

**THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF STUDY**

**THESIS**

Submitted by

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**THESIS**

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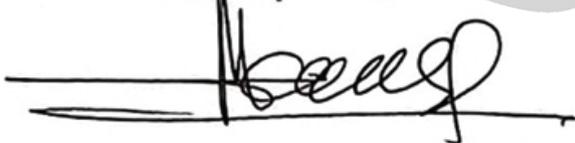
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**SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN**  
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Menyatakan dengan sesungguhnya bahwa skripsi saya yang berjudul :

**The Challenges Encountered By English Department Students During The  
First Year of Study**

Adalah benar-benar karya saya, **kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya**. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan menjadi sepenuhnya menjadi tanggungjawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

Banda Aceh, 02 Desember 2023

Saya yang membuat surat pernyataan,



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Banda Aceh, 3rd December 2023  
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## ABSTRACT

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English have learned for many years in Indonesian School. However, there are still many challenges in learning English at different levels, including university level. So, it is need to recognize the challenges in earlier step, namely in the first year of study to minimize the big challenges that could be happened in the following years. Therefore, This study are conducted to investigate the challenges that English language department students of UIN Ar-raniry faced in learning English in the first year of study and the strategies used to deal with the challenges. The researcher used a mixed method in this research. The researcher used two techniques in collecting data: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study found the challenges regarding English skills: speaking unconfidently and unfluently, the inability in comprehending explanation and recognizing words, and the difficulty in understanding different accents. Several challenges found regarding linguistic aspects, namely: interference of the first language and the complexity in using grammar; interference of the first language and the difficulty in pronunciation; limited vocabulary and the difficulty in guessing words' meaning. The other challenges found are regarding motivation, background knowledge, environment, and lecturers' behavior. In addition, this study also found the strategies in dealing with the challenges, namely watching and listening to English resources, learning with friends, memorizing vocabulary, learning independently, and trying to be confident. In conclusions, the students faced many challenges in learning English and the strategies used have helped them in dealing with the challenges.

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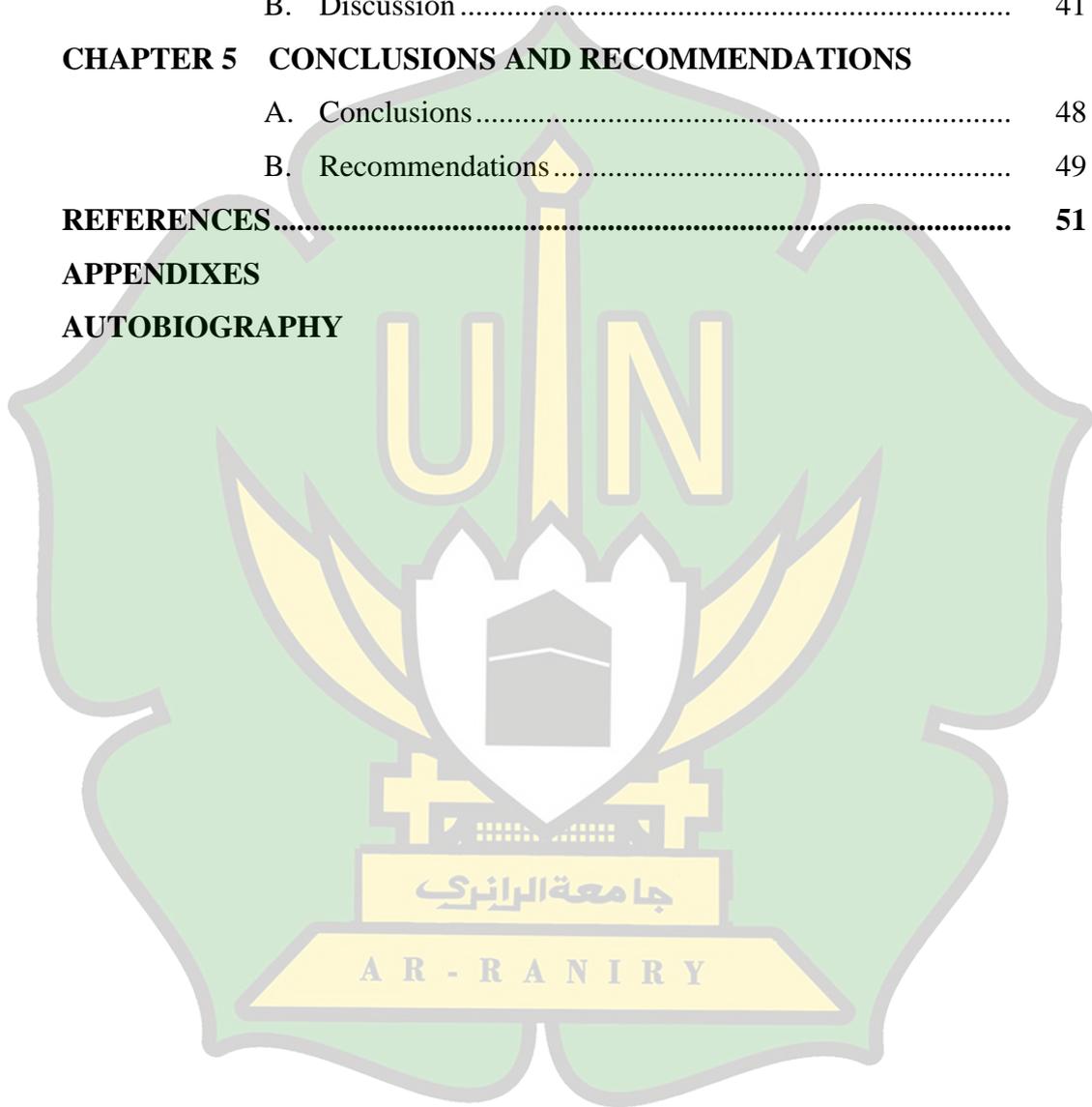
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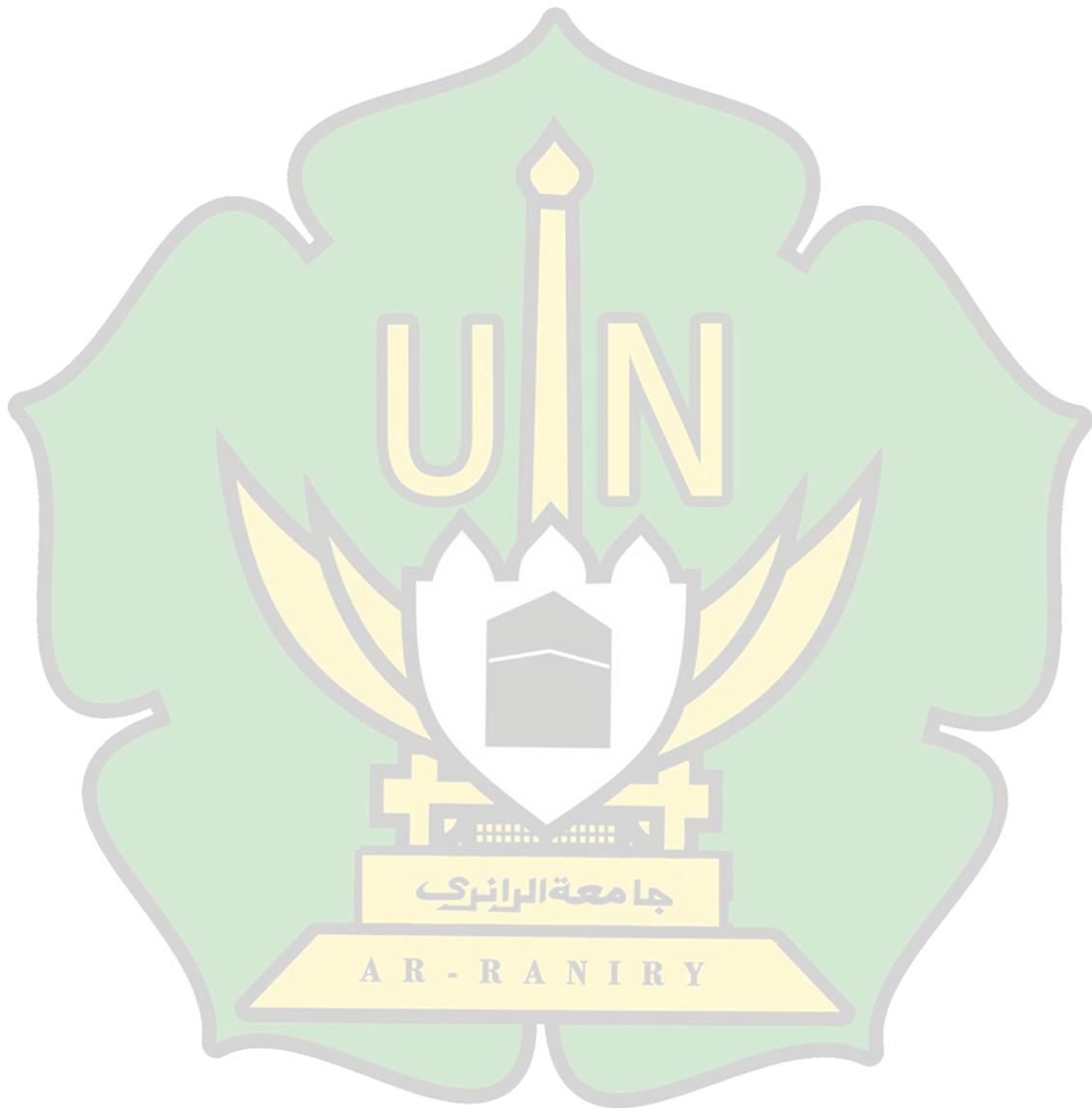
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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of Study**

As a country that does not use English in daily communication, English is learned as a foreign language and becomes a compulsory subject in Indonesian schools. English learning including four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and the other aspects of English studies such as vocabulary and grammar have become the lesson for Indonesian students. English is not new for the students since it is learned formally in school for many years. It is learned in elementary school, junior high school, senior high school and university level. However, in fact, there are many difficulties and challenges that students face in learning English.

Wulandari, Surtikanti and Agung (2020) conducted the research about the difficulties in learning English. The study found that learning difficulties happening in learning English in the classroom could be affected by internal and external factors. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Sengah Temila. This was a descriptive research which aims to find out the impact of external and internal factors in learning difficulties. The internal factors include condition, motivation, interest and habits of the students. Students that have low motivation, low interest and bad habits in learning cause great difficulties in learning English. The external factors include the teaching method and the media used in the classroom. Teaching using inappropriate methods will cause students difficulties

in learning. The use of varied media also plays an important role in creating a pleasant learning atmosphere for students. If these aspects are not paid attention in the classroom, it will cause challenges for students in learning English.

Furthermore, English learning is not only considered difficult for students in secondary school. It has also become a challenging experience for undergraduate students. The study from Sri Lanka context conducted by Aaqil, Faizer, and Moulan (2022). It shows the challenges faced by undergraduate students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language. The study revealed the challenges in English skill caused by the dominance of the mother tongue in their schooling education. Wolf and Phung (2019) also conducted the research about challenges, strategies and support service among bachelor's-prepared Chinese nurses. The study found that writing and listening were the most difficult challenges. They used some strategies to overcome the challenges such as asking others for support and asking for repetition.

Based on the previous studies above, students in different education levels faced various challenges in English learning. Even though they did not learn English specifically as their major. Thus, it become more complicated challenges for students who learn English language as their major because they learn English in various courses such as English four skills, linguistic, grammar and vocabulary in depth. Pratolo, Habibie, and Setiawan (2019) conducted the study about the challenges encountered by students in private university in Yogyakarta. The study focused on English speaking challenges encountered by undergraduate students of English Education Department. The study mentioned the challenges

by categorizing into some topics and sub-topics. In language boundaries, the challenges of students are the lack of vocabulary, the difficulty in pronouncing the words, arranging the sentence in correct grammar and feeling hard to speak fluently. In Psychological elements, students have anxiety in practicing English. In proponent factors, friends and low or uneven participation become the challenges in speaking activities. The unattractive topics discuss in the classroom also become the challenges for students.

Moreover, based on the observation and interview with some undergraduate students of the English department, there are some challenges they faced when learning English language, such as students could not understand well what was conveyed by the lecturer during the lesson, they could not communicate well in English and they did not have interest in learning English. Challenges in learning English for English department students should be considered as crucial problems that need big attention. It is due to their purpose in learning English. They learn English to master the English language so that they can achieve their goals. If they have significant challenges and they are unable to deal with them, it will interfere with them in mastering English. English major students learn English from first year study. So, the challenges should be recognized at an earlier stage in order to prevent the big challenges that might happen in the next stage.

