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CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This section presents the findings about students' strategies and challenges in learning English as a foreign language. In presenting the findings, the researcher aims to answer the research question: what are the strategies used and the challenges faced by eleventh grade students in learning English as a foreign language: A Case Study at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih? The data were collected from six students of the eleventh grade, who were selected as participants through purposive sampling. They were interviewed to share their learning experiences, including the approaches they used and the difficulties they encountered.

These findings are presented as follows:

- 1) How do students use learning strategies to overcome difficulties in learning English?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by students in learning English in the classroom?

To answer the research questions, the researcher analyzed the data obtained through interviews and documentation. The analysis focused on students' learning strategies and the challenges they faced in learning English as a foreign language. From the data, 6 main themes emerged: (1) Types of learning strategies used by students, (2) Frequency of self study, (3) use of digital media, (4) Challenges in classroom learning, (5) Environment to

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support English practice, (6) Pressure when facing exams.

1) How do students use learning strategies to overcome difficulties in learning English?

1. Types of learning strategies used by students

This section discusses the strategies used by students at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih to improve their English skills. Based on the interviews, students commonly practice vocabulary, read English texts, watch English videos, and listen to English songs because these activities are enjoyable and help them understand the language better. Besides classroom learning, students also study independently at home, especially to review materials before exams or complete assignments. Some also practice speaking English with friends or family to build their confidence. such as the following statement from Student 2. The excerpt is as follows:

“Strategies to improve my English skills are not too special, for example, often watching hollywood movies and English tik tok content. For self-study outside of English hours I rarely , maybe in my spare time I study briefly. As for the use of applications, I don't use them much, but I use social media more for content”.
(Interviewed Student 2, May 19th 2025)

Based on the interview with student 2, Students learn English using informal and basic means, such viewing Hollywood films and reading TikTok articles in English. Outside of class, they study on their own and primarily rely on social media to access English-language content rather than learning programs. This

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suggests that learning outcomes may be subpar as the tactics being employed are still largely relaxed and not yet well-structured. For students to adopt more active and organized strategies, they require motivation and guidance.

Then, Student 5 added another statement, the excerpt is as follows:

"Strategies to improve my English I often memorize vocabulary and I intend to take English lessons, I rarely study independently outside of class hours but I often use the Duolingo application to know some vocabulary. I use apps and digital media to learn English".
(Interviewed Student 5, May 21st 2025)

It is clear from the statement that the student 5 used a range of methods to study English, including digital media, the Duolingo program, and vocabulary memorization. The student demonstrates motivation to enhance their English abilities by, for instance, deciding to enroll in an English course, even though individual study outside of class is still uncommon. This suggests that the tactics incorporate both technological use and self-initiated efforts, however their regularity and consistency still require work. These tactics fit the concept of "strategies used by students in learning English" since they combine digital resources with individual effort to enhance learning.

It is clear from the two points of view that students employ a variety of methods to learn English, including watching movies, using social media, learning words by heart, and using apps like

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Duolingo. The majority of these tactics are informal, unstructured, and inconsistent, which might result in less than ideal learning results even when they represent motivation and learning endeavors. Therefore, kids need incentive and coaching to build more active, intentional and successful learning practices.

This conclusion aligns with Oxford (1990), who emphasizes that language learning strategies should be applied consciously, actively, and in an organized manner to support successful learning. It also supports the view of Griffiths (2008), who states that the effectiveness of learning strategies largely depends on selecting appropriate strategies and receiving support from the learning environment.

