on the theme.
4. Write the words on the card and add a small picture to help memory.
5. Add a checklist column with "can / cannot."
6. Add a small task that students can do with their buddy.

How to Use English Buddy Cards:

1. Pair the students randomly or based on ability needs.
2. Give one card to each pair.
3. Ask students to read and practice the vocabulary together.
4. Students check the box when they feel they can say and remember the word.
5. Conduct a quick 3–5-minute class check.
6. Change the theme and card for the next week.

Through this structured yet simple tool, students' high enthusiasm can be directed toward focused and effective vocabulary learning. Since the method is low-cost, enjoyable, and

sustainable, it serves as a practical strategy to support English learning in elementary schools with limited resources. By combining improved teacher competence with peer-based vocabulary support, the learning process becomes more balanced, meaningful, and aligned with students' needs. Ultimately, this integrated approach can help reduce the gap between students' strong motivation and their current English abilities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research from the interview with the homeroom teacher, it can be concluded that the fifth grade students of Yayasan Pendidikan MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin have a very high level of enthusiasm for learning English. They show strong interest, join class activities actively, ask questions, and enjoy every learning activity. This enthusiasm is a good starting point in the learning process. However, this enthusiasm does not match their real English ability. Out of 20 students, only around 40 percent show a good level of English skills, and most of them join extra lessons outside of school. Meanwhile, many students still find it difficult to understand simple vocabulary, say words correctly, and follow basic instructions. This shows that there is a clear gap between students' enthusiasm and their actual learning results.

This gap is caused by several factors. One of the main reasons is the limited English teaching skill of the homeroom teacher, because English is not taught by a specialist teacher. English lessons also happen only twice a week, so students do not get enough time to practice. Because of this, the learning process cannot run deeply, clearly, or effectively. For this reason, improving the teacher's teaching skill is one important solution, so the teacher can guide students better and use their enthusiasm in a more effective way. Besides that, another simple and effective solution is the use of English Buddy Cards, which are small vocabulary cards used by students to practice English with a partner. This method focuses on building basic vocabulary and gives students more chances to practice in a fun and relaxed way. English Buddy Cards do not require advanced English skills from the teacher, and they allow students to learn inside and outside the classroom. With the help of this activity, students can learn new words slowly and clearly, while enjoying the learning process with their friends.

By improving the teacher's teaching skills and using English Buddy Cards as a simple support tool, students' high enthusiasm can be changed into real progress. This combination

helps students grow their English ability step by step in a way that is easy, enjoyable, and sustainable.

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