

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains what inspired the study and is divided into five parts. The first part discusses the background, outlining the issue and why the researcher chose this topic. The second part focuses on defining the research question for Chapter Four of the thesis. Next, operational definitions are provided to clarify key terms used throughout the thesis. The fourth part discusses the research aim, detailing what the study hopes to achieve. Finally, the significance of the study is explored, highlighting its practical implications and real-world relevance.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is considered as important language to master as it will impact personal and professional life. Study by Ting et al. (2017) underscore the necessity of English proficiency for enhancing employability and accessing career advancement opportunities, emphasizing its indispensable role in modern society. In addition, Aziza (2020) points out that English holds immense significance in our contemporary world, serving as a fundamental means of communication across various sectors such as media, tourism, business, and education. Despite its widespread utility, mastering English poses multifaceted challenges, particularly for non-native speakers embarking on the language-learning journey.

Learning English as Foreign Language (EFL) possesses multifaceted challenges due to the context of learning which is not a speaking country. Research conducted by Alshehri (2018) identifies several hurdles encountered by non-native English speakers, including a lack of confidence in language usage, communication avoidance, discourse speed, and difficulties encountered in practical laboratory settings. Furthermore, Uyen & Dieu (2023) highlight prevalent challenges faced by English major freshmen in Vietnam context, primarily rooted in linguistic factors such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, as well as psychological factors encompassing confidence, motivation, and prior knowledge background.

The study done by Alshehry (2018) and Uyen & Dieu (2023) has shed light on the various challenges encountered by non-native English speakers, particularly in educational settings, emphasizing both linguistic and psychological factors. However, to understand better the specific challenges faced by high school students, particularly those in unique educational environments, it is essential to delve into more focused studies. Therefore, the researcher in this study will focus on High School students in Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya.

Islamic boarding schools, known as a pesantren in Indonesia, are traditional educational institutions where students (santri) live on-site and receive religious and academic education. These islamic boarding schools offer a unique educational experience by combining two distinct curricula: the national standard curriculum and the pesantren curriculum. This dual approach allows students to gain a comprehensive education that encompasses both general knowledge and religious studies. The national standard curriculum ensures that students meet the educational requirements set by the government, while the pesantren curriculum focuses on Islamic teachings and values. This combination not only equips students with a balanced education but also prepares them to navigate both secular and religious spheres in their future endeavors.

In teaching English language, the pesantren employ two main approaches: conversational classes and syllabus-based learning. Conversational classes focus on practical language use, helping students develop their speaking and listening skills in real-life contexts. Syllabus-based learning, on the other hand, provides a structured framework that covers grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. For instance, conversational classes might involve role-playing or interactive activities, while syllabus-based learning ensures a comprehensive understanding of linguistic rules. By combining these methods, students benefit from both practical and academic language skills. This dual approach not only prepares students for everyday

communication but also equips them with the academic proficiency needed for further education.

However, several Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories illuminate the challenges faced by EFL learners. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, learners acquire language by understanding messages slightly above their current level (Krashen, 1982). In pesantren, limited exposure to authentic English might hinder this process. Moreover, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that emotional factors like anxiety can impede language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). The potentially stressful environment of boarding school life might raise learners' affective filters, making language acquisition more difficult. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning (L. S. Vygotsky, 1978), yet the insular nature of boarding schools may restrict opportunities for meaningful interaction with native speakers. Furthermore, Social Constructivism, as highlighted by Bruner (1990), emphasizes the role of collaboration and interaction in knowledge construction, complemented by Vellayan et al. (2021) study demonstrating the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies. To address the challenges identified by SLA theory, the pesantren must first recognize the challenges and develop tailored strategies to overcome them. Therefore, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools.

While the integration of conversational and syllabus-based learning in pesantren significantly enhances students' English proficiency, it is essential to acknowledge and address challenges identified by SLA theories. This approach not only aims to help students overcome language skill barriers but also offers educators and institutions an opportunity to effectively address these challenges. By addressing both linguistics and learning environment factors that hinder language learning among high school students in an Islamic Boarding School context, this research seeks to enhance English language education and support mechanisms in similar educational settings.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher addresses the following question, “What are the challenges faced by students in Islamic boarding school in learning English?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, here are the operational definitions of each keyword:

1.3.1 Learning English as Foreign Language : Refers to the process of English mastery in an Islamic boarding school.

1.3.2 Islamic Boarding School : Educational institution where students receive education while living on the campus during the school term.

1.3.3 English Learning Challenges : Situation where students face task during learning English that requires mental and physical effort to accomplish it successfully. It tests students’ abilities and often involves overcoming Obstacles or difficulties encountered by students in the process of learning English.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The study describes the challenges faced by Islamic boarding school students in learning English.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

The study contributes to theoretical understandings of learning english as a foreign language by examining the specific challenges faced by high School students within a unique educational environment an

Islamic Boarding School. This could potentially offer insights into how cultural and religious contexts intersect with language learning. Hence, can lead to theoretical insights into how these factors influence language education strategies and teaching practices, potentially contributing to cross-cultural pedagogical theories.

The study aids in expanding theoretical frameworks related to language learning, particularly among adolescent learners. This could contribute to the development of more nuanced theories in the field of language.

1.5.2 Practical Use

The practical implication of this study can inform the development of tailored strategies aimed at addressing the identified linguistic and psychological challenges. This could involve curriculum adjustments, teacher training programs, or peer support initiatives designed to enhance language learning outcomes.

Educators and administrators within Islamic Boarding Schools, as well as similar educational settings, can utilize the insights from the study to implement more effective English language education programs. Practical recommendations derived from the study can help these institutions create supportive environments conducive to language learning.

Beyond educational contexts, the study may also have practical implications for community stakeholders, such as parents and local leaders, who are invested in the academic success of high school students. Awareness of the challenges and potential solutions identified in your study can foster collaborative efforts to support language learning initiatives within the community.

1.5.3 Empirical Use

The empirical data from this study can be valuable for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of language learning in diverse educational settings. In addition, the data

offers guidance for other educators and researchers working in Boarding School environments. They can draw parallels from the findings to understand common challenges and explore potential solutions that align with the specific cultural and educational context.

Researchers can use this study's empirical insights for cross-context comparisons, comparing challenges faced by students in Islamic Boarding School with those in other religious or non-religious Schools. This can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of learning challenges across different educational settings.