Introducing English as an International Language
(A Research in: Assa'idiyyah Islamic Boarding School)

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Abstract

English as global *lingua franca* has begun to be widely implemented in Islamic boarding school circumstance. Since it is considered crucial skill, this study is aimed to describe the effectiveness of introductory English in educational curriculum at Assa'idiyyah Islamic Boarding School. This paper discusses these findings and makes recommendations for understanding introductory English learning. Data were collected through observing 27 of first-grade high school students for six weeks. Students were introduced to speaking skill as an early step to learn a language, since it is practical and easy to be applied. The result showed during six weeks probation, about 74.07% students were successful and confident to speak English. As a further action, Assadiyah is considering implementing English for all classes in high school programs.

Key words: English program, international language, introductory English, Islamic boarding school, speaking

Introduction

An Islamic boarding school is a religious institution that provides education and teaching while also developing and spreading the Islamic religion guided by a teacher who is usually called "Kyai/Buya". Arabic is the primary language used for reciting Qur'an and praying. For this reason, Arabic is markedly applied in the Islamic boarding school curriculum. Almost all actors in Islamic boarding schools, including students and teachers can make conversation effectively in Arabic.

Meanwhile, society is currently experiencing globalization, where regional and national barriers becoming increasingly invisible. Therefore, people must have all competence that required to meet global needs. According to data from etsglobal.org, as of 2020, English is the language with the most speakers in the world with a total of 400 million speakers, taught in over 118 countries and using by 53 countries as official language. English is also language of internet, aviation, computer, and media. English as the language of international communication spoken by individuals or people from different countries, also known as *lingua franca* (Kecskes, 2019). It is a main skill that all stakeholders involved in this Islamic boarding school, including students, must acquire. Students must be understood English language, in order to integrate boarding school into international world.

English skills are necessity that learners have to acquire immediately in learning. Several islamic boarding schools are currently offering programs that include languages: Arabic and English. Pondok Modern Gontor is one of the Islamic boarding schools that uses Arabic and English as formal languages completely. With the ability to understand and implement these languages, it is expected that the students will not expert only in religion or theology, but also specialists in other sciences (gontor.ac.id, 2015).

Currently, stakeholders in the Islamic boarding school environment are starting to realize the importance of following the needs and developments of globalization. Based on fact that in Islamic boarding schools, most of the daily communication and learning uses Arabic, the English language usage will certainly be a new entity and a challenge for all actors involved, especially students. Therefore, this study about introducing English learning in islamic boarding school society becomes essensial.

Assa'idiyah Islamic boarding school has begun introducing three-language system (Arabic, English and Indonesian) since the even semester 2023/2024 academic year, previously this boarding school only implemented two languages (Arabic and Indonesian). In an attempt to apply English in a learning life that

previously used Arabic as the most widely used daily language, this is certainly a challenge for Islamic boarding school managers. As a result, this research was aimed to present an overview of the outcomes of the English language introduction program at the Assa'idiyyah Islamic Boarding School.

Method

This research was carried out through direct observation to get an outline regarding to the introduction of English language in islamic boarding school. The data obtained was analyzed and presented in tables and descriptions. The object of this research was the students of class XB by a total of 27 students. It was located at Assa'idiyyah Islamic Boarding School for six weeks duration which introducing English as an international language. This research used a qualitative descriptive analysis method through in-depth interviews with school managers to obtain complete and comprehensive information concerning the attempt to introduce English language that have been carried out.

Results and Discussions

According to Mullany and Stockwell (2017), introducing English language presents a comprehensive and systematic introduction to a wide range of linguistic concepts along with a panoramic view of all the issues. In an attempt to introduce English, as stated by Skinner in 1957, emphasizing the role of environmental factors and reinforcement in language introduction. Careful and targeted curriculum preparation was needed, in order to prepare the curriculum, elite of Assa'idiyyah Islamic boarding school managed open discussions with some English language practitioners and undergraduates to obtain a comprehensive picture of current English language needs. The discussion was held approximately six times over a period of one year with different sources. From the discussion, it was determined that it was preferable to focus on speaking abilities during the early steps of introducing english for high school level in the school. Consequently, at least the students could communicate confidently using English. In addition, speaking is one of the skills in English that does not require complicated theoretical abilities (Brown, 2004). It is expected that English could be easier to say daily for students. Besides, Maduwu (2016), mentioned that communication skills are the main objective of language usage.

After the first stage of preparation was completed, the following stage was to examine budget and physical infrastructure requirements. According to the results obtained by calculating the number of students who need to get English language program as 88 students from four classes (XA, XB, XI MIA, XI IIS). Physical infrastructure in the form of four units of laptops or notebook computers was necessary for teaching staff or tutors.

After analyzing the budget, the school decided to hire four tutors with the following qualifications: (1) a bachelor's degree or alumni of one of the teaching institutions in Kampung Inggris, Pare; (2) experience in the field of English language teaching; (3) intended to teach for four hours per day and stay among students to accompany and control students' speaking. These qualifications, would be properly qualified to maximize the benefits of the English program.

This program consisted of four meetings with the schedules below: 5.15 - 6.15 A.M, 11.15 – 12.15 P.M, 4.45 – 5.30 P.M. and 8.45 – 10.00 P.M. The first three-meetings learned about the materials and the last meeting was for practicing and discussing. The learning method used was active learning, which emphasizes the involvement of learners in communicating in English. Besides, tutors sometimes used the role-playing technique with students to create an enjoyable learning class.

