Students' and Teacher's Perceptions of English Day Program: A Case at an Acehnese School

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of students and teacher toward the implementation of English Day program. The study took place at SMAS Insan Madani, Meukek Sub-district, South Aceh District, Aceh, Indonesia. English Day is a program commonly conducted in most integrated schools in Indonesia which aims to promote students' English speaking activities. The study used qualitative research methods, collecting data from interview. Participants of the study included four students and one teacher involved in English Day program. The results of the study showed that English Day was quite an enjoyable learning environment for the students to practice English. Still, the students felt sometimes discouraged due to some psychological factors. Nevertheless, the teacher had been supportive in the program and also provided necessary feedback for the students.

Keywords: *English Day Program, English Speaking Skill, Student Perception, Teacher Perception*.

Introduction

In this millennial era, the presence of English language has become more inevitable in many sectors of life. Due to this, English has been inserted in the Indonesian educational curriculum for decades. The significance of English is stated in the 1996 GBPP in which "*English is the first foreign language considered as an important language to gain and develop science and technology to make a good relationship with other nations*" (Indonesian Department of Education and Culture, 1995). From four skills embedded in English language learning, speaking becomes one of the most significant skills to be mastered. Speaking is an important skill that reflects communicative competence as the goal of language teaching (Brown, 1994). As such, improving students' communicative competence will certainly become the mission for many

schools in Indonesia. Regardless of the effectiveness and issues related to the English language learning process, schools and its elements have tried many solutions.

Consequently, several schools in the context of Indonesia have implemented certain programs to maximize the outcomes of learning English. One of the most common and popular programs is "English Day" program. English Day is an activity established in particular community learning context that provides a wider opportunity for students to deepen and optimize their English language ability, especially in speaking (Saputra, 2011; Suardi, Emzir & Rafli, 2017; Nurcholilah, 2018; Sukarlov, 2018). The implementation of English Day is believed to provide the advantages for the students for improving their speaking ability. Rosyid (2004) argues that aside of teaching method, professional teaching staff, well-supported facilities, contextual textbooks, and conducive environment, English Day program is considered as an effective program to help achieve the language learning objectives. Additionally, Islamiati (2019) believes that by building the linguistics environment as a boarding system can encourage the students to use particular foreign language in daily conversation. Nurcholilah (2018) also adds that English Day became a place for the students to express what they have learned from school (regular class), especially to practice the speaking skill which is difficult to master without a supportive habit.

In order to obtain the purposes embedded in English Day program, several factors are needed, including the role of teachers. Teachers are not simply considered as the supervisor and partner for the students to maintain conversation, but they are also expected to be creative in designing interesting activities that can motivate the students to speak in English (Wahyuni, Basri & Mashuri, 2014). Similarly, Sinaga (2018) in his study has mentioned that the teachers' inconsistency in using English has become the main cause of ineffective English Day implementation.

However, little is known about the use of English Day program in the province of Aceh, Indonesia. Therefore, we attempted to investigate the English Day implementation in one of the Islamic schools in South Aceh District. This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of the students and the teacher about the role of English Day in terms of improving the students' ability in English speaking performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW
ENGLISH DAY PROGRAM

According to Rhodes (as cited in Sukarlov, 2018), English Day is a program model which differs from the bilingual models in that the students receive instruction in English only. English Day program is a system of training to give knowledge about English

components (Saputra, 2011; Sukarlov, 2018). Similarly, English Day is a program established to provide the training and the concept for understanding the use of English in daily activities (Syahfutra & Niah, as cited in Nurcholilah, 2018). More importantly, English Day is designed to achieve an English learning objective. English Day is a program where English is used as the facility and media for English teaching and learning process organized by a particular learning community on a certain day (Sinaga, 2018). English Day program is conducted as a supplementary activity taking place in outside formal or regular school hours. Krashen (as cited in Islamiati, 2019) categorizes English Day program into informal language environment which means the English language activites occurred in mostly outside of the formal school activities. Here, the English language activities are naturally happened without any planned formation and without rules isolation and feedback.

English Day is commonly implemented for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in certain school contexts. Contextually, Rosyid (2004) describes the English Day program implemented in a senior high school in West Jakarta (SMAN 12 Jakarta Barat), Indonesia as an extracurricular program conducted every Saturday which helps the students to develop their English competency. In the context of International Standard School (Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional) in Indonesia, Mudyanita (2011) explains the role of English Day program in a senior vocational school (SMKN 1 Pacitan) in East Java, Indonesia, in which the students and teachers are commanded to use English all day long. Moreover, in the Islamic Boarding school system, English Day program is implemented in certain days in which the students are required to communicate in English whether they are in dormitory, in mosque, in dining area, during English, arts and sport competition, and in the announcement post (Suardi et al., 2017; Latif, 2019).

