

EFL STUDENTS' EFFORTS FOR ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Pursuing an English major requires students to master English. However, some variations of English proficiency levels are found. Recognizing how students behave to improve their English as an English department student is needed to profoundly appropriate treatment for students. Therefore, this research aims to explore the EFL students' efforts to enhance their English proficiency and the differences that may occur between cohorts using mixed methods. The subject of this research is English department students in Malang with 35 students. With survey and interview, this research found that the levels of students' efforts are: (1) Seldom (Non-compliance level); (2) Often (Procedural effort level); (3) Sometimes (Substantive effort level); and (4) Often (Focal effort level). In addition, the mean effort level of the 2020 cohort is 48, the 2021 cohort is 49.3, the 2022 cohort is 50.17, and the 2023 cohort is 52.75. It can be concluded that the younger their cohort, the higher their effort to improve their English proficiency. Due to the limitation of this study, further studies need to explore the students' effort in each English skill: speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

Key Words: EFL students; effort level; English proficiency

ABSTRAK

Menempuh jurusan Bahasa Inggris mengharuskan mahasiswa untuk menguasai bahasa Inggris. Namun, kenyataannya ditemukan adanya variasi tingkat kemampuan bahasa Inggris di antara mahasiswa. Untuk memberikan perlakuan yang sesuai bagi mahasiswa, diperlukan pengenalan terhadap bagaimana mahasiswa berperilaku dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka sebagai mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi upaya mahasiswa EFL dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka serta perbedaan yang mungkin terjadi antar angkatan dengan menggunakan *mixed-method*. Subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Malang dengan total sebanyak 35 mahasiswa. Melalui survei dan wawancara, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa tingkat upaya mahasiswa adalah: (1) Jarang (*Level non-compliance*); (2) Sering (*Level procedural effort*); (3) Kadang-kadang (*Level substantive effort*); dan (4) Sering (*Level focal effort*). Selain itu, rata-rata tingkat upaya berdasarkan angkatan ada angkatan 2020 sebesar 48, angkatan 2021 sebesar 49,3, angkatan 2022 sebesar 50,17, dan angkatan 2023 sebesar 52,75. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa semakin muda angkatan mahasiswa, semakin tinggi upaya mereka untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris. Karena keterbatasan dalam penelitian ini, penelitian lebih lanjut perlu mengeksplorasi lebih dalam mengenai upaya mahasiswa dalam masing-masing keterampilan bahasa Inggris: berbicara, membaca, mendengarkan, dan menulis.

Kata Kunci: mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris, tingkat upaya, kecakapan Bahasa Inggris

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INTRODUCTION

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Pursuing an English major at university, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are anticipated to achieve a high level of English proficiency after years of studying the subject, starting from elementary or junior high school. However, Arratibel and Alastuey (2015) highlighted that students exposed to the same learning duration may show different proficiency levels. Therefore, research has delved into identifying additional factors that influence this variation in proficiency, with effort emerging as a significant factor. Arianti (2021) found that EFL students exhibit varying levels of effort in improving their English proficiency.

Agbuga & Xiang (2008) considered effort an essential indication of motivating students. The effort is defined as the amount of time, energy and willpower exerted by students to fulfill the academic requirements set by their teachers and/or schools Carbonaro (2005). Learning effort is the willingness/commitment to do tasks and the drive to accept new and challenging concepts (Hashim et al., 2002; Genç & Köksal, 2021; Özer, 2020). Yeung (2011) mentioned that effort is related to mastery orientation. He emphasized, "The harder the problem, the harder the effort".

Carbonaro (2005) mentioned that learning involves rule-oriented, procedural and intellectual effort. Rule-oriented effort is students' effort to comply with the rules at school or in the learning process, such as attending class regularly and refraining from destructive behavior. Meanwhile, the procedural effort is an effort that requires students to try to meet specific demands set by teachers in class, such as completing requested tasks, submitting assignments on time, and actively participating in class discussions. The last is intellectual effort, where students devote more time and thought to answering the questions in the task correctly. He added that procedural effort places higher demands than rule-oriented effort. That is when two students who attend class regularly have the same effort in terms of rule-oriented effort. Still, one student may exert more procedural effort by submitting homework assignments more consistently than the other students.

