

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the area of the study that involves background of the study, research question, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of Study

English has become an international language that plays a vital role in various aspects of modern life, including education, business, science, and technology. According to Crystal (2003), English is a global language used as a means of cross-cultural and international communication. Therefore, English proficiency has become one of the essential 21st-century skills that students must acquire to compete in the global era.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) from elementary school to higher education levels. However, despite years of English instruction, students' overall English proficiency remains relatively low, particularly in speaking skills. The EF English Proficiency Index ranks Indonesia 79th out of 113 countries, categorized as a "low proficiency" country. This indicates that English education in formal schools has not yet succeeded in fostering students' communicative competence.

This condition is supported by Fachriyah (2017), who found that many secondary school students face difficulties in speaking English due to limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and a lack of opportunities to practice in authentic contexts. Moreover, English instruction in formal classrooms often emphasizes grammatical knowledge and theoretical understanding rather than

meaningful communicative practice (Harmer, 2007). As a result, students tend to have passive skills in reading and writing but struggle with active communication in English.

To address these challenges, many educational institutions particularly Islamic-based schools such as MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang have developed supporting programs beyond formal classroom instruction, namely English extracurricular activities. One of the flagship programs implemented is the Darussalam English Course (DEC). This program aims to enhance students' English skills, especially speaking, pronunciation, and fluency, through communicative and interactive activities such as discussions, conversations, presentations, public speaking, and debates.

The DEC program not only focuses on linguistic aspects but also fosters students' confidence, cooperation, and responsibility in communicating in English. This aligns with Littlewood's (2011) concept of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes that language learning becomes more effective when learners are provided with opportunities to use the language authentically and meaningfully in social contexts.

However, the success of any learning program inside or outside the classroom greatly depends on the perceptions of the participants involved, namely teachers and students. Richards and Lockhart (1996) assert that teachers' perceptions significantly influence their teaching practices, classroom interactions, and judgments about program effectiveness. Meanwhile, students' perceptions strongly affect their motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Therefore, it is essential to explore how both teachers and students perceive the implementation of the DEC program at MA Darussalam. Positive perceptions can indicate that the program is effective and beneficial, while negative perceptions can reveal areas that need improvement.

Previous studies have also highlighted the importance of perception in the context of language learning. For instance, Sari (2021) found that students' positive perceptions of English extracurricular activities significantly increase their motivation and active participation. Similarly, Rahmawati (2020) reported that teachers' positive perceptions toward English clubs influence their commitment to guiding students and improving the quality of English instruction.

Although the Darussalam English Course (DEC) has been implemented since 2003 and has become one of the flagship English programs at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang, no formal academic evaluation has been conducted to examine how the program is perceived by its main stakeholders, namely teachers and students. Most evaluations of the program have focused on students' participation and administrative implementation rather than on the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by those directly involved in the learning process. Since teachers and students are the primary actors in the success of the program, understanding their perceptions is essential to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement of the DEC program. Therefore, the DEC program deserves further investigation to provide evidence-based recommendations for its future development.

This study also offers several novelties compared to previous research. First, while earlier studies mainly investigated either students' perceptions or teachers'

perceptions separately, this study integrates both perspectives to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the DEC program. Second, previous studies generally examined English extracurricular activities or English clubs in general educational settings, whereas this study specifically focuses on the Darussalam English Course (DEC), a long-established English reinforcement program implemented in an Islamic boarding school context. Third, this study does not only explore participants' perceptions but also identifies the challenges encountered during the implementation of the program and gathers practical recommendations for its improvement. These aspects provide a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and sustainability of the DEC program.

So, the present study titled “Perceptions of Teachers and Students at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang Regarding the Darussalam English Course (DEC) Program” is highly relevant. It seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of how teachers and students perceive the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges of the DEC program. The findings are expected to serve as an evaluation and provide recommendations for developing more innovative, interactive, and student-centered English learning programs in Islamic educational contexts.

Furthermore, this research is expected to make theoretical contributions to the field of foreign language education, particularly in understanding educational perception and activity-based learning. Practically, the results will offer valuable insights for teachers and school administrators in designing more effective and enjoyable English learning programs that meet students' needs.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the questions of the research can be formulated as follows:

1. How do teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of the Darussalam English Course (DEC) program in supporting students' English learning at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang?
2. What challenges do teachers and students encounter in the implementation of the DEC program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang?
3. What improvements do teachers and students recommend to enhance the implementation of the DEC program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang?

C. Research Objectives

According to the research questions, there are 3 objectives of this study. The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To identify teachers' and students' perceive of the effectiveness of the Darussalam English Course (DEC) program in supporting students' English language learning at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang.
2. To identify the challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing the Darussalam English Course (DEC) program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang.
3. To identify the improvements recommended by teachers and students to enhance the implementation of the Darussalam English Course (DEC) program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang.

D. Significances of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study contributes to find field of educational research by providing a deeper understanding of teacher and student perceptions toward specific English language programs. The findings can be used as a reference for future studies on similar topics.

Practically, this research is beneficial for several parties:

a) For the school

The findings can provide valuable feedback for the school's management to evaluate and improve the DEC program, making it more effective and relevant to the needs of the students.

b) For the teachers

The study can help teachers understand the student's perspectives on the program, enabling them to adjust their teaching methods to better suit the student's learning needs.

c) For the students

This research serves as a platform for students to voice their opinions and experiences, contributing to the improvement of their own learning environment.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on exploring the perceptions of teachers and students at MA Darussalam in Jombang regarding the DEC program. The research subjects are limited to the English teachers who are directly involved in the DEC program and students who are active participants in the program. Data were collected

through observations, and interviews. This study does not measure students' academic achievement or English proficiency improvement quantitatively, but rather explores their subjective perceptions and experiences of the program. Therefore, the findings are limited to the context of the DEC program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang and cannot be generalized to other schools or English reinforcement programs with different characteristics.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Perceptions

In this study, perceptions refer to the personal views, understandings, and interpretations of teachers and students regarding the DEC program.

2. Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers' perceptions in this study refer to the teachers' views, beliefs, opinions, and evaluations regarding the implementation of the Darussalam English Course (DEC) Program at MA Darussalam Sengon Jombang. These perceptions include how teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the program in supporting students' English learning, the challenges encountered during its implementation, and their suggestions for improving the program. Teachers' perceptions are explored through interviews based on their experiences in planning, implementing, and evaluating the DEC Program.

3. Students' Perceptions

Students' perceptions refer to how learners view, experience, and evaluate a particular learning program.

4. Darussalam English Course (DEC) program

DEC is a non-formal program from MA and MTs Darussalam as a reinforcement or support and enhancement of language skills in the boarding school, especially in English.