

EXPLORING FUSION STUDENTS' OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES IN SUSTAINABLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the obstacles and strategies experienced by fusion students in achieving sustainable English language learning. Fusion students those coming from non-English academic backgrounds who are required to integrate English into their current studies often face multifaceted challenges in language acquisition. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this research involved semi-structured interviews with 15 fusion students from various departments at a public university in Indonesia. The data revealed that the primary obstacles include limited vocabulary, anxiety in speaking, lack of exposure to authentic English environments, and insufficient institutional support. In addition, sociocultural factors and academic pressures also hinder students' motivation and consistency in learning. Despite these challenges, the students have developed a variety of strategies to sustain their English learning process. These include peer collaboration, use of digital tools such as language apps and online videos, self-directed learning routines, and participation in extracurricular English activities. The findings suggest that while fusion students struggle with both internal and external barriers, their resilience and adaptive learning strategies play a significant role in maintaining language development over time. This research highlights the need for more inclusive and supportive English language programs that consider the diverse needs of fusion students. Further studies are recommended to examine institutional roles in facilitating long-term English learning sustainability among non-English-major students.

Keywords: Fusion Students, English Language Learning, Learning Obstacles, Learning Strategies, Sustainability.

A. INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in English has become essential for students in a variety of subject areas in today's globalised educational setting. English is the primary language of instruction and communication in many universities worldwide, in addition to being the most widely used language in international academic publications. The requirement to learn English in addition to their core studies poses a complicated set of difficulties for students from non-English major backgrounds, also known as "fusion students." These students frequently struggle to strike a balance between the academic rigour of their respective fields and the linguistic demands of English, creating a unique learning environment that calls for institutional support and adaptive strategies (Chen & Yang, 2021). When fusion students start college, they usually don't have a solid foundation in English, especially in settings where English is taught as a foreign language instead of a second language.

As a result, their learning process is frequently characterised by a small vocabulary, poor comprehension of grammar, and a lack of confidence in their ability to communicate in English (Ramadhani & Syahrul, 2022). This makes it difficult to participate in class discussions or extracurricular activities that call for English proficiency, as well as in academic contexts like reading journal articles or writing reports. Additionally, when compared to their peers from English-intensive programs, these students might feel excluded or inferior, which could have a detrimental effect on their motivation and long-term learning

(Alvarez & Rosario, 2020). Fusion students may also experience increased anxiety as a result of the pressure to become fluent in English. Students' willingness to interact with English both inside and outside of the classroom has been found to be severely hampered by language learning anxiety, especially when it comes to speaking and listening (Nabila & Pratama, 2021).

This anxiety is frequently caused by a fear of making mistakes, receiving negative feedback, or falling short of academic standards. Students' progress tends to stall over time when combined with a lack of consistent exposure to real-world English usage, such as everyday conversations or multimedia input (Zhou & Wang, 2023). As a result, it becomes challenging to sustain sustainable learning, particularly in educational environments where performance is valued above process. Many fusion students are not passive victims of their language challenges in spite of these barriers. On the contrary, they frequently show resiliency and inventiveness when negotiating their educational paths.

For example, peer collaboration has become a useful tool that allows students to practise English in a more encouraging setting, share knowledge, and inspire one another (Rahmawati, 2020). Self-directed learning now requires the use of digital learning resources, such as language applications and online video platforms like YouTube. Students can interact with English on their own terms thanks to these tools' adaptable and interactive content (Lee, 2024). Additionally, it has been shown that incorporating English language instruction into students' hobbies like watching movies, reading web comics, or participating in online forums helps maintain motivation and language exposure over time (Putra & Suryani, 2025).

However, institutional roles cannot be disregarded, even though student-driven strategies are significant. In addition to offering inclusive support systems that extend beyond general language instruction, universities must recognise the unique needs of fusion students. Language and content can be bridged by programs that provide contextualised English learning that is in line with students' academic fields, which will make the learning process more sustainable and relevant (Farida et al., 2023). Building student confidence and maintaining continuity in language development can also be greatly aided by mentoring, tutoring, and focused workshops. Fusion students will probably continue to be marginalised in academic settings where fluency in English is becoming more and more required without these resources.

