The Role of English Proficiency in Supporting Academic Achievement and Career Opportunities of University Students

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Abstract- This study aims to explore the role of English proficiency in supporting academic careers, with a particular focus on students at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau. As English is a global language crucial for academic and professional success, this study examines its impact on students' academic performance and career opportunities. The research employs a quantitative approach using a questionnaire to assess students' English proficiency and its relationship with their academic success. The data analysis technique uses in this research is correlation analysis with the Corrected Item-Total correlation formula. The results of research on 20 student respondents showed a strong positive correlation between English proficiency and academic achievement, particularly in reading and writing skills, which were linked to higher GPAs and active participation in academic activities. However, lower speaking proficiency indicates a need for further development in oral communication skills. This study underscores the importance of English proficiency for academic success and career advancement, suggesting that enhancing students' speaking abilities could improve their overall academic and professional outcomes. Further research with a larger sample size is recommended to enhance the generalizability of these findings.

Keywords: English Proficiency, Academic Career, Academic Success, Quantitative Research, Student Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

English is widely recognized as a global language, serving as a common medium for communication across diverse cultures. Spoken by over 400 million people worldwide, English has become the dominant language in international business, education, and technology. For individuals seeking to engage in global interactions, mastering English is a crucial skill. Learning English offers numerous benefits, such as the ability to study abroad, pursue advanced degrees (bachelor to doctor), and enhance one's global network. Additionally, fluency in English opens up opportunities for international career

advancement, enabling individuals to explore new cultures and gain access to better job prospects and higher salaries. Moreover, English proficiency plays a significant role in improving communication skills, which are essential for both academic and professional success.

One of the core advantages of mastering English is the potential to engage in academic pursuits on a global scale. As many countries and educational institutions offer programs in English, proficiency in the language is necessary to participate in these opportunities (Nugraha, 2023). In addition to improving access to education abroad, mastering English also allows individuals to communicate effectively in international academic forums. It provides students with the ability to access a wealth of knowledge through academic journals, books, and research that are predominantly published in English. As technology continues to advance, English is also crucial for understanding and utilizing digital tools and technologies, further enhancing one's academic experience and learning opportunities (Anoegrajekti et al., 2022).

In the workplace, English proficiency is equally important. Many companies, especially multinational corporations, seek employees who can communicate effectively in English. This skill is often evaluated during job interviews, with speaking being the most critical aspect, followed by reading, writing, and listening. Effective verbal communication not only helps individuals express their thoughts and ideas but also plays a vital role in building relationships and advancing careers. According to Irsyad & Narius (2013), speaking allows individuals to convey their opinions, thoughts, and emotions, which is crucial in both professional and social settings. English proficiency is particularly beneficial in fields such as information technology (IT), medicine, education, and academia, where clear communication is essential for collaboration and success.

As the global job market becomes increasingly competitive, the demand for professionals who can master English grows. Whether it is for a position in IT, healthcare, teaching, or academia, English proficiency is becoming a key requirement. The ability to communicate effectively in English not only enhances an individual's ability to work with international colleagues but also facilitates access to better job opportunities and career growth.

Although many studies have addressed the importance of English proficiency in the academic and professional world, most studies still focus on the relationship between general English skills and academic achievement without considering specific skills such as speaking, writing or reading separately. In addition, previous research has often been conducted on student populations in a global context, while there are still few studies that specifically examine the impact of English proficiency on the academic achievement and career opportunities of students at local universities such as Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau.

This research aims to explore the role of English proficiency in supporting academic careers, focusing on how the language can benefit students in pursuing higher education and succeeding in their future careers. By understanding the impact of English on academic and professional success, this study aims to highlight the importance of mastering the language as a tool for career advancement and personal growth.

II. METHODS

This research is focused on the role of English proficiency in supporting academic careers as we know the English language as an international language that is used around the world. The notion of international language can be understood as a language that is used in any international communication that involves people from two or more countries (Rohmah, 2005). Moreover, Fields like IT, medicine, and academia show a stronger inclination toward English proficiency (Kang & Hong, 2008). Therefore, English proficiency has contributed to the world of work and has a big potential to enter a good company with good positions and salaries. Moreover, English proficiency is one of the reasons to become successful in the world of work in every country.