Hence, based on these problems, the researcher had been interested in focusing on this concern. The researcher wants to know the challenges that hinder students in learning English as their major. The previous studies above had discussed the challenges in learning English in schools and undergraduate

students in general, but there is limited research discussing learning English challenges that English major students faced during the first year of study. Learning English at the school and university levels is certainly different. The first year at university is a learning transition from primary to advanced. The educational background could affect the challenges of the first year students. It is with regard to Gamede and Ajani (2020) who mentioned in their study that the challenges faced by students could be related to their socio-economic background and academic inequalities from their school background. Transitioning high school learners into universities has challenged them to adjust to the new academic environment. Therefore it is important to do the research about the challenges faced in the first years of study in order to find the appropriate strategies to deal with them earlier. Thus, it can minimize the occurrence of bigger challenges when studying in the following years. Several previous studies have conducted the research about this problem, but there is no research that conducted in Aceh. So, it certainly have differences in social and economic characteristics that lead to give different result. Therefore, the writer desired to conduct research that focus on the challenges encountered by English department students of UIN Ar-Raniry in English learning during the first year of study and how to deal with the challenges.

## **B. Research Questions**

There are two questions emerging from research concerning the challenges in English learning based on the experience during the first year of study. Those are :

1. What are the challenges encountered by English department students in English learning during the first year of study at UIN Ar-raniry ?
2. What are the strategies used by English department students to deal with the challenges they encountered in English learning during the first year of study?

### **C. Research Aims**

According to the research problems that has been mentioned before, the purposes of this study are:

1. To investigate the challenges encountered by English department students in English learning during the first year of study at UIN Ar-Raniry
2. To discover the strategies used by English department students to deal with the challenges they encountered in English learning during the first year of study

### **D. Significance of Study**

1. Academically
  - a. This research is expected to be useful in increasing students' understanding of the challenges that can be faced in learning English language
  - b. The results of this study are expected to be useful for deepening understanding regarding how to overcome challenges in learning English for students majoring in English in the first years.
  - c. The results of this study are expected to provide students with an understanding regarding the challenges in learning English so that they can prevent future challenges

- d. To be an additional reference for academics who desire to do research related to this study

2. Practically

- a. This study can be used for students to overcome the challenges encountered in learning English
- b. The result of this study can be used to increase the teaching and learning English both at the secondary school and university level.

## **E. Research Terminologies**

The explanation of main terms in this study is provided to avoid misunderstanding among the readers.

### **1. Challenge**

A challenge in this study defined as a difficult situation that requires certain efforts to perform successfully. So, the challenges here have similar meaning with the problem. In this study, the challenges refer to the difficult situation or experience students faced in learning English.

### **2. English Learning**

English learning intended in this study is learning English for English department students. Specifically, learning English during the first year of study at UIN Ar-raniry. The English learning here refers to the English learning experience in learning English basic subjects in the first year such as English Basic Skills, Vocabulary and pronunciation and Basic Grammar.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Challenges

#### 1. *Definition of challenges*

The challenge is the 'level' at which students believe they can overcome it if they put sufficient effort into it (Ormrod, 2008, as cited in Calikoglu, 2019). Sultra and Baharuddin (2020) stated that challenge refers to the obstacles that interfere with access to, involvement in, and performance from the action. So, challenges can be interpreted as difficult conditions that restrict the actions and need adequate effort to deal with.

#### 2. *Challenges in English learning*

The challenges in learning English is the disturbance in acquiring English skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (Sultra and Baharuddin, 2020).

Several main challenges students faced in learning English as shown in a study from Al-Khalidi (2020) are the anxiety and fear of using English, poor concentration in learning English in class, lack of interest, motivation of students, low proficiency and competency of teachers.

According to Wolf and Phung (2019), there are several challenges that learners might confront in English learning, namely :

- 1) The challenges in writing assessments and the unfamiliarity of the rubrics.

- 2) The difficulty in understanding the native speakers and professors in the class because of the different accents, unfamiliar words, and speed.
- 3) The difficulty in speaking because of anxiety, the lack of prior knowledge and the demand of the speaking task.

Ismeti (2022) also declared some challenges in learning English described in the research by dividing it into four parts :

1) Speaking challenges

- a) The hesitance in speaking with others, both professors and friends.
- b) The feeling of self-consciousness regarding the ability to communicate.
- c) The difficulty in communicating in a fluent manner

2) Listening challenges

- a) The inability to properly comprehend what the lecturers say.
- b) The inability to follow the discussion with their friends in the class.
- c) The inability to recognize several words from the media in the class.
- d) The unfamiliarity of connotations and denotations of certain words.

3) Reading challenges

- a) The inability to comprehend the passage.
- b) Taking a long time to understand the reading passage.

4) Writing challenges

- a) Taking a long time to write an essay
- b) Unacquainted with the subject matter.
- c) The difficulties in writing academic essays that required paraphrasing, citation, and synthesis.

In their study, Septianasari and Baihaqi (2019) also stated several challenges encountered in English learning regarding students' mother tongue, namely phonological domain and syntactic domain. The challenge in the phonological domain is the interference of the first language in pronouncing the words. The challenge in the syntactical domain is using grammatical rules of the first language, such as incomplete expressions and incorrect word order in producing the language. On the other hand, Aaqil et al. (2022) explained that the challenge confronted by students in enhancing English is the dominance of using the first language in schooling. The dominance leads to the lack of English outcomes that students obtain in English learning.

Nuraeni (2019) also presented some challenges in learning English. In her study, the challenges was divided into three aspects :

1) Problem with grammar

Students become passive in communication orally because they are afraid of using grammar rules. This fact causes the inability of students to produce natural language.

2) Problem with pronunciation

Students perceived that English words are difficult to pronounce because of the different pronunciation in speaking and in writing.

3) Problem with low academic writing skill

Students have problems in differentiating between academic and general writing. It is due to the lack of academic writing skills.

According to Huang et al. (2022), the challenges in learning English are the difficulty in memorizing new words, difficulty in understanding the meaning of a word in context, difficulty in using the words while writing and speaking, the interference of mother tongue in pronunciation and grammar rules, limited authentic input, limited practice in English pronunciation, the complexity of English grammar, lack of interest in English grammar, a lack of authentic language exposure, unfamiliarity with English culture, limited vocabulary, a lack of English speaking environment, limited speaking practice, limited access the English culture, culture transfer and low reading rate

Moreover, Ruzikulovna (2022) mentioned several challenges that secondary school students faced in learning English. The first one is the aspect of phonetic, lexical, and grammatical due to the influence of their first language. The second challenge is the difficulty in pronunciation because of the unfamiliarity with English sound. Third, grammatical challenges in regard to the article, preposition, tenses, construction of sentence, and verb. The fourth challenge is lexical difficulties. The research also stated that the other challenges in learning English is student passivity, boredom and inability to concentrate.

Furthermore, Nanda and Azmy (2020) argued that a debilitating problem in the EFL context is poor reading comprehension. The problem is affected by three significant factors: students' lack of motivation, low prior knowledge, and poor English vocabulary. Vocabulary gives significant challenges in English learning. Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) also revealed that vocabulary was one of the challenges in developing speaking skills other than interference of mother

tongue, limited practice, student-teacher interaction, fossilization, and anxiety. Afzal (2019) added that there are many problems in learning English vocabulary, namely problem in using new vocabulary in speaking and writing, problem in pronouncing, spelling, memorizing, and recognizing and using new words, problem in learning meaning of technical terms, inadequate time to studies, remembering words without understanding meaning, never guessing meaning based on the context, difficulty in learning cultural-specific vocabulary, understanding compound-word meaning, problem in learning multiple-meaning words.

## **B. Learning**

### ***1. Definition of learning***

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge of subjects or skills by experience, study, or instruction (Brown, 2014). In addition, Patzold (2011) stated that learning is the change of an individual's concepts, experience, and understanding with regard to a particular phenomenon. It means learning is the process of acquisition of knowledge and skills and building expertise by changing the experience and concepts of individuals.

### ***2. English learning***

There are four skills in learning English, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

#### **a) Listening skill**

The listening skill is defined as the ability to receive, interpret, and respond to spoken or nonverbal messages (Brown, 2015). It involves paying

attention, understanding, and retaining information conveyed through various mediums such as face-to-face conversations, lectures, podcasts, and videos. In the context of language learning, listening skill is crucial for effective communication and comprehension. It enables learners to understand the meaning, tone, and context of spoken language, and to respond appropriately.

b) Speaking skill

According to the Council of Europe (2018), speaking skill is the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language. It involves the use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation to convey a message clearly and accurately.

c) Reading skill

According to Kemala and Marpaung (2022), reading skill is the ability in understanding and interpreting the symbols, signs, or the other writings. It can be defined as the ability to comprehend the symbols, signs, and text. There are several aspects in reading comprehension, namely : identifying the main idea, understanding the words, making inferences and identifying supporting details.

d) Writing skill

Writing is a complex skill that involves multiple processes and integrates multiple components such as topic, word choice, organization, purpose, clarity, and cohesion (Westwood, 2008).

### 3. *Strategies in English learning*

Learning strategies are activities or techniques used by learners to improve or enhance the target language ability (Horwitz, 2013). In addition, Cohen (2011)

defined learning strategies as thoughts and actions chosen consciously operationalized by language learners to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance. So, strategies in English learning can be defined as thoughts, activities, techniques, or actions to assist the learners in enhancing their English ability and performance.

Schmitt and Rodgers (2020) classified strategies in language learning according to skill area :

1. Listening strategies

The strategies are listening and watching TV show or movie, attending event conducted in the target language, Looking for the sound of a familiar word, imitating native speakers, paying attention on pronunciation of native speaker, paying attention on word and sentence stress.

2. Reading strategies

The strategies are finding the suitable reading material to build reading habits, trying to summarize text, guessing the meaning of the text by using clues from the context, and using a dictionary to get a detailed meaning of certain words.

3. Speaking

The strategies are practicing new grammatical structures in different situations, practicing language use based on native speakers, initiating the conversation frequently, and looking for different ways to express certain ideas when unable to think of it.

#### 4. Writing

The strategies are planning how to write the product, monitoring to see how it is going, and checking to see how well it is, giving effort to write different types of writing, reviewing what is already written before continuing new ideas, and revising the writing to improve the language and content. In addition, Lestari and Wahyudin (2020) stated the strategy can be used in improving writing skills by writing notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.

#### 5. Vocabulary strategies

The strategies are analyzing words to identify the structure or meaning, making mental image to memorize the words, using the words that have already been learned, and remembering the situation where the word was used. Lestari and Wahyudin (2020) also stated that the strategy used to remember new words are using new English words in a sentence, making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used, writing new words several times, using rhymes and the other media such as flashcards and acting out new English words physically.

#### 6. Grammar strategies

The strategies are memorizing past verb by means a song, using an acronym to remember when to use the imperfect tense, using a model sentence to remember pronoun position, underlining all nouns and their respective adjectives in the same color to ensure agreement

#### 7. Strategic use of translation

The strategies are planning out what people wants to say or write in the L1 and then translating it into the target language, translating parts of what people have said into their own L1 to help store the concepts, making an effort to put one's native language out of mind and to think only in the target language, and being cautious about transferring words or concepts directly from the L1 to the target language.

In addition, study from Komari et al. (2022) showed that students preferred learning through interesting activities (games and role play) and through songs and movies. Games and role play activities can lower anxiety, sustain the effort of learning, and enable students to practice the language as in real situations. Songs and movies facilitate students to develop their linguistic skills because they make them feel relaxed, and can motivate them in learning.

Moreover, Lestari and Wahyudin (2020) mentioned that the strategy can be used in learning English are trying to find many ways to use my English, noticing English mistakes and using that information to help in do better in the future, paying attention when someone is speaking English, planning the schedule in order to have enough time to study English, looking for people as partner to talk to in English, looking for opportunities to read as much as possible in English, setting the clear goals for improving English skills, trying to relax whenever feel afraid of using English, encouraging self to speak English even when afraid of making a mistake, rewarding self when doing well in English, and writing down feelings in a language learning diary.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Research Design**

In conducting this research, the researcher used mixed method research. It is used in order to explain the phenomenon comprehensively in which the quantitative data obtained would be supported and explain completely through qualitative data. Mixed method research is an approach to inquiry data by integrating quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used quantitative descriptive to give description about a phenomenon objectively using numbers from collecting interpreting, and displaying data and the finding (Arikunto, 2006). The data resulted in number and analyzed by statistical procedures. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is the kind of the research approach that explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It means, the qualitative method is used to understand in depth a problem or phenomenon that occurs to examine the truth in order to produce suggestions according to the results of the research. Therefore, in this study, the researcher analyzed data from questionnaires statistically and uncovered the deeper meanings of the problem through the interview with the participants.