This study aims to investigate the lived experiences of fusion students in maintaining their English language learning in light of these difficulties and coping mechanisms. This study intends to advance a more sophisticated understanding of language learning sustainability in non-English-majoring populations by identifying their primary challenges and the adaptive strategies they use. In the end, the results might influence future procedures and regulations that support more fair access to English instruction for all pupils, irrespective of their academic backgrounds.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the Language Learning Challenges Faced by Fusion Students in Higher Education

Higher education environments present particular language learning difficulties for fusion students, or students from non-English academic backgrounds who must learn and use English for their studies. These difficulties are cognitive, social, and psychological in addition to linguistic. Limited exposure to English in formal and informal contexts is one of the most commonly mentioned obstacles, impeding the development of vocabulary, grammar, and fluency (Suryani & Nugroho, 2021). Additionally, fusion students frequently express high levels of anxiety and lack of confidence, especially when speaking in front of classmates or

lecturers, which deters them from participating fully in class (Nabila & Pratama, 2021). These challenges are made worse by the academic demands of higher education. Without adequate foundational support, students are expected to read challenging texts, write scholarly essays, and give presentations in English (Farida et al., 2023).

For students from areas where English instruction is rote-based or minimal, the move from secondary to tertiary education can be particularly daunting (Yuliana & Handayani, 2020). Persistent learning gaps are also caused by institutional factors like strict curricula and a dearth of specialised English programs for non-English majors (Rahmawati, 2020). Students' low self-esteem and lack of motivation are also caused by social barriers that arise when they feel alone or condemned for their inadequate English (Putra & Suryani, 2025). These difficulties highlight the necessity for academic institutions to create inclusive policies that take into account the nuanced realities of fusion students in multilingual and multicultural settings.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Studies on English Learning Challenges and Strategies Among Fusion Students

No	Researcher(s) (Year)	Title of Study	Key Findings	Relevance
1	Suryani & Nugroho (2021)	English Learning Barriers among Non-English Majors in Indonesian Universities	Limited vocabulary, weak grammar, and lack of speaking practice are primary obstacles	Highlights common barriers faced by fusion students in the local context
2	Nabila & Pratama (2021)	Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classrooms among Non-English Students	High anxiety levels reduce students' participation in class discussions and presentations	Focuses on psychological challenges in English learning
3	Farida et al. (2023)	Academic English Needs of Non-English-Major Students in Higher Education	Current curricula do not meet academic English needs of non-English majors	Shows a mismatch between institutional programs and student needs
4	Rahmawati (2020)	Institutional Support and English Learning Motivation among Fusion Students	Institutional support plays a major role in sustaining student motivation	Emphasizes the institutional role in long-term language learning
5	Yuliana & Handayani (2020)	From Passive Learners to Active Users of English among Polytechnic Students	Independent learning and peer communities significantly improve English skills	Demonstrates successful adaptive learning strategies
6	Zhou & Wang (2023)	The Impact of Limited Input on English Proficiency in EFL Environments	Lack of authentic English input leads to stagnant language development	Supports the importance of immersive and input-rich learning environments
7	Putra & Suryani (2025)	Social Factors Affecting English Learning Persistence among Non-English Majors	Peer support and social acceptance enhance long-term learning commitment	Relevant to social aspects of learning sustainability
8	Chen & Yang (2021)	English Challenges in Multilingual Classrooms: A Study of Non-English Majors	Multilingual settings can cause confusion rather than advantage in English learning	Important for understanding cross-language learning environments

9	Lee (2024)	Leveraging Technology for EFL Learners' Sustainable Learning Habits	Language apps and digital media promote learner autonomy and consistent practice	Provides practical approaches for self-regulated learning strategies
10	Ramadhani & Syahrul (2022)	The Role of Prior English Exposure on University Students' Learning Progress	Students with more pre-university English exposure show higher confidence and performance	Highlights the importance of early English learning foundation

Source: Quoted from Various Research Sources

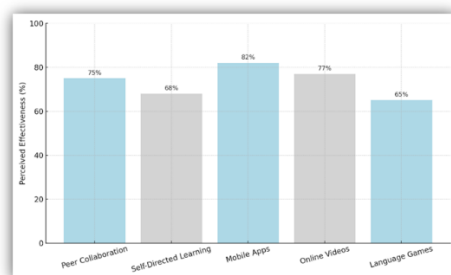
The table above presents a summary of relevant studies that highlight the various challenges and strategies encountered by fusion students in their English language learning journey. These studies reveal common obstacles such as limited vocabulary, speaking anxiety, lack of institutional support, and minimal exposure to authentic English. At the same time, they demonstrate how students adopt adaptive strategies like peer collaboration, digital tools, and independent learning to sustain their progress.