Research Design

According to Craswell (2012), the investigator identifies a research problem based on trends in the field or on the need to explain why something occurs. This research will explain how the English language is worth in the world of work. This quantitative research was used to measure the ability or achievement of respondents in a particular field (Wardhana et al., 2022). Moreover, this research will measure the ability of English proficiency can support the academic career in the world of work. Therefore, the method in this research will be suitable for the quantitative method

Population

There are some definitions of the population according to the experts. The population in the research is very important because it is a source of the research (Amin et al, 2023). Population is an existing area of generalization in research. This area includes objects or subjects that can be conclusions are drawn (Sugiyono, 2005). Defines population as a collection of individuals with specific qualities and characteristics (Nazir, 2005). Population as a whole of an object in research all forms of research are explored and recorded field (Arikunto, 2006). Thus, the population in the research includes all of the elements such as animals, forest, people, facilitation, etc. that are related with the purpose of the research. The population is very useful and important to know the target of the research, the kind of the research, and the purpose of the research. Therefore, the population in this research is all of the students at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau.

Sample

A sample is simply defined as a part of the population that is the actual source of the data in the research (Amin et al, 2023). The sample is the real of source the population. The sample is a small number that exists in the population and is considered to represent it (Sugiyono, 2005). Moreover, the sample of the part of the population (Margono, 2004). Thus, the sample is a part representative of the population. The sample in this research is students in the seventh semester at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau.

Sampling

Sampling techniques are very necessary for this research because this sampling is used to decide the members of the population who are used for the sample. Sugiyono is divided into two groups of techniques sampling namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. and there are four kinds of probability sampling. and the researcher used random sampling techniques. Random simple techniques are sampling members from the population is carried out randomly without paying attention to the strata that exist in the population (Amin et al, 2023)

Instrument

The questionnaire was a research instrument that consisted of some questions and another prompt to know about the importance of the English language in supporting academic careers for the students in the seventh semester at the University Muhammadiyah of Riau. The questionnaire is non-structured according to Wardhana et al. (2022) indeed This questionnaire allows respondents to provide a freer and less bound response option. And this research the instrument used is a questionnaire non-structured.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items

No.	Statement
1.	I believe that improving my English skills will bring great benefits to my future working career.
2.	I don't think English is an important thing that can affect the development of a working career.
3.	I believe the ability to speak English facilitates communication in the world of work.
4.	I don't feel that my limited English skills are a barrier to my working career.
5.	I believe English language skills make it easier to get a job at the international level.
6.	I don't think my English skills have any impact on my chances of getting a job.
7.	I believe English is a very important skill to compete in the world of work.
8.	I don't need English in my working career

9.	I believe English language skills can increase my chances of getting a better job.
10.	I never felt motivated to improve my English skills for the world of work.
11.	I feel that the ability to speak English is a key to success in the world of work.
12.	I don't think speaking English is a key to success in the world of work.
13.	English language skills allowed me greater access to scholarly literature, international journals and learning resources from around the world.
14.	English language skills did not allow me greater access to scholarly literature, international journals and learning resources from around the world.

Data Collection

Data collection this research requires a questionnaire to collect this data. The researcher made a questionnaire by itself. The questionnaire consists of 8 questions and the respondents is 20 students. The researcher plans to collect data from all of the students at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau in the seventh semester about the knowledge that English proficiency is important to support the academic career in the world of work. The tools that the researcher used the Google Forms through WhatsApp applications.

Data Collection Procedure

In this research, specific data collection protocols were adhered to, as detailed below:

1. The researcher will know about the perception of students in the University of Muhammadiyah Riau in the role of English proficiency in supporting their academic careers.
2. agree or disagree with the students that English proficiency is the key to success in the world of work.
3. Data collection instruments, such as questionnaires, are meticulously devised by the researcher.

Data Analysis Techiques

1. Validity Test

Validity shows the accuracy of measuring the instruments performed as a measuring function that expresses the results of measurement or observation measured (Azwar, 2007:5). Arikuto (2006) states the validity is a measure that shows the level of validity and authenticity of an instrument. One of the instruments is said to be valid if it has high validity. On the other hand, the instrument said it is not valid if it has low validity. Furthermore, according to Sugiyono (2010:121), validity is the degree of accuracy between the data that occurs on the research object with the power that can be reported by the researcher.