#### **B. Research Location**

The study was conducted at UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh. The reason underlying the researcher to choose this place as a research location is because UIN Ar-Raniry has many enthusiasts in English major every year. Therefore, the

researcher can obtain adequate information related to the research problem. In addition, the location can facilitate the process of collecting data because the researcher is also a student of UIN Ar-Raniry.

### **C. Research Participants**

#### **1. Population**

According to Creswell (2014), population can be defined as the group of individuals or objects that share a common characteristic or set of characteristics that are relevant to the research question. The population of this research was all of the English department students batch 2022 of UIN Ar-Raniry. Based on data obtained by the researcher, the population was 162 students.

#### **2. Sample**

The sampling technique used in this research was a convenience sampling technique. It is the sampling technique that selects participants who are ready and available to be studied (Cresswell, 2012). In this study, the participants were 70 students to answer the questionnaires and 8 students to answer interview questions.

### **D. Techniques of Data Collection**

The data collection technique used in this research consists of two phases, questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A questionnaire consists of a number of questions in definite order on a form or set of forms (Kothari, 2004). The questionnaires used are closed questionnaires in which the researcher gives the answer choice to respondents. The answers given in four point Likert Scale ranging from 1-never, 2-Rarely, 3-Often, 4-Always. The questionnaires

distributed to all English department students batch 2022. It was distributed using google docs and the link was shared through Whatsapp.

In-depth interviews are a method designed to obtain a clear description of the participant's perspective on the research topic (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey (2005). The interviewer was the researcher and the interviewee was several students majoring in English batch 2022 at UIN Ar-Raniry. The interview was implemented to several students who obtained the highest score from the questionnaires. The interview was carried out at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh to make it easier for informants to participate in the interviews. The interview used Indonesian, thus, the informant could provide detailed answers and the interviewer could cover all the information needed. The interview was carried out face to face, however, the contents of the interview were recorded using a smartphone in order to get original results. The researcher asked questions in a neutral manner and did not pressure participants to give certain answers. Therefore, in the interview process, the informants could provide responses freely and in detail based on their experiences. The researcher who acted as the interviewer recorded the interview content, asked questions regarding the students' challenges in English learning and how to deal with the challenges, and asked follow-up questions based on the participants' responses.

Semi-structured interviews are a type of qualitative research method that involves a flexible and open-ended approach to data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are characterized by a set of predetermined questions or topics that guide the conversation, but the interviewer has the

flexibility to ask follow-up questions or explore new topics as they arise. The interview was implemented to several respondents who have the most challenges based on the questionnaires result.

#### **E. Instruments for Data Collection**

In this research, the instruments were the questionnaires, the researcher and interview. The questionnaires used by the researcher are closed questionnaires. It consists of several questions which have offered answers, namely never, rarely, often, and always. The questionnaires were obtained from the combination of several researchers, namely Ismeti (2022), Septianasari and Baihaqi (2019), and Afzal (2019).

In addition, the researcher acted as an interviewer. The interview questions were ten questions. The researcher used interview guide questions based on research problems to get data from participants about the challenges encountered by students and their strategies to deal with the challenges in English learning during first year of study as English department students at UIN Ar-raniry. The interview guide consists of questions to ask the students about the common challenges that they face in learning English, the most difficult challenges, the best actions to overcome the challenges and the effectiveness of the strategies in dealing with the challenges.

#### **F. Techniques of Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, for the questionnaire the researcher used Microsoft Excel. The data was analyzed to display the percentage of the challenges that students faced, to find out the challenges that students mostly faced in the first

year of study and to look for the students who got the highest score that would be chosen as participants in the interview.

The researcher also implemented a qualitative analytic method invented by Miles and Huberman (2014) to analyze the interview. It was particularly useful in this study because it allowed for a detailed exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This method was also flexible and adaptable, which allowed for the incorporation of new insights and ideas as they emerged from the data. The method consisted of three stages in analyzing the data, namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification.

#### 1. Data condensation

According to Kitchin and Tate (2013), data condensation is a crucial step in data analysis as it helps researchers to identify patterns and trends in large datasets. Data reduction is part of analysis that sharpens, classifies, directs, discards unnecessary, and organizes data in such a way that conclusions can be drawn and verified (Hardani et al, 2020). At this stage, the researcher selected important data that can be used in research. These data are grouped into several categories. The aim was to find the patterns or the themes so that a research focus was formed. In the data condensation stage, researchers looked for similarities and differences in information of data.

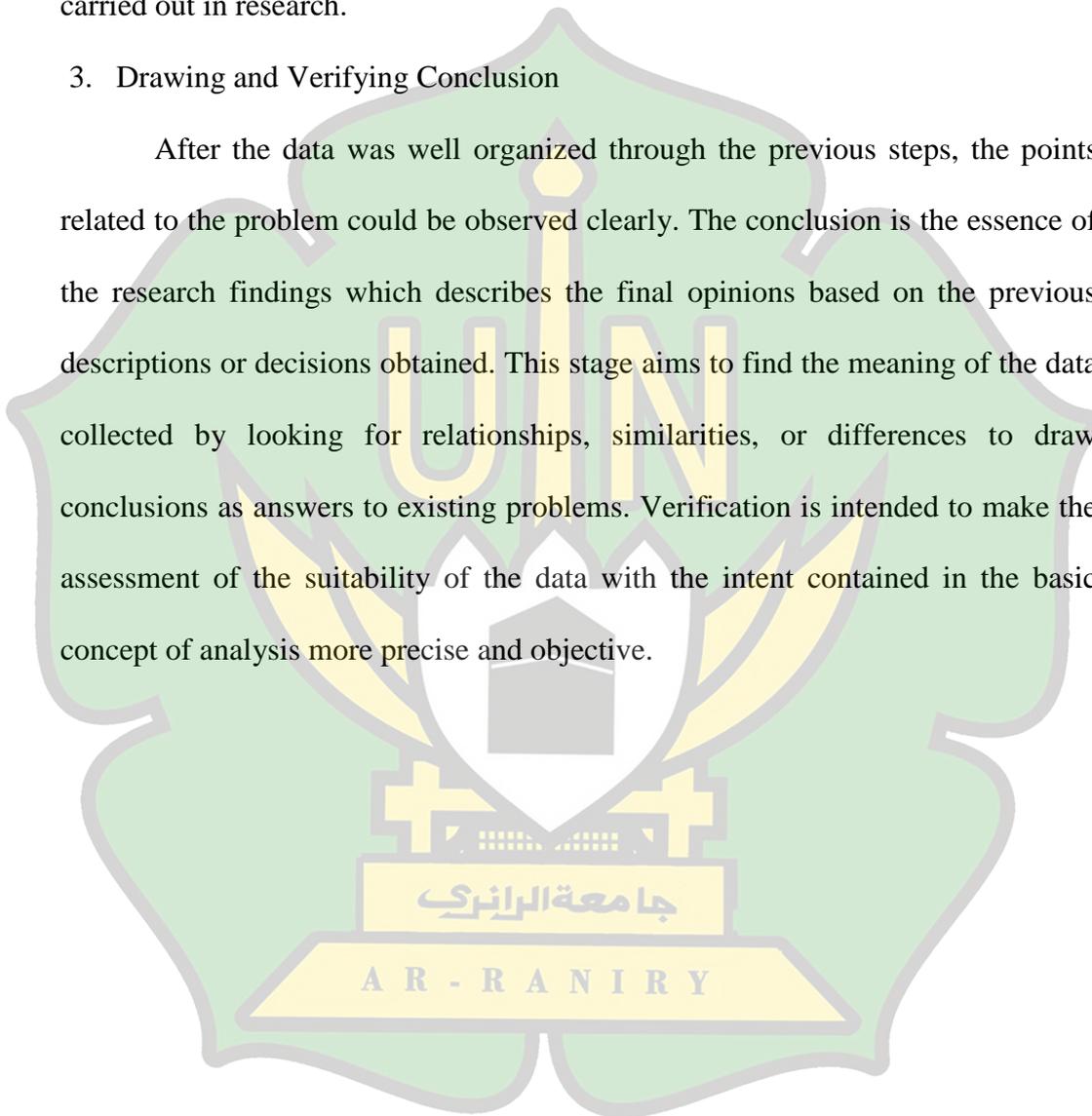
#### 2. Data display

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), data display means a collection of structured information that gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. Data display is the process of displaying data in

certain forms, such as narratives, graphs, matrices, networks and charts. At this stage, the data that has been grouped was described narratively by the researcher. This process aims to facilitate understanding of the data, and further plans to be carried out in research.

### 3. Drawing and Verifying Conclusion

After the data was well organized through the previous steps, the points related to the problem could be observed clearly. The conclusion is the essence of the research findings which describes the final opinions based on the previous descriptions or decisions obtained. This stage aims to find the meaning of the data collected by looking for relationships, similarities, or differences to draw conclusions as answers to existing problems. Verification is intended to make the assessment of the suitability of the data with the intent contained in the basic concept of analysis more precise and objective.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaires and interviews as well as a discussion of the findings. This chapter is intended to answer the research question of this study.

#### A. Findings

In this research, the process of collecting data started on October 2<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and was completed on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The researcher used two instruments in collecting the data. The first one is the questionnaires distributing to all English department students batch 2022. From the questionnaire distribution, only 70 students answered the questionnaires. Next, the researcher selected eight students with the highest score from the questionnaire results to conduct the interview. The researcher used initials to keep their privacy. The following are the findings of the data collection from the questionnaire and interview.

##### 1. The result of the questionnaires

One of the data collection techniques used in this research is a questionnaire that aims to find out the challenges of English language education students in learning English in the first year. In the questionnaire section, students were asked 14 questions. The following are the results of the questionnaire:

Table 4.1

*The result of questionnaires*

No	Questions	Percentage			
		Never	Rarely	Often	Always
1	I got self-conscious regarding my ability to communicate in English	4%	24%	64%	7%
2	I felt difficulty speaking fluently	1%	27%	63%	9%
3	I took a long time to write an English essay	9%	64%	26%	1%

4	I felt unfamiliar with the subject matter in writing	16%	54%	27%	3%
5	I was unable to comprehend the English passage properly	6%	59%	36%	0%
6	I took a long time to understand the reading passage	3%	49%	40%	9%
7	I was unable to comprehend what the teachers say properly if they speak in English	6%	21%	61%	11%
8	I was unable to recognize several words from the listening media in the class	6%	36%	53%	6%
9	I was influenced by my first language when pronouncing English words	10%	31%	39%	20%
10	I felt difficult pronouncing new English words	10%	70%	17%	3%
11	I used grammatical rules of the first language in producing English	7%	37%	46%	10%
12	I felt difficulty in memorizing new words	7%	51%	39%	3%
13	I felt difficulty in guessing the meaning of the words based on the context	4%	46%	44%	6%
14	I feel difficulty in using new words	10%	51%	37%	1%

Table 4.1 shows that there are several questions that chosen 'often' and 'always' less than 50 %, such as number 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 14. It indicates that those are not the challenges for them. In addition, there are several questions that chosen 'often' and 'always' more than 50 %, such as number 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, and

13. It indicates that those are the challenges for the students. The highest percentage in 'often' and 'always' options fall into 72% as in question number 2 and 7. It means the most challenges that students faced are difficulty in speaking fluently and inability in comprehending what the teachers say in English.

Table 4.2

*The challenges and not the challenges for students*

No	Questionnaire	Challenge	Not a challenge
1	I got self-conscious regarding my ability to communicate in English	✓	
2	I felt difficulty in speaking in a fluent manner	✓	
3	I took a long time to write an English essay		✓
4	I felt unfamiliar with the subject matter in writing		✓
5	I was unable to comprehend the English passage properly		✓
6	I took a long time to understand the reading passage		✓
7	I was unable to comprehend what the teachers say properly if they speak in English	✓	
8	The inability to recognize several words from the media in the class	✓	
9	I was influenced by my first language when pronouncing English words	✓	
10	I felt difficult in pronouncing new English words		✓
11	I used grammatical rules of the first	✓	

	language in producing English		
12	I felt difficult in memorizing new words		✓
13	I felt difficult in guessing the meaning of the words based on the context	✓	
14	I felt difficult in using new words		✓
Jumlah		7	7

Thus, it can be concluded that from the questionnaire, the challenges that the students encountered in learning English in the first year of study were :

1. Self-conscious regarding the ability to communicate in English
2. Speaking in a fluent manner
3. comprehending what the teachers say properly when speaking in English
4. recognizing several words from the media in the class
5. Interference of first language in pronouncing English words
6. Interference of First language in using grammar
7. The difficulty in guessing the meaning of the words based on the context

## 2. The result of the interview

There were eight students involved as interviewees in this research. The participants were chosen purposely among the students who got higher scores in answering the questionnaire. The interview started on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and was completed on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Each of them got the same question. The researcher also added several additional questions based on participants' answers.