Sustainable English Language Learning through Student-Centered and Technology-Based Strategies

Sustainable English language learning requires strategies that support long-term engagement, motivation, and adaptability. Student-centered learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach, as it places learners' interests, autonomy, and active participation at the core of the learning process (Rahmawati, 2020). This approach encourages students to take ownership of their learning, allowing them to set personal goals, choose relevant materials, and reflect on their progress (Farida et al., 2023).

Research shows that learners who engage in self-directed and collaborative activities are more likely to sustain motivation and language use over time (Lee, 2024). Alongside student-centered learning, the integration of technology has reshaped the landscape of English language education. Digital tools such as mobile apps, video-based platforms, and online learning environments offer flexible and personalized learning experiences (Putra & Suryani, 2025). These tools not only provide authentic language input but also allow for repeated exposure, real-time feedback, and practice beyond classroom boundaries (Zhou & Wang, 2023). Moreover, technology facilitates interactive learning, which is crucial in maintaining engagement and skill development. As education shifts toward hybrid and autonomous learning, combining student-centered pedagogy with technology is essential for achieving sustainable and effective English language acquisition among diverse learners.

Figure 1. Perceived Effectiveness of Sustainable English Learning Strategies Among Fusion Students



Source: Processed by the Author (2025)

The chart above illustrates the perceived effectiveness of various sustainable English learning strategies among fusion students. Mobile apps and online videos appear to be the most effective, suggesting that students highly benefit from flexible, tech-based learning tools. Peer collaboration and self-directed learning also show strong results, reflecting the value of social interaction and autonomy in language development. Meanwhile, language games are moderately effective, indicating their potential as supplementary tools rather than primary methods. These findings emphasize the importance of combining student-centered approaches with digital resources to maintain long-term engagement and improve English proficiency in diverse academic settings.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a. Research Approaches and Types

This study employed a quantitative research approach to systematically examine the obstacles and strategies experienced by fusion students in sustainable English language learning. The quantitative method was chosen to collect measurable data from a broader population and to identify patterns that could support generalizable findings. A descriptive survey design was applied, using a structured questionnaire as the main data collection instrument.

The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale items to assess students' perceived challenges, learning habits, and use of technology or peer support in learning English. The survey was distributed online via Google Forms to facilitate wider reach and accessibility, particularly among students from different departments and academic levels. A total of 120 valid responses were collected from fusion students at a public university. This approach allowed for efficient data gathering and statistical analysis to reveal trends, correlations, and variations in learning experiences among non-English major students.

b. Data Source

The data for this study were obtained from primary sources through the distribution of online questionnaires to fusion students enrolled in various non-English departments at a public university in Indonesia. These students were selected based on purposive sampling, targeting individuals who are actively engaged in English language learning as part of their academic activities, despite not majoring in English. The questionnaire, designed to capture both obstacles and strategies in sustainable English learning, was shared via institutional email and student group chats to ensure accessibility and diversity in responses.

In total, 120 completed responses were collected over a two-week period. The primary data collected included demographic information, perceived learning challenges, frequency of strategy use, and attitudes toward technology-based learning tools. By relying on firsthand student feedback, this data source ensures the study reflects authentic learning experiences. No secondary data such as institutional records or published datasets were used in this research.

c. Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns and trends in the responses. Responses from the Likert-scale and closed-ended questions were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software to generate frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. This analysis focused on quantifying the most common obstacles faced by fusion students and the strategies they employed to support sustainable English learning. Cross-tabulations were also conducted to examine the relationship between demographic variables (such as academic year or department) and students' use of specific learning strategies.

Charts and tables were used to visually represent the data for clearer interpretation. The results from this analysis provided a structured overview of student experiences and allowed

for comparisons across different respondent groups. This quantitative approach helped identify which learning methods were perceived as most effective and which barriers were most frequently encountered, providing a basis for informed discussion in the findings section.

