



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Faza Amelia<sup>1</sup>,

Universitas Negeri Semarang

Jl. Raya Banaran Kota Semarang

Dr. Seful Bahri, S.Pd., M.Pd.<sup>2</sup>,

Universitas Negeri Semarang

Jl. Raya Banaran Kota Semarang

e-mail: [fazalia@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:fazalia@students.unnes.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: [seful.bahri@unnes.ac.id](mailto:seful.bahri@unnes.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** Understanding classroom instructions is essential for effective learning in EFL contexts, yet many students face difficulties in comprehending them. This study aims to investigate students' challenges in understanding English classroom instructions and identify the contributing factors. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, involving five junior high school students in Semarang, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major factors affecting comprehension: instruction delivery, linguistic limitations, classroom environment, and affective conditions. Students struggled with fast-paced and unclear instructions, limited vocabulary, classroom noise, and anxiety when seeking clarification. These findings suggest that effective instructional delivery and supportive classroom environments are crucial for improving students' understanding. Future research is recommended to involve larger participants and incorporate classroom observations to provide deeper insights into instructional practices in EFL settings.

**Keywords:** EFL; classroom instructions; vocabulary; comprehension; anxiety

## KESULITAN SISWA DALAM MEMAHAMI INSTRUKSI BAHASA INGGRIS DI KELAS

**Abstrak:** Pemahaman terhadap instruksi di kelas merupakan hal penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL), namun banyak siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam memahaminya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan siswa dalam memahami instruksi bahasa Inggris di kelas serta faktor-faktor yang memengaruhinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan lima siswa SMP di Semarang yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat faktor utama yang memengaruhi pemahaman, yaitu penyampaian instruksi, keterbatasan linguistik, lingkungan kelas, dan faktor afektif. Siswa mengalami kesulitan akibat penyampaian instruksi yang terlalu cepat dan kurang jelas, keterbatasan kosakata, kondisi kelas yang bising, serta rasa cemas saat meminta klarifikasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan pentingnya penyampaian instruksi yang efektif dan lingkungan

belajar yang mendukung. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan melibatkan partisipan yang lebih luas dan menggunakan observasi kelas.

**Kata kunci:** EFL; instruksi kelas; pemahaman; kosakata; kecemasan

## INTRODUCTION

English has been widely recognized as a global language and is taught in many countries where it is not used as a means of everyday communication. In such contexts, English is learned as a foreign language (EFL). Harmer (2007) explains that EFL refers to situations in which learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, causing learning to rely heavily on classroom instruction. This view is supported by Saville-Troike (2012), who states that EFL learners typically depend on formal instructional settings for language input due to the lack of natural exposure in their environment. Consequently, the classroom becomes a crucial setting for English learning. In Indonesia, where English is taught as a compulsory subject in schools, students mainly encounter English through classroom activities rather than daily communication, making classroom instruction an essential component of English language learning.

Within classroom instruction, teacher instructions serve as a key element in directing students' learning activities. In EFL classrooms, instructions are commonly delivered in English, as teachers use the target language to organize tasks, explain procedures, and manage classroom interaction. Harmer (2007) states that classroom instruction is an important part of teacher talk that helps learners understand what actions are expected during lessons. When instructions are clearly delivered, students are more likely to follow learning tasks, participate actively, and engage in classroom activities, contributing to a more effective learning process (Ur, 2012). However, this condition is not always achieved, as some students experience difficulty in understanding teachers' instructions when the language used is not their first language, making comprehension a critical issue in EFL classrooms.

In practice, the use of English for classroom instructions does not always result in effective understanding among EFL learners. Many students experience difficulties in comprehending English instructions, including limited understanding of instructional vocabulary, confusion in following multi-step directions, and problems processing instructions delivered at a fast pace. These difficulties may lead to incorrect task completion, passive participation, and increased dependence on peers during classroom activities. Related research in Indonesian EFL classrooms has shown that teacher talk tends to dominate classroom interaction, and students may remain silent or confused when they do not fully understand the language used by the teacher, indicating difficulties in processing classroom instructions (Kurniawan, 2022). Previous studies have also indicated that challenges in understanding teacher instructions may hinder students' engagement and learning in EFL classrooms (Pratiwi, 2018). These difficulties suggest that students' problems in understanding English classroom instructions are influenced by various underlying factors, particularly in the early stages of EFL learning.