Regarding types of learning effort, Özer (2020) also mentioned that learning effort consists of procedural, substantive, and non-compliance. The definition of procedural effort aligns with that of Carbonaro (2005), which includes completing assignments, complying with school and class rules, and punctuality. Substantive effort, on the other hand, represents students' active engagement in learning, such as working hard in school or devoting extra time to preparing or studying for exams. And the last is non-compliance, which is behavior that can inhibit exertion, such as misbehaving or daydreaming in class, being late for class, or not completing assigned homework (as cited in Karabiyik and Mirici (2018)). The study added another learning effort, focal effort, which implied mindfulness in foreign language classes.

Both theories suggest that academic success is influenced not only by students' adherence to rules, from following basic regulations to actively engaging in the learning process, but also by their cognitive and emotional commitment and ability to minimize behaviors that disrupt learning.

With L2 success, there is an indirect relationship between effort perseverance and L2 success through personal best and affective emotion (Khajavy & Aghaee, 2024; Pawlak et al., 2024). These results highlight the importance of Foreign Language Learning Effort (FLLE), which refers to how students' learning actions, both in and out of the classroom, reflect their perseverance, emotional engagement, and commitment to improving their L2 skills. Genç and Köksal (2021) assumed that the level of effort invested by learners in learning a foreign language is directly influenced by the strength of learners' motivation and their attitudes towards the language itself. Cole et al. (2008) mentioned that students tend to exert more effort on tests they find interesting, useful, and essential than on tests they find boring, useless, and unimportant.

Previous studies have analyzed various aspects of learning efforts in different contexts. For instance, Kuluşaklı (2023) explored EFL learners' autonomy and learning effort in online vocational colleges in Turkey, finding that freshmen "often" exert substantive effort in learning a foreign language while demonstrating "never" in the non-compliance effort. This suggests that effort plays a crucial role in language learning, especially in the context of online education. Gender differences in the effort were also explored, with studies by Genç and Köksal (2021), as well as Hashim et al. (2002), revealing that female students tend to exert significantly more significant effort than their male counterparts, indicating potential gender-based variations in learning strategies. Moreover, Meiranti et al. (2022) found that English Education freshmen made diverse efforts to improve their speaking

abilities, such as attending extra classes, practicing pronunciation, and watching English movies, demonstrating the various strategies students employ to enhance their skills. In addition, Setio et al. (2022) discovered that 44% of English education students often tried to overcome challenges in online learning, particularly focusing on self-regulation to avoid procrastination and complete assigned tasks. These findings underline the diverse ways in which learning effort manifests, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing academic success

Based on previous research on learning efforts focused only on vocational education students or freshmen in English programs. However, this study focused on students who took English, English Education, and English Literature courses, covering a range of academic years and not just one batch. This broader coverage aligns with the findings from Anisah & Hamid (2023), who observed that each undergraduate student makes different efforts to improve their English proficiency.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the EFL students' efforts in improving English proficiency?
- (2) Are there different efforts at improving English proficiency between cohorts?

Knowing the types of effort and understanding the differences is crucial, as it allows lecturers to assess the level of effort made by each cohort and provide feedback and guidance tailored to the level of student engagement, which will ultimately improve classroom learning outcomes. These insights can help lecturers develop targeted strategies to support students' needs and maximize their learning potential throughout their academic journey.

METHODS

Research Design and Subject

A method is used to conduct this research with a case study design. The mixed method gathers comprehensive data to determine what is being researched (Stockemer et al., 2019).

The participants for this research are undergraduate EFL students in Kota Malang. Targeting undergraduate EFL students in this research provides a unique advantage, as they are at a critical stage in their language acquisition journey where English proficiency directly impacts their academic success, career prospects, and social interactions. This setting creates a rich environment for examining EFL students' unique and varied strategies to enhance their English proficiency. By focusing on undergraduate EFL students, this study gains access to a population actively engaged in language learning within a context that supports language acquisition efforts, providing valuable insights into effective strategies for English proficiency improvement.

The sampling method used was random sampling method to generalize a large population. The sample size used was from Gay and Diehl (1992), which stated that if the minimum sample is 30 respondents. This research's sampling technique was implemented by randomly accepting all undergraduate EFL students in Kota Malang without determining their gender or cohort. This could maintain an unbiased selection. Then, the provided respondents were chosen randomly to be included in this research.

Research Instrument

This research explored the students' efforts to enhance their English proficiency. To find the answers and discover the patterns of the research questions, this research used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the main instruments. Questionnaires in mixed-method research can maximize the data collection since the data collected is in a large population that needs to be generalized (Stockemer et al., 2019). The questionnaire was given to the participants using Google Forms to ease data tabulation and coding.

