



FACTORS THAT HINDER ENGLISH SPEAKING DEVELOPMENT IN MIA ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that are causing difficulties for female students in grades 1-3 of Ibnu Khaldun MIA Islamic Middle School in Banda Aceh, in learning to speak English. The study involved 48 students, and a Likert-Scale questionnaire consisting of 16 statement items was used as the research tool. The questionnaire assessed personal, peer, teacher, and facility factors. The results showed that the facility factor is the biggest hurdle to learning English speaking skills, followed by peer-related, self-related, and teacher-related factors. The students expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of facilities to watch videos and other digital learning materials. Additionally, they reported that their peers do not respond in English when they try to speak in English to them and laugh at them for using English. Furthermore, the factors of fear and the lack of vocabulary were also identified as significant self-related factors that hinder successful English-speaking learning. Lastly, the teacher's permission for the students to speak in the Indonesian language and their limited use of English in their interaction with the students are also reported as important roles in restricting the students' English-speaking development.

Keywords: speaking, English learning, boarding school, learning obstacles, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

Boarding schools are an ideal education system to support foreign language learning or implement language programs (Jauhari, 2017; Ritonga & Nurdianto, 2022). Boarding schools provide an immersive learning environment that helps students develop habits conducive to achieving their academic goals. Islamic boarding schools are no exception and place great emphasis on instilling Islamic values. Typically catering to students in grades 7 and above, these institutions incorporate foreign language education into their curriculum. Students are required to communicate in a specific language, such as English or Arabic, within the boarding school's premises. To ensure compliance with the rules, room supervisors carefully monitor students' language usage, with some schools imposing penalties or fines for speaking their native language, such as Indonesian or any other ethnic language.

There has been controversy surrounding a particular regulation due to the fact that the languages being enforced are not familiar to the majority of the students. Specifically, English is a foreign language that is widely considered difficult to master by Indonesian-speaking learners (Lamb, 2007a; Lamb 2007b; Irnanda & Sarair, 2022). Many boarding schools disregard the fact that the students come from a zero-English environment and mostly are graduates of public primary schools that do not provide basic English lessons. English is not a compulsory subject in Indonesian primary schools (Afifah, 2017), which means that there are no government-trained English teachers available to support English learning at the primary level to ensure that Indonesian 7 graders are ready to learn English at the secondary level (Irnanda, 2021), regardless of the types of institutions they choose. Therefore, the boarding school's foreign-language daily use is more likely to create problems than offer solutions for teaching and learning the English language in Indonesia.

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of the English Education approach in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. According to Rahayu's study conducted in 2015, students at the Husnul Khotimah boarding school in West Java still lack proficiency in English despite being exposed to the language for nearly 24 hours. This is attributed to various internal and external factors as elaborated as follow:



"The students still lack of understanding of grammatical patterns, incorrect pronunciation, and they (have) limited of vocabulary mastery, minimum opportunities, students interest, mother tongue use, seldom to practice and less discipline, fear of making mistake and environment factors. Besides, they also have a psychological problem such as lack motivation. The main factors of students' problems because the environmental factors which do not support them to implement English in daily language communication. From this factor also have a big effect for students that they lack of motivation and seldom to practice English. These show that students still have many problems of speaking English." (Rahayu, 2015, pp. 1)

Another study by Muhammad & Ashadi (2019) sampled several modern boarding schools in East Java to observe which theoretical principles, mentalist or behaviourist were employed by the school in eradicating their English Use regulation program. The results found that based on the observation and interview, the subject boarding schools use three main activities (1) Vocabulary Drills, (2) Environment Building and (3) the Explicit teaching of grammar (2019, p. 65), which according to the researchers are the combination of both theories and could be categorised as balance based on the Krashen (1981) second language learning theory (2019, p. 65). Yet, it is noteworthy that this study took place in modern boarding schools which normally have relatively above-average quality. Not only do the high-quality schools have students from relatively higher SES backgrounds, but they also comprise well-qualified teaching staff. To understand English-speaking teaching and learning in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, it is therefore important to investigate the boarding schools from all quality levels and varied regional contexts in Indonesia.

Exploring students' speaking challenges in a life skill program at an Islamic boarding school - Al-Fahd, South Sumatra, Indonesia, Holyandah et al. (2022) reported that students were challenged by a variety of issues that had prevented them from having good speaking skills in English, such as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical limited skills and knowledge, as well as the strong mother-tongue interference. Similarly, in several other studies, the problems are low participation and strong mother-tongue code-switching (Amelia & Komariah, 2017; Lestari, 2019; Aulia et al., 2021). Overall, most studies report language-related factors neglecting the other important potential factors such as facility and teacher-related factors. Hence, the present study, using the 7-9 graders of MIA Boarding School of Banda Aceh as the participants, aimed to look at the students' opinions on problems that hinder their English-speaking learning in boarding schools by including two additional factors; the teacher and school facility factors.

