



Exploring EFL Secondary Islamic Boarding School Students' Practices And Challenges In Using English As A Classroom Language

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Abstract

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This study focused on investigating the practice of English in EFL classroom and the challenges encountered by EFL students at Islamic Boarding School. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal to what extent students practice English in EFL classroom and the obstacles they encountered. Participants of this study consist of six students from eighth grade. They were recruited voluntarily and based on suggestions from the teacher. This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive case study as the research design. The author used observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain the data. In analyzing the data, the author applied a method by Miles and Huberman (1994) which consist of data reduction, data display, conclusions drawing and verification. For the result, the author found that during the learning process, students practiced English actively during the questioning and answering session, and during the presentation session. Both sessions encouraged students to practice English confidently and fluently. However, some challenges encountered by students in practicing English, such as inhibition consist of being shy to speak English, being afraid to make mistakes, being scared of critique, and being confused about what to say. Moreover, restricted learning time and students' mother tongue were considered as students' challenges in practicing English as well.

Keywords: Classroom Language, English Practice, Challenges in Practicing English, Islamic Boarding School Students

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INTRODUCTION

The difficulty students face in learning English is caused by the infrequent use of English in daily communication (Annisa et al., 2018 as cited in Oka, I.A.P.P.H. & Artini, L.P., 2021). Hence, the student's level of exposure to English plays an important role to overcome the difficulty in learning English. Exposure to language can be done through practice in daily communication or classroom language. However, since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, students cannot rely on daily communication practice because people rarely use it in daily conversation. Nevertheless, instead of being used daily, English has mostly been used in the classroom for teaching and learning (Hadiatmi, I. N., 2020). Therefore, the use of English as a classroom language in EFL classrooms is highly expected to facilitate students in improving their English skills.

In the teaching and learning process, the use of classroom language brings about changes in delivering a lesson. It assists students in effectively interacting with teachers as well as students with their peers. It is also believed that the use of a particular language as a classroom language can affect students' motivation. In line with the previous studies which revealed that classroom language is important because it can influence students' attitudes toward languages, which affects their

motivation and preferences for language use (Kärchner-Ober, R., 2012). Based on World Education Services; World Education News + Reviews, Indonesian is the official language of the educational system. However, in reality, the teacher may use other languages during the learning process in a particular subject like in an EFL classroom.

Related to the EFL classroom, it is interesting and essential to discuss who the students are. One of the interesting types of students comes from boarding schools because it has unique characteristics. One of them is that it is common for boarding schools to conduct a bilingual program. Besides Indonesian and students' vernacular languages or mother tongue, students are usually able to speak other languages because boarding school itself usually emphasizes teaching English and Arabic to students. In line with a study conducted by Nurjaman, I (2013) in one of the boarding schools in Bandung. The study revealed that students in that boarding school are required to speak English and Arabic in their daily activities. Furthermore, boarding school holds some additional language subjects in order to strengthen students' language abilities. Other studies showed the same result, the boarding school implemented the same program (Zulfiqar, S., 2015; Pratama, R., 2019). Other unique characteristic of boarding school students are they tend to come from a variety of regions with many different types of mother tongues. Thus, the differences of their demographic background may affect the students' practices and challenges in the use of English as a classroom language.

However, plenty studies conducted regarding the use of classroom language with variety focus. One of the studies conducted by Debreli, E., & Oyman, N. (2016) focusing on Turkish students' preferences on the use of mother tongue in EFL classroom revealed that the majority of EFL students preferred L1 to be used during English class. Another study conducted by Kärchner-Ober, R. (2012) focused on investigating the language preferences of Malaysian multilingual students in reading, speaking, and writing and showed quite different results. The study revealed that students of the English and Malay BA course preferred English in speaking, reading, and writing whereas the Malay group clearly preferred to use BM (Bahasa Malaysia) for all skills.

However, apart from formal education, there is study that involved boarding school students as their participants which was conducted by Jaliya, F.G. & Idrus, F. (2017). The result showed that Islamic boarding school students have positive attitudes towards English language learning. Furthermore, they found that there were many factors that caused their attitudes and perception towards English learning, such as parental encouragement, self-efficacy, and their English classroom anxiety. It is similar with some studies which revealed that students' demographic characteristics influenced their perceptions of language. Students who graduated from a low level preferred the use of L1. Besides, the student's level of English language skill influenced their perceptions of the use of L1 (Dujmovic, 2007; Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002).

In addition to the study focusing on students' perspective, a study conducted by Pahlevi, M. R. & Ridwan, I. (2018) investigated the use of classroom language at junior high school focused on the pre-service teacher's perspective. One of their

findings revealed that considering students' abilities is important in choosing the classroom language.