2. Frequency of Self–Study

This section describes the experiences of students at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih in learning English as a foreign language in the context of learning at secondary school. Based on the interview results, some important aspects were found related to the frequency of English use during the learning process, students' understanding of the material delivered in English, their motivation in learning the language, and their views on the importance of mastering English in the future. as illustrated by the following statement from Student

1. The excerpt is as follows:

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“Very often in every English lesson I always use English. For understanding in learning English I understand it quite quickly, except if the teacher explains too fast it makes me take a while to understand the meaning of the learning material. What motivates me to learn English are my parents, friends and teachers. Learning English is very important , because in the future English language skills are needed, especially if you want to work abroad”.
(Interviewed Student 1, May 19th 2025)

Based on the interview with Student 1. There is a high frequency of English use during the learning process, as evidenced by the respondent's statement that they use English in every English lesson. Though they occasionally struggle when the teacher explains things too quickly, they pick up on the learning contents quite quickly. Support from parents, friends, and teachers is the primary source of motivation for learning English. Additionally, the respondent understands the value of learning English for their future, particularly when it comes to accepting job offers overseas.

Student 3 also added another point in the following excerpt:

"My use of English in class is about 60% and 40% Indonesian. My understanding in English is quite good, maybe for new complex material it is a little difficult, but if it is like text procedure, narrative text it is quite easy. What motivates me first is because English is an international language in the future English is the most needed for careers. How important English is 80% because English is “Opportunity” to get a job in the future”.
(Interviewed Student 3, May 21st 2025)

In the interview with student 3. The student understands most of the material, especially easy texts, and utilizes English in class regularly. Because they understand that English is a crucial

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worldwide language that will lead to better professional options in the future, they are driven to learn it.

The interview results support previous research on the importance of learning English as a foreign language. One student reported using English around 60% of the time in class, with the rest in Indonesian. The student understood English materials quite well, especially simple texts like procedure and narrative texts, although they found complex materials more difficult. This aligns with Harmer (2007), who stated that regular exposure to the target language can significantly improve understanding. Similarly, Nation and Newton (2009) noted that unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar structures often create difficulties for learners. The student's main motivation came from the belief that English is an international language essential for future career success, reflecting Gardner's (1985) theory that motivation plays a central role in language learning.

3. Use of digital media

Based on the interviews, it is evident that students use digital media in diverse ways, but their understanding of how to use these tools effectively for learning is often limited or surface-level. This lack of deep understanding results in inconsistent use and reduces the potential benefits of digital media in improving their

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reading skills. This issue is reflected in the following statement from Student 1. The excerpt is as follows:

"I often use English web applications to learn English and my parents provide some learning access such as books, internet at home".(interviewed student 1, May 16th 2025)

The interview with Participant 1, revealed that the participant perceives family support as an important motivational factor in learning English, particularly through encouragement from an older sibling. The participant also highlighted the accessibility of various learning resources, including the internet and books, which play a crucial role in supporting their language acquisition process. However, the absence of participation in English extracurricular activities, coupled with the unavailability of such programs at their current school, suggests limited institutional support in fostering extracurricular English practice. This indicates that while personal and familial resources contribute positively to the learning experience, structural opportunities within the school environment remain underdeveloped.

Then, Student 3 added another statement, the excerpt is as follows:

"I have support from my family, such as my mother who helps in providing some materials. For the availability of access to learning such as the internet and books, it is provided by parents. If you take part in extracurricular activities at school, there is no because in SMA 4 there is no extracurricular activity and outside of school there is also no English extracurricular activity, I only play games

in which there are many foreign players who participate in playing them and that can train English too ".
(Interviewed Student 3, May 21st 2025)

The interview with Participant 3, revealed that the surrounding environment, particularly family support, plays an important role in learning English. The participant's mother helps provide learning materials, and the parents ensure access to resources such as the internet and books. Although there are no English extracurricular activities available at school or outside, the participant practices English through online games with international players. This indicates that both family support and digital exposure contribute to the participant's English language development.