Semi-structured interviews are used to more deeply correct the information needed in this research. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian to make it easier for participants to provide information and avoid misunderstandings. The researcher asked several questions about the challenges faced in learning English in the first year and the strategies used to deal with challenges. This research produces discoveries in the form of answers to research questions. The following are the results of this research:

## 1. Challenges encountered by English department students in English learning during the first year of study at UIN Ar-Raniry

### 1) Limited Vocabulary Mastery

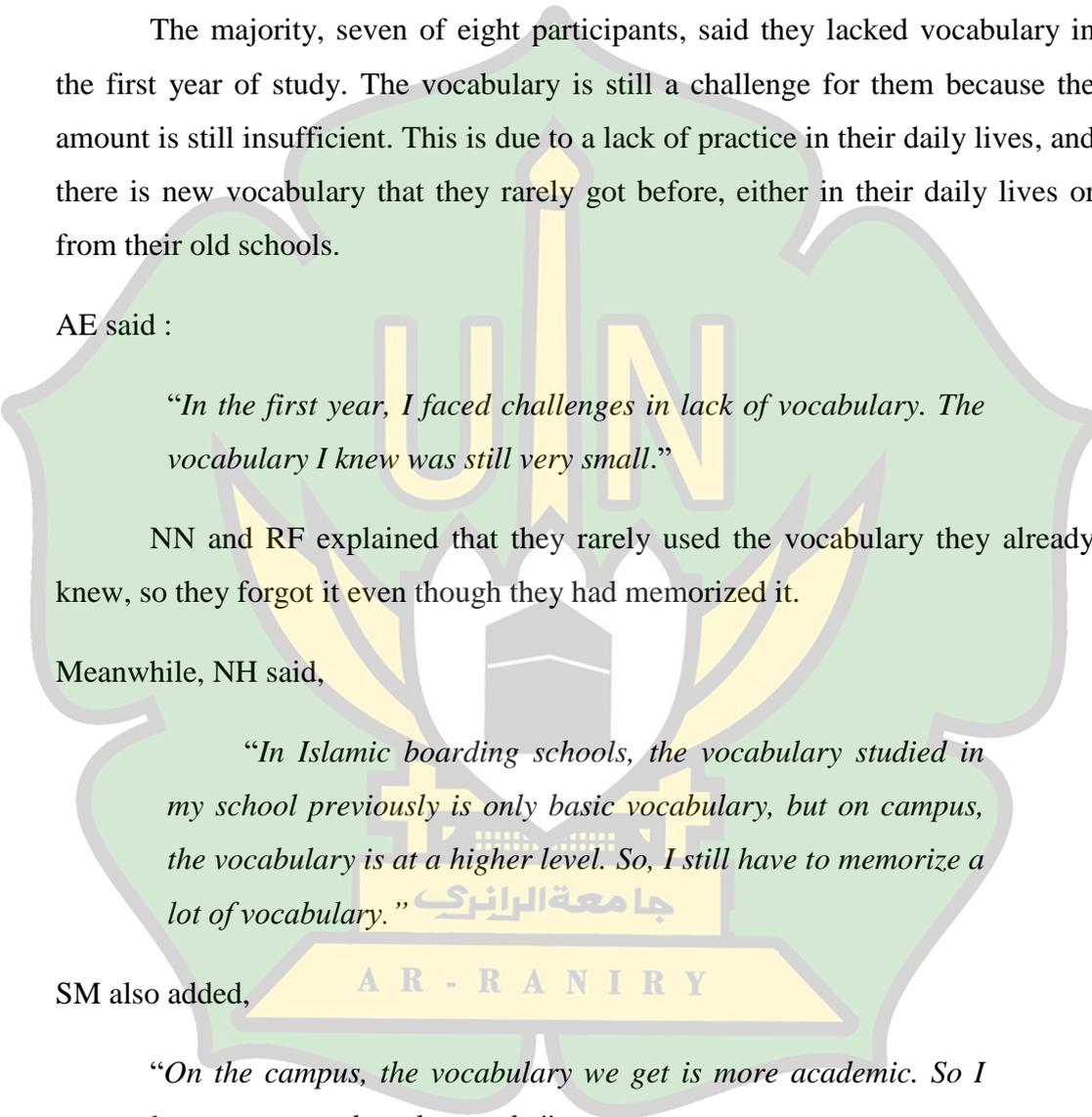
The majority, seven of eight participants, said they lacked vocabulary in the first year of study. The vocabulary is still a challenge for them because the amount is still insufficient. This is due to a lack of practice in their daily lives, and there is new vocabulary that they rarely got before, either in their daily lives or from their old schools.

AE said :

*“In the first year, I faced challenges in lack of vocabulary. The vocabulary I knew was still very small.”*

NN and RF explained that they rarely used the vocabulary they already knew, so they forgot it even though they had memorized it.

Meanwhile, NH said,

*“In Islamic boarding schools, the vocabulary studied in my school previously is only basic vocabulary, but on campus, the vocabulary is at a higher level. So, I still have to memorize a lot of vocabulary.”* 

SM also added,

*“On the campus, the vocabulary we get is more academic. So I have to re-translate the words.”*

Meanwhile, AA explained that the lack of understanding in vocabulary causes a lack of understanding of the learning in the class.

AF also said,

*“Because the English we initially mastered in high school or terms of our hobbies was daily English. This English is very different from English in education. The language is complicated, so this causes us to not understand well what the lecturer is saying in class.”*

NH and SS also explained that the limited vocabulary made it difficult for them to speak.

NH said

*“In speaking, I don’t have sufficient English vocabulary. So there’s a lot of vocabulary that I don’t memorize. This makes it difficult for me to speak English well”.*

SS also added,

*“When I want to speak, I think my vocabulary is still lacking, so I still have to mix it with Indonesian. If I am required to speak English, I have to think first. I cannot immediately use English completely in the sentence.”*

## **2) Lack of confidence in communicating in English**

Even though the participants were English students, they did not feel confident using English, especially speaking. They are embarrassed to speak English in front of their friends, have doubts about their English skills, and are afraid of making mistakes when using English.

AA explained

*“When I first entered campus, I was embarrassed to speak English because I thought my friends were very skilled in using English, while my English skills were still inadequate. So I was pressured to make mistakes in front of them, so I was reluctant to speak English in front of them, especially in front of the class, and be observed by the lecturer, such as in a presentation.”*

Two other students, AE and SM, explained that they were afraid of making mistakes when using English, which made them not confident in speaking English.

SM also added,

*“When I was speaking, I felt doubtful whether the order of the words I was using was correct.”*

Meanwhile, NN said

*“I lacked confidence in speaking because I rarely practiced English before becoming an English student, then when I became an English student, I also rarely spoke English, so this caused me to not be confident in speaking English.”*

### **3) The complexity of grammar**

The majority of students admit that grammar is a challenge for them because it is too complicated to understand. They find it difficult to understand, they are confused about the rules in grammar, easily forget grammar material that has been studied previously, and have difficulty applying it in sentences even though they previously understood it. AE, RF, and NH explained that they had difficulty understanding grammar.

AE said,

*“I have difficulty understanding grammar. In grammar, I was confused about the past tense; it is tenses, sis.”*

RF added,

*“I don't know why grammar is so difficult for me to understand. Understanding it is difficult, especially since the lecturers who teach it are different. So when delivering grammar material, there are certain lecturers' presentations that I understand, some I don't.”*

Meanwhile, NH said,

*“Wow, grammar is really bad. I often confuse the use of grammar, for example, verb-ing. As we know, there are*

*'interested' and 'interesting', so sometimes these two forms are confused. Especially if there are a lot of questions, that's really difficult for me. I don't know what's right anymore.'*

On the other hand, NN and RF explained that they felt capable when understanding grammar, but when they were given exercises to make sentences, they became confused. NH and AA also explained that the difficulty they faced in grammar was forgetting grammar material because they rarely applied it.

NH continued,

*"Actually, I like writing in Indonesian. It is just difficult for me in English because I don't know a lot of vocabulary, and the tenses are also rarely repeated, so it's difficult for me to apply them in my writing."*

Meanwhile, AA explained,

*"The challenge was a few days after we left the grammar lesson. Sometimes, when we understand, we don't use it, so we forget. Grammars that we rarely apply are forgotten."*

SS also explained

*"Writing gives us time to think more about what we want to write. So, it's not immediately spontaneous. So maybe you can choose the words better, but the grammar is difficult. Because, as we know, grammar has many rules, having to memorize formulas is difficult"*.

In addition, NN and SM also explained that they were sometimes influenced by the grammar of their mother tongue when trying to apply English in writing because of their inability to properly understand English grammar.

SM explained,

*"Writing is also difficult. There are grammar mistakes. The meaning is correct, but the grammar is wrong. The sentence structure is difficult. I don't understand the grammar lesson either. So sometimes Indonesian grammar is influenced, so when we write, it's like translated Indonesian"*.

Grammar challenges not only have an impact on writing, but FN also explained that the challenges have an impact on her speaking.

She said,

*“I feel that if one of the components is lacking, it could have an impact on other components. Especially when we speak, our grammar is wrong, which can also have big consequences. So in speaking, mostly I have problems with grammar”.*

#### **4) The difficulty in English pronunciation**

Five out of eight students said that their challenge was difficulty in pronouncing English. For them, English is too complicated to pronounce; this is also caused by their unfamiliarity with pronouncing English words. So sometimes, when trying to pronounce English words, the sound is affected by the sound of their mother tongue.

AE said,

*“I find it difficult to pronounce words in English. It's difficult to make English sounds because I'm used to Indonesian pronunciation.”*

RF added,

*“Challenge in pronunciation may be due to foreign language. It's hard to adjust the sound. This is because English is a winding language.”*

SM also explained that there were many errors in sounding out English words caused by her mother tongue, Acehnese.

Meanwhile, SS explained that her confusion in pronunciation was due to the different sources obtained.

*“Sometimes, we still confuse the pronunciation of English words. Sometimes, I hear from some people that this is how it is pronounced; others say it differently. So, I don't know how to pronounce it correctly. Apart from that, because we are not native speakers, it is difficult to pronounce it”.*

In addition, NN said,

*“Some words are difficult for me to pronounce. Doesn't fit my tongue. Often, what I say is not the way it should be pronounced. Maybe after listening it, I can pronounce it, but I can't do it anymore when I practice in daily life, the wrong pronunciation comes back.”*

### 5) The diversity of accent

English has various accents. These accents influence students' understanding of listening to English. This is how the participants felt. Participants admitted that they could not understand the meaning of the audio provided because the accents used by native speakers were different. They have difficulty catching the words spoken. This challenge does not only come from the diversity of accents native speakers use. Students also cannot properly understand the explanations from their lecturers and friends in class because the accent used is not just one accent.

FN said,

*“The challenge is distinguishing the sound. Because, as we know, people have different accents. So, I couldn't catch what was said in the audio provided. Moreover, if the media for listening is inadequate, the sound is sometimes small. This made it difficult for me to listen.”*

AA added,

*“Moreover, as we know, our lecturers are alumni from several countries, so they use different accents. Some have Australian accents, and some have British accents. And there are also older brothers in the class who like British accents, so when they explain something or speak using a British accent, we don't really understand what they are saying.”*

In addition, AE said,

*“I find it difficult to listen when the lecturer speaks in English. I don't understand it because it's not clear. Here, many of the lecturers speak Acehnese. So the English is English with an Acehnese accent.”*

The speed factor of English pronunciation also causes challenges in listening to English with different accents.

SS said,

*“Some of the lecturers used English with a slight British accent, which made me not understand as well. If they talk fast, I can't understand them.”.*

#### **6) Lack of motivation**

Even though students have chosen English education as their study program, their motivation to learn English is still deficient. They admitted that they were not interested in spending time learning things related to English. This lack of motivation is due to a lack of interest in the texts provided, dissatisfaction with the teaching methods of certain lecturers, and not wanting to become an English student. So, this becomes a challenge for them in learning English in the first year.

SS said,

*“Maybe in the first year, I still had less motivation because I had not joined a supportive environment, namely an environment that supported me in the English department. I'm too lazy to read text. So there has to be something that makes me interested in reading. If it's just old texts, I'll immediately feel sleepy. Every lecturer is different. Some are fun, and some are not. So if it's not fun for me, I'm not interested in paying attention and following the lesson well.”*

FN added

*“The first challenge was that I was in a place I didn't want to be, so actually, this wasn't my dream major. So, in the first year,*

*because I didn't like it, I had less motivation to learn English at that time. So when we are in the position that we don't want, we can't do anything."*

### **7) Inadequate background knowledge**

Students majoring in English come from diverse educational backgrounds. The diversity of previous educational backgrounds causes differences in the knowledge they have. So when undergoing education as English students, especially in the early terms, some students experience challenges, namely a lack of English knowledge because the knowledge obtained from previous schools is not sufficient as preparation to become English students.