2. METHODS

Participants

The participants were 48 female students of grades 7, 8 and 9 of Markaz Al-Islah Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The total population for these three grades were 57 students. The whole population was encouraged to participate, yet only 48 students filled out the survey.

Instrument

The instrument used in the present study was a Likert-Scale questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items that were developed from four factors; the personal, peer, teacher and facility factors. The scale was tested for its normality using Saphiro-Wilk. All items score p-value <0.05. In other words, the questionnaire items are all normally distributed.

Data Analysis

The Likert-Scale was treated as interval data and is presented in the mean form that was calculated using SPSS.



3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Figure 1-4 summarises the four factors measured in the survey; the personal, peer, teacher and facility factors. Overall, based on the comparison of the total mean scores for every factor, it is found that the total mean score of the facility factor is the highest among all, followed by peer-related, self-related and teacher-related factors. Below, the result for every factor is presented and discussed from the most hindering factor to the least.

A. The Facility Factor

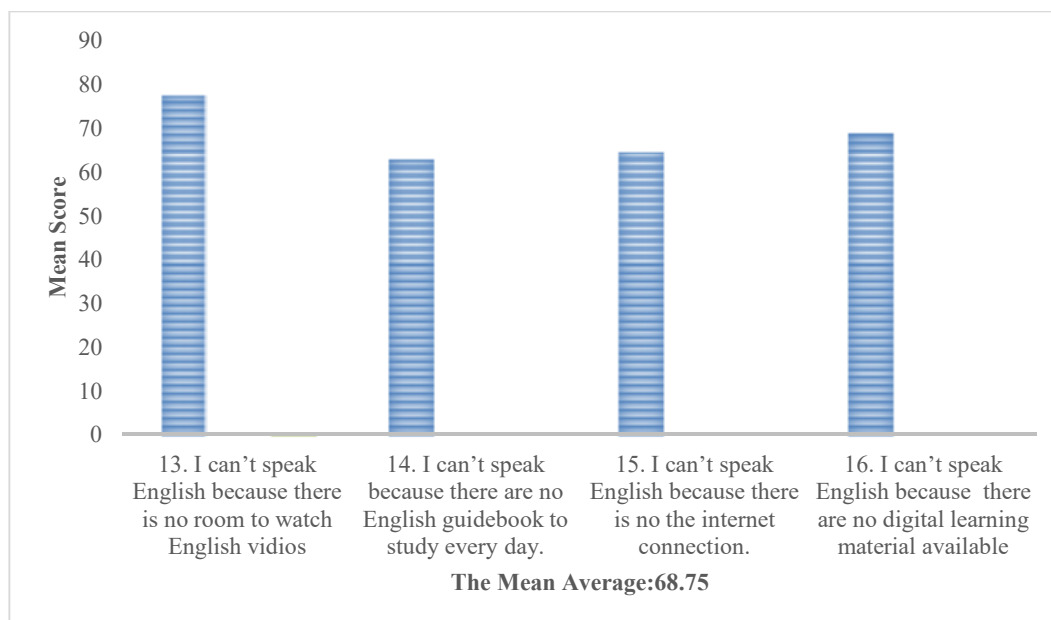


Figure 1. The Facility Factor

The first and most important finding of the present study is that the students believe that the lack of learning facilities is the most hindering factor in their English-speaking learning in boarding school. From the four subfactors listed; English videos, guidebooks, internet connection and digital materials, the lack of English videos is regarded as the most important factor, followed by the unavailability of digital learning materials, the absence of internet connection and the lack of English books. This finding is parallel with what was reported by Yousaf et al. (2021). The study also revealed that learning facilities have a positive impact on students' language learning achievement because it affects the learners' motivation to learn a language. This finding is also relevant to what is mentioned in the Background Section, that most students are unprepared to express themselves in a foreign language daily (Irnanda, 2021) and they express it by pointing out the facility problem as the root problem. Students in MIA are not allowed phones and also do not have a multimedia room that can support more interactive and fun learning. Therefore, being not well-equipped with English language learning resources, it is reasonable that they face hardship in improving their English skills in general and speaking skills in particular. In short, the students feel the need to hear the language, to see how it is used by others in various contexts before they are expected to experiment with it through speaking.