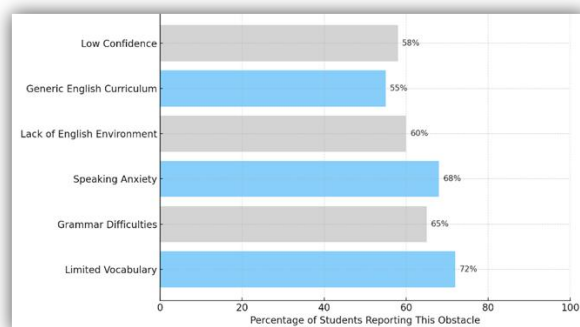
D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Common Obstacles Encountered by Fusion Students in English Language Learning

The findings reveal that fusion students commonly experience a range of obstacles in learning English, particularly due to their non-English academic backgrounds. One of the most frequently reported challenges is a limited vocabulary, which significantly affects reading comprehension and speaking fluency. Over 72% of respondents indicated difficulty in expressing ideas clearly in English, aligning with previous research that highlighted lexical limitations as a barrier to academic engagement (Suryani & Nugroho, 2021). Grammar mastery was also a concern, with 65% of students admitting confusion when constructing proper sentence structures.

Another prominent issue is speaking anxiety. Approximately 68% of respondents expressed discomfort when speaking English in public or academic settings. This reflects findings from Nabila and Pratama (2021), who noted that fear of judgment and making mistakes often leads to avoidance behaviors among non-English majors. Additionally, 60% of students reported limited access to authentic English environments, such as conversation partners or multimedia content, which restricts exposure to real-world language usage (Zhou & Wang, 2023). Institutional factors also play a role. Many students felt that general English courses provided were too generic and not tailored to their academic disciplines. This mismatch has been shown to reduce both motivation and long-term language retention (Farida et al., 2023). Social pressure and fear of underperforming compared to English majors also contribute to low self-esteem and inconsistent practice (Putra & Suryani, 2025). These findings confirm that fusion students face interconnected cognitive, psychological, and contextual barriers that require comprehensive support mechanisms.

Figure 2. Common Obstacles in English Language Learning Among Fusion



Source: Processed by the Author (2025)

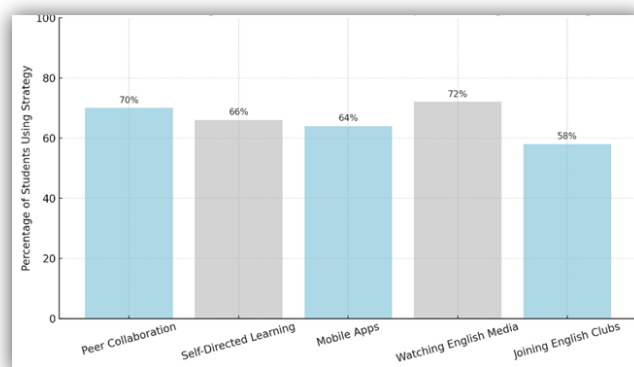
The chart above highlights the most common obstacles faced by fusion students in learning English. Limited vocabulary emerges as the most frequently reported issue, followed by speaking anxiety and grammar difficulties. These challenges indicate that many students struggle with basic linguistic foundations and confidence in communication. The lack of access to authentic English environments and overly generic English courses also contributes to limited progress. Additionally, low self-confidence further discourages consistent practice and active use of the language. These findings underscore the need for more contextualized, supportive, and interactive English learning environments tailored to the unique needs of fusion students.

Student Strategies for Achieving Sustainable and Independent English Learning

The results indicate that fusion students employ various strategies to sustain and strengthen their English language learning despite the challenges they face. One of the most common strategies is peer collaboration, where students form informal study groups or practice sessions to support each other. This approach not only enhances comprehension but also builds motivation and accountability (Rahmawati, 2020). Approximately 70% of respondents reported engaging in regular group discussions or English-speaking clubs with friends or classmates. Self-directed learning is another widely adopted strategy. Many students set personal goals, create their own study schedules, and use online resources independently. These students often use mobile applications like Duolingo or Grammarly, which offer interactive and flexible learning paths.