ENGLISH DAY PROGRAM AS STRATEGY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

Many schools and other learning communities frequently implement English Day program to actualize the learning purposes, especially in speaking English. However, not all students will acquire the same level of English language proficiency, and thus, English Day appears as the program which provides the opportunity for the students to practice using English and to explore their speaking English ability (Nurcholilah, 2018). Additionally, Saputra (2011) states that English Day program can improve students' capability in English, because English Day is a stimulus given by the teachers that makes the students speak in English. A study by Saputra (2011) found that English Day program at MAN 2 Model, an Islamic senior high school in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, could motivate the students to practice English, increase the students' speaking ability, and help the students become more confident in expressing their ideas. Similarly, Nurcholilah's (2018) study revealed that English Day program could

encourage the students to behave positively and be brave in using English in school activities when they learned, met the teachers, and discussed with friends in school.

In terms of English speaking skills, the students usually focus on what is appropriate to say, how it should be said, and in what social situation they can use it (Rosyid, 2004). This means that the students are be taught to speak correctly and contextually. Considering the purposes of English Day implementation in improving the students' speaking ability, there are several speaking-related activities regulated by the school's administrators, such as speech, song, debate, poem and drama competitions that require the students to speak up (Saputra, 2011). English Day program is also utilized by the teachers to reinforce the previous learning material in regular school classes, and the students are also encouraged to participate in conversation sessions carried out in dormitory or other activities (Rosyid, 2004).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study sought to figure out the perceptions of the participants (students and teachers) using the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is used to explore the issues and develop detailed understanding of a particular phenomenon which involves respondents' experience and perception (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2012).

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study came from the students and one teacher involved in the implementation of English Day program at an Islamic boarding school SMAS Insan Madani, in Meukek Sub-district, South Aceh District, in the Province of Aceh, Indonesia. The participants were purposively selected, consisted of four students (2 males and 2 females) and one female teacher. Gray (2004) states that in the purposive sampling technique, researchers deliberately select one or more participants who are considered representative and usually included in a balanced number between males and females. In this study, the students have been involved in the English Day program for about three years, whereas the teacher has been the coordinator for the program for almost three years. In short, two categorized participants (students and teacher) have had a sufficient experience in English Day program and are expected to be satisfying in providing a nuanced information toward English Day in this study.

DATA COLLECTION

As this study tried to discover the perceptions of the participants, the interview was necessarily conducted to ask about descriptive information. In the interview, respondents are questioned about the description of a particular activity, a

phenomenon or a story as information, and the information lay as the form of interviewee's opinions, perceptions, attitudes, emotions and others (Merriam, 2009).

This study employed the semi-structured interview to obtain the data from the participants. The questions in the interview were systematically asked in a consistent order, but it could be flexible in which the researchers were given the freedom to elaborate and to add some questions before or after the main questions (Lune & Berg, 2017).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process to seek and manage systematically the data obtained from the interview in order to draw the findings and conclusions, so that they can be easily understood and informed (Bogdan as cited in Sugiyono, 2009). In analyzing and presenting the findings obtained from the data, we employed the procedures of data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely: data reduction, data display, and data verification/conclusion. In data reduction, the rough data obtained from the interview were simplified, extracted, selected, filtered and organized into a conclusion and findings that can be verified completely. Having extracted the data, in the data display, the data were categorized in order to provide the easiness in combining and understanding the conclusion in solid form. Lastly, having presented the data, they were verified in order to be accounted for its reliability and validity.

In addition, in presenting the data, we used a descriptive analysis and content analysis. The main goal of descriptive analysis and content analysis is to provide the description of the research findings obtained from the respondents' opinions and statements, and later they were categorized into several themes (content) in order to flow the discussion related to the current issues (Merriam, 2009; Bryman, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings are categorized into several themes: *Students' Responses toward English Day Program, Students' Challenges during English Day Program, and Teacher's Opinions toward English Day Program.* The information was obtained from four students (female: NA and AFR; male: HN and IH) and one female teacher (TA).

STUDENTS' RESPONSES TOWARD ENGLISH DAY PROGRAM

Three of four students expressed similar feelings toward English Day program that they enjoyed the program since the program was believed to help them improve their ability in speaking English. Student AFR enjoyed the program although it took time for her to

adapt. Student NA believed that by getting involved in this program, she could be accustomed to speaking in English any time. Additionally, HN believed that through English Day program, he could correct his mistakes in pronouncing words that he thought he could not get in the regular English subject during school. These findings were in line with the findings of the study conducted by Rahmatullah, Gani and Usman (2019) which revealed that the main reasons that made the students' participation in English Day satisfactory were the skills and learning experience that they received in the program. In contrast, however, student IH thought that he could not enjoy the program because the program seemed not quite challenging since there were no punishments, so he felt discouraged. This statement was also supported by the least factor that discourage the students to "like" the English Day which was the supervision made by the supervisor or coordinator of English Day program (Rahmatullah et al., 2019).

STUDENTS' CHALLENGES DURING ENGLISH DAY PROGRAM

All students expressed nuanced opinions regarding the challenges they might face while speaking in English during English Day program. For instance, NA thought that most students ignored the English Day program, so they seemed discourage to speak English. Besides, the teachers also did not speak in English with them so that worsened the students' motivation to speak frequently in school.