On top of that, the monitoring stage from the supervisor was also crucial, *Buya* as the leader of the school actively oversaw these teaching and learning activities. At mornings, the supervisor patrolled the classrooms and dorms. In this occassion, the students became more diligent and focused.

In addition, routine evaluations were also conducted once per two weeks among tutors and school managers with the aim of sharing learning progress and identifying the concerns experienced by tutors and students. These evaluations enabled all actors involved to collaborate and discover solutions of problem in teaching and learning. Moreover, students were given one mid and one final test to assess student level of learning success, which were conducted after the third and the sixth week of study.

On the other hand, after first-two weeks duration of learning, students were required to speak English 24 hours in particular area, exactly inside the room, also both inside and outside classes all the time. If there were students who used Indonesian, they were going to get punished with free-talking in the yard. The punishment was

implemented after a two-weeks probation, which meant during the initial two weeks, students were still allowed to speak mixed languages Indonesia-English. However, in implementing this program, school managers could not immediately apply rigid rules, because it would cause students to be anxious and forced to learn English; therefore a cautious approach could not be achieved.

The mid-test consisted of a form of telling story in three minutes. There were 16 out of 27 students achieved a score higher than 75 out of 100, as per the minimal graduation criteria (KKM). Furthermore, about 20 of students scored higher than 75 out of 100 on the final exam. This results showed the students had improved 14.81% during the program.

Tab. 1: Percentage of student scores based on KKM

Type of test	Number of student percentage	
	≥ KKM	< KKM
Mid	59.26%	40.74%
Final	74.07%	25.93%

In addition, there were average scores of improving based on competences obtained from the the tests. Assessment indicators included daily scores from the following areas: content (measured the students' ability to construct sentences in accordance with instructions), pronunciation (measured the level of appropriateness of the pronunciation of English vocabulary), and fluency (measured the students' level of fluency and self-confidence in speaking English).

Tab. 2: Percentage of student scores based on scoring category

Test	Student score		
	Fluency	Content	Pronunciation
Mid	72.43	73.98	74.64
Final	76.94	78.33	75.50
Average	74.68	75.50	75.07

Based on the results in final test, it can be seen that as many as 20/27 students (74.07%) are able to absorb and implement English they have learned confidently. Discussion was held among 7 students getting score below KKM. It was discovered that there were several difficulties they were facing. These difficulties included (1) students do not have sufficient basic knowledge of English, there is lacking of vocabularies that they do not understand, and when they do not understand certain vocabulary, access to online dictionaries is very difficult, because the school do not provide facilities. Internet and smartphone access for students are denied (2) the

insecurities of the students are high, so there are some of the student who are actually able to change from Indonesian to English but do not dare to speak it; (3) The fatigue factor that cause students lost a majority of concentration, considering that evening English learning hours are held at 8.30 - 10.00 P.M., while the students had full activities from 3 A.M.

From the general results above, if it was elaborated based on the assessment indicators, it could get the result that the majority of students at Assa'idiyyah Islamic Boarding School were lacking in the fluency indicator. It means that the English skills of the students are not fully exposed due to its fairly low level of self-confidence. This deficiency could be slowly overcome by continuing to get used to and making efforts to practice speaking English regularly. This is also proven by the fluency indicator scores of the students getting better gradually as the use of English continued to be encouraged.

During interview session, it was able also find out the benefits of learning English which has been implemented at Assa'idiyyah Islamic boarding school for first probation program was successful. The majority of students enjoy learning English which has been implemented. It also makes learners feel more confident in speaking English when talking to friends and families.

Conclusion

According to the manager of Assa'idiyyah Islamic boarding school, learning English creates a new and fresher feeling in school environment. It makes students more enthusiastic. The management of the school expected approximately 70 % of the students showed at least have the courage to express feeling and activities in English. It turns out that at the end of semester, the results were obtained exceeded the target, exactly 74.07%. With this result, the management of the school is satisfied with the good cooperation among students and teachers.

According to the tutors, there are several important notes that must be evaluated both by the students and by the management of the school. In an attempt to continue improving the smoothness and continuity of English language learning that has been implemented, tutors provide several evaluations including (1) in terms of infrastructure, the boarding school management could consider providing internet and smartphone access to students when English learning takes place. It is aimed to

streamline the time given if there is vocabulary that needs to be searched using an online dictionary - instead of using a manual dictionary which takes some time. The role of gadgets is essensial to increase the success of introducing English, as stated by Shokirovna (2023) that designing tools and gadgets can facilitate learning and teaching English. Multimedia resources need to be included in teaching by educators to make the class more engaging and comprehensible by students. As an alternative to reading textual material found in books, students are able to comprehend concepts simpler once they are exposed to visual resources, for example images and videos; (2) the curriculum needs to be studied further and discussed carefully according to the objectives that have been set; (3) choosing learning time that is not too late at night by paying attention to the effectiveness of the learning and taking into account the fatigue factor of the students, in line with study from Hidayat and Hawanti (2019) which stated that the majority of students experience difficulties in applying language due to limited lesson hours; and (4) providing permanent contracts to tutors who are considered successful in providing English teaching. As a result, the knowledge of English which is provided to students can be holistic and comprehensive.

Based on the study shown above, the application of English language learning must be promoted and implemented progressively in order to build an environment that could shape students' abilities to use English discourse in life and adapt to global issues and demands.

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