B. The Peer-Factor

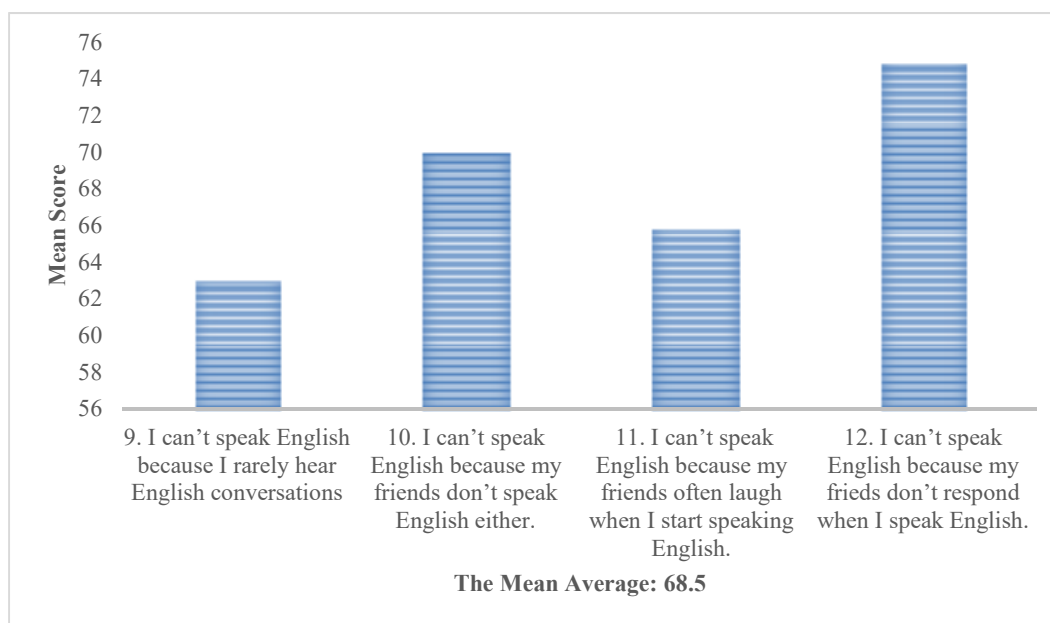


Figure 2. The Peer Factor

The second important factor that hinders the MIA Boarding school students in learning to speak English according to the students themselves is their peers. They believe that they cannot speak English because their friends do not respond when they are being spoken to in English (mean score: 74). Furthermore, they think they cannot speak English because their peers do not speak English either (70), the peers laugh at them if they speak in English (66), and because the community do not speak English to one another (63). From this finding, another reality of language regulation in boarding schools is revealed. The majority of the students have low English knowledge and skills but they are forced to run meaningful communication in English to function in their daily lives. In fact, according to Philp et al. (2013), peers and peer interaction can potentially foster second language learning. However, this peer interaction should be started from classroom settings, such as through roleplay and discussion before the students are confident and independent enough to make use of this peer assistance outside of the classroom.

C. The Personal Factor

From Figure 3, it can be seen that the most determinative personal-related subfactor is vocabulary knowledge. This finding is consistent with what was reported in previous related studies (Holyandah et al., 2022; Amelia & Komariah, 2017; Lestari, 2019; Aulia et al., 2021). Moreover, although the motivational factor is not believed to be that important in preventing them from being good English speakers, it looks like the other factors, such as the lack of facilities and unsupportive social circle (Figures 1 and 2), affect the students' motivation in general to learn English. In addition, two important internal factors, the fear of making mistakes and shyness to speak English are problems universally found in Indonesian EFL contexts. The latter, particularly, is regarded to be cultural rather than psychological by Alwasilah (2002). To find this culture in boarding schools with its peculiar English-speaking habit regulation adds more complexity to the matter.