These difficulties may be influenced by various interrelated factors involving to learners, teachers, and the classroom context. From the learners' perspective, limited vocabulary knowledge, low listening proficiency, and minimal exposure to English may hinder students' ability to comprehend classroom instructions delivered in the target language (Ahmed, 2025). In addition, students at the early stage of EFL learning often rely heavily on their first language, which may affect their understanding of English instructions. Teacher-related factors may also contribute to these

difficulties, such as the speed of instruction delivery, the complexity of language used, and limited opportunities for checking students' understanding. Related research in Indonesia has shown that pre-service teachers encounter challenges in communicating English instructions effectively in classroom settings, which can contribute to learners' difficulties in processing instructional language (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2024). Furthermore, classroom conditions, including limited instructional time and diverse levels of students' English proficiency, may further influence students' comprehension of English classroom instructions.

Despite a number of studies examining classroom interaction and language use in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), many of them tend to focus more on teachers' speech patterns and teaching strategies than on students' understanding of classroom instructions. For instance, Nasir, Yusuf, and Wardana (2019) explored teacher talk in Indonesian EFL classrooms and found that teachers frequently used English to manage classroom interactions and give instructions; however, the study primarily highlighted interactional features without specifically exploring how students interpreted or understood the instructional language. Similarly, research on factors influencing EFL student comprehension has focused on the role of instructional design and teaching strategies in facilitating comprehension (Wijayanti, 2025), but has not explicitly addressed students' difficulties in processing English instructions during real-time classroom activities. It shows that, even though attention to classroom discourse and learning support is increasing, students' difficulties in understanding English classroom instructions remain under-explored, especially from the students' perspective.

Based on the discussion above, it is obvious that understanding classroom instructions in English is crucial for students' active participation and successful learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. Classroom instructions serve as the main medium for delivering learning tasks and organizing classroom activities. However, previous studies have mostly focused on teaching strategies and classroom talk from the teacher's perspective, while students' experiences in interpreting English instructions have been rarely explored. Nanda and Azmy (2020) explore that Indonesian EFL learners experience persistent comprehension difficulties, which may affect their engagement in classroom activities, yet the study does not specifically address how students interpret teachers' English instructions during lessons. Similarly, research on students' communication strategies in EFL classrooms shows that learners often rely on compensatory strategies when they encounter difficulty processing classroom language (Azis, Rum, & Mahmudah, 2024), but students' difficulties in understanding classroom instructions are not explored in depth. Therefore, this research aims to investigate students' difficulties in understanding classroom instructions in English and identify the factors contributing to these difficulties, particularly in the context of EFL classrooms in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

A descriptive qualitative research design was used in this research to investigate students' challenges comprehending instructions in English classes. Studies that seek to interpret meanings based on participant experiences and comprehend phenomena in their natural environment are best served by a qualitative method (John W. Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this research is to describe the kinds of challenges that students face in English as a foreign language (EFL) subjects and to determine the factors that contribute to these challenges, rather than to measure variables or test hypotheses.

Qualitative descriptive research enables researchers to communicate participants' perspectives in an uncomplicated way and offers a thorough overview of occurrences in daily words (Margarete Sandelowski, 2000). Because it allows the researcher to get in-depth accounts of students' experiences without changing the research environment, this method is appropriate for investigating students' challenges comprehending instructions in the classroom. Furthermore, descriptive qualitative research prioritizes detailed descriptions of phenomena as they occur in actual contexts

and naturalistic inquiry (Sharan B. Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, in a natural classroom setting, this design enables the researcher to explain students' challenges and the elements impacting their comprehension of English classroom instructions.

### Research Context and Participants

This research was carried out at a public junior high school in Semarang, Indonesia, where class instructions are frequently given in English by the teacher during teaching and learning activities and English is taught as a required subject. The purpose of the research was to document students' challenges in comprehending English classroom instructions as they naturally arose during sessions in a typical classroom environment. The research's participants were five junior high school students from a Semarang public junior high school. Small participant numbers are acceptable in qualitative research as the focus is on depth of experience rather than generalization. Utilizing purposive sampling, the participants were chosen because they were thought to be pertinent to the research's goals and able to offer rich information about students' challenges comprehending instructions in English classes.

The students demonstrated varying levels of English proficiency. Most students had limited vocabulary knowledge and relatively low exposure to English, as they began learning English formally at the elementary school level. As a result, many students experienced challenges in understanding English classroom instructions, while a small number of students showed higher English proficiency and were able to follow classroom instructions more effectively.

