

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings and a discussion of how five photographs selected by EFL learners represent their experiences in learning English and the challenges they face. The findings were obtained through photo analysis and individual interviews that highlighted the learners' experiences, skill development, and various difficulties they encountered. All findings were then further analyzed in the discussion section based on theory and previous research.

A. Findings

1. Improvement

a. Elsa



Figure 4. 1 Elsa's Experience at Mr. Bob English Camp

The photos Elsa selected, based on the interview, capture a moment after she attended a vocabulary class at Kampung Inggris Pare in 2024. That experience was one of the most memorable moments in her English learning journey.

Elsa explained that the experience helped her learn vocabulary as well as pronunciation. She said, *“That moment came after learning about vocabulary and also how to pronounce it phonologically.”* In addition to the material learned, Elsa highlighted the learning methods used during the activity. She explained that *“the learning method was fun and playful, so there was no pressure or, as people say, anything too serious, because the system involved learning through games, so it really got to the brain.”*

When asked about her feelings during the activity, Elsa replied, *“I feel so happy.”* She explained that she liked the learning style, which wasn’t too serious but wasn’t entirely playful either. According to her, *“I like learning that way. It’s not too serious, but it’s not all jokes either.”* Additionally, Elsa also mentioned the role of the tutor who taught the class. She said, *“The tutor is also great because he’s from Gen Z, so he understands how to teach Gen Z students.”*

Reflecting on the experience, Elsa revealed that she initially joined the program at Kampung Inggris just to have a fun experience. She explained, *“Actually, I went there just for the sake of it, to make friends or*

just hang out. And of course, the bonus is gaining knowledge. So, I went there just for the fun of it.”

However, from that experience, Elsa also paid attention to how the tutor delivered the lesson material. She explained, “What I learned from that experience was, of course, the knowledge itself, but also how the teacher taught that knowledge to us.” According to Elsa, the learning activities “always started with an icebreaker, there was also an icebreaker in the middle of the lesson, and at the end of the lesson there were games and icebreakers.” She added that “the learning environment wasn’t too formal or overly tense.”

These findings indicate that the most memorable aspect of the experience for Elsa was not only the vocabulary and pronunciation material she learned but also the way the learning was conducted through games, icebreakers, and a learning atmosphere that she found neither too formal nor too tense.

b. Anna



Figure 4. 2 Anna's English Experiences at Islamic Boarding School

Anna reflected on her experience learning English through a photo of the Islamic boarding school she chose, which illustrated the learning environment at the junior and senior high school levels. In that environment, she had many opportunities to use English in daily activities, not only through classroom instruction but also in interactions at the dormitory. Anna explained that *“at that Islamic boarding school, we were required to speak both English and Arabic.”* This environment helped her get used to actively using English, especially during junior high school, which she considered the most memorable phase of her learning process.

This experience helped Anna improve her English skills through regular language learning activities held after the Fajr prayer, known as “mufradat” sessions. This activity focused on expanding vocabulary and learning how to use it in daily communication. According to Anna, *“our*

vocabulary keeps growing” and “*we don’t just learn new vocabulary every day, but we also practice the language.*” Through these activities, Anna not only expanded her vocabulary but also gained the opportunity to use English directly in conversations with friends and teachers.

When recalling that experience, Anna confessed that she was happy because she truly preferred language learning over other subjects. Her interest in foreign languages made the learning process enjoyable and meaningful for her. She said, “*I really love learning languages.*”

From that experience, Anna learned the importance of consistently practicing a language in daily life. She believed that English proficiency can improve if someone uses and actively practices it. According to Anna, “*if we practice English every day, we’ll definitely be able to do it.*” Besides that, she also felt that the requirement to use English while at the Islamic boarding school encouraged her to keep expanding her vocabulary and practicing the language in various situations.

The findings showed that Anna's most memorable learning experiences came from the boarding school environment, which provided her with opportunities to use English actively and consistently. For Anna, the combination of vocabulary learning, daily communication practice, and the requirement to use English contributed to the development of her English proficiency and reinforced her belief that language skills can be improved through consistent practice.

c. Belle



Figure 4. 3 Belle's Pronunciation Awareness Through Classroom Observation

Belle reflected on her English language learning experience through a photo showing her as an observer in a classroom learning process. During the activity, she served as an observer, observing the interactions between the teacher and students as the teaching and learning process unfolded.

Through this observation, Belle gained new insights into English language learning, particularly regarding pronunciation. She noticed that the teacher directly corrected the students' mistakes and asked them to repeat until their pronunciation was correct. Belle explained, *"The teacher I studied was very meticulous in correcting students' pronunciation and made them repeat until it was correct."* This experience gave her a real-world understanding of how language skills can be developed through consistent correction and attention to detail.