FN said,

*"I didn't learn pronunciation in high school. At this age, when our knowledge is still at level 1, and we are exposed to the material at a high level, it's like people are already at level 30, and we are still at level 1. We still have to go through 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and so on, we can not go straight to level 30. So that's a challenge for me."*

*"Even at our previous school, we were taught by teachers whose undergraduate education was not in the English department, but only his master's degree, which is English Education. This is already wrong. In second grade, we should have been given English lessons according to our level, but instead, we were given elementary level lessons, maybe because he was inexperienced."*

Meanwhile, SM said,

*"Because I just came here and haven't learned listening before, I did, but not often. In previous schools, there were only two times listening lessons a year. So that makes me less understanding of the English listening aspect".*

In addition, RF explained,

*“I was a little surprised because the English I learned in high school was different from what I learned here. As we know, English is difficult. Initially, I thought that English would be taught from the basics here, but apparently not. Immediately practice English, so it's a little confusing. So my understanding of English at my previous school was lacking.”*

### **8) Unsupportive environment**

Some students admit that the environment also influences their English learning in their first year. So, an environment that does not support them in learning and cannot improve their English ability is also a challenge for them. This environment can be the friendship environment and the class environment.

NN and FN explained that their circle of friends did not have a positive effect on improving their English speaking skills. Even though the circle is surrounded by English language education students, they also rarely use English in their daily lives. So this becomes a challenge for them because the environment cannot support them to become better at English communication.

AA added,

*“Because we move from high school to college, our new habits grow from children to teenagers. That's where the environmental influence is, namely friends. So when our friends invited us to drink coffee, we did it so we forgot about studying. Actually, firstly, studying wasn't difficult. But because of this environment, studying has become difficult. That was the challenge”.*

SM also said,

*“As we know, English should be used a lot in class, but what happens is that Indonesian is used a lot, so we underestimate the use of English. Finally, we think that there is no need to use English too strictly because the lecturers also used Indonesian.”*

## 9) Unpleasant behavior of lecture

The challenges faced by students did not only come from themselves but also from the behavior of lecturers. Some students perceived that there were lecturer habits that were unpleasant for them in the learning process. The habit was that the lecturers often paid more attention to smart students. Hence, the students at lower levels feel left behind. Another habit was the lecturer, who rarely came to class, which had a bad impact on students.

RF said,

*“So those who are very smart stand out; those who are not smart shrink in class. So, we feel less confident in class. We feel like we're not very smart. So, the smart ones are dominant in the class. So we don't feel confident enough to show our abilities. If there is a smart student, the lecturers only focus on him. So when we want to ask, we feel that the question is not considerable, so it's better not to ask.”*

While SM said,

*“During term 1, there was a lecturer who rarely came in; it was in the English skills course. So it was difficult. During the second term, we had a lecturer who really honed our skills. So in the second term, I was really surprised; I immediately had to catch up on the material I missed”.*

The two things above became the challenges for students in the process of learning English in the first year.

## 2. The strategies used by English department students to deal with the challenges encountered in English learning during the first year of study

### 1) Watching English videos

Based on the results of interviews, it was found that watching videos in English can improve pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills. AA said that

watching snippets of English films was the most effective solution for him in understanding vocabulary based on its meaning.

AA added,

*“For example, if we have a hobby, I personally prefer things related to videos or photos. We say photographer and videographer. So, the knowledge of photographers and videographers is more mastered in the Western world. So, with this hobby, we can connect it with the way we learn. Learning pronunciation and vocabulary by watching videos that we like. I watched videos on photographer tips and videographer tips. So from this, we can watch, and we also get the benefits of getting to know new accents and vocabulary. So we do not just watch one channel. Of course, the channels are different and from different people. From there, we can also get to know people's accents; they can be from Sweden, Australia, or America. So we can understand their accents.”*

In addition, the participant with the initials RF also used video speech subtitles to find out the grammar used by the speaker and used it to deepen his knowledge. The video can also increase motivation to learn.

RF also said,

*“I watch Ted talks. As we know, TED talks are not only designed to get motivation but will also increase our knowledge. So when we see the video, our imagination is higher, we are more motivated.”*

RF Added,

*“I often watch. I watch YouTube in English. Watch educational videos related to English. For example, how to improve writing.”*

## 2) Listening English Audio

From the interview results obtained from participants, their way of overcoming challenges in learning English is listening to English language sources, and these sources can be songs and podcasts.

AA said,

*“So I took the solution. It was looking for the song, looking at the lyrics. Maybe some people say not to know the lyrics of the song first so that we understand how to pronounce it. But if we know the lyrics first, it will be easier for us to understand the song. It will be easier for us to memorize the lyrics. From memorizing the lyrics, we can memorize the pronunciation and understand the meaning.”*

NH also added,

*“I often listen to podcasts on YouTube. It is ‘English by Tiffani’. Anyway, the pronunciation is clear. We do not need to look for the meaning of what she explains anymore because we will definitely understand. Indeed, what she explains is easy to understand.”*

Listening to podcasts and songs can help students understand the meaning of new vocabulary and know how to pronounce it.

## 3) Learning with friends

Many of the students overcome challenges in speaking English, especially in speaking, by practicing with friends. This activity can train them to speak fluently and confidently and can improve their English vocabulary.

SM said,

*“I talk to friends, but only close friends because I'm still not confident.”*

SS added,

*“In speaking, I practice with friends. So when I get used to it, within a week, I can learn some new vocab.”*

Learners also admit that studying with friends can overcome challenges in other aspects of learning English, namely in pronunciation, grammar, and writing.

AA said,

*“So the solution to improve grammar skills is friends. Circle us with friends who actually have better English skills. So when we talk, we can remember what grammar they use, so we can always remember the grammar.”*

RF also said,

*“When I find a word, I don't want to read it first. I ask my friend first how to read it correctly.”*

Additionally, NH explained,

*“I just study often, often repeat the lessons. Usually, when writing, I write in notes. So, for example, when I make a mistake, I ask a friend to correct it. My friend is actually taking part in a student exchange in America. So she's really smart. So I told her to proofread my writing.”*

#### **4) Memorizing vocabulary**

Some students use memorization techniques to overcome the lack of vocabulary. They memorize vocabulary in different ways, such as memorizing several words in a day, re-searching the forgotten words, read the dictionary frequently and memorizing the sentence to know the meaning of the words based on the context.

AE said,

*“I increased my vocabulary. For example, in a day, I memorize at least ten vocabulary words.”*

RF added,

*“I usually memorize it myself. If there is something I can use when talking to friends, I will use it. If I forget something, I'll open it again”.*

Meanwhile, NH said,

*“I memorized the vocabulary, so at the Islamic boarding school, I was given a dictionary. So I often read it.”*

SM also explained,

*“I memorized it too. But sometimes, I don't memorize the words. I just memorize the sentences. So I can understand the meaning according to the context.”*

##### **5) Learning independently at home**

To overcome the challenges faced by students, efforts are needed to deepen their knowledge of English by repeating the material that has been given, practicing it, and trying to correct mistakes that have been made. NH, SS, and SM said that to overcome the challenges they faced in class in learning English, they tried to re-study the material they had received previously and apply it.

AA explained,

*“What the lecturer teaches in class is not enough for us to digest. We need to re-digest outside the classroom. Well, the previous time that was used for playing, so I decided to leave it and focus on studying.”*

Some of them used their free time at home to practice their abilities in English subjects.

AE said,

*“I practice a lot of listening tests, practicing alone at home.”*

Meanwhile, NN said,

*“I practice writing, so I made a diary using English. I studied using grammar books and often do the exercises.”*

SM also said,

*“On TikTok, there are lists of questions about everyday life. I write them at home, so I practice from TikTok. The questions are in written form, so I practiced answering the questions to practice writing.”*

#### **6) Try to be confident**

two out of eight participants tried to give themselves the courage to be more active in class. This method is used to overcome the challenges of lack of confidence in learning English in the classroom.

AE said,

*“I try to have the courage to point to myself when the lecturer asks something.”*

AA also added,

*“Well, one way I can do this, which also applies to other things, is to just believe in myself first. So, from a mistake, we can achieve success because college is not a place to show our performance; that will happen later in the workplace. This is where we look for mistakes. So it doesn't matter if we make mistakes. So, when you want to speak or make a presentation, just move forward. When we make mistakes and are embarrassed, other people will forget in the future. The important thing is just enjoy it.”*

## B. Discussion

After analyzing the data from the questionnaire and interview, it was found that the students faced several challenges in English learning during the first year of study. Students experience difficulty in pronouncing English. This difficulty is caused by unfamiliarity with the pronunciation of English sounds. This is in accordance with research from Ruzikulovna (2022), which states that difficulties pronouncing English are caused by unfamiliarity with the sounds of English. The difficulty in pronouncing is also due to being used to Indonesian pronunciation, so the pronunciation is influenced by Indonesian pronunciation. This includes challenges in the phonology domain described by Septianasari and Baihaqi (2019), namely interference with the mother tongue in pronouncing English. Hence, English pronunciation is very challenging for students.

Students also mentioned that they were not confident in communicating in English, especially in front of the class. This is due to hesitance about communicating in English and fear of making mistakes when speaking. This causes them to not be confident in speaking English. This is agreed by Ismeti (2022), who states that challenges in speaking are hesitance about using English when talking to other people and a lack of confidence regarding their ability to communicate. In addition, this lack of self-confidence is also caused by rarely practicing English both before becoming an English student and after becoming an English student. It has been mentioned by Huang et al. (2022) that one of the challenges in learning English is limited speaking practice.

The other challenge faced by students is the lack of vocabulary. A lack of use in everyday life causes this lack of vocabulary. So that the vocabulary they knew before is forgotten. In addition, the move from high school to college means they do not know much high-level vocabulary. They previously acquired basic vocabulary, whereas, in lectures, they require mastery of academic vocabulary. Therefore, this can result in serious challenges for students in their first year. As stated by Nanda and Azmy (2020), the small amount of English vocabulary is the cause of problems in the EFL context. Based interview results, these vocabulary challenges cause the other challenges in learning English. These challenges

include difficulty in speaking fluently and not properly understanding what the lecturer said. Both challenges are the most challenges as shown in questionnaires result. If vocabulary mastery is lacking, there will be an inability to speak English fluently. This is in accordance with what was stated by Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) that one of the things that causes an inability to speak skills is a lack of vocabulary. Unfamiliarity with the vocabulary well can result in difficulties in understanding the lecturer. It was also the challenges for students themselves that were stated in the questionnaire section. This is similar to what was stated by Wolf and Phung (2019). They stated that the difficulty in comprehending what the professors said in the class is caused by different accents, unfamiliar words, and speed.

Moreover, grammar is the challenge that students experience. Based on interview result, grammar is too complicated to understand, so it is not easy to master. Grammar has several rules that make it difficult to understand. Even though they already understand the material, sometimes the application becomes difficult. Grammar makes students confused about the rules being taught. This is in accordance with Huang et al. (2022) research that mentioned the complexity of grammar and disinterest in grammar are challenges in learning English. They do not even know why grammar is so difficult to understand completely. In writing, the grammar used is influenced by Indonesian grammar. This challenge is included in the syntactic domain, as explained in research by Septianasari and Baihaqi (2019). Not only that, students also think that grammar grammar cause the difficulty to speak fluently. However, this contradicts what was stated by Nuraeni (2019). In this research, it is explained that their great concern for grammar in communicating causes the inability to produce natural language.

Next, The diversity of accents in English is a challenge for students. This can cause difficulties in understanding what the lecturer says in class and the content of the audio provided. These challenges are in accordance with the challenges in listening mentioned by Ismeti (2022) in her research.

Motivation to learn is also an aspect that needs to be considered in learning English. The greater the motivation within oneself, the greater the possibility of

success in learning. However, on the contrary, a lack of motivation can create challenges when studying. Al-Khalidi (2020) stated that students' lack of motivation and poor concentration in learning English in the class were the challenges. A lack of motivation to learn can be seen in how students respond to learning. Based on the interview results, students can become sleepy and easily not participate in learning well. This can be a challenge in learning English. As Ruzikulovna (2022) mentioned in her research, the inability to concentrate well on learning is a problem in schools.

Low prior knowledge was another challenge PBI students faced in the first year. Their low level of prior knowledge due to factors from their previous school results in their inability to understand English at the campus level. When they become English education students, they will not learn English from the basics like at school. Students should have sufficient knowledge of English so they can understand higher-level material at the campus level. Nanda and Azmy (2020) also found that a lack of prior knowledge causes problems in the EFL context. Therefore, students will face challenges in learning English, especially in early terms, if they do not have sufficient prior knowledge of English.