### Data Collection

Data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews with junior high school students. This method was chosen to explore in depth the students' experiences and difficulties in understanding instructions in English class. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to use a set of guiding questions while providing flexibility to ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research because they allow participants to express their perspectives and experiences in detail while enabling researchers to gain a deeper understanding (Louis Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, this method is considered appropriate for gathering rich and descriptive data regarding students' difficulties in understanding instructions in the classroom.

The interviews focused on students' perceptions of how instructions were delivered, the challenges they faced in understanding them, and the strategies they used when encountering difficulties. Through this method, students could convey their thoughts and experiences in their own words, enabling the researcher to obtain detailed qualitative data. All interviews were conducted individually and recorded to ensure data accuracy.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method was used to identify recurring patterns and themes related to students' difficulties in understanding English classroom instructions. Following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis involved several stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed systematically to ensure consistency throughout the process. The identified themes were then interpreted to describe the types of difficulties experienced by students and the factors influencing their understanding of classroom instructions. This approach enabled the researcher to organize qualitative data clearly and provide a comprehensive description of students' experiences in understanding English classroom instructions..

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of interview data generated four major themes representing students' difficulties in understanding English classroom instructions. The themes were developed through coding and categorization of participants' responses, as summarized in

**Table 1**

Coding Process Based on Interview Data

Theme	Initial Codes (Student Responses)	Categories	Description
Instruction Delivery Factors	Fast explanation, unclear pronunciation, low speaking volume, repeated instruction	Instruction clarity and delivery	Difficulties arising from how teachers deliver classroom instructions, including pacing, audibility, and repetition.
Linguistic Difficulties	Unfamiliar vocabulary, difficulty understanding words, need thinking time, confusion about task	Vocabulary limitation	Comprehension problems caused by limited vocabulary knowledge when interpreting English instructions.
Classroom Environment	Noisy classroom, classmates talking, distraction, loss of focus	Environmental distraction	External classroom conditions affecting students' concentration during instructional explanation.
Affective Factors	Fear of mistakes, hesitation to ask, shyness, anxiety about wrong answers	Emotional barriers	Emotional conditions influencing students' willingness to seek clarification and understand instructions.

**Instruction Delivery Factors**

The findings revealed that students experienced difficulties in understanding classroom instructions due to the way instructions were delivered by the teacher. Several participants reported that instructions delivered too quickly made it difficult for them to process the information. In addition, unclear pronunciation and low speaking volume sometimes prevented students from fully hearing and understanding the instructions. Students also mentioned that repetition helped them better comprehend what was expected in the task.

One participant stated, *“Kadang guru menjelaskan terlalu cepat, jadi saya tidak langsung memahami instruksinya.”* (S1). The excerpts are presented in the participants’ original language to preserve the authenticity of their responses. Another student mentioned, *“Kalau guru berbicara pelan, saya tidak bisa mendengar dengan jelas.”* (S2). Similarly, a participant explained that repeated explanations supported comprehension, saying, *“Saya lebih paham kalau guru mengulang instruksinya lagi.”* (S4). These responses indicate that instructional delivery plays an important role in supporting students’ comprehension of English classroom instructions.

The findings indicate that the way teachers deliver classroom instructions plays a significant role in influencing students’ understanding of English instructions in the EFL classroom. Students reported experiencing difficulties when instructions were delivered too quickly, spoken unclearly, or presented with insufficient repetition. These results suggest that comprehension problems were not solely caused by students’ linguistic limitations but were also closely related to instructional delivery practices.

From a pedagogical perspective, instruction delivery functions as an essential component of teacher talk, which Harmer (2007) identifies as a key element guiding students’ learning actions in the classroom. Since students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, they rely heavily on teachers’ spoken instructions to understand learning tasks. When instructions are delivered at a fast pace, students may struggle to process incoming language due to limited real-time comprehension ability. This finding reflects the cognitive processing challenges faced by EFL learners, who must simultaneously decode vocabulary, interpret meaning, and connect instructions with expected actions.

The present findings are consistent with Wu and Wang (2025), who found that the clarity, pacing, and organization of teacher talk significantly influence students’ comprehension and participation in language learning activities. Their study demonstrated that excessive speech rate reduces learners’ ability to process instructional information, particularly among students with lower language proficiency. Similarly, Nasir et al. (2019) reported that instructional discourse constitutes one of the dominant functions of teacher talk in Indonesian EFL classrooms, and unclear delivery may lead to confusion and reduced student engagement. These studies support the current findings by emphasizing that instructional effectiveness depends not only on what teachers say but also on how instructions are communicated.

