



The Dynamics of English Language Culture in the Context of Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

This study aims to describe how English culture is implemented at the junior high school level in Darussalam Stano Boarding School, an Islamic-based educational institution. Using a qualitative approach and interview methods, the research explores the teaching strategies employed by educators to habituate students in using English in their daily lives. The findings reveal that instruction is focused on direct practice, both within the classroom and through language activities such as the routine morning mufradat program. Teachers also utilize various supporting media to enhance students' language skills and build their confidence in using English. However, the learning process still faces challenges, particularly related to students' low interest and motivation. This is largely due to the perception that English is a difficult language to learn, especially because of inconsistencies between spelling and pronunciation. Based on these findings, the study emphasizes the importance of environmental support and institutional policies in creating a setting that actively encourages consistent and sustainable English usage. The integrated implementation of English language culture is believed to better equip students to meet the demands of the global era.

Keywords: English culture, language learning, Islamic boarding school, junior high school, learning motivation, language practice.

INTRODUCTION

As a global language, English holds a significant position in education worldwide, including in Indonesia. The government has designated English proficiency as a key competency for students across all levels of education. This also applies to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which are increasingly adopting modern learning approaches. However, simply mastering the material is not sufficient to ensure successful language acquisition. It is necessary to foster an environment or culture that consistently supports the use of English in the daily lives of the students.

English language culture here refers to the patterns of interaction and habits that enable students to actively use the language, both during classroom instruction and in informal communication. From a language learning perspective, success is determined not only by cognitive aspects but also by student participation in real-world practice and the social and institutional support that allows for the continued use of English.

Currently, English language proficiency is considered an essential skill for facing the challenges of the global era, as it serves as an international communication tool in the fields of science, technology, and professional work. However, for Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren, integrating English as part of the institutional culture

requires a well-thought-out strategy. The obstacles stem not only from the limited abilities of students but also from the lack of exposure to a foreign language environment.

One solution that can be implemented to foster an English-speaking environment is a communicative approach, where English is actively used in meaningful contexts relevant to students' lives. In some pesantren, efforts to establish a bilingual (English and Arabic) culture have become flagship programs. These programs involve the routine use of English and Arabic in daily activities.

However, successful implementation requires commitment from teachers, pesantren management, and the willingness of students to actively participate in an environment that naturally supports language practice. Therefore, this paper aims to examine how English language culture is implemented at the junior high school level in a pesantren, by analyzing the approach used by one English teacher and the efforts made to cultivate a language-rich environment..

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how English language culture is implemented at Darussalam Stano Boarding School (Junior High School level). This approach was selected for its ability to depict phenomena within their natural context, specifically the interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment within the Islamic boarding school.

Data were collected through interviews and observations. Interviews, involving English teachers as key informants, served as the primary data source. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore information on teaching strategies, methods employed, and challenges encountered in cultivating an English-speaking culture within the school. Non-participatory observations were also conducted to supplement the data and provide a direct understanding of the learning atmosphere and language-related activities, both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., morning vocabulary sessions).

The collected data were analyzed descriptively using qualitative methods, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was employed to validate the data by comparing interview results, observations, and supporting documentation.

Beyond field findings, the research methods and approach were further strengthened by relevant literature and scholarly journals, particularly those focusing on language learning within Islamic boarding schools, the habituation of English, and the influence of environment on student motivation. This ensured a robust theoretical and empirical foundation for the research design and execution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an interview with an English teacher at Darussalam Stano Boarding School, it was found that the implementation of English language culture at the junior

high school level is achieved through practical and contextualized habituation. Given the school's Islamic boarding school background and the teacher's experience teaching in this environment, the teacher felt they possessed an appropriate understanding and approach to encourage students to actively use English in their daily lives.

Community Language Learning (CLL) was originally developed by Charles A. Curran and his colleagues. Curran was a counseling specialist and professor of psychology at Loyola University Chicago. The application of psychological counseling techniques to learning is known as Counseling-Learning. Community Language Learning (CLL) represents the application of Counseling-Learning theory to language teaching.

The teaching strategy employed at Darussalam Stano Islamic Boarding School centers on the Community Language Learning (CLL) method, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and hands-on practice in language acquisition. This approach allows students to learn through real-world communication, rather than solely through written exercises or rote memorization. This method is further supported by a daily morning vocabulary program ("mufradat") introducing students to vocabulary and wise sayings in both English and Arabic. This program serves as a consistent form of habituation, fostering a bilingual culture within the boarding school environment.

In creating a conducive and enjoyable learning environment, the teaching strategies employed by the teacher play a crucial role. Teachers need to design approaches that not only focus on delivering material but also build active student engagement in the learning process, particularly in English speaking skills. Therefore, it is important for teachers to choose appropriate strategies to ensure that the learning process is effective and participatory. Conceptually, teaching strategies can be understood as a series of steps or actions systematically designed to achieve specific learning objectives. In the context of speaking instruction, various techniques can be utilized to activate students' speaking abilities. For example, activities such as group discussions, role-playing, simulations, brainstorming, interviews, and picture descriptions are some strategies proven to encourage students to be more active in using English orally.

Through this approach, the teacher acts not only as a content deliverer but also as a facilitator who creates a dialogical and interactive space for learners. Thus, the application of varied and contextual strategies is essential to support the achievement of English teaching objectives, particularly in mastering speaking skills.

In the classroom, teachers utilize a variety of learning media, such as images and digital devices, to create an engaging and interactive learning environment. Students are not only asked to understand language structure, but are also encouraged to use English orally. The goal is for them to become more accustomed to and confident in communicating.