The EFL students in Kota Malang who were willing to participate in this research were asked to fill out the consent form (to join in and be interviewed). The respondents then filled out their data to reach them for the interview. After that, the respondents selected to be interviewed were contacted.

The instrument consists of the questions from the effort levels, including non-compliance level, procedural effort level, substantive effort level, and focal effort level, adapted from Özer (2020), Arianti

(2021), and Meiranti et al. (2022) (Table 2). Non-compliance level refers to the degree to which the students comply with regulations or policies in the teaching-learning activities, such as class contracts. In addition, the procedural effort level refers to the students' efforts to follow the teachers' procedures during English learning, such as submitting assignments on time. Other than that, the substantive effort level refers to the students' efforts to engage in English learning, such as finding additional books for reading comprehension outside class. Lastly, the focal effort level refers to the student's commitment to English learning, such as highly contributing to every practical class activity.

The researchers piloted the questionnaire items to ensure the instrument's validity and reliability. The pilot study was conducted towards 20 non-English department students. The items are considered valid if the r-value is more than the r-table (>0.422); while the items are deemed reliable if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.6 (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). The results of the validity and reliability tests of the instruments are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Validity and Reliability Test Results

Item	R-Value	Cronbach's Alpha	Item	R-Value	Cronbach's Alpha
Q1	.553	.835	Q11	.630	.835
Q2	.596		Q12	.710	
Q3	.651		Q13	.709	
Q4	.723		Q14	.591	
Q5	.707		Q15	.571	
Q6	.849		Q16	.604	
Q7	.751		Q17	.503	
Q8	.837		Q18	.454	
Q9	.725		Q19	.731	
Q10	.753		Q20	.682	

From Table 1, this research identifies that the r-value of all items is more than r-table (.553>.422; .596>.422; .651>.422; .723>.422; .707>.422; .849>.422; .751>.422; .837>.422; .725>.422; .753>.422; .630>.422; .710>.422; .709>.422; .591>.422; .571>.422; .604>.422; .503>.422). It means that all items are considered valid. In addition, the value of Cronbach's alpha of the instrument is .835, more than 0.6. It means that it is reliable and appropriate for data collection. The complete components and indicators for the instrument are in Table 2.

Table 2 Research Components and Indicators to be Measured

Components	Indicators	List of Items	
		Questionnaire	Interview
Non-compliance level	Disruptive behavior, cheating behavior, plagiarism	4	5
Procedural effort level	Flexible, on-time, carrying out tasks well	4	9
Substantive effort level	Well preparation, review, practice, English learning media engagement, consultation, extra learning	8	15
Focal effort level	Attentively listen, concentration, contributions	4	4
Total		20	33

Source: Adapted from Özer (2020), Arianti (2021), and Meiranti et al. (2022)

Questionnaire Instrument

Closed-ended questions

Closed-ended questions aim to discover the EFL students' efforts and implementation to gather quantitative data. The EFL students give their responses on a five-point Likert scale, with the available

answers being: never (1), seldom (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). The questions for closed-ended questions contain the components and indicators in Table 2, such as non-compliance, procedural, substantive, and focal efforts in developing their English proficiency.

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are structured so EFL students can explore their efforts to enhance their English proficiency while learning English at the university. This aims to gather qualitative data for fundamental indicators to conduct an interview. The questions for this research are developed based on the indicators from closed-ended questions.

Interview Instrument

An interview is a conversation between two or more people with a specific purpose, often conducted to gather information, assess qualifications, or obtain insights (Bauman, 2015; Roberts, 2020). Interviews are widely used in research for various purposes, and they can be classified into different types based on their structure and objectives (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Turner III & Schmidt, 2022).

This research involves a semi-structured interview with EFL students who had filled out the questionnaire. This research utilizes semi-structured interviews as it has the flexibility to ask follow-up questions of the interviewee. This is particularly useful for discovering individual student efforts, as it can explore unique or unexpected strategies that students use in addition to the planned questions.

The interview questions used in this research are developed based on the indicators in each effort in Table 1. In addition, the followed-up questions are also contained in this research to deepen the respondents' answers and get richer data based on the students' answers during the interview.