Furthermore, students' positive responses toward repeated explanations highlight the importance of repetition as a scaffolding strategy in second language learning. Repetition allows learners additional processing time and reinforces comprehension by providing multiple opportunities to interpret meaning. This finding aligns with Hilly and Hasan (2024), who observed that repeated instructional input helps learners confirm their understanding and reduces misunderstanding during listening-based classroom activities. In EFL contexts, repetition functions as a form of linguistic support that compensates for learners' limited exposure to authentic English input.

These findings further reinforce Harmer's (2007) argument that effective teacher talk directs students' classroom behavior and supports task comprehension. In EFL classrooms, teacher talk functions as the primary medium through which students understand task expectations. The difficulties reported by students in this study, particularly related to fast instruction delivery and unclear pronunciation, indicate that ineffective instructional delivery may reduce students' ability to interpret teacher intentions during classroom activities.

This finding suggests that the effectiveness of classroom instruction depends not only on what teachers say but also on how instructions are delivered. When instructions are spoken too quickly or unclearly, students require additional cognitive effort to process meaning, which may delay task engagement. Conversely, repeated explanations helped students confirm their understanding, demonstrating that adjusted teacher talk can facilitate comprehension.

Therefore, the findings imply that teachers in EFL contexts need to carefully manage the clarity, pace, and audibility of their instructional language. As emphasized by Harmer (2007), effective teacher talk should support learners' understanding and participation, indicating that instruction delivery plays a crucial role in creating accessible learning environments for students with limited English exposure.

### Linguistic Difficulties

The findings revealed that students experienced difficulties related to their limited English vocabulary when trying to understand classroom instructions. Several participants reported that unfamiliar English words made it harder for them to immediately grasp the teacher's instructions. As a result, they often needed additional time to process the meaning of the instructions before completing the task.

One participant stated, "*Kadang ada kata-kata bahasa Inggris yang masih terdengar asing bagi saya, jadi saya butuh waktu untuk memahami instruksinya.*" (S1). Another student mentioned that they occasionally needed time to process information, saying, "*Kadang saya perlu waktu untuk berpikir dulu sebelum memahami maksud guru.*" (S3). Another participant added, "*Kalau saya tidak tahu kosakatanya, saya jadi bingung harus melakukan apa.*" (S2). These responses indicate that vocabulary limitations significantly influence students' comprehension of instructional language in the EFL classroom.

The findings indicate that linguistic factors, particularly limited vocabulary knowledge, significantly influenced students' ability to understand English classroom instructions. Students reported experiencing confusion when encountering unfamiliar English words, which prevented them from immediately understanding what actions were expected during classroom tasks. Rather than directly following instructions, students often needed additional time to interpret meaning, suggesting that vocabulary limitations created barriers to real-time comprehension in the EFL classroom.

In EFL learning contexts, vocabulary knowledge plays a central role in listening comprehension because learners must recognize words quickly in order to interpret spoken messages. When students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary during instruction, their attention shifts from understanding task procedures to decoding individual words. As a result, comprehension becomes fragmented, and students may miss subsequent parts of the instruction. The present findings suggest

that understanding classroom instructions requires not only listening ability but also sufficient lexical knowledge to process spoken input efficiently.

These findings are strongly supported by Adi et al. (2021), who found that unfamiliar vocabulary caused learners to lose important parts of spoken instructions during listening activities. Their study demonstrated that vocabulary limitation often leads to comprehension breakdown, as learners focus excessively on unknown words and fail to follow the continuation of the message. This condition closely reflects the experiences reported by participants in the present study, who indicated that unfamiliar words delayed their understanding and created uncertainty about task expectations.

Similarly, A'R et al. (2024) identified vocabulary limitation as one of the primary factors contributing to listening difficulties among EFL learners. Their research showed that unfamiliar words, combined with spoken language processing demands, reduced students' ability to interpret instructional language effectively. The study emphasized that learners with limited vocabulary knowledge tend to struggle more when instructions are delivered orally, as they must simultaneously recognize vocabulary and interpret meaning within limited processing time. This finding aligns with the current study, where students reported needing additional thinking time before understanding teachers' instructions.

Furthermore, the importance of vocabulary mastery in supporting comprehension is reinforced by Riana et al. (2024), who found that improved vocabulary knowledge enhances learners' overall language understanding and facilitates more effective processing of spoken English. Their research highlights that vocabulary development enables learners to interpret meaning more automatically, reducing cognitive load during listening activities. In relation to the present findings, students' confusion when encountering unfamiliar instructional words suggests that insufficient vocabulary knowledge increases cognitive demands and slows comprehension during classroom interaction.