4. Challenges in classroom learning

Interview results show that students face several challenges in learning English, such as difficulty understanding grammar, limited vocabulary, and anxiety when speaking or writing. Some students also mentioned that their school or home environment does not fully support the use of English, making it harder to practice outside the classroom. In addition, many students feel nervous during English exams, which affects their confidence and learning outcomes., as described by the student 5. The excerpt is as follows:

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"My biggest challenge in learning English is memorizing vocabulary. The surrounding environment is supportive, especially at home, such as being told to take private lessons. The feeling during the English exam was a little scared because I was afraid I wouldn't understand what the instructions were". (Interviewed Student 5, May 21st 2025)

Students experience major challenges in learning English, especially in memorizing vocabulary. Despite receiving support from the environment, such as encouragement from the family to take private lessons, students still feel worried when facing exams. This fear arises due to concerns about not understanding the question instructions. This shows that the challenges of learning English include aspects of language ability and mental readiness in exam situations.

Then, Student 2 added another statement, the excerpt is as follows:

"For the biggest challenge at the moment there is no I just follow the learning flow well. For the support of learning English at school, there is a lot of support such as support from teachers, but for home there is none. The most difficult part of the skill is writing , because we have to be precise in placing the vocabulary according to the structure. ". (Interviewed Student 2, May 19th 2025)

From these statements, it can be concluded that students do not experience significant difficulties in learning English because they have followed the learning process well. Learning support is mostly obtained from school, especially from teachers, while support from the home environment is less adequate. Based on the

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statement, it can be concluded that the student's main difficulty lies in writing skills, particularly in placing vocabulary correctly according to sentence structure. The student also struggles with understanding words that are rarely used in daily life.

The interviews with two students reveal that difficulties in learning English are largely shaped by the level of support they receive from their environment and their psychological preparedness during examinations. One student indicated minimal obstacles and highlighted strong encouragement from school teachers, which helped them feel relaxed and confident during tests. Conversely, the other student struggled with vocabulary retention and, although supported by family through private lessons, felt anxious about comprehending exam instructions. These insights indicate that effective English learning relies on both social encouragement and the learner's confidence. This view is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) focus on the importance of social interaction in education and Bandura's (1997) assertion that self-efficacy is vital for managing academic difficulties and improving outcomes.

5. Environment to support English practice

The learning environment plays an important role in helping students practice English beyond the classroom. This includes support from family, friends, school facilities, and the

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surrounding community. A supportive environment can motivate students to use English more frequently in their daily lives and develop greater confidence in using the language, as shown in the interview with Student 5.

“For external support, such as parents who support learning English by asking to take private lessons and teachers at school as well”. **(Interviewed student 5, May 17th 2025)**

Supportive environments such as encouragement from parents and teachers can significantly influence students' motivation to learn English. In the case of Student 5, the student received external support from both parents and teachers, which included being encouraged to take private English lessons and receiving assistance from school teachers. This aligns with Harmer (2007), who stated that a positive learning environment including support from family and educators plays a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes and opportunities to practice the target language. A well-supported student is more likely to engage actively in the learning process and seek out opportunities for improvement. Student 6 also added another point in the following excerpt:

"My environment is not unsupportive, because my environment is not proficient in English, there are only one or two people who use English. My parents always support me, such as motivating me to be enthusiastic about learning English". **(Interviewed student 6, May 19th 2025)**

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This reflects Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and support especially from more capable individuals such as parents in language development. Even when the immediate environment lacks linguistic resources, parental encouragement can serve as a strong affective support that sustains the learner's motivation and engagement with the language.

6. Pressure when facing exams

Examinations often create a high-stakes atmosphere that can influence students' emotional states and academic performance. Many students experience anxiety, stress, or pressure as exams approach, especially in subjects like English that require comprehension and language production. Understanding how students cope with exam-related pressure provides insights into their learning habits, confidence levels, and the support they need during assessment periods. As illustrated by the following statement from Student 1. The excerpt is as follows:

"I feel very afraid for the score .I did in the English exam because in English it is also difficult to understand the language". (**Interviewed student 1, May 16th 2025**)

The interview revealed that the student experiences significant anxiety and fear when facing English exams, primarily due to difficulties in understanding the language. This emotional

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response reflects a lack of confidence in their reading comprehension and linguistic ability, which contributes to exam-related pressure. This response aligns with Horwitz et al. (1986), who noted that language anxiety particularly test anxiety is a common barrier in second language learning.

Student 2 also added another point in the following excerpt:

“If there is no pressure, the problem is that everything is easy and the grades are good”. (Interviewed student 2, May 16th 2025)

Not all students perceive exam pressure negatively. For some, a certain level of pressure is seen as necessary to maintain focus and motivation. One student stated that the absence of pressure could lead to complacency and overconfidence. This aligns with the concept of eustress, or positive stress, introduced by Selye (1974), which suggests that a moderate amount of stress can enhance performance by increasing alertness and motivation. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) emphasized that external challenges when properly managed can act as motivational stimuli that push learners to achieve more.

In conclusion from the interviews with students at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih reveal that while various strategies are used to learn English such as watching videos, using apps, and memorizing vocabulary these approaches are mostly informal and inconsistent. Family support and access to digital media help facilitate learning,

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but limited school-based activities and exam pressure pose challenges. Some students feel anxious due to language difficulties, while others see pressure as motivation. These findings align with experts like Oxford (1990), Harmer (2007), and Vygotsky (1978), who highlight that successful language learning depends on structured strategies, emotional support, and a supportive environment.

2) What are the challenges faced by students in learning English in the classroom?

Building on the variation in students' experiences and levels of motivation, several challenges also emerged in relation to their classroom learning of English. The students identified some challenges in learning English in the classroom, especially in developing speaking and writing skills. 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.

One student said, "The hardest part is writing, because if you misplace just one word, the meaning can change and the grammar". (Student Interview 2, May 19, 2025). Other difficulties included limited

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vocabulary and a lack of understanding of grammar, which hindered their ability to follow the content of the lessons. In addition, the students noted that exam pressure had a negative impact on their learning process, while a classroom environment that lacked opportunities to actively practice English also contributed to their difficulties. These findings support Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006), argument that identifying and addressing learning barriers is essential to promoting learner development and independence.

The interview data reveal that students at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih face a variety of challenges in learning English within the classroom context. These challenges include difficulties in memorizing vocabulary, understanding grammar rules, writing with correct sentence structure, and managing anxiety during exams. Student 5, for instance, explicitly stated, "My biggest challenge in learning English is memorizing vocabulary during the English exam I felt a little scared because I was afraid I wouldn't understand what the instructions were" (Interviewed Student 5, May 17th, 2025). This shows that limited vocabulary mastery not only affects general comprehension but also increases anxiety in high-stakes situations such as exams.

In addition, some students expressed challenges related to language production, particularly in writing. As Student 2 mentioned, "The most difficult part of the skill is writing, because we have to be precise in placing the vocabulary according to the structure" (Interviewed Student

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2, May 16th, 2025). Writing requires not only sufficient vocabulary but also a strong grasp of grammatical rules and sentence construction. This supports the view of Nation (2009), who argued that writing is one of the most cognitively demanding language skills, involving a combination of vocabulary knowledge, grammar understanding, and the ability to organize ideas logically. Students who lack practice or exposure to writing tasks may struggle more compared to those who regularly engage in structured writing activities.

Another issue concerns the pace and delivery of classroom instruction. Student 1 pointed out that while they generally understand the lesson, comprehension becomes difficult when the teacher explains too quickly. The student explained, “I understand it quite quickly, except if the teacher explains too fast it makes me take a while to understand the meaning” (Interviewed Student 1, May 19th, 2025). This implies that teaching pace and teacher clarity play a significant role in student comprehension. According to Harmer (2007), effective English teaching requires sensitivity to students’ processing time and the ability to adjust explanations based on learners’ proficiency levels. A mismatch between instructional delivery and student processing speed can result in misunderstanding and learning gaps.

Environmental factors also contribute to the challenges students face. While some students report strong support from their school, others mentioned a lack of practice opportunities outside the classroom.

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Student 2 noted, “For the support of learning English at school, there is a lot of support such as from teachers, but for home there is none” (Interviewed Student 2, May 19th, 2025). The limited use of English in their immediate environment makes it difficult for students to reinforce what they learn at school. This aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that language development occurs more effectively in environments where learners are surrounded by opportunities to interact using the target language. Without meaningful communication outside of class, students may find it hard to internalize the language.

Lastly, emotional and psychological challenges particularly exam-related anxiety were mentioned as barriers to performance. While Student 5 expressed fear of misunderstanding exam instructions, Student 2 offered a contrasting view, stating that pressure is necessary for motivation: “If there is no pressure, the problem is that everything is easy and the grades are good” (Interviewed Student 2, May 16th, 2025). These differences reflect what Selye (1974) termed eustress (positive stress) and distress (negative stress). While mild pressure can enhance alertness and performance, excessive anxiety can hinder comprehension and confidence. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of these affective variables and provide emotional support, clear exam instructions, and stress-reducing classroom practices to ensure a supportive learning environment.

B. Discussion

This section discusses the findings from the previous chapter by focusing on two main aspects: The learning strategies used by students to overcome difficulties and the challenges they face in learning English in the classroom. The analysis is drawn from in-depth interviews, aiming to provide a clear understanding of how students manage their English learning process. Special attention is given to the types of strategies students apply both in and outside the classroom and the specific obstacles they encounter, such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, or environmental factors. This discussion offers insights into students' real learning experiences and serves as a reference for improving English language teaching and learning practices.

The findings indicate that students use various strategies in learning English, such as memorization, repetition, and contextual practice, along with self-directed learning at varying frequencies. The use of digital media, including educational applications and videos, also significantly supports their language development. This aligns with Oxford's (1990) theory that effective learning strategies enhance learner autonomy, as well as Nation and Newton's (2009) emphasis on the importance of self-study and digital resources in language acquisition. Moreover, students' flexibility in applying these strategies across different contexts and times highlights their effectiveness in improving English learning outcomes.

Students at SMAN 4 Tanah Putih employ a variety of learning strategies to overcome difficulties in learning English, although these

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strategies tend to be informal and vary in consistency. For instance, Student 2 mentioned that they often watch Hollywood movies and English TikTok content as a way to increase their exposure to English. Similarly, Student 3 reported using the Duolingo application and memorizing vocabulary as part of their learning efforts. These strategies are aligned with Oxford's (1990) categorization of language learning strategies, particularly indirect strategies, such as exposure to authentic input (watching movies) and memory strategies, such as vocabulary memorization. Although informal, these activities show that students are actively engaging with English in ways that are meaningful to them.

However, the effectiveness of these strategies is often limited by the lack of structure and consistency. As seen in Student 2 response's, self-study tends to happen only occasionally during spare time, and the use of applications is minimal. This illustrates that while students are trying to address their learning challenges, they may not be using strategies consciously or systematically. According to Griffiths (2008), effective language learning requires intentional strategy use that is matched to specific language learning tasks. Without structured guidance from teachers or a curriculum that explicitly incorporates strategy instruction, students' efforts may not result in significant improvement, especially in areas such as grammar, writing, or speaking.

In some cases, students integrate both digital tools and personal motivation to support their learning. For example, Student 5 expressed a desire

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to take additional English courses, indicating self-initiated efforts beyond classroom activities. This self-regulated behavior corresponds with the idea of metacognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990), where learners plan and seek out learning opportunities themselves. Moreover, both Student 1 and Student 3 highlighted the role of motivation driven by family, future career aspirations, and the global importance of English which is crucial according to Gardner's (1985) socio educational model of language learning. Motivation influences the choice and persistence of learning strategies, enabling students to push through challenges despite external or internal obstacles.

In conclusion, students use a combination of cognitive (e.g., memorizing vocabulary), social (e.g., practicing with friends), and digital-based strategies (e.g., watching videos, using apps) to overcome their learning difficulties. However, the informal and sometimes inconsistent application of these strategies limits their potential. Effective strategy use requires awareness, guidance, and consistent practice, which should be integrated into classroom instruction. Supporting students with training in strategy use and providing more structured opportunities such as English clubs or guided digital activities can help bridge the gap between effort and successful language acquisition. These findings reinforce the importance of equipping students not only with language input but also with the tools and habits to process and apply it effectively.

One of the most significant challenges faced by students in learning English in the classroom is the lack of vocabulary mastery. According to

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Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension and language production. Without sufficient vocabulary, students struggle to understand texts, follow classroom instructions, and express their ideas both orally and in writing. Limited vocabulary also hinders their ability to engage in meaningful communication, which can affect their confidence and willingness to participate in classroom activities.

Another major challenge is students' difficulty in understanding grammar and sentence structure. Grammar, as the backbone of any language, requires systematic instruction and practice. Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues that grammar learning is not just about rules but also about meaningful use, which many students find hard to grasp, especially when English is taught in a test-oriented manner. Students often become confused when applying grammatical rules in real communication, resulting in fragmented sentences and misunderstandings during speaking and writing tasks.

Anxiety and low self-confidence also pose significant barriers to classroom learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced the concept of foreign language anxiety, emphasizing how fear of making mistakes or being judged can negatively affect language performance. Many students feel nervous during speaking activities, especially when they are asked to perform in front of their peers. This emotional barrier reduces their participation and slows their progress in developing fluency and pronunciation skills.

Lastly, the lack of authentic exposure to English in students' environments further complicates the learning process. In many EFL (English

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as a Foreign Language) contexts, including Indonesia, English is not used outside the classroom, which limits students' opportunities to practice and reinforce what they have learned. Richards and Schmidt (2010) explain that language input and interaction are essential for developing communicative competence. When the classroom is the only place students encounter English, the learning becomes limited and passive, especially if the instruction is dominated by textbook-based activities and lacks real-life relevance.

These challenges are consistent with findings from previous studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. For example, Nanda and Azmy (2020) emphasized that a major problem in EFL learning in Indonesia is poor reading comprehension, which is heavily influenced by limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. This suggests that students' struggles are not isolated incidents, but rather part of a broader issue within the national EFL context. Moreover, vocabulary and grammar are not only linguistic elements but also cognitive and psychological barriers when students are unable to relate them to meaningful communication.

In addition, the emotional aspect of language learning cannot be overlooked. Emotional factors such as fear of failure, embarrassment, and lack of self-esteem often prevent students from engaging actively in classroom interaction. As Horwitz et al. (1986) explained in their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), anxiety significantly impairs students' ability to process language input and output. This aligns with classroom observations in which students tend to remain silent or passive during

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speaking sessions, even if they possess the basic knowledge. This psychological barrier is often compounded by a lack of supportive feedback from peers or teachers..

Furthermore, environmental factors such as limited access to English in students' daily lives also contribute to the challenges. In regions where English is rarely spoken outside of school, students are often exposed to English only through textbooks or occasional media. As supported by Richards (2015), meaningful exposure to authentic language is critical for developing communicative competence, yet many Indonesian students do not have adequate access to such resources. This limitation results in their dependence on rote learning and makes it difficult for them to develop listening and speaking skills.

Therefore, classroom learning in EFL contexts should go beyond language content by also addressing emotional and environmental factors. Teachers are encouraged to use communicative methods, support students emotionally, and provide access to authentic English materials. As Oxford (1990) states, learners benefit most from strategic learning and meaningful practice. Thus, a holistic approach that integrates input, motivation, support, and real-life application is essential to overcome learning challenges.

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