The environment is an important factor in learning. Therefore, the lack of support from environmental aspects is also a challenge in learning English. The environments are the friendship environment and the class environment. The interviews found that students did not have an environment of friends who could develop their English language skills, especially in speaking. They rarely practice English in their daily lives because of their social circle. So, this becomes a challenge for them in learning English. This is in accordance with research from Huang et al. (2022), who stated that another challenge in learning English is the lack of an English-speaking environment. Besides the friendship environment, the classroom environment can also impact learning. Students stated that the classroom environment should use more English, but in reality, the use of their mother tongue is more dominant. Such a classroom environment can result in challenges in improving English language skills, as Aaqil et al. (2022) mentioned in their research.

Lecturers can also cause challenges faced in learning English. Bad habits of teachers can have an impact on the learning process. This research found that lecturers often pay more attention to smart students so that other students receive less attention and the opportunity to interact in class. Plus, there is another habit, namely rarely going to class. This causes losses for early semester students. They should have received proper learning from the beginning to move on to the next level. However, this kind of lecturer's habits become challenging for students in the learning process. Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) also stated that the interaction between teachers and students is one of the challenges in improving speaking skills.

On the other hand, according to analysis results, there are several things that are not a challenge for English students in the 2022 batch. Time in completing an essay was not a challenge for students because they already know how to organize and how to write an essay, so they rarely spend too long on writing an essay. Furthermore, the subject matter given in writing was also not a challenge for them because it was very close to their daily lives so they are quite familiar with the topics given in the writing task. Apart from writing, they also rarely experience problems in reading. Students revealed that they were able to understand English reading well due to several factors. These factors are that students have the habit of reading various texts, and the text provided was easy to understand. The level of ease of the text provided was also a factor that causes them to rarely need a long time to understand the reading text. It is different from the study of Ismeti (2022) that stated several problems above were challenges for students. In addition, Afzal (2019) found several problems in pronouncing, memorizing, using new words and. But in this study, pronunciation of new English vocabulary was not a challenge in learning English because there was effort in pronouncing new words repeatedly. The process of memorizing new vocabulary was also not a challenge for students because there is an effort to use these words in sentences, so that the process of acquiring words is easier. Lastly, using new vocabulary is not difficult for some students because they make an effort to immediately practice it at the right time.

In addition, there are several strategies can be used in dealing with the challenges faced. Watching is an activity that can be used to support knowledge, one of which is knowledge of English. The learning process will be more relaxed by choosing videos according to their preferences. The English videos they watch not only provide enjoyment for them but also provide benefits to support their skills in English. Students also used the activity to overcome the listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation challenges. Watching English videos or films helps them recognize various English accents, which will help them in listening. By watching English videos, they can learn pronunciation from the way native speakers pronounce English. Moreover, students can also know a lot of vocabulary indirectly and can understand its meaning based on its use. Not only in terms of knowledge, students also admit that the videos they choose can also increase their motivation to learn English. So, watching activities can be a solution to overcome the challenges they face in learning English. This is in accordance with what was explained by Komari et al. (2022) that listening to songs and watching videos can motivate students to learn so that they can improve their linguistic skills more easily. In this research, it was also found that students also listened to songs to solve their challenges in English vocabulary and pronunciation. From songs, students can pay attention to how the singer pronounces a word. This is a strategy that can be used in learning English listening, as explained by Schmitt and Rodgers (2020) in their research. The research stated that paying attention to the native speaker's pronunciation, the words spoken, and sentence emphasis are strategies for listening. This is also in accordance with the interview that students also listen to podcasts to overcome their challenges in listening. Podcasts contain conversations that use sentence emphasis definitely. So, Podcasts can help students pronounce and understand the meaning of sentences that are conveyed well.

Memorizing word for word directly is also an activity that many students do to increase their English vocabulary. Memorization activities are memorizing several vocabulary words a day and then trying to use them when speaking or

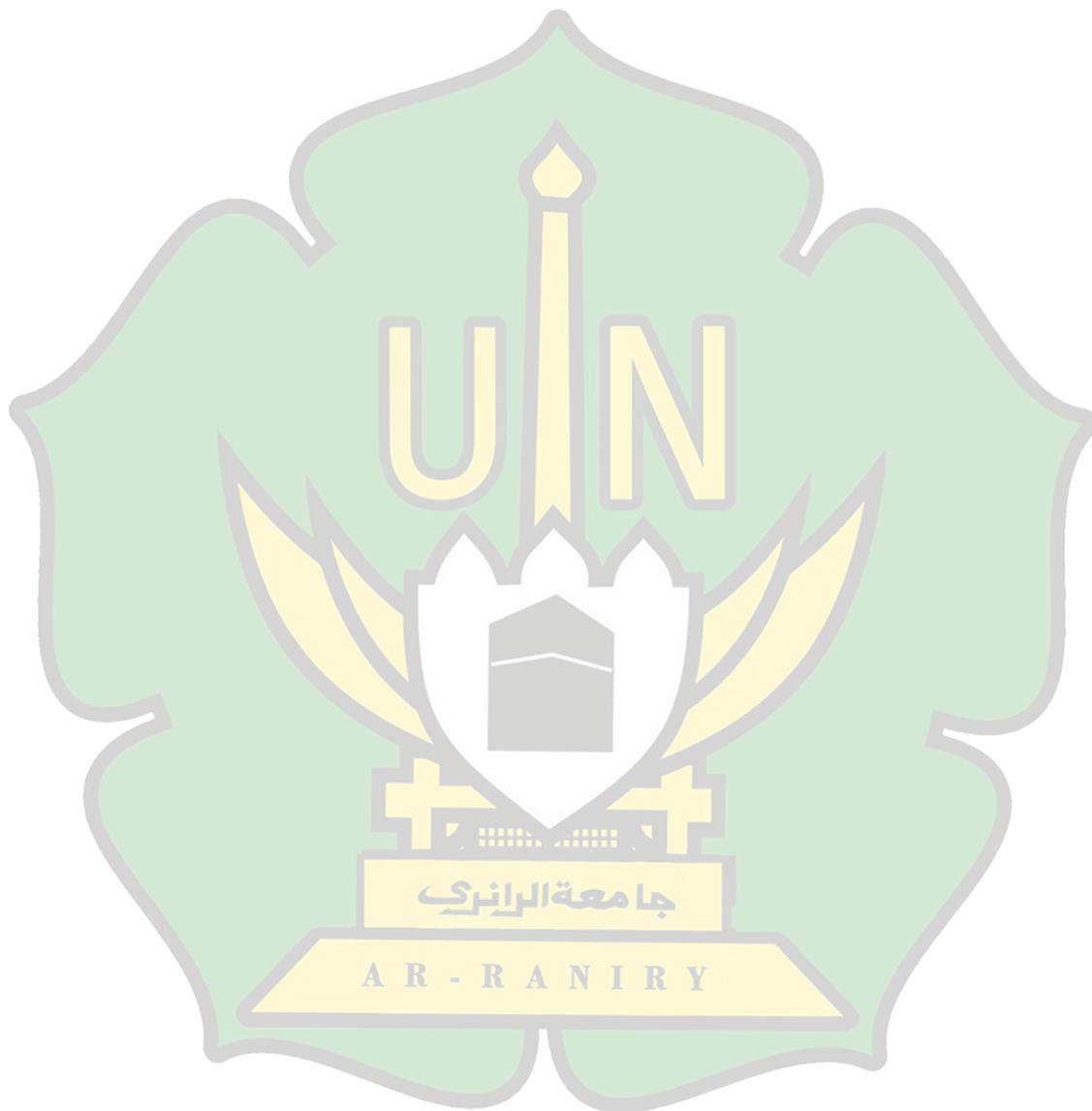
memorizing sentences. Memorizing sentences can help in understanding meaning based on context so that they know the meaning of a word and how these words are used in sentences. This can also be used to overcome their challenges in limited English vocabulary. This was similar to research conducted by Lestari and Wahyuddin (2020) that imagines a situation where a word is used as a solution to increasing vocabulary.

Another strategy that can be used to overcome challenges in learning English is involving friends. English language education students commonly use these methods. This is done by practicing English with friends. Frequent conversations can improve English speaking skills, as Schmitt and Rodgers (2020) mentioned. It can also help in overcoming self-hesitance about speaking English. Lestari and Wahyuddin (2020) said that the strategy that can be used to learn English is to find someone as a partner to practice speaking English. Not only overcoming limitations in speaking, friends can also help students learn other English skills, such as pronunciation and grammar.

It is not just skills that need to be improved in learning English. Internal factors such as self-confidence also need to be built as an effort to develop oneself. Trying to show off in class can be the strategy to overcome self-hesitance. It will increase our self-confidence to do anything in the class, especially speaking in front of the class. This is in line with what was expressed by Lestari and Wahyuddin (2020) that one of the strategies that can be used in learning English is to encourage ourselves to speak English even though we are afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes made when studying are normal, so there is no need to be afraid of making mistakes. Confidence and the courage to try are needed to complete English language skills so that students are capable of knowledge, skills, and mental.

Learning cannot be successful if it only relies on the classroom learning process. Students need to take the time to improve their abilities outside of class. Efforts to overcome their challenges in the classroom are carried out by reviewing

the material they have received and applying it in everyday life. Writing a diary in English, doing exercises, and repeating previous lessons are solutions students use to improve their English skills. This method has also been explained in previous research conducted by Lestari and Wahyuddin (2020).



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of two parts, namely, conclusions and recommendations. The results of the data analysis and discussion in the previous chapter are concluded in the conclusion section of this chapter. In addition, there are several recommendations from researchers regarding this research.

#### A. Conclusions

The researcher has researched the challenges English language education students face in learning English in the first year at UIN AR-raniry Banda Aceh. Based on the research findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded several points as a result of achieving the objectives of this research. First, there are many challenges faced by the students in the first year. The following are the challenges:

1. The difficulty in speaking fluently
2. The inability to understand what the lecturer conveyed in class
3. The inability to recognize several words from listening media given in class
4. Limited vocabulary
5. lack of confidence in English communication
6. The complexity of grammar
7. The difficulty in pronouncing English
8. The diversity of English accents
9. The difficulty in guessing meaning of the words based on the context
10. The lack of motivation in learning English
11. Insufficient prior knowledge
12. Unsupportive environment
13. Bad teacher habits

Second, the students used some strategies to overcome challenges in learning English. The following are the strategies:

1. Watching English videos to recognize various accents, increase vocabulary, deepen grammar knowledge, and increase learning motivation.
2. Listen to English audio, both podcasts and songs to help them in practicing English pronunciation and increasing vocabulary.
3. Learning with friends that helped them in practicing English speaking, increasing vocabulary, learning pronunciation and grammar.
4. Memorizing vocabulary both memorizing words by words and memorizing full sentences.
5. Learning independently at home to review material and do exercises
6. Try to be fearless in-class activities to build self-confidence.

#### **B. Recommendations**

Firstly, for English teachers. Considering that one of the challenges faced by students is related to the teacher's attitude in teaching, here the researcher provides advice to teachers to further improve the quality of teaching in the classroom, as well as make good use of learning time to improve learning outcomes, and to provide good examples for students as future teachers.

Second, recommendation for students at the high school level. Researchers recommend students to consider carefully before deciding to take a major. Because a mismatch between their desires and the major they are taking can affect their performance in studying. This will also increase the difficulty of studying in that major. So they will face challenges that are difficult to overcome.

Third, a recommendation for English language education students. Researchers advise these students to recognize their challenges in learning from the start, especially majoring in English. This is useful for finding and applying the right strategy in overcoming challenges in mastering knowledge in your department to minimize bigger challenges in next semesters.

Fourth, a recommendation for future researchers. This research is limited to the challenges junior students face in the early semesters of college. The researcher recommends that future researchers research the challenges senior students face to find the best strategies to overcome them. This can help students overcome their difficulties while studying English. So that in the future it can create students who are more experts in their fields.