Research Analysis

To answer the questions, the data in this research was analyzed in two levels: qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative analysis aims to provide numerous data to find statistical generalizations. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is involved in quantitative analysis in this research. ANOVA is the statistical technique used to analyze and compare the means of two or more groups or treatments to determine whether statistically significant differences exist among them. This quantitative data is analyzed with the help of the SPSS 26 application. Meanwhile, the qualitative data aims to answer and explore the respondents' questions further. This qualitative data is analyzed using the NVivo 14 app to find appropriate coding and visualization data afterwards.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Quantitative Data

According to the survey we conducted among our respondents, we have gathered 35 respondents from different undergraduate study programs in the English Department. The variation of the respondents' data was written in the demographic features of respondents in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the number of female students was 25 (71.4%), which was higher than that of male students (28.6%). Of the total respondents, 65.7% were from English Language Education, and 24.3% of were from English Language and Literature. In addition to information to complete the data, the cohort of each respondent was also identified; 22.9% of students were from 2020 cohort, 17.1% of students were from 2022 cohort, 22.9% of students were from 2023 cohort, and the highest number of respondents belong to 2021 cohort with 37.1%.

Table 3 Demographic Data of the Respondents

Demographic Features		f	%
Gender	Male	10	28.6
	Female	25	71.4

Study Program	English Language Education	23	65.7
	English Language and Literature	12	24.3
Cohort	2020	8	22.9
	2021	13	37.1
	2022	6	17.1
	2023	8	22.9
	Total of Respondents	35	100

Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded

After discovering the demographic features of the respondents, we found the answer for the first RQ about the effort level of the EFL students to enhance their English proficiency. The results of overall effort levels of EFL students are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the overall effort level of EFL students in improving their English proficiency based on four components of effort level. It shows that, at the non-compliance level, EFL students seldom do it ($X=1.69$) in their daily activities during their university studies. It means that students did their best not to violate their teachers' provisions and requirements during English language learning. In addition, the results show that they often make the procedural effort ($X=3.91$). It means that the students consistently follow procedures and assignments related to English learning, showing a commitment to improvement. They show the same effort with focal effort ($X=3.8$). It means that the students prioritize English learning and apply varied and purposeful approaches during English learning in class. However, they sometimes get level ($X=3.11$) to show the substantive effort. It means that the students' moderate engagement and focus may fluctuate depending on their academic workload or motivation.

Table 4 Overall Effort Level of EFL Students in Improving Their English Proficiency

Components	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev.	Level
Non-compliance level	35	1	3	1.69	.703	Seldom
Procedural effort level	35	2	5	3.91	.705	Often
Substantive effort level	35	1	5	3.11	.951	Sometimes
Focal effort level	35	2	5	3.8	.817	Often

Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded

To answer the second question, we calculated the data using the ANOVA technique helped by the SPSS Ver.26 app. However, before determining whether the efforts are different between cohorts using ANOVA, the data must be normal and homogenous. Thus, the pre-hypothesis test is carried out. The pre-hypothesis tests consist of normality and homogeneity tests. The results of the normality and homogeneity test are shown in Table 5.

The data is considered normal and homogeneity if the significance value is more than .05. The pre-hypothesis test results (Table 5), show that the data is normally distributed ($p=.200>.05$) and is homogeneity ($p=.841>.05$). Thus, the ANOVA test could be conducted.

Table 5 Normality and Homogeneity Test Results of the Quantitative Data Research

Test	Results			Information
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. Value	
Normality Test	49.94	6.193	.200	Normal
Homogeneity Test			.841	Homogeneity

Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded

The hypothesis patterned from the RQ2 consists of H_a (There is a significant difference between EFL cohorts in efforts to improve English proficiency) and H_0 (There is no significant difference between EFL cohorts in efforts to improve English proficiency). When the significance value shows less than 0.05, H_a is accepted, H_0 is rejected, and vice versa. The hypothesis test results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that the significance value of the ANOVA test is .009. This value is more than 0.05 ($.009<.05$). It indicates that H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected. This means that the effort levels of EFL cohorts (2020, 2021, 2022, and 2024) are different. The differences are indicated in Figure 1.

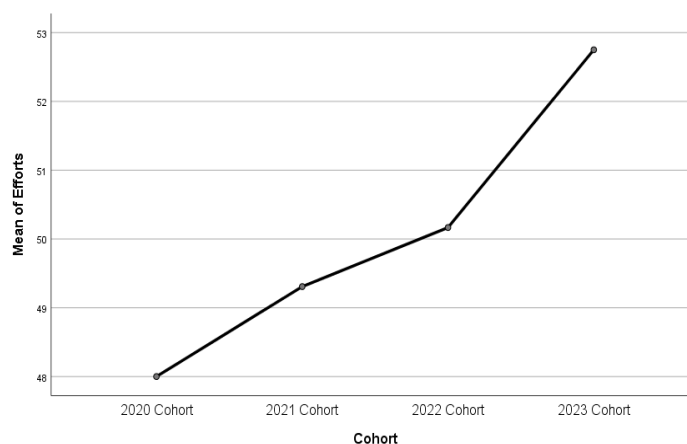
Table 6 ANOVA Test between Groups of the Quantitative Data Research