In addition, this experience made Belle compare the learning process she observed with her own learning experiences during her school days. She revealed that the experience made her feel *“a sense of déjà vu, as if I were back in school, sitting in a classroom again.”* However, Belle also recognized a difference between the learning she observed and her own past learning experiences. She explained that *“when I was in school, as far as I can remember, there was no learning process like that where the teacher was so meticulous about correcting students’ pronunciation.”* According to Belle, the teacher she observed was someone who was *“absolutely perfect and truly mastered English.”* This observation gave her a new understanding of the importance of a teacher’s precision in providing corrections and feedback on students’ mistakes during the learning process.

From these observations, Belle also realized that she had been mispronouncing certain words without realizing it. She explained that *“words I had always thought I was pronouncing correctly turned out to be wrong after all.”* By observing the corrections made by her teacher, Belle learned the more accurate pronunciations. She gave an example that she had always thought the pronunciation of the words “sing-sang-sung” was correct, but she later learned that the correct pronunciation is *“/sɪŋ/, /sæŋ/, /sʌŋ/.”* This experience helped Belle understand the importance of accurate pronunciation in learning English and increased her awareness of mistakes she hadn’t previously noticed.

Furthermore, this observational experience not only influenced Belle's understanding of English but also shaped her perspective as a prospective teacher. She stated, *"When I become a teacher, I will pay close attention to even the smallest details."* In her view, the attention to detail demonstrated by teachers during the learning process is important to apply in teaching practice. Belle added that *"our duty as teachers is to correct what needs to be corrected."* This statement indicates that the observation experience not only heightened Belle's awareness of pronunciation but also inspired her to adopt a meticulous and responsive teaching approach toward students' mistakes in the future.

d. Alice



Figure 4. 4 Alice's English Learning Through TV Series

Alice's most memorable experience learning English stems from her habit of watching English-language TV series since elementary school.

Through the photo she selected, she reflected on her experience watching the series “Castle”, which indirectly served as a key source for developing her vocabulary and pronunciation.

Alice explained that through this TV-watching activity, she picked up a lot of new vocabulary without even realizing it, especially in various contexts such as everyday conversation, work, and even more complex terminology. She stated, *“My vocabulary grew without me realizing it while watching that series.”* According to her, the series introduced various vocabulary words rarely encountered in formal learning, including terms related to the world of investigation, work, and the medical field.

In addition to vocabulary, this experience also helped her understand proper English pronunciation by imitating the actors in the series. She explained, *“I’m the type of person who likes to imitate how others speak and follow their lead.”* Through this process, Alice realized that some of the pronunciations she had been using were actually incorrect. She gave the example that she used to pronounce the word “pronunciation” incorrectly before learning the correct pronunciation from the show she was watching. This experience helped her better understand how English words are pronounced by native speakers.

Watching the show also helped Alice understand how language is used in the right context. She explained that she wasn’t just learning new vocabulary, but also understanding its use in specific situations. Alice

stated that through the series, she “*learned how this vocabulary is used in the right context.*” Additionally, she also learned various forms of everyday conversation used by native speakers. She revealed, “*I also learned those daily conversation phrases because of watching that.*” This experience helped her understand more natural language usage in everyday communication.

Furthermore, Alice gained an understanding of linguistic variations such as slang. She realized that some of the expressions that she encountered were informal language used in specific contexts and could not be used randomly. Alice explained, “*So it turns out this slang is specific to that place. You can’t just use it randomly.*” This understanding helped her identify differences in language usage based on the situation and social context.

Nevertheless, this experience initially felt like a challenge. Alice confessed that she often found new vocabulary and terms she didn’t understand, such as medical terms or those related to investigations. The difficulty was compounded because the series she was watching used English transcripts, not Indonesian translations. She explained, “*At first, it was frustrating,*” because when listening to the dialogue and reading the English transcript simultaneously, she often struggled to understand the meaning. Alice added, “*Without context, I just didn’t know what they were*

talking about.” This situation made her feel confused and frustrated when she couldn’t follow the ongoing conversation.

However, over time, that experience actually sparked an even greater curiosity about the English language. In addition to wanting to know the plot, Alice also became interested in understanding how native express various concepts in their language. She explained that she often wondered, *“how do they say it in their language,”* when she encountered certain terms or situations. Alice described that feeling as *“just being curious.”* This curiosity encouraged her to pay closer attention to the use of English in various contexts.

In addition to improving her English skills, this experience also expanded Alice's knowledge on various topics that appeared in the series she watched. She revealed that she gained a better understanding of various terms and new knowledge related to detective themes, investigations, and other fields that appeared in the story. Alice also stated that this experience made her feel *“smarter in terms of her knowledge of those topics and her English.”*

These findings indicate that watching English-language TV series has contributed to the development of Alice’s English language skills. Through her habit of watching TV, she has acquired new vocabulary, improved her pronunciation, and gained an understanding of language use in various contexts, including daily conversation, slang, and expressions

used by native speakers. This experience has also encouraged her curiosity about the English language and enriched her understanding of how the language is used in real-life situations.

e. Olaf



Figure 4. 5 Olaf's Early English Exposure Through Television

Olaf's most meaningful English-learning experience came from his habit of watching English-language television programs since childhood. Through the photo he chose, he reflected on the moment when he first got to know English through television. Olaf explained, "*So this photo shows*

a little boy watching TV. This moment illustrates my experience when I first got to know English.”