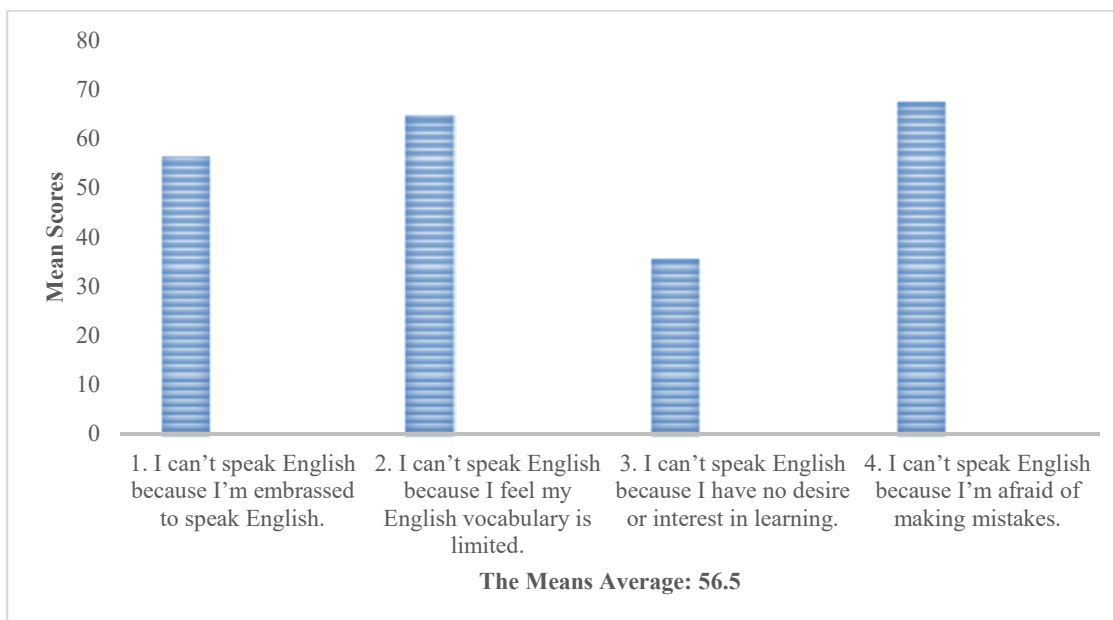


Figure 3. The Personal Factor

D. The Teacher Factor

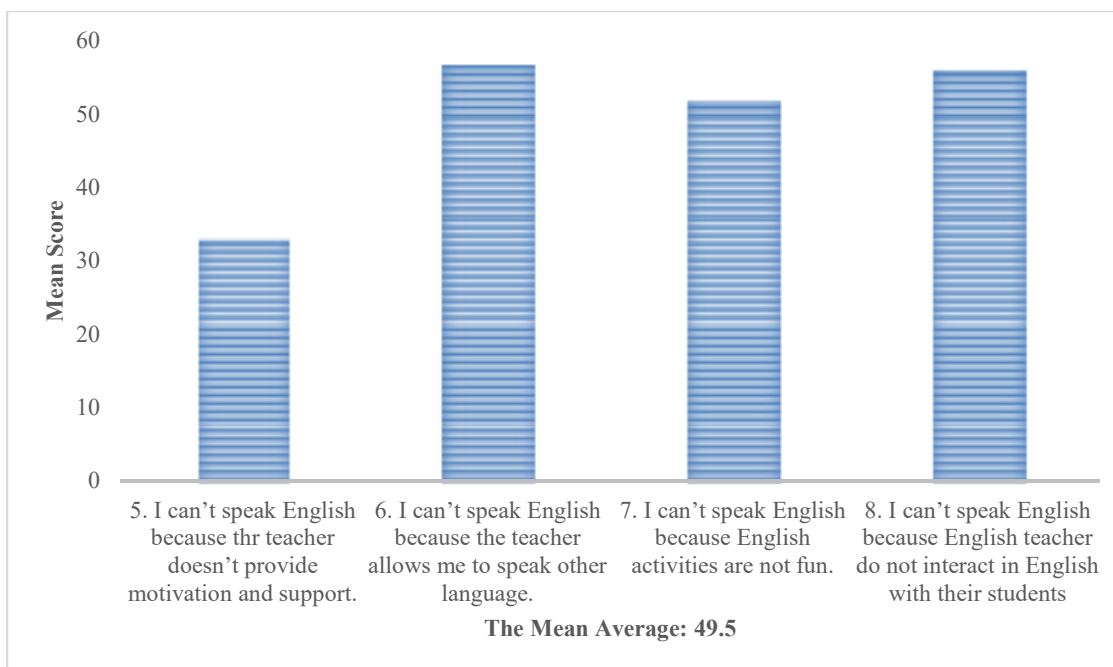


Figure 4. The Teacher Factor



The last contributing factor that is regarded as an obstacle to their English-speaking learning by the students is the teacher. Students see their boarding school teacher as too permissive. This is proven by a high agreement expressed by the respondents in item number 6; teachers allow them to speak in a different language. Something that contradicts the school regulation. Perhaps the teacher relates to what their students feel, that it is so difficult to function every day if access to their native language is blocked. The teachers themselves are also witnessed talking in languages other than English, including to their students (Item 8). The respondents also believe that English activities taught by the teachers are not fun enough and the teachers do not give enough support and motivation. This particular finding provides a dimension missed by related previous studies (Holyandah et al., 2022; Amelia & Komariah, 2017; Lestari, 2019; Aulia et al., 2021), that teacher plays a significant role in supporting the English language regulation in boarding schools.

4. CONCLUSION

The students of grades 7,8 and 9 at MIA Boarding School believe that despite the school's English language regulation that requires them to speak English daily, their English-speaking skills are not improved due to four important reasons; the facility, the peer, their personality and the teacher. Overall, the students feel their English competence is not sufficient to be used in social settings, and think that the school should have supported them with a less authentic learning experience, such as those from the digital resources, and fun role-play-based classroom activities. They also believe that the teacher should have been a role model for them and at the same time the language resource to whom they can safely practice their English.

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