Taken together, these studies support the interpretation that linguistic difficulty in understanding classroom instructions is not merely a matter of listening skill but is closely connected to vocabulary familiarity. When students lack sufficient lexical knowledge, they experience delays in comprehension, uncertainty in task execution, and reduced confidence in responding to instructions. This condition may contribute to passive classroom participation, as students hesitate to act without fully understanding what is required.

Therefore, the findings imply that vocabulary support plays an important role in improving students' comprehension of English classroom instructions. Teachers may need to consider simplifying instructional language, providing key vocabulary before tasks, or reinforcing important words through repetition and contextual explanation. Supporting students' vocabulary development can help reduce comprehension barriers and enable learners to follow classroom instructions more confidently and effectively in EFL learning environments.

### **Classroom Environment**

The findings also showed that classroom environmental conditions contributed to students' difficulties in understanding instructions. Some participants reported that noise and distractions in the classroom reduced their concentration and made it harder to listen carefully to the teacher's explanations.

One participant explained, "*Ketika kelas ramai, saya tidak bisa fokus pada instruksi guru.*" (S3). Another student similarly stated, "*Kadang teman-teman berbicara saat guru menjelaskan, jadi saya melewatkan instruksinya.*" (S4). These responses suggest that classroom atmosphere and noise levels can affect students' listening focus and consequently influence their understanding of English instruction.

The third theme emerging from the findings relates to classroom environmental factors that influenced students' understanding of English classroom instructions. The interview data revealed that students experienced difficulties concentrating during listening activities due to classroom noise

and various distractions. Several participants reported that surrounding sounds, conversations among classmates, and an uncondusive classroom atmosphere made it difficult for them to focus on the listening material. As a result, students often missed important information and needed repetition to understand the instructions or audio content.

This finding indicates that understanding spoken instructions is not only affected by linguistic competence but also by external environmental conditions. When students' attention is interrupted, their ability to process auditory input decreases, which leads to incomplete understanding. Listening requires sustained concentration because learners must simultaneously decode sounds, interpret meaning, and retain information in short-term memory. Therefore, environmental disturbances can easily disrupt the comprehension process.

The findings of this study are strongly supported by Kulsum and Hidayatullah (2023), who found that environmental noise and lack of concentration significantly hindered junior high school students' listening comprehension. Their study demonstrated that classroom noise reduced students' focus and caused learners to lose important parts of spoken input. Similar to the present study, students reported difficulty maintaining attention when the learning environment was not conducive, showing that environmental variables play a critical role in instructional understanding.

In addition, the results align with Angkasa and Farida (2025), who conducted a systematic review on listening difficulties and identified background noise as one of the major barriers to listening comprehension. Their study explained that distractions slow down students' processing of spoken language because learners must divide attention between the audio input and surrounding stimuli. This condition reduces comprehension efficiency, especially for EFL learners who already need greater cognitive effort to understand English speech.

The similarity between the present findings and previous studies suggests that classroom environment is a consistent factor influencing instruction comprehension across different contexts. Noise and distractions do not merely disturb students physically but also affect cognitive processing during instructions delivering. When concentration decreases, students struggle to follow the flow of spoken information, resulting in misunderstanding or loss of meaning.

These findings imply that teachers need to consider classroom management and environmental conditions when delivering English instructions. A noisy and distracting classroom environment may prevent students from fully attending to teachers' verbal instructions, leading to misunderstanding or incomplete task comprehension. Therefore, creating a more condutive learning atmosphere, minimizing unnecessary noise, and ensuring students' attention before giving instructions can help students better understand English instructions and follow classroom activities more effectively.

### **Affective Factors**

The findings revealed that students' emotional factors also influenced their understanding of classroom instructions. Several participants expressed feelings of fear and hesitation when they did not understand instructions. Fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence sometimes prevented students from asking questions or seeking clarification from the teacher.

One participant stated, "*Saya takut membuat kesalahan, jadi kadang saya memilih diam.*" (S2). Another student mentioned, "*Kadang saya ingin bertanya, tetapi saya merasa malu.*" (S1). Additionally, a participant described feeling anxious when instructions were unclear, saying, "*Saya merasa khawatir karena takut mengerjakan tugas dengan salah.*" (S4). These findings indicate that affective factors such as anxiety and hesitation may hinder students from actively clarifying instructions, which can lead to misunderstandings during classroom activities.