According to Oemar Hamalik (1994:43), "A picture is anything visually realized in two dimensions as an outpouring of feeling or thought." Meanwhile, the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (2001: 329) defines a picture as "an imitation of objects, animals, plants, etc." Visual graphic media, like other media, is a means of transmitting messages from a source to a receiver. The channel used involves the sense of sight. The message to be conveyed is expressed in visual communication symbols. There are three common

types of learning media: audio, visual, and audiovisual. Of these three, visual media are frequently used to create a more engaging learning environment. Pictures, one form of visual media, are not only the most commonly used but also the easiest to implement. Visual media can facilitate understanding (for example, through the elaboration of structure and organization) and strengthen memory. Visual media can also cultivate student interest and connect the lesson content with the real world. In classroom practice, the teacher uses instructional media such as pictures and a laptop to support the learning process. "I often use pictures or a laptop so that the students don't get bored and can understand better by seeing the visuals directly," she explained. This approach aims to stimulate students' interest and enhance their confidence in speaking English.

However, this learning process is not without challenges. Teachers report that a significant number of students exhibit low interest in English lessons. One contributing factor is the perception that English is difficult to master, particularly due to the often confusing discrepancies between spelling and pronunciation. This contrasts with Arabic, which is perceived as more consistent between its written and spoken forms. Consequently, many students lack confidence and are reluctant to practice using English. "The students sometimes feel that English is difficult, especially because the pronunciation and spelling are different. This makes them less enthusiastic," said Mrs. Puji Rahayu. In contrast to Arabic, which is considered to have more consistent pronunciation with its spelling, English is seen as more complicated, leading to a decrease in students' learning motivation and self-confidence.

Also add that low interest in learning is seen in students' behavior during the classroom learning process, such as students not showing enthusiasm during the English language learning process. This study found that most students did not pay close attention to the teacher's explanation. They even did other things like reading novels, drawing, and joking with other friends. Modern Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren Modern) implement communicative learning methods, emphasizing the communication skills of their students (santri). This is manifested in the daily lives of the students, where the boarding school requires them to speak English every day. This daily practice makes the students accustomed to speaking fluently in a foreign language. In addition, other forms of communicative approaches are applied in the learning process at modern Islamic boarding schools, such as speeches, debates, discussions, and others.

In addition to explaining the learning approach she implements, Mrs. Jirahayu also expressed her strong hope for the school's role in creating a more supportive environment for the use of English within the boarding school. According to her, the success of the English habituation program should not rely solely on teachers' efforts in the classroom, but also requires comprehensive support from the school management through institutional policies and commitment. "I hope the management puts more emphasis on building an English-speaking environment, so the students can become more fluent and accustomed to using it," she stated.

She emphasized that the use of English should not be limited to formal classroom instruction, but should be extended to students' daily activities. Interactions with dormitory supervisors, casual conversations in the dining area, and participation in extracurricular activities could serve as effective opportunities to practice English in more natural and contextual ways. Through such efforts, students would not perceive English

merely as an academic subject, but rather as a practical communication tool in their everyday lives.

Furthermore, she also hopes that the school can regularly provide training for teachers and dorm supervisors so that they can serve as role models in using English within the school environment. In her view, the cultivation of a language culture will only succeed if all elements of the school share the same vision and work collaboratively. She believes that a supportive learning atmosphere—where English becomes part of the students' daily routine—will make the language acquisition process more effective and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of English language culture at the junior high school level in Darussalam Stano Boarding School reflects a meaningful effort to integrate language learning into students' daily lives within the context of a modern Islamic boarding school. The learning process is not only confined to classroom instruction but is also strengthened through routine programs such as *mufradat*, which introduce students to vocabulary and wise expressions in both English and Arabic. This daily exposure serves as a consistent and structured strategy for promoting bilingual habituation, aligned with the boarding school's mission to produce globally literate students grounded in religious values.

The teacher's choice to employ the Community Language Learning (CLL) method shows a strong commitment to making English learning more interactive, student-centered, and contextually relevant. By prioritizing direct language use and real-life communication over traditional rote memorization, this approach provides students with practical skills and boosts their confidence in speaking. Additionally, the incorporation of visual and digital media in the classroom enhances student engagement, encourages creativity, and supports diverse learning styles. These strategies affirm the importance of dynamic and multimodal teaching approaches in second language acquisition, particularly in settings where English is not the primary language of instruction.

However, despite these innovative efforts, several challenges persist, particularly regarding students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English. Many students perceive English as difficult due to discrepancies between spelling and pronunciation, which hinders their enthusiasm and willingness to practice. This issue is further compounded by a lack of confidence and the psychological barrier that often accompanies language learning in environments where English is not consistently spoken. In contrast, students view Arabic as more approachable due to its consistent phonetic system, which highlights the influence of linguistic perceptions on learner motivation.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the success of English habituation programs cannot rest solely on the shoulders of classroom teachers. A broader, systemic effort is needed—one that involves school management, dorm supervisors, and the overall educational culture. The teacher emphasized that without strong institutional support and consistent reinforcement of English use beyond the classroom, it is difficult to cultivate a sustainable language culture. She also highlighted the importance of regular training and capacity building for educators and dormitory staff so that they can serve as role models and language facilitators in students' everyday interactions.

Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of creating a supportive and immersive English-speaking environment as a cornerstone for effective language acquisition in boarding school settings. The development of English culture should be viewed not merely as a pedagogical goal, but as a shared institutional vision involving collaboration between teachers, administrators, and the broader school community. With a unified and structured approach, Islamic boarding schools like Darussalam Stano can successfully foster students' English proficiency while maintaining their religious and cultural identity. In this way, the school can produce well-rounded learners who are not only spiritually grounded but also linguistically and globally competent.

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