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	98.783	3	32.928	.847	.009
Within Groups	1205.103	31	38.874		
Total	1303.886	34			

Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded

Figure 1 shows the mean differences between cohorts described by the ANOVA test. It is identified that the mean effort level of the 2020 cohort is 48, the 2021 cohort is 49.3, the 2022 cohort is 50.17, and the 2023 cohort is 52.75. The younger their cohort, the higher their effort to improve their English proficiency.

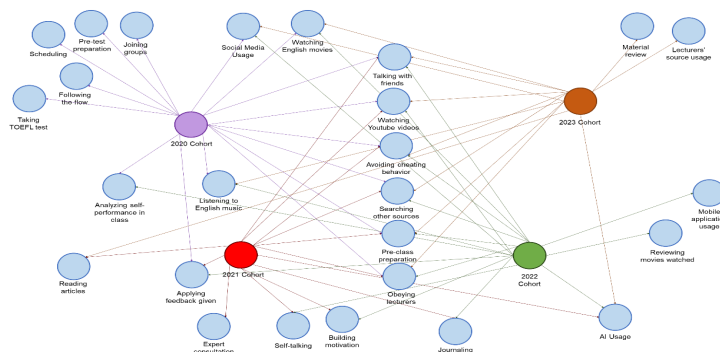
Figure 1 Mean Differences of EFL Students Efforts in Improving Their English Proficiency
Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded



Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was gained from the interview to deepen the analyses of their efforts to enhance their English proficiency. From the deep analysis of the semi-structured interview, we devised several codes to clear students' efforts in enhancing their English proficiency. The findings of the analysis found that there are six efforts that all cohorts try to make for English improvement, such as: (1) Talking with friends; (2) Watching YouTube videos; (3) Avoiding cheating behavior; (4) Searching other sources rather than their main source from lecturers; (5) Having pre-class preparation; and (6) Obeying their lecturers. These conditions show how all cohorts manage to improve English proficiency. The complete analysis of the interview is visualized in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Codes of Students' Efforts to Enhance English Proficiency based on Cohorts
Source: Researchers' Data Proceeded



Discussion

The findings from this study reveal that students show varying levels of effort in learning English. All students also indicated that they try to express their sense of responsibility and self-awareness as English Department students.

On the non-compliance level, students were asked how to avoid disruptive behaviors such as cheating and plagiarism. As shown in the rare results, some students do these behaviors. This behavior was most prevalent in writing subjects. According to Shang (2019), Plagiarism is often perceived as cheating, dishonesty, imitation, or moral failure in writing because plagiarism is stealing other people's ideas without properly quoting or paraphrasing. All the students interviewed in this study admitted to cheating at some point. Some used a dictionary, while others read additional sources to gain deeper insights but emphasized that they would only use 35% of the ideas to develop their work. One student, however, confessed to using AI when faced with a difficult assignment and feeling confused. She later expressed guilt and blamed herself for not being capable enough to complete the task independently.

According to Arab and Orfan (2023), students cheat to get a higher grade and pass the exam and cheat because they do not prepare for the exam. Based on the statement, it is important to have preparation before taking a class or exam. In this study, the students' efforts to prepare were doing listening exercises as practice for class, preparing for exams, and reading English magazines (Hsieh & Hsieh, 2019). There is a noticeable difference in study preparation across cohorts. As students' progress in their studies, they tend to prepare less for class.

Interviews revealed that students from the 2023 and 2022 cohorts often review the course profile to prepare better and be more active during class, especially during their extra or leisure time. Two students mentioned that they prepare by thoroughly studying the materials multiple times, allowing them to rely on their memory during tests. For assignments, they explained that they review previous materials, highlight key points they consider important or likely to appear in the tasks, and then focus on reading and answering the questions.

This aligns with Purwanti and Suryawati (2022), who found that students felt more active and confident when they watched pre-class videos, which helped them feel prepared and comfortable. In contrast, students from the 2021 and 2020 cohorts rarely prepare for class, only when the course is challenging or the lecturer is strict. Some interviewees also mentioned studying outside of class by reading English news or learning through video games.