Although numerous studies related to the use of classroom language have been done, the study that focused on EFL secondary boarding school students' practices and challenges in using English as a classroom language is rarely explored, especially students who are exposed to the English program implemented in their school. Therefore, the researcher is intrigued to explore more about EFL secondary boarding school students. The current study will fill in a contextual gap between previous studies and the present study which will focus on exploring EFL Islamic boarding school students' practices and challenges in the use of English as a classroom language.

METHODS

In order to portray students' experiences, the research used qualitative approach with descriptive case study as the method. Yin (1984) described descriptive case study as study that describe natural process that take place in data question. Therefore, this design was used thoroughly to study students' practice and challenges in using English as a classroom language.

This study was conducted in one of the Islamic Boarding Schools in Purwakarta. The basis for assigning a research site was due to the uniqueness of the school. It has a bilingual program and English activity program. Participants of this research are students from 8th grade students. They have spent at least almost two years of English program in this Islamic boarding school. Out of thirty students, the author only involved six students who were recruited voluntarily. All the participants were either having Sundanese or Indonesian language as their mother tongue. The age range was from 13-15 years old. Therefore, other reasons for assigning them as participants were because of their demographic background and their age which might affect the research's result.

This data collection technique consisting of observation, interview, and documentation. This data collection technique was used to improve the validity of data and showed an in-depth picture of the research problem. The author conducted an observation during teaching and learning process. Furthermore, an interview was conducted to convey a more thorough view of students' responses. In addition to supporting the interview data, the documentation was taken as other supporting data. The acquired data was organized according to the specification before being evaluated through the stages of data reduction, data display, and data verification and conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

A. Questioning and Answering Session Encourage Students to Practice English

In main lesson, there is chance to support students-teacher interaction especially in encouraging their practice. It occurs at main lesson which is questioning and answering session. This session is initiated through checking

students' background knowledge of what will be learned through questioning and answering session. Based on the data, the activity encourages students to practice English. It can be traced from observation data which describes students' practice in questioning and answering session as follow:

Teacher : *What type of text is this?*

Student (Rika) : *Recount text*

Teacher : *Why?*

Student : *Because past experience*

Teacher : *We'll move on to the structure of recount text, who knows the structure of recount text?*

Student(Quinza): *The structure of recount text is orientation, events, and reorientation*

Teacher : *Orientation isinya apa si?*

Student : *Tells who was involved, what happened, where and when the events took place or happened*

Teacher : *What kind of tenses that is used in recount text?*

Students : *Past tense*

(Observation data 4.1)

Based on delivered observation report, it illustrates that questioning and answering session assisted students to have the interest in practicing English. It can be seen that students kept answering teacher's questions in English. It also supported by interview transcription which explained that students felt more confident during this session. Most students claimed that they were motivated to speak English during this session. However, a student felt hesitant to speak, while other two students admitted that they were eager to answer and be active in practicing English even though they still felt hesitant. The interview transcription can be seen below:

<i>Reseracher</i> :	<i>Menurut kamu sesi tanya jawab antara guru dengan siswa terkait materi yang sedang dipelajari membuat siswa terdorong untuk aktif berbicara Bahasa Inggris ga?</i>
<i>S1</i> :	<i>Iya, saya sendiri merasa terdorong walaupun kadang ada siswa yang malu dan takut salah</i>
<i>S2</i> :	<i>Iya, jadi pengen jawab tapi kadang malu</i>
<i>S3</i> :	<i>Masih ragu ragu sih</i>
<i>S4</i> :	<i>Pasti semua murid beda-beda. Kalau aku sih sebenarnya jadi mau jawab dan ngomong kalau guru nanya tapi kadang ga enak sama temen kalau jawab terus. Jadi kadang ngasih kesempatan ke temen yang lain buat jawab</i>

S5	:	<i>Menurut Saila pasti ada murid yang terdorong, 873apia da juga yang enggak. Kalau aku kadang ragu ragu, tapi kalau ga ada yang jawab lagi aku coba jawab</i>
S6	:	<i>Kalau Sarah tau jawabannya ya dijawab. Kadang-kadang terdorong buat ngomong kalau guru nanya walaupun masih ragu ragu</i>

(Interview data 4.1)

B. Presentation Session Stimulates Students to Speak Fluently

During the presentation session, the students were facilitated to practice bravely. It mediates them to respond in target language. All students introduced themselves and presented their discussion result in English. This pattern can be traced from observation data as follows:

Teacher : From which group are you?

Students : Five, my name is Alifa Salsabilla. My answer is got, went, entered, visited

Teacher : Which group are you?