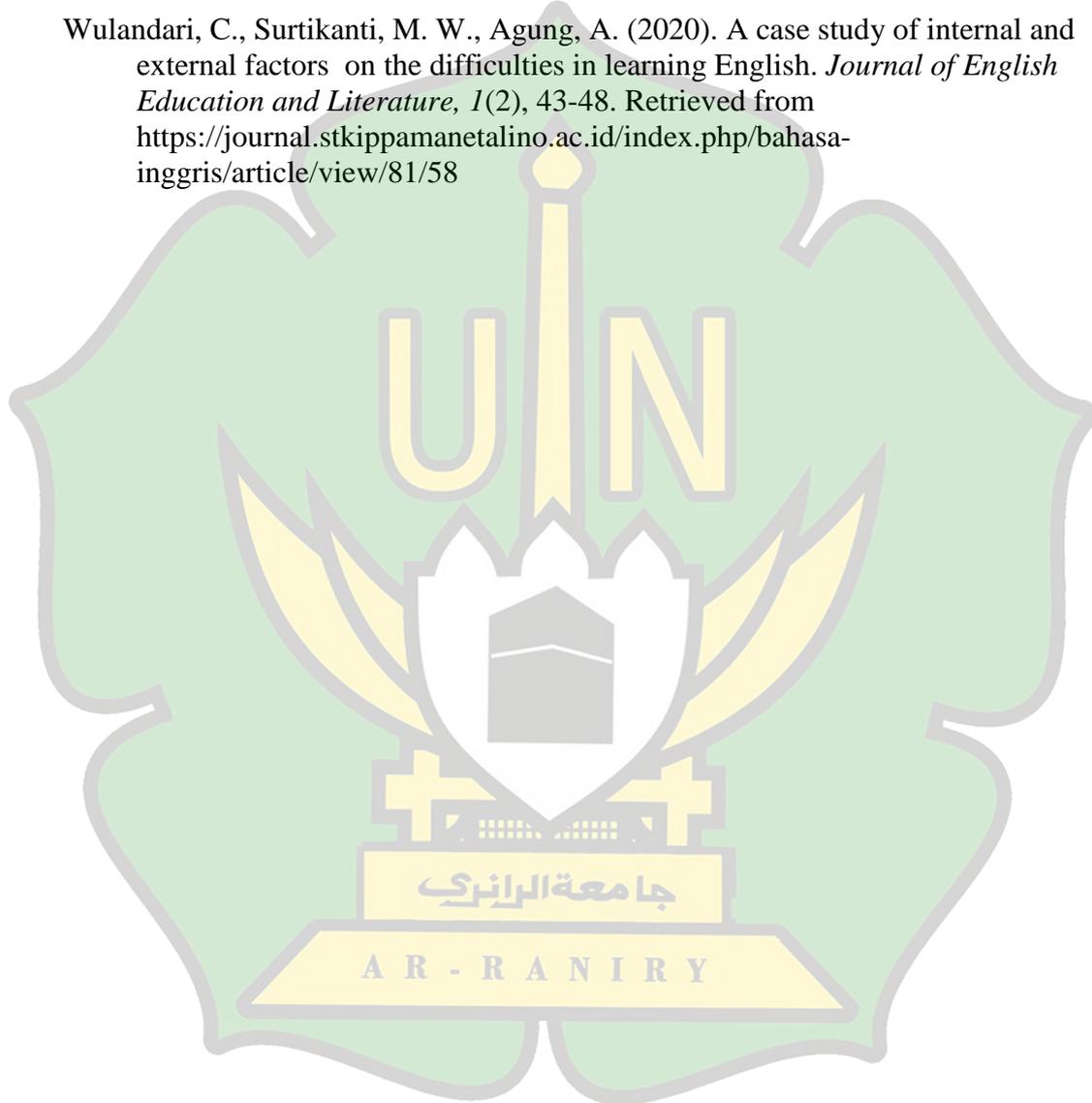
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## Appendix A Appointment Letter of Supervisor



**SURAT KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY**  
 Nomor : B-7638/UN.08/FTK/KP.07.6/07/2023

**TENTANG**  
**PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN**  
**UIN AR-RANIRY**

**DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY**

- Menimbang** : a. bahwa untuk kelancaran bimbingan skripsi dan ujian munaqasyah mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, maka dipandang perlu menunjuk pembimbing skripsi tersebut yang dituangkan dalam Surat Keputusan Dekan;  
 b. bahwa saudara yang tersebut namanya dalam surat keputusan ini dipandang cakap dan memenuhi syarat untuk diangkat sebagai pembimbing skripsi.
- Mengingat** : 1. Undang-undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;  
 2. Undang-undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, tentang Guru dan Dosen;  
 3. Undang-undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;  
 4. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 74 Tahun 2012 tentang Perubahan atas Peraturan Pemerintah RI Nomor 23 Tahun 2005 tentang Pengelolaan Keuangan Badan Layanan Umum;  
 5. Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, tentang Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Tinggi dan Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi;  
 6. Peraturan Presiden RI Nomor 64 Tahun 2013; tentang Perubahan IAIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Menjadi UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;  
 7. Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 12 Tahun 2014, tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;  
 8. Peraturan Menteri Republik Indonesia No. 21 Tahun 2015, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry;  
 9. Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang, Pengangkatan, Pemindahan dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia;  
 10. Keputusan Menteri Keuangan Nomor 293/KMK.05/2011 tentang Penetapan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh pada Kementerian Agama sebagai instansi Pemerintah yang Menerapkan Pengelolaan Badan Layanan Umum;  
 11. Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Nomor 01 Tahun 2015, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
- Memperhatikan** : Keputusan Sidang/Seminar Proposal Skripsi Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Tanggal **13 Juni 2023**
- Menetapkan** :  
**PERTAMA** : Menunjuk Saudara:  
 1. Prof. Dr. Muhammad AR, M.A  
 2. Siti Khasinah, S.Ag, M.Pd  
 Untuk membimbing Skripsi:  
 Nama : **Nuraini**  
 NIM : **190203049**  
 Program Studi : **Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris**  
 Judul Skripsi : **The Challenges Encountered by English Department Students During The First Year of Study**  
 Sebagai Pembimbing Pertama  
 Sebagai Pembimbing Kedua
- MEMUTUSKAN**
- KEDUA** : Pembiayaan honorarium pembimbing pertama dan kedua tersebut diatas dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor: SP DIPA. 025.04.2.423925/2023, tanggal 30 November 2022.
- KETIGA** : Surat keputusan ini berlaku sampai akhir semester Ganjil Tahun 2023
- KEEMPAT** : Surat Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan segala sesuatu akan diubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya apabila kemudian hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam penetapan ini.

**AR - RANIRY**

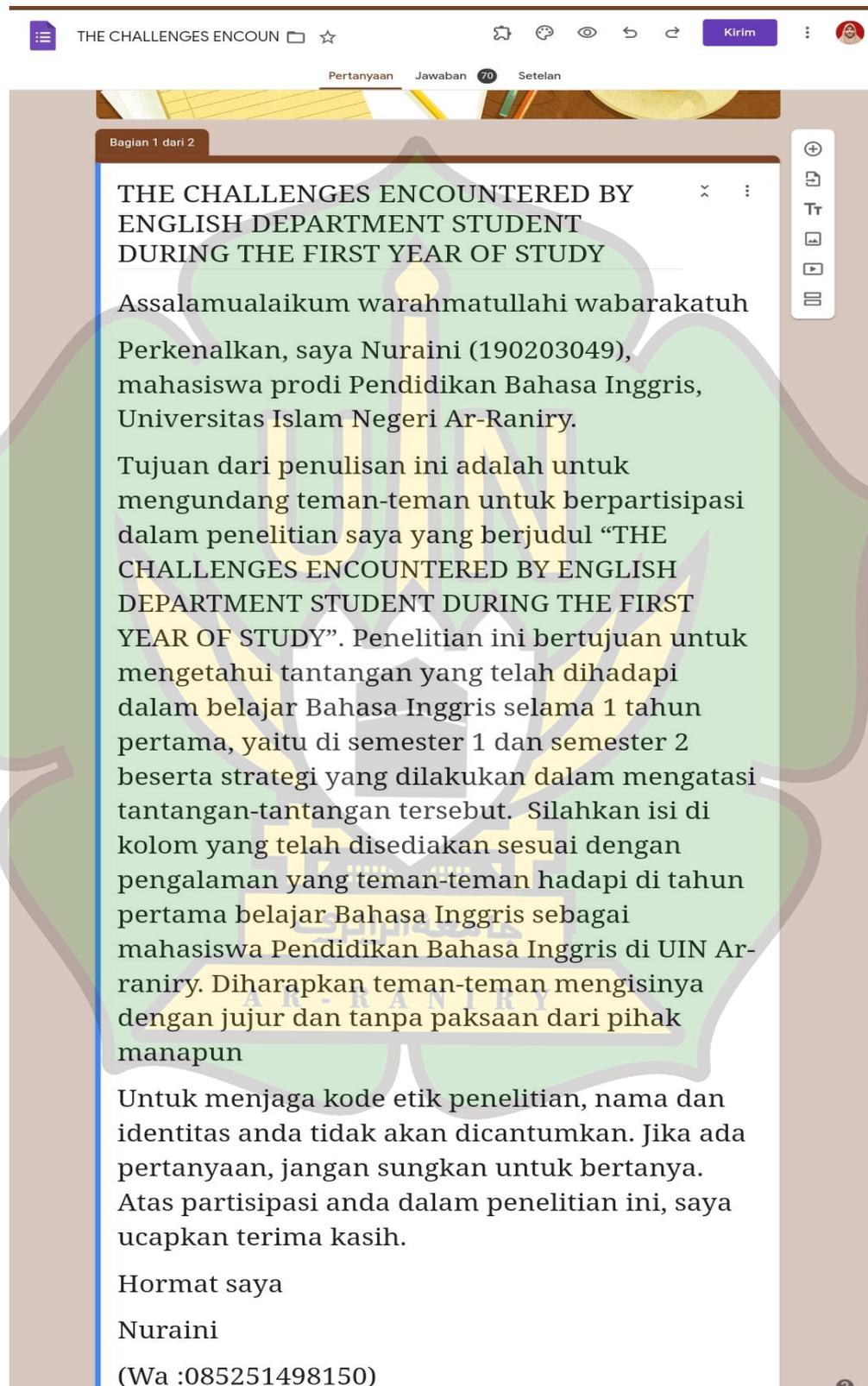
Ditetapkan di: Banda Aceh  
 Pada Tanggal: 21 Juli 2023  
 Dekan.

Saiful Muluk

**Tembusan**

1. Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry (sebagai laporan);
2. Ketua Prodi PBI Fak. Tarbiyah dan Keguruan;
3. Pembimbing yang bersangkutan untuk dimaklumi dan dilaksanakan;
4. Mahasiswa yang bersangkutan;
5. Arsip.

## Appendix B List of Questionnaires



THE CHALLENGES ENCOUN ☆

Pertanyaan Jawaban 70 Setelan Kirim

Nama Lengkap \*

Teks jawaban singkat

NIM \*

Teks jawaban singkat

No. Whatsapp \*

Teks jawaban singkat

Setelah bagian 1 Lanjutkan ke bagian berikut

Bagian 2 dari 2

QUESTIONS

silahkan dijawab dengan jujur sesuai dengan apa yang teman-teman alami ya :)

1. Saya tidak percaya diri atau khawatir dengan kemampuan saya untuk berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

2. Saya kesulitan berbicara dengan lancar \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

3. Saya membutuhkan waktu yang lama untuk menulis sebuah karangan \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

4. Saya tidak terbiasa untuk menulis teks bahasa Inggris dengan suatu bahan pembahasan. \*

Tidak pernah

THE CHALLENGES ENCOUN ☆

Pertanyaan Jawaban 70 Setelan Kirim

4. Saya tidak terbiasa untuk menulis teks bahasa Inggris dengan suatu bahan pembahasan. \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

5. Saya tidak memahami dengan baik teks-teks bahasa Inggris. \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

6. Saya membutuhkan waktu yang lama untuk memahami isi dari sebuah teks bahasa Inggris \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

7. Saya tidak mampu memahami dengan baik apa yang dosen sampaikan dalam bahasa Inggris \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

8. Saya tidak mampu mengenali beberapa kata dari media listening di kelas \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

