

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Human beings are inherently social creatures who interact with others to exchange ideas, express emotions, and build relationships. Language serves as the primary medium for this communication and plays an essential role in education, where learning is closely connected to social interaction and emotional engagement. As stated by Nall (2020), language learning involves not only cognitive processes but also social and emotional dimensions that influence learners' participation and development. In today's globalized world, English has become an international language used in education, technology, business, and intercultural communication, making English proficiency increasingly important for students.

Among the four language skills, speaking is considered one of the most challenging because it requires learners to express ideas spontaneously while managing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence simultaneously. Holandyah et al. (2022) explain that speaking requires learners to use language meaningfully in real communication, while Soland (2019) emphasizes that speaking performance is strongly influenced by psychological factors such as confidence, anxiety, motivation, and emotional readiness.

Therefore, successful english speaking learning depends not only on linguistic competence but also on students' emotional and social development.

The importance of language learning can also be connected to Islamic perspectives. Islam encourages human beings to recognize the diversity of languages as one of the signs of Allah's greatness. This is reflected in Surah Ar-Rum verse 22:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاجْتِلَافُ السِّنِّتِكُمْ وَالْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّلْعَلَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

This verse shows that linguistic diversity is part of Allah's creation and should be understood as something meaningful for human life. The diversity of languages allows people to recognize one another, communicate across cultures, and broaden their understanding of the world. Therefore, learning foreign languages, including English, can be seen as an effort to appreciate Allah's creation and to develop one's knowledge and communication ability. In addition, the Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of preparing oneself for the future.

In practice, many modern Islamic boarding schools implement intensive English programs to improve students' language abilities. These programs usually include vocabulary memorization, grammar learning, speaking practice, listening activities, debates, conversations, and other creative activities. Some *Pesantren* also apply English-only policies in certain areas or

at certain times to encourage students to use English in daily communication. This kind of environment provides students with more opportunities to practice English not only in the classroom but also in their dormitory and social life. Through continuous exposure and practice, students are expected to become more familiar with English and more confident in using it.

However, the implementation of English-speaking programs in *Pesantren* is not free from challenges. Speaking English in front of others can create emotional pressure for students, especially when they are afraid of making mistakes, being laughed at, or being judged by their friends. Students may also feel anxious, embarrassed, or lack confidence when they are required to speak English spontaneously. These psychological factors can affect students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. Although students may have enough vocabulary or grammar knowledge, they may still remain silent if they do not feel emotionally safe and supported.

The *Pesantren* context also has unique characteristics that influence students' English learning experiences. Unlike regular schools, *Pesantren* students live in a boarding environment where learning, social interaction, discipline, and religious activities occur continuously. Students are not only learners in the classroom but also members of a close community with strict routines and rules. In language programs, students may be required to use English in daily interaction, which can increase their exposure to the language. Nevertheless, this situation may also create emotional pressure when students

feel unprepared or afraid of violating language rules. Therefore, English speaking learning in *Pesantren* involves not only linguistic challenges but also social and emotional challenges.

In many Islamic boarding school contexts, languages also have different social and cultural meanings. Arabic is commonly associated with Islamic studies, worship, and religious identity, so students may perceive it as more familiar and meaningful within the *Pesantren* environment. On the other hand, English as a foreign language may be perceived differently by students. Some students may consider English important and interesting, while others may feel hesitant or less confident in using it. These perceptions can influence students' attitudes, motivation, and emotional responses toward English speaking activities. Therefore, teachers need to understand not only students' linguistic difficulties but also their emotional and social conditions.

In this situation, teachers have an important role in supporting students' English-speaking development. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering materials, correcting pronunciation, or explaining grammar, but also for creating a supportive classroom atmosphere. A supportive teacher can help students feel more comfortable, confident, and motivated to speak English. Teachers can encourage students, reduce their fear of making mistakes, appreciate their efforts, and build positive relationships in the classroom. As emphasized by Li (2023), Zhang et al (2023), supportive teacher-student

relationships can reduce speaking anxiety and increase students' engagement in foreign language learning.