Student : Group 6 miss, my name is Quinza. My answer is decided, took, had

Student : My name is Alissa. I am from group two. My answer is going, drove, cooked

Student : I am Nada from group 1

Teacher : Alright Nada, can you read your result?

Student : Yes, two, one, three, six, four, five

Teacher : From group 1 is 2-1-3-6-4-5. Is it correct? Who has different answer?

Student : Different miss (raising hand)

(Observational Data 4.3)

The observational data presented above showed that students were stimulated to speak English during presentation session. It confirmed by their interview result. All students claimed that they were motivated to practice English bravely during the presentation session. Three students admitted that presentation session stimulated them to practice English confidently. Other student claimed that during the presentation session, she could learn from her friends. Hence, she felt motivated to do the presentation. It can be traced from the interview transcription as follows:

<i>Reseracher :</i>	<i>Ketika sesi presentasi kamu lebih terdorong untuk bisa lancar berbicara Bahasa Inggris ga sih?</i>
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S1	:	<i>Iya, karena sudah terbiasa di rumah mendengarkan umi, belajar di rumah. Disini juga kan kita belajar untuk percaya diri berbicara di depan. Jadi ketika sesi presentasi kemarin aku ngerasa jadi salah satu kesempatan buat aku confident berbicara Bahasa Inggris</i>
S2	:	<i>Iya, soalnya di rumah aku sering nonton presentasi dari motivator pakai Bahasa Inggris jadi ketika presentasi kemarin aku ngerasa terdorong buat ngomong lebih percaya diri</i>
S3	:	<i>Iya, menurut aku bisa presentasi itu keren, jadi kemarin aku bisa saling belajar dari temen yang presentasi juga</i>
S4	:	<i>Kalau Zahra sih iya, karena merasa setelah belajar tuh bisa dipraktikkan dengan cara presentasi</i>
S5	:	<i>Menurut Saila iya, jadi merasa terdorong buat berbicara, jadi lebih berani karena liat temen juga</i>
S6	:	<i>Menurut Sarah presentasi kemarin tuh karena materinya mudah jadi gampang sih, jadi adanya sesi presentasi buat aku lebih terdorong buat ngomong</i>

(Interview data 4.2)

C. Students' challenges in practicing English in EFL classroom

Based on the interview data, the researcher found that there are several challenges encountered by students in practicing English in EFL classroom. The variety of challenges can be classified into three: 1) Inhibition; 2) Restricted Learning Time; 3) Mother Tongue Aspect. The inhibition aspect consists of being shy, being afraid to make mistakes, being scared of critique, and being confused about what to say.

1) Inhibition

a) Being Shy

The researcher found that there were two students who admitted to be ashamed to express thought, while two others admitted that they were not shy to express their idea, and the last two students confessed that they occasionally were ashamed to express their thought. The interview result is presented below:

<i>Reseracher :</i>	<i>Apakah Anda merasa malu untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris?</i>
<i>S4 :</i>	<i>Malu sih tapi ya coba coba nyari kosa kata</i>
<i>S5 :</i>	<i>Malu sih kalo salah, trus ada orang yang ngomong cara bacanya gini</i>

<i>S1</i>	:	<i>Ngga sih karena emang suka Bahasa Inggris tuh dan enjoy paeknya. Jadi kebawa sama rasa Bahagia pake Bahasa Inggris tuh karena emang maknanya juga enak dipake</i>
<i>S3</i>	:	<i>Malu ngga sih, Cuma kadang takut salah paham gitu suka dipake juga Bahasa Inggrisnya</i>
<i>S</i>	:	<i>Kadang kaya bukan malu tapi takut salah dalam kosa kata kaya gitu, jadi sambal belajar juga</i>
<i>S6</i>	:	<i>Kadang malu kadang ngga. Kalo misalnya tau kosa katanya sih biasa aja, tapi kalo misalnya takut salah malu lah. Jadi kalo masih ragu-ragu mah malu</i>

(Interview data 4.3)

b) Being afraid to make mistakes

Among 6 participants, only one student responded that she was not afraid to make mistakes in practicing English, while other 5 students admitted to be afraid in making mistakes in speaking. A student claimed that she was afraid to make mistakes due to her limited vocabulary, while other student confessed that she was afraid to make mistake because she was not sure how to pronounce the words.