Olaf shared that his family subscribed to a TV service that offered various international channels. From those channels, he often watched English-language cartoons like Adventure Time and The Amazing World of Gumball. He explained, *“Back then, there was a service called Indovision. My family subscribed to Indovision, which provided access to international channels. So, I’d watch these foreign cartoons, you know.”* According to him, the shows he watched used *“pure English with no subtitles.”*

This experience occurred through Olaf’s habit of watching English-language cartoons, which he has done regularly since childhood. He explained that he watches cartoons almost every day, both before and after school. According to him, *“every day, every morning, sometimes before school, or even after coming home from school, I would definitely turn on the TV to watch cartoons.”* Although at first he didn’t understand the meaning of the language used in the shows, he still enjoyed the content presented. Olaf explained, *“At first, I might not have really understood the meaning, but since it was a cartoon, an animation and it looked fun, so I just enjoyed it.”* As time went on, he felt that he *“would gradually understand it passively on my own, even though I couldn’t actively master English yet.”*

When asked which aspect of his English had improved the most from that experience, Olaf cited his listening skills as the most significant improvement. He explained, *“It seems to be in the Listening section. Because when you watch, you’re seeing and listening. So, you could say it’s from listening. That way, we can understand English.”* On the other hand, he felt that his vocabulary hadn’t improved much because *“as for vocabulary, it probably didn’t improve that much.”*

Emotionally, Olaf described the experience as enjoyable. He explained, *“Yeah... just enjoy it. Just like how other people watch what they like, I just enjoy watching it.”* He didn’t perceive the experience as a difficult learning process, but rather as an activity he enjoyed in his daily life.

Based on this experience, Olaf concluded that practice is essential to the language-learning process. He explained, *“Language is a skill, so if you want to master a language, you have to practice it regularly.”* This reflection shows that, according to Olaf, repeated exposure to English through daily activities played a role in helping him gradually understand the language.

1. Challenges

This section describes the challenges faced by the participants and how they dealt with them based on the experiences they shared in the interviews.

a. Elsa

The main challenge Elsa has faced in learning English is grammar. When asked about the problems she faces while learning English, she replied, *“The first one is grammar, of course grammar. And I hate grammar.”* She explained that although she considers English to be relatively easy, grammar actually makes her reluctant to use English actively. She stated, *“English is easy, but it’s this grammar thing that makes me not want to speak English and not want to improve my English.”* Elsa also added that she actually understands the meaning and how to speak in English, but grammar often becomes a barrier because it causes her to worry about how others will judge her, *“Grammar makes other people sometimes judge our speaking, like, ‘Your grammar isn’t right and your English is still bad.’”*

She began to feel this challenge in 2022 after graduating from Islamic boarding school and starting college. She explained, *“Starting in 2022,”* and emphasized that it happened after she left the boarding school. According to her, doubts about grammar arise every time she uses English, especially when speaking. She said, *“Everytime I thought, Everytime I speak English, that thought is always in my mind. Like, is the grammar correct?”* Although she has never received direct criticism, she still feels there is a possibility of judgment from others, *“Maybe there isn’t any direct judgment, but I just feel like someone is judging me*

indirectly.” This feeling most often arises when she gives a presentation in class. When facing such situations, Elsa briefly expressed her feelings *“I feel insecure, I try to ignore it.”*

To deal with these challenges, Elsa chose to learn step by step through the various media she uses every day. She explained, *“I don’t really like pressure, so I just go with the flow.”* One of her methods is to pay attention to the English she finds on social media like TikTok and Twitter. She explained, *“I see some English text, I read it and think, oh so this is the correct sentence structure, oh I should use this in the future.”* In addition, she also learns from various posts containing English corrections or educational content, *“A post by someone passing by about grammar education, oh...that’s how it’s used, oh, like this,”* which she says helps her gain new knowledge *“From there, I gain new insights about English.”*

In addition to social media, Elsa also used AI to check the English writing she produces. She explained, *“I ask the AI whether my grammar is correct or not. Actually, the AI checks my work and tells me my grammar is correct. But I’m still unsure if the grammar is really correct.”* She also tried to learn from the AI’s corrections *“Oh, so it turns out I was wrong here, I should use this instead, and avoid using something like that.”* Additionally, she has used Duolingo for *“395 days,”* though she

feels the app focuses more on sentence structure than on in-depth grammar.

b. Anna

Anna faced major challenges in her speaking skills, particularly regarding her limited vocabulary and nervousness when speaking in front of others. She explained that these difficulties often arose when she didn't know or had forgotten the vocabulary needed to express her ideas. This made her feel confused about how to express her thoughts verbally. Anna said, *"Maybe it's