The result of this study contradicts the finding that EFL learners in vocational colleges often exert substantive effort to learn a foreign language, and they never show non-compliance in effort to learn a foreign language (Kuluşaklı, 2023). It was found that students from all cohorts frequently put effort into procedural and focused aspects of learning, meaning they actively engage in structured classroom activities. They strive to stay focused during class and give their best effort on assigned tasks.

On the other hand, substantial effort—deeper engagement with the subject—was only occasional. One reason for this is that students felt choosing an English major represented a significant commitment, making them less inclined to go beyond classroom learning. Consequently, their focused effort in class increased, aiming to maximize what was taught.

Then, for the finding that freshmen put more effort into improving their English proficiency than seniors, Abdaoui and Grine (2020) stated that, surprisingly, freshmen achieved higher scores in critical thinking than senior EFL learners. One of the senior students in this research stated that although they watch English videos on social media, in the current condition, he did not intend to learn specific material to improve his English proficiency because they only felt that the video seemed interesting and they wanted to know the content. On the other hand, Alimyar (2020) found that intrinsic motivation holds the highest mean score in senior students, and integrative motivation holds the highest mean score in junior students. Integrative motivation means that they easily integrate it with the culture of their native speakers. One of the freshman students of this research stated he pretended to watch the same English movies several times because he wanted to know the movie's message.

When talking about efforts completed by overall cohorts based on *Figure 2*, students like to improve their English by talking with friends. This is useful for beginners, especially when looking for a partner for practice, especially in reducing students' anxiety levels. Some studies have found that

talking with friends makes students enjoy, be brave, not afraid or hesitant, and freely express their opinions and feelings (Bohari, 2020; Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022; Daeli, 2022). Ahmad et al. (2022) emphasized that more frequent two-way communication indirectly enhances students' vocabulary and pronunciation knowledge. Furthermore, Moore and Hicks (2014) noted that the Critical Friends Group (CFG) process not only supports English proficiency but also enables participants to learn more about their colleagues and college, fostering a stronger sense of connection within the community.

The interviews revealed that each cohort has a distinct approach to practicing speaking. Students from the 2023 cohort prefer practicing with friends, while those from the 2021 and 2022 cohorts often use self-talk, finding it effective when alone. However, students from the 2022 cohort noted that speaking more requires having more friends to talk to. In contrast, students from the 2020 cohort avoid responding in English, even when their friends initiate conversations in English, switching to Indonesian instead. They still practice speaking with native speakers. These differences suggest that while early cohorts are highly motivated and put in significant effort despite lacking fluency, senior students, though capable, are less enthusiastic and use English only when necessary.

Social media is also considered an essential tool for improving students' proficiency. In this study, YouTube emerged as the most commonly used learning resource among English Department students across all cohorts. They typically listen to podcasts, follow English learning channels, or watch English news on YouTube. The English skills influenced the most by this tool are speaking and listening (Syafiq et al., 2021). Students also found that using YouTube videos is enjoyable since it's easy to use by phone and has a positive impact on the English learning process (Abbas & Qassim, 2020). They also frequently use various language learning apps, such as Elsa Speaking, audiobooks, Disney Plus, and others.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study found that English Department students make efforts to improve their English proficiency by increasing their exposure to English both inside and outside the classroom. Based on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, students' efforts vary across academic levels. Examples of these efforts include talking with friends, watching YouTube videos, avoiding cheating, seeking additional resources beyond those provided by lecturers, preparing before class, and following lecturers' instructions.

Younger students, especially freshmen, are highly motivated to study English, often engaging in activities such as pre-class preparation and watching films. However, the range of activities among freshmen is less varied compared to students in the middle cohorts (2021 and 2022), who additionally engage in activities like journaling and self-talk. On the other hand, senior students (2020 cohort) do not engage in as much pre-class preparation but remain focused during class. Their English proficiency level may influence this pattern; seniors with over three years of study likely accumulated more language input, which could account for their reduced efforts compared to other cohorts.

Teachers should consider these findings to optimize the early academic years by providing comprehensive materials aligned with the syllabus and study tips and resources to support students' language development. Additionally, maintaining an interactive and engaging classroom environment is essential, as students across all cohorts showed consistent focus in class as part of their procedural and focused efforts.

Future research should explore the relationship between students' proficiency and effort levels, enabling teachers to better tailor materials and language input to meet students' needs. Furthermore, as this study primarily focused on general effort levels, further research could investigate students' efforts specific to individual English skills—speaking, reading, listening, and writing—so that all language skills can be effectively developed.

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