<i>Reseracher</i>	:	<i>Apakah Anda merasa takut dan khawatir melakukan kesalahan?</i>
<i>S1</i>	:	<i>Ngga sih</i>
<i>S2</i>	:	<i>Iya takut</i>
<i>S3</i>	:	<i>Takut</i>
<i>S4</i>	:	<i>Itu pasti karena masih ada kosa kata yang belum tau jadi masih suka gelagapan</i>
<i>S5</i>	:	<i>Takut cara pengucapannya soalnya belum terlalu bisa gitu</i>
<i>S6</i>	:	<i>Iya</i>

(Interview data 4.4)

c) Being scared of critique

Based on the interview data, the students were scared of critique, two students were not, and other student was occasionally scared of critique. A student even admitted that she was criticized because she did not know the meaning but then her friends let her know the correct meaning. The result can be traced in the interview transcript below:

<i>Reseracher</i>	:	<i>Apakah Anda takut dikritik oleh teman atau orang lain?</i>
<i>S1</i>	:	<i>Ngga, belum pernah dikritik</i>
<i>S2</i>	:	<i>Ngga sih, karena kan kita juga sama sama belajar disini jadi slaah itu wajar</i>
<i>S5</i>	:	<i>Sarah ngga sih</i>
<i>S3</i>	:	<i>Iya takut dikritik</i>

S4	:	<i>Iya, pernah tapi dikasih tau arti Bahasa Inggrisnya</i>
S6	:	<i>Kadang ngerasa gitu tapi kadang pede aja</i>

(Interview data 4.5)

d) Being confused about what to say

The researcher found that all participants ever felt confused about what to say. A student admitted that she frequently felt confused about what to say, while other student claimed that she occasionally felt that way. Moreover, there were two students who claimed that they were confused about what to say due to their limited vocabulary. It can be traced from the interview transcript as follows:

Reseracher :		<i>Apakah Anda sering merasa tidak tahu apa yang harus diungkapkan ketika guru Anda menanyakan sesuatu atau memberi Anda kesempatan untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris di kelas?</i>
S5	:	<i>Pernah, sering bahkan. Jadi kalo misalnya ada yang nanya tapi gatau kosa katanya suka nanya ke temen</i>
S2	:	<i>Kadang sih, tapi 876ob acari di buku, cari referensi juga biar bisa jawab</i>
S1	:	<i>Pernah sih tapi kadang ada baiknya kita mencoba menjawab pake bahasa apa pun juga walaupun belum bisa, terus belajar</i>
S3	:	<i>Iya suka kaya gitu</i>
S4	:	<i>Iya, karena gatau trus kadang juga karena malu</i>
S6	:	<i>Pernah karena lupa kosa katanya kadang suka liat kamus dulu jadi lama</i>

(Interview data 4.6)

2) Restricted Learning Time

The researcher found that all students felt the restricted learning time as one of challenges to practice English. They claimed that they only had the chance to practice English in EFL classroom in two hours of lesson. Hence, they stated that the time was not enough. It can be traced from the interview transcript below:

Reseracher :		<i>Apakah Anda merasa tidak memiliki cukup waktu untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris di kelas?</i>
S1	:	<i>Iya</i>
S2	:	<i>Iya, ngga cukup. Waktunya sedikit</i>
S3	:	<i>Iya kadang ngerasa kurang kesempatannya</i>
S4	:	<i>Iya</i>
S5	:	<i>Iya karena belajar di kelas kan cuma 2 jam pelajaran jadi ga maksimal gitu</i>
S6	:	<i>Iya soalnya emang waktunya juga sebentar kalo belajar di kelas</i>

(Interview data 4.7)**3) Mother Tongue**

All participants confessed that they used to using their mother tongue in their home. Hence it makes them difficult to practice English in EFL classroom. Even though the school's regulation only allows students to speak English or Arabic depends on the week, students still encounter challenges in practicing English, one of them is due to their mother tongue. It can be traced from the interview transcript below:

<i>Reseracher :</i>	<i>Apakah Anda merasa sudah terbiasa dengan bahasa ibu sehingga sulit bagi Anda untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris selama kelas EFL?</i>
<i>S1 :</i>	<i>Iya aku ngerasa begitu</i>
<i>S2 :</i>	<i>Iya</i>
<i>S3 :</i>	<i>Iya dibawa aja gitu, lebih biasanya pake Bahasa Indonesia</i>
<i>S4 :</i>	<i>Iya</i>
<i>S5 :</i>	<i>Karena udah dibawa Bahasa Indonesia di rumah jadi dibawa juga pas di sekolah gitu</i>
<i>S6 :</i>	<i>Iya sih soalnya emang kalo diajak ngobrol sama orang tua pake Bahasa indonesia</i>