The findings indicate that affective factors play an important role in shaping students' understanding of English classroom instructions. Several students reported feeling afraid of making mistakes or hesitant to ask questions when they did not fully understand the teacher's instructions. This hesitation often prevented them from seeking clarification, which resulted in incomplete understanding of task expectations. These responses suggest that comprehension difficulties were

influenced not only by linguistic or instructional factors but also by students' emotional conditions during classroom interaction.

Students' fear of making mistakes appeared to reduce their willingness to actively participate in classroom communication. When students felt uncertain about their understanding, they tended to remain silent rather than confirm the meaning of instructions. As a consequence, misunderstandings were sometimes carried into task completion. This finding indicates that emotional barriers may indirectly affect instructional comprehension by limiting students' engagement in clarification processes, which are essential for successful classroom communication.

The present findings are consistent with Latifah et al. (2025), who examined the relationship between anxiety, motivation, and language performance in EFL learning contexts. Their study revealed that fear of making mistakes significantly decreased students' participation and willingness to communicate. Students experiencing anxiety were more likely to remain passive even when they encountered difficulties. This supports the current study's findings, showing that emotional discomfort can prevent learners from asking questions or confirming instructions, thereby increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding classroom tasks.

Similarly, Adi et al. (2021) identified affective factors such as nervousness as contributors to comprehension difficulties among EFL learners. The study reported that anxious students often lost focus when processing spoken language, which disrupted their ability to follow ongoing information. Although their research discussed comprehension challenges broadly, the findings help explain the present study by demonstrating how emotional states influence learners' attention and cognitive processing. When students feel nervous or afraid of being wrong, their attention shifts from understanding the instruction to managing their emotional reactions, reducing their ability to interpret instructional messages accurately.

These findings highlight that understanding classroom instructions is not purely a cognitive or linguistic process but also an affective one. Emotional factors influence how students allocate attention, process information, and decide whether to seek clarification. In classrooms where students feel anxious or lack confidence, comprehension problems may persist even when instructions are linguistically clear. Therefore, affective conditions can function as hidden barriers that interfere with students' ability to fully understand teachers' instructional language.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results imply that teachers need to create supportive classroom environments that encourage students to ask questions without fear of negative judgment. When students perceive the classroom as psychologically safe, they are more likely to confirm their understanding and actively engage with instructions. Encouraging clarification questions, providing reassurance, and responding positively to mistakes may help reduce anxiety and improve students' comprehension of classroom instructions.

Overall, the findings suggest that affective factors such as fear of mistakes and hesitation to communicate contribute significantly to students' difficulties in understanding English instructions. Addressing emotional barriers alongside instructional clarity and linguistic support may help teachers create more inclusive learning environments in which students feel confident to process and respond to classroom instructions effectively.

In the Indonesian EFL context, where exposure to English is largely limited to classroom interaction, understanding instructional language becomes a critical gateway to participation in learning activities. The present study contributes to existing research by demonstrating that students' difficulties in understanding classroom instructions are shaped not only by linguistic limitations but also by instructional practices, classroom environments, and affective conditions experienced during learning.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research aimed to investigate students' difficulties in understanding English classroom instructions and to identify the factors contributing to these difficulties in an EFL classroom context.

The findings revealed four major themes influencing students' comprehension: instruction delivery factors, linguistic difficulties, classroom environment, and affective factors. Students experienced challenges when instructions were delivered too quickly or unclearly, when unfamiliar vocabulary limited their understanding, when classroom noise disrupted concentration, and when emotional barriers such as fear of making mistakes discouraged them from seeking clarification. These results demonstrate that difficulties in understanding classroom instructions arise from the interaction between instructional practices, learners' linguistic competence, environmental conditions, and psychological factors within the classroom setting.

The findings highlight that effective instructional communication in EFL classrooms requires teachers to adjust not only the linguistic complexity of instructions but also the manner and context in which they are delivered. Clear pronunciation, appropriate pacing, repetition, vocabulary support, and supportive classroom management may help reduce comprehension barriers and improve students' participation. Furthermore, creating a learning environment that encourages students to ask questions and reduces anxiety is essential for facilitating understanding. For future research, studies may involve a larger number of participants or different educational levels to provide broader perspectives on students' comprehension of classroom instructions. Future researchers may also combine interviews with classroom observations or experimental designs to examine how specific instructional strategies influence students' understanding in real classroom settings. By extending investigation into different contexts and methodologies, future studies can further contribute to improving instructional communication and enhancing the effectiveness of EFL classroom interaction.

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