On students, AFR, for example seemed to have a psychological issue since she was always nervous every time she wanted to speak English with her teacher. Meanwhile, HN believed that limited vocabulary and understanding of the complex sentences became the main problem for him to speak English. On the other hand, IH felt that he could not find supportive environment to encourage him to speak often. He admitted that he did not have any friend who could speak in English with him. It seems that the students' limited lexical resources may influence their confidence in speaking, thus it hinders them to be more involved in English communication activities (Rahmatullah et al., 2019).

TEACHER'S OPINIONS TOWARD ENGLISH DAY PROGRAM

This section describes the attitude expressed by the teaching staff. Teachers' competency such as tolerance and behavioral competencies is reflected in their teaching skills, guiding, assessing, learning aids, and developing learning plans (Suardi et al., 2017).

TA is one of the teaching staff and also the coordinator of English Day program at SMAS Insan Madani for about 3 years. She mentioned that the English Day program

was made to help the students improve their ability to speak English and to encourage the students to have a supportive behavior toward English speaking. In her perspective, some students really enjoyed the program because it really motivated them to practice English in school. However, she also understood the difficulties faced by other students which made them reluctant to speak in English. Most of the challenges were related about the students' psychological conditions (feeling depressed and frustrated) and also lexical resources (limited vocabulary and complex sentences). Nevertheless, TA felt satisfied although somehow felt upset toward the students' attitude in English Day program. Becoming someone who has been involved actively in this program, TA sometimes evaluated her students' errors while speaking in English.

TA noted that the students commonly committed the errors in spelling and pronunciation, subject verb agreement, singular and plural nouns and overused vocabulary. At the end of the interview, TA remarked that the English Day program should be implemented continuously. She believed that this program could become a beneficial extracurricular program for the students to build their discipline and confidence, especially in speaking English. She also added that sometimes the students were not given the chance to freely express their ability in English in class during the regular English subject; however, through this program, they could express their English speaking skills with their friends and learn from one another. In this case, Nurjaman (2013) states that one of the ways to see whether the students are capable in speaking or not is when they can understand what their speaking partner says, and teachers in this case not only measure the students' ability through the worksheet, but also through active conversation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that generally the students admitted that they enjoyed and were satisfied with the English Day program since it helped them enhance their skill in speaking English. However, there were obstacles faced by the students including unsupportive learning environment, limited lexical resources, and teacher's supervision during the program. On the other hand, the teacher or the coordinator of the program also played a significant role in improving and motivating the students during their English-speaking performance. The teacher helped in correcting the students' errors in pronunciation and vocabulary and monitoring the students' daily speaking activities in order to achieve the objectives of the program.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Interview Guide with Teacher

1. How long does the "English Day" program have been implemented in this school?

   (Berapa lama program "English Day" telah diterapkan di sekolah ini?)

2. What are the purposes of establishing it?

   (Apa tujuan membuat program "English Day" tersebut?)

3. What do students feel about the program? Do they enjoy it? Do they feel under pressured?

   (Apa yang siswa rasakan ketika menjalankan program tersebut? Apa mereka menikmatinya? Apakah mereka merasa tertekan?)

4. As the administrator or person who is also involved in that program? What do you feel?

   (Sebagai orang yang menjalankan dan yang juga terlibat dalam program tersebut, apa yang Anda rasakan?)

5. Do you correct or evaluate your students' mistakes in English verbal communication done during the "English Day"?

   (Apakah Anda memperbaiki atau mengevaluasi kesalahan siswa dalam komunikasi verbal Bahasa Inggris selama "English Day?")

6. Do you think that "English Day" is an effective way to improve students's ability in speaking in English? Why/Why not?

   (Apakah Anda pikir program "English Day" ini merupakan sebuah cara yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan siswa berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris? Mengapa? Mengapa tidak?)

7. If students make mistakes in their speaking performance during "English Day", what kind of mistakes do they usually commit? Do you have specific information or notes about this?

   (Jika siswa melakukan kesalahan dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris selama "English Day", jenis kesalahan seperti apa yang biasa mereka buat? Apakah Anda memiliki informasi atau catatan khusus akan ini?)

8. If you think this program (English Day) is not effective in terms of improving students' ability in English speaking, what are your opinions or best solutions to be necessarily improved in the future?

   (Jika Anda pikir program ini tidak efektif dalam hal meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris, apa pendapat dan solusi dari Anda yang kiranya perlu ditingkatkan di masa depan?)

Appendix II

<u>Interview Guide with Students</u>

1. What do you feel about "English Day" program? Do you enjoy it? Or what?

   (Apa yang Anda rasakan selama menjalani program "English Day?" Apakah Anda menikmatinya? Atau bagaimana?)

2. Do you think that "English Day" can improve your ability in speaking English? Why/Why Not?

   (Apakah Anda pikir "English Day" bisa meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara Bahasa Inggris Anda?)

3. What are the challenges or problems do you usually face when speaking in English language during "Englsih Day"?

   (Tantangan atau masalah apa yang biasa Anda hadapi ketika berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris selama "English Day"?)

4. Do your teachers/teaching staff/senior/supervisor correct and evaluate your English-speaking performance?

   (Apakah guru/senior/pengawas asrama mengevaluasi atau membenarkan kesalahan Anda ketika berbicara selama "English Day"?)