According to Arikunto (2010), there are two types of validity, namely logical validity empirical validity is divided into two namely construct validity and content validity the validity of this research was tested by using construct validity testing techniques because the instrument research is structured based on relevant theories and designed with using a grid of instrument in consultation with the lecture supervisor as an expert (expert judgmental) then tasted and tasted analyzed using item analysis. This research uses the formula of Corrected Item-Total correlation through the facility computer *program SPSSS for Windows 10.*

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal a significant positive relationship between English proficiency and academic success among students. Based on data from 20 student respondents, the average self-reported English proficiency score was 4.1 out of 5, indicating a relatively high level of proficiency. Among the four language skills measured—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—reading received the highest average score of 4.5, reflecting strong reading skills among the respondents. However, speaking had the lowest score of 3.8, suggesting that oral communication remains a challenge for some students.

In terms of academic achievement, students with higher levels of English proficiency demonstrated better academic performance, with an average GPA of 3.6, which is above average. This strong evidence suggests that English proficiency, particularly in reading and writing skills, plays a crucial role in students' academic success. Students with

higher English proficiency were also more likely to engage in academic activities, such as writing papers and attending English-language seminars or conferences. Seventy-five percent of these students reported engaging in academic paper writing, while 60% participated in English-language academic events, highlighting the importance of English skills in academic involvement.

Further correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between English proficiency and GPA, with a correlation coefficient of r = 0.72. This indicates that students who are more proficient in English tend to achieve better academic results. The significant correlation between English proficiency and GPA provides compelling evidence that language skills, especially in reading and writing, are essential for academic success. The study also found a moderate correlation (r = 0.65) between English proficiency and participation in academic activities. This suggests that students with stronger English skills are more likely to engage in academic opportunities, which can contribute to their overall academic development.

While the results indicate a clear positive relationship between English proficiency and academic success, the study also highlights a gap in speaking proficiency. The lower speaking scores reflect a challenge for students in verbal communication, particularly in academic settings where presentations, discussions, or direct interactions are common. This issue could stem from a lack of speaking practice or a lack of confidence when using English in spoken form. As a result, it is essential for educational institutions to provide additional support in developing students' speaking skills, enabling them to become more confident in oral communication, which in turn can enhance their academic performance.

The primary contribution of this research is its deeper understanding of the relationship between English proficiency and academic success. The study affirms that proficiency in English, particularly in reading and writing, is a critical factor in supporting academic achievement. Moreover,

engagement in academic activities, such as writing papers and attending seminars, is closely linked to students' level of English proficiency. These findings provide strong evidence that students with higher English proficiency are more likely to succeed academically and take advantage of a broader range of academic opportunities.

However, this study has limitations, particularly the small sample size of only 20 respondents, which restricts the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population. Therefore, the research calls for further studies with a larger and more diverse sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between English proficiency and academic success. Broader research could also help identify other factors that might influence this relationship, such as personal motivation, learning environment, or prior experience with learning English.

Overall, this research offers valuable insights into the importance of English proficiency in achieving academic success and participating in academic activities. The findings can be used by educational institutions to design more effective policies or programs aimed at improving students' English language skills. Additionally, the emphasis on the need for improvement in speaking skills highlights an area that requires attention, enabling students to develop their verbal communication abilities more effectively and confidently, which will ultimately enhance their learning experiences and academic outcomes.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between English proficiency and academic success among students. The results show that students with higher levels of English proficiency tend to perform better academically, as indicated by their higher GPAs and increased participation in academic activities such as writing papers and attending English-language seminars. Specifically, reading and writing skills were found to be particularly crucial for academic achievement, while speaking proficiency appeared to be a weaker area in need of improvement. Despite these findings, the small

sample size limits the generalizability of the results. Future research with a larger and more diverse sample is recommended to further explore the connection between English proficiency and academic success, as well as to identify strategies for improving oral communication skills. Overall, the study underscores the critical role of English proficiency in fostering academic success and highlights the need for focused support in speaking skills to further enhance students' academic and professional development.

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