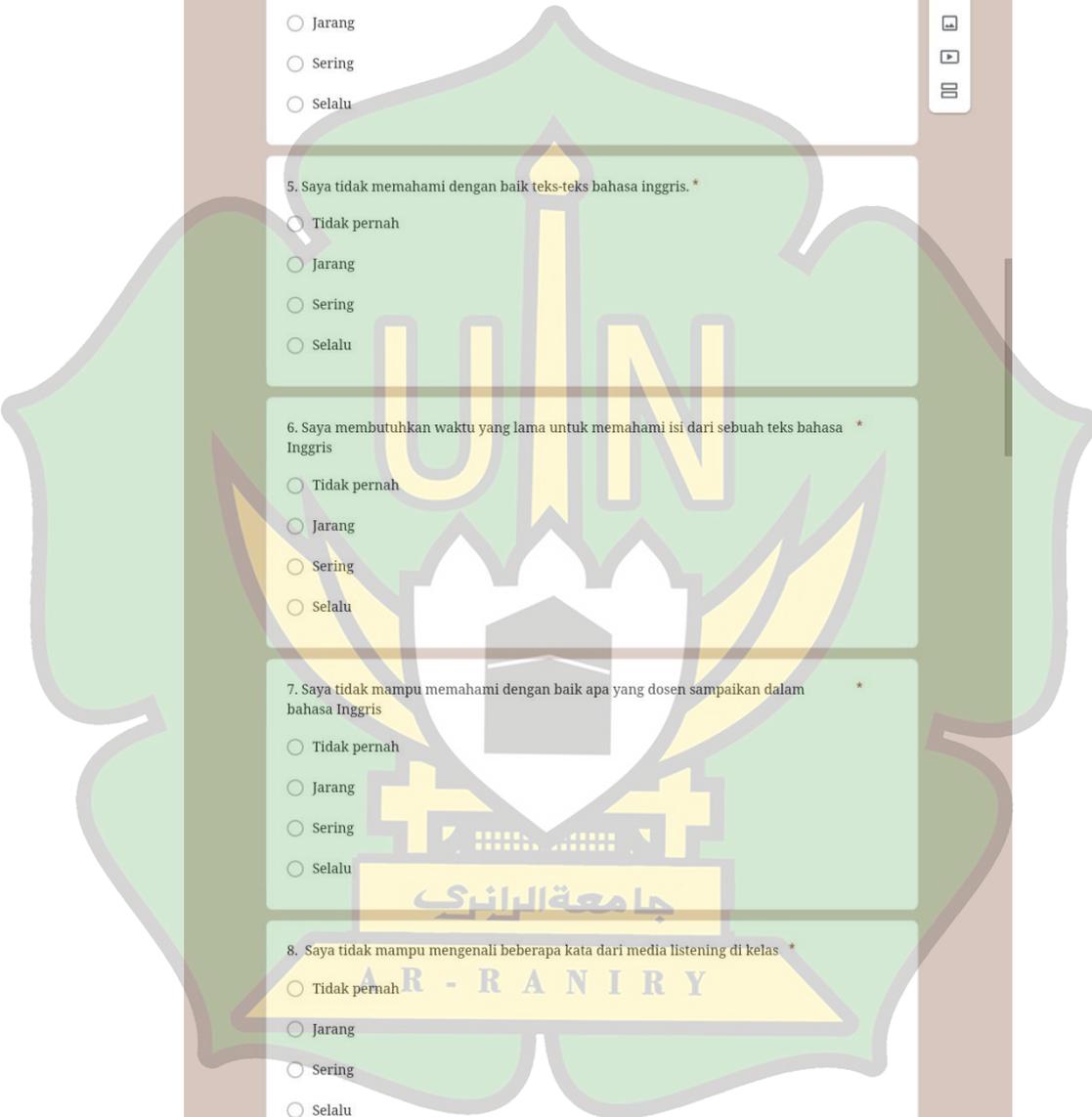
9. Saya terpengaruhi oleh bahasa pertama saat melafalkan bahasa Inggris \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu



THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED ☆

Pertanyaan Jawaban 70 Setelan Kirim

9. Saya terpengaruhi oleh bahasa pertama saat melafalkan bahasa inggris \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

10. Saya kesulitan dalam melafalkan kosakata baru \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

11. Saya kesulitan menggunakan tata bahasa inggris dengan benar karena terpengaruhi oleh tata bahasa pertama saya \*

Tidak Pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

12. Saya kesulitan untuk mengingat kosakata Bahasa Inggris \*

Tidak Pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

13. Saya kesulitan dalam menebak makna suatu kata berdasarkan konteksnya \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

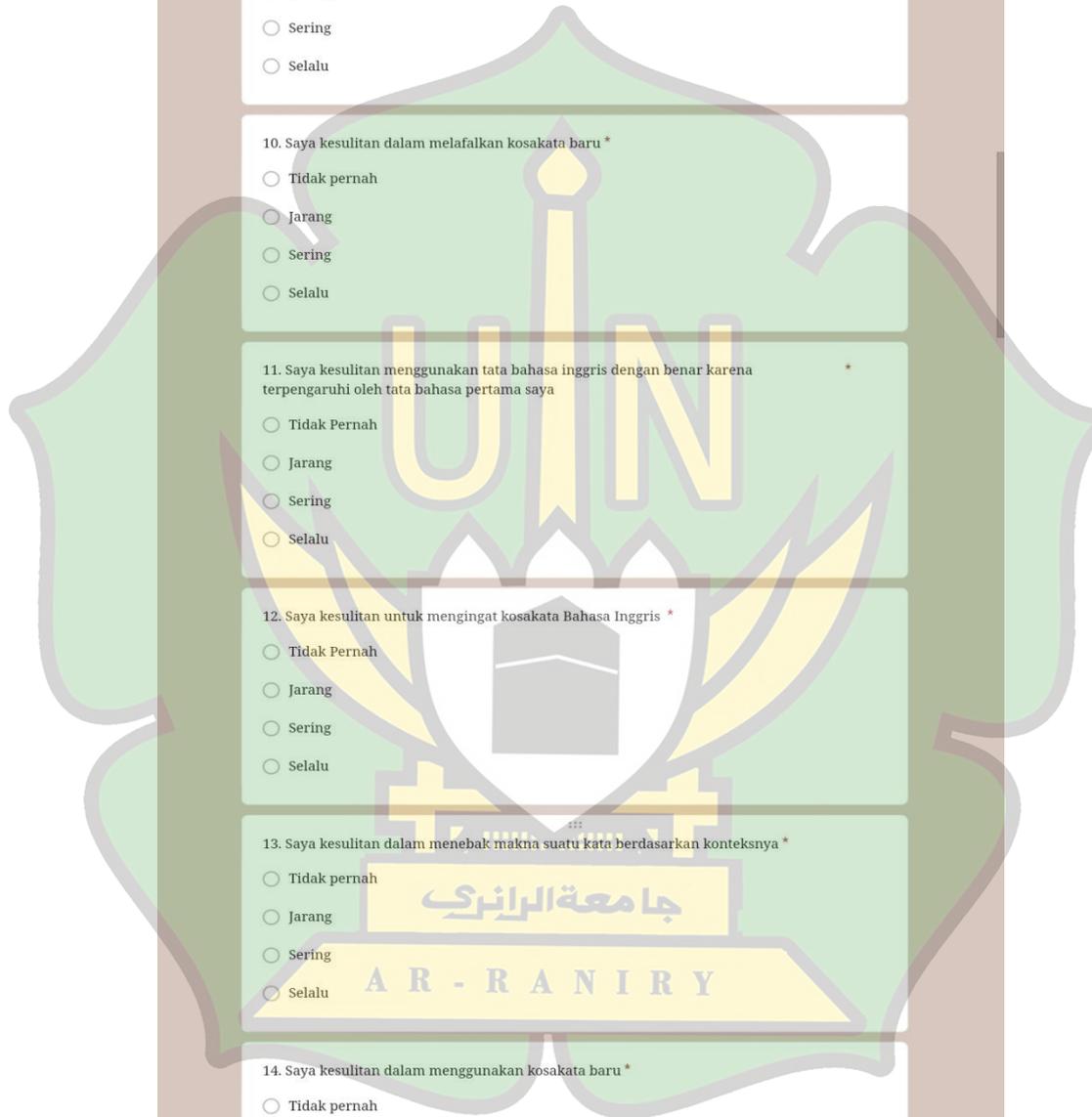
14. Saya kesulitan dalam menggunakan kosakata baru \*

Tidak pernah

Jarang

Sering

Selalu

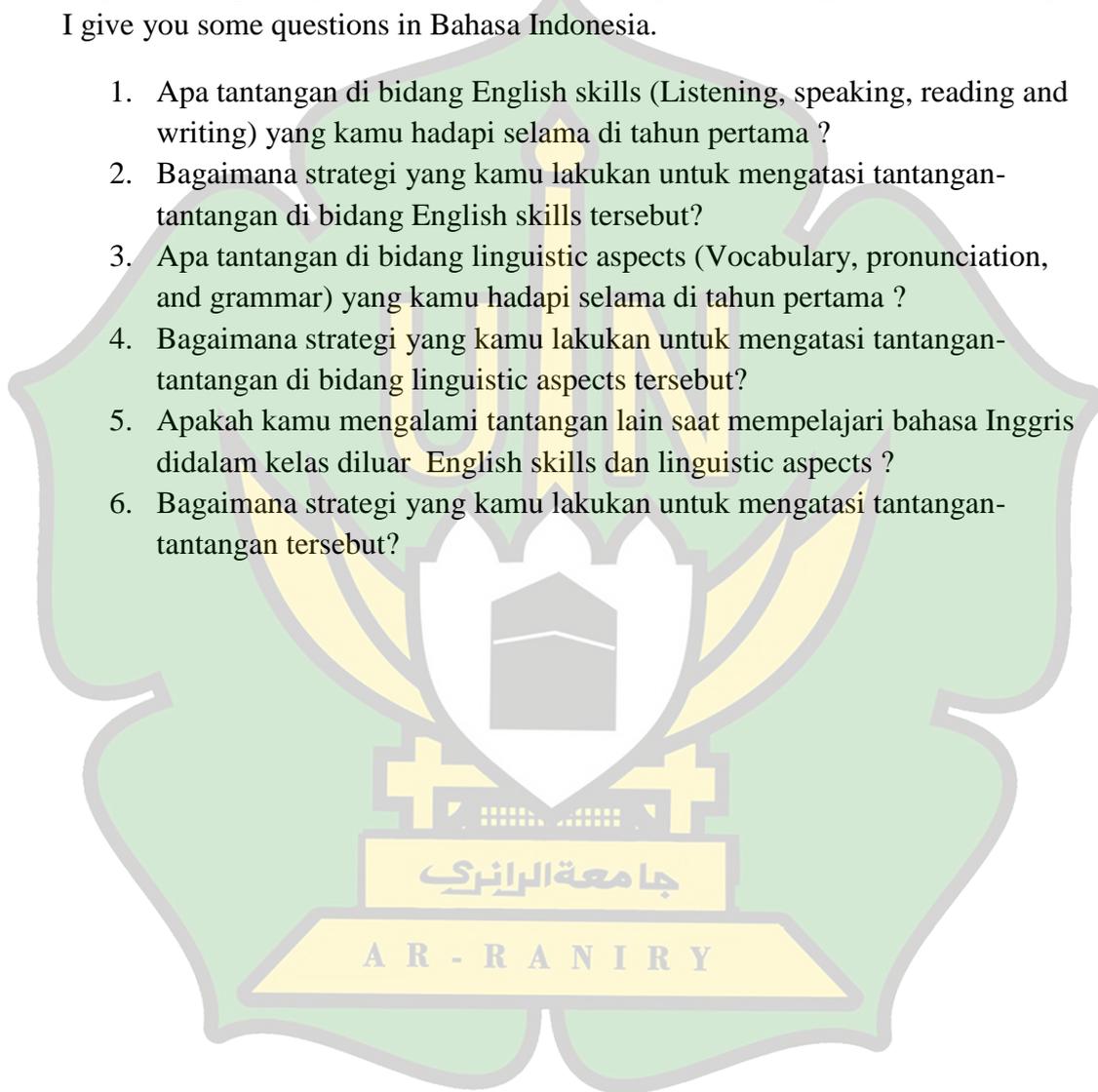


### Appendix C List of Interview Questions

Assalamualaikum Wr.wb

I am Nuraini, a student of English Language Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry batch 2019. I intend to Interview you about your challenges in learning English during first year of study and the strategies in dealing with the challenges. I give you some questions in Bahasa Indonesia.

1. Apa tantangan di bidang English skills (Listening, speaking, reading and writing) yang kamu hadapi selama di tahun pertama ?
2. Bagaimana strategi yang kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi tantangan-tantangan di bidang English skills tersebut?
3. Apa tantangan di bidang linguistic aspects (Vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) yang kamu hadapi selama di tahun pertama ?
4. Bagaimana strategi yang kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi tantangan-tantangan di bidang linguistic aspects tersebut?
5. Apakah kamu mengalami tantangan lain saat mempelajari bahasa Inggris didalam kelas diluar English skills dan linguistic aspects ?
6. Bagaimana strategi yang kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi tantangan-tantangan tersebut?



### Appendix D Documentation of Research



## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

1. Name : Nuraini
2. Place/ Date of Birth : Leubu Cot/19<sup>th</sup> October 2000
3. Sex : Female
4. Religion : Islam
5. Nationality : Indonesia
6. Address : Desa Cadek, Baitussalam, Aceh Besar
7. Email : [190203049@student.ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:190203049@student.ar-raniry.ac.id)
8. Occupation : Student of Department of English  
Language Education, UIN Ar-Raniry
9. Parents
  - a. Father's Name : Razali
  - b. Mother's Name : Sukmiati
  - c. Father's Occupation : Almarhum
  - d. Mother's Occupation : Housewife
  - e. Address : Desa Leubu Cot, Kec. Makmur, Bireuen
10. Educational Background
  - a. Elementary School : SD N 7 Makmur
  - b. Junior High School : SMP N 2 Makmur
  - c. Senior High School : SMA N 1 Peusangan
  - d. University : Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry

Banda Aceh, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023  
The Writer

Nuraini