(Interview data 4.8)**Discussion**

In this study, students admitted that questioning and answering session encourages them to practice English which can be seen from their activeness in answering teacher's question. Astrid A., et al (2019) claimed that one of the purposes in conducting questioning and answering session is to engage students in the content of the lesson and to promote classroom interaction. In this phase, it facilitates students to learn speaking fluently as they are given opportunity to deliver their opinion and curiosity. It is in line with Morgan and Saxton (1991) who believed that students are able to freely express their views and thoughts during the questioning and answering session. This is also supported by Ellis as cited in Ozcan (2010) who claimed that language learners have the most opportunities to participate and practice language use when they are asked a question. Silberman (1996) believed that a question asked during the beginning of the learning process is a simple strategy in stimulating students to ask and answer questions during the classroom activity. It is supported by David (2007) who stated that the essential aspect of classroom interaction in ESL Classroom is questioning. It means that through questioning and answering sessions during the EFL class students and teachers could have a better classroom interaction. In other words, this session could encourage students to practice using target language as they were facilitated to practice it interactively.

Xuerong (2012) believed that questions asked by the teachers could invite students to have further discussion which equal with stimulating them to practice English. In addition, according to Bulent, D., et al (2016) some researchers believed

that one of the most essential elements of teaching is asking questions, which may be highly effective when utilized correctly. It can motivate and assure the active participation of students (Gall, 1984; Cotton, 1988). Hence, the author can conclude that current study in line with these previous studies which mentioned that questioning and answering session could promote interaction between students and teachers. It means the more questioning and answering session occurs, the higher possibility for students to practice English.

Besides questioning and answering session, this study found that presentation session stimulates students to speak fluently. As a study conducted by Brooks, G & Wilson, J (2014) showed that oral presentations offer teachers a learner-centered activity that can be utilized as an effective technique in the language classroom to improve their students' communicative ability. It is supported by a study conducted by Girard, Pinar, and Trapp (2011) who discovered that implementing oral presentations in the classroom boosted class interaction and involvement, increased student interest in learning, and resulted in significant improvements in their students' communication and presentation skills. It is proven that presentation session could lead to a better speaking skill because students are given the opportunity to practice their language ability. It is same with the study conducted by Miles, R (2022) who revealed that students believed presentations were another way for them to communicate their thoughts and practice their speaking skills. Furthermore, based on his study, students who thought presentation session improved their English speaking and their confidence got the high percentage which were 4.28 and 4.00 sequentially.

In practicing English, however, students might encounter some challenges. Wang (2019) believed that students who are not native English speaker frequently face difficulties in practicing English. Aishuak, S & Kassymova, G (2023) revealed that college students who are not native English speakers may struggle not only with a lack of vocabulary and bad pronunciation, but also with the grammatical rules of English, which can be complicated and difficult to grasp. This can result in speech problems, impairing their capacity to communicate successfully in academic and professional situations. Fear and anxiety can also be important impediments to non-native college students acquiring English speaking skills, as they may be self-conscious about making mistakes and speaking in public, or even in front of their classmates. These inhibitions are in line with the result of a current study which shows that students tend to be shy to speak English, afraid to make mistakes, scared of critique, and confused about what to say.

Other factor that causes students' challenges is due to restricted learning time. The time students spend to practice English in EFL classroom tend to be less to make students have fluent speaking skill. It is in line with study conducted by Akbari, Z (2015) who investigated the challenges faced by Iranian students in speaking English, one of the reasons which caused their difficulties in speaking English is due to restricted time of speaking English in their English classes. Moreover, the time spent during the learning process frequently used to implement teacher-oriented and drill-oriented activities (Browne & Wada, 1998, p.108). Therefore, students tend to have restricted time to actually practice English. It is

supported by Brooks, G & Wilson, J (2014) who stated that students tend to get traditional method. One of the methods that is usually implemented by teacher is choral method where students repeat what the teacher is saying. This method frequently used rather than the method which require students to practice English individually.

Other challenges faced by students is due to their mother tongue. Ur (1991) claimed that students tend to like using their mother tongue naturally. It has become a habit to use their first language. Hence the habit of using students' mother tongue become challenges in practicing English. It can be seen from the data that showed students occasionally speak Indonesian language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion have been presented above, students practiced English actively during questioning and answering session and presentation session due to the opportunity to speak English during these phases. This result is in line with several previous studies which claimed that during these sessions students tend to have freedom in expressing their ideas and opinions using English.

Besides the students' activeness in practicing English during learning activity, they encountered some obstacles such as inhibition which consist of being shy to speak English, being afraid to make mistakes, being scared of critique, and being confused about what to say. Moreover, restricted learning time and students' mother tongue are students' challenges in learning to speak as well.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this paper, the author(s) reported no potential conflicts of interest.

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