One approach that is relevant to this issue is Social Emotional Learning. It refers to the process of developing students' ability to understand and manage emotions, build positive relationships, show empathy, make responsible decisions, and handle social situations effectively. According to Hoffman (2009), SEL helps students develop social and emotional competencies that are important for their academic and personal growth. In English speaking learning, SEL can support students in overcoming anxiety, building confidence, respecting others, and participating more actively in communication activities.

From an Islamic perspective, the principles of Social Emotional Learning are also reflected in the teachings of the Qur'an. Islam encourages believers to uphold justice, kindness, empathy, and positive social relationships, which are closely related to social-emotional competencies such as self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Allah states in Surah An-Nahl verse 90:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَائِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُم لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

This verse shows that Allah commands justice (al-'adl), kindness (al-ihسان), and maintaining good relationships, while prohibiting immoral

behavior, wrongdoing, and oppression. According to Al-Mahalli and As-Suyuthi (2010), justice refers to treating others fairly in words and actions, whereas al-ihsan means performing good deeds with sincerity beyond mere obligation. The prohibition of al-fahsha', al-munkar, and al-baghy also emphasizes self-control and the importance of maintaining harmonious social relationships. These values are closely aligned with the principles of Social Emotional Learning, which promote empathy, emotional regulation, responsible decision-making, and positive relationships. Therefore, this verse provides a moral and spiritual foundation for the implementation of social-emotional skills in educational settings, including English speaking learning

The integration of social-emotional skills in English speaking learning is especially important in *Pesantren* because *Pesantren* education is closely related to moral values, character building, discipline, and social life. Social-emotional support is in line with the broader educational goals of *Pesantren*, which aim to develop students not only intellectually but also morally and emotionally. Through social-emotional practices, teachers can help students face speaking challenges in a more positive way. For example, teachers may create a safe learning environment, give emotional encouragement, use group activities, provide constructive feedback, and promote respect among students during speaking practice.

Several previous studies have discussed the importance of social-emotional aspects in English language learning. Fitratullah (2023), Nall (2020),

and Sari & Munifah (2021), show that social-emotional learning can improve students' motivation, reduce anxiety, and increase students' willingness to participate in English learning. Other studies also indicate that students' emotional conditions, such as confidence and anxiety, have a significant influence on speaking performance. These studies suggest that English learning should not only focus on linguistic competence but also on students' emotional readiness and social interaction.

Although previous studies have examined the impact of social-emotional learning on students' motivation, confidence, and learning outcomes, little is known about how English teachers in Islamic boarding schools experience and implement social-emotional skills in speaking instruction. Furthermore, limited studies have explored the challenges faced by teachers in balancing emotional support, discipline, and institutional expectations in the *Pesantren* context. In fact, teachers in *Pesantren* face complex responsibilities. They are expected to teach English, maintain discipline, enforce language rules, and at the same time respond to students' emotional needs. Many teachers may apply social-emotional strategies based on personal experience rather than formal training. Therefore, it is important to explore how teachers understand, apply, and reflect on social-emotional skills in their English-Speaking classrooms.

At Al-Falah Islamic Boarding School Banjarbaru, English speaking learning is implemented through an intensive English Program that encourages

students to use English not only during classroom instruction but also in daily communication and various language activities in the dormitory. In this context, teachers have multiple responsibilities as language instructors, dormitory mentors, and character educators who support students both academically and emotionally. Meanwhile, students come from diverse educational backgrounds and possess different levels of English proficiency, which often lead to speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. These conditions require teachers not only to teach language skills but also to apply social-emotional skills in creating a supportive, disciplined, and emotionally safe learning environment.

Furthermore, understanding the implementation of social-emotional skills in English speaking learning requires more than identifying teaching strategies. It requires a deeper exploration of teachers' stories, reflections, and experiences in dealing with students' emotional challenges. Teachers' narratives can provide meaningful insights into how social-emotional support is practiced in real classroom situations. Through their experiences, it is possible to understand how teachers help students overcome anxiety, build confidence, and become more willing to speak English in the *Pesantren* environment.

Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' experiences in applying social-emotional skills in English speaking learning at an Islamic boarding school. This research employs a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry in

order to understand teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices. Through narrative inquiry, this study seeks to reveal how teachers perceive, implement, and reflect on social-emotional support in English speaking instruction. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of English speaking learning that is emotionally supportive, context-sensitive, and relevant to the values of Islamic boarding school education.

B. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher will define key phrases related to the title in order to prevent any misunderstandings about the study:

1. Teachers' Experiences

The terms of teachers' experiences refer to the knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and teaching practices that educators develop through continuous professional engagement in the classroom and educational environment. These experiences shape how teachers interact with students, make instructional decisions, and respond to academic, social, and emotional challenges. In this study, teachers' experiences refer specifically to English teachers' lived experiences in Islamic boarding schools in applying social-emotional skills during English speaking learning. This term is used to capture how teachers understand, experience, and reflect on their roles, challenges, and strategies in supporting students' emotional and social development in speaking English.

2. Social-Emotional Skills

Social-emotional skills refer to abilities related to recognizing and managing emotions, building positive relationships, demonstrating empathy, and communicating effectively with others. These skills support learners in developing self-confidence, emotional regulation, and positive engagement in learning activities. In this study, social-emotional skills refer to the emotional and social competencies applied by teachers to support students' English speaking learning, particularly in helping students manage speaking anxiety, build confidence, and create a supportive classroom and dormitory learning environment within the Islamic boarding school context.

3. English Speaking Learning

English speaking learning refers to the process of developing oral communication skills in English, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence, through both formal instruction and communicative practice. In this study, English speaking learning is understood as the learning process that takes place in the English program of an Islamic boarding school, where students are required to use English in classroom activities as well as in daily interactions with peers. This term is used to emphasize speaking as a social and emotional practice, not merely a linguistic skill, which is influenced by teacher support and social-emotional learning practices.

C. Research Questions

1. How do teachers' experiences in the English program at Al-Falah apply social-emotional skills in English speaking learning?
2. What challenges do teachers face in integrating social-emotional skills into English speaking learning?

D. Objectives of Study

1. To explore how do teachers' experiences in the English program at Al-Falah apply social-emotional skills in English speaking learning.
2. To identify what challenges do teachers face in integrating social-emotional skills into English speaking learning.

E. Significance of Study

1. Theoretically

This study is academically significant because it addresses a specific gap in the literature on English language teaching and social-emotional learning by examining how teachers in the English Program at Al-Falah apply social-emotional skills in English speaking learning and what challenges they face in integrating those skills into their teaching practice. Previous studies have shown that social-emotional learning can support learners' motivation, confidence, emotional regulation, and participation in language learning (Fitratullah, 2023; Nall, 2020). However, existing studies have more often focused on student outcomes, general classroom practices, or broader educational contexts, while limited attention has been given to

teachers' lived experiences in *Pesantren*-based English programs (Wicaksono & Saraswati, 2024). Therefore, this study contributes context-specific knowledge to the literature on English speaking pedagogy, social-emotional learning, and Islamic boarding school education by explaining both the practical enactment of social-emotional skills and the challenges of integrating them within a religious, communal, and discipline-based learning environment.

2. Practically

Practically, this study is expected to be useful for teachers, English program leaders, and school administrators in Islamic boarding schools. For teachers, the findings may provide insights into ways of supporting students' confidence, emotional safety, and participation in English speaking activities. For the English Program at Al-Falah, the findings may help identify the main difficulties teachers encounter in integrating social-emotional skills, such as student anxiety, institutional expectations, time limitations, or the need to balance discipline with emotional support. These insights may be used to improve teacher development, classroom practice, and program support systems in the *Pesantren* context. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding schools or similar educational settings that seek to strengthen English speaking instruction while also attending to students' social-emotional development.