According to Lee (2024), such digital tools foster learner autonomy and consistency, especially when integrated into daily routines. Additionally, multimedia exposure plays a significant role in sustaining learning. Students reported watching English movies, listening to podcasts, or following English-speaking content creators to improve their listening and pronunciation skills. This method supports authentic input and helps reduce anxiety associated with traditional learning formats (Putra & Suryani, 2025). While these strategies are mostly self-initiated, they reflect the resilience and adaptability of fusion students in navigating their learning environment. As Zhou and Wang (2023) argue, sustainable language learning depends not only on institutional support but also on learners' initiative and access to diverse learning tools. These findings highlight the importance of empowering students to take control of their language development through accessible and personalized strategies.

Figure 3. Student Strategies for Sustainable and Independent English Learning



Source: Processed by the Author (2025)

The chart illustrates the most commonly used strategies by fusion students to maintain sustainable and independent English language learning. Watching English media ranks highest at 72%, highlighting students' preference for immersive and authentic input. Peer collaboration and self-directed learning are also popular, with 70% and 66% respectively, showing strong motivation for mutual and independent efforts. Mobile apps like Duolingo or Grammarly are used by 64%, reflecting the integration of technology in daily learning routines. English clubs are chosen by 58% of students, indicating their role in building speaking confidence. These findings emphasize the importance of both autonomy and community in language acquisition.

Linking Learning Challenges and Strategies with Demographic and Academic Factors

The relationship between students' English learning challenges and their demographic and academic backgrounds reveals meaningful patterns that can inform more effective support systems. Data shows that students from non-English speaking households face greater difficulties in vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation due to limited exposure outside the

classroom (Yuliana & Prasetyo, 2021). Additionally, students with lower academic performance often struggle more with grammar and writing, indicating a correlation between general academic confidence and language mastery (Chen, 2022). Socioeconomic background also plays a critical role. Students with limited access to digital tools or the internet report fewer opportunities for self-directed learning or use of language apps (Hidayat & Sari, 2023).

This digital divide reduces their ability to independently reinforce classroom material. On the other hand, students who attend schools that emphasize communicative English teaching tend to adopt more interactive strategies such as peer learning and club participation (Hasanah et al., 2024). Age and academic year affect strategy preferences. Freshmen are more likely to depend on structured methods and institutional support, whereas seniors tend to engage in autonomous learning strategies like journaling and content immersion (Fukuyama & Tan, 2020). Gender differences were minimal, but female students showed slightly higher participation in English clubs and collaborative learning sessions.

Table 2. Correlation Between Demographic and Academic Factors with English Learning Challenges and Strategies

No	Demographic/Academic Factor	Main Challenge Observed	Preferred Strategy
1	Non-English Speaking Household	Vocabulary and Pronunciation	Classroom-Based Learning
2	Low Academic Performance	Grammar and Writing	Grammar-Focused Exercises
3	Limited Digital Access	Reduced Independent Learning	Offline Resources
4	Communicative Teaching Environment	None / Lower Challenges	Interactive Learning
5	Freshmen (First-Year Students)	Reliance on Structured Support	Teacher Guidance and Tutorials
6	Senior Students	Preference for Autonomous Learning	Self-Directed and Media-Based Learning
7	Female Students	Higher Peer Learning Participation	Collaborative Learning (Clubs)

Source: Processed by the Author (2025)

The table above presents the correlation between students’ demographic and academic backgrounds and their corresponding English learning challenges and strategies. For instance, students from non-English speaking households struggle primarily with vocabulary and pronunciation, often relying on classroom-based learning for support. Meanwhile, those with low academic performance tend to face grammar and writing difficulties, preferring structured grammar exercises. Interestingly, senior students and those in communicative environments exhibit fewer learning barriers, showing a tendency toward autonomous and media-based learning.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, this study concludes that fusion students encounter diverse challenges in learning English, often influenced by their demographic and academic contexts. Common obstacles include limited vocabulary, grammar difficulties, and reduced exposure to English outside the classroom. However, students employ various strategies to sustain their learning, such as watching English media, collaborating with peers, and using language-learning apps. The integration of student-centered and technology-based approaches proves essential in fostering sustainable and independent language acquisition. Furthermore, the correlation between background factors and learning behaviors emphasizes the need for adaptive pedagogical methods that accommodate students’ specific needs. Educators and institutions are encouraged to support both structured and autonomous learning environments, promoting digital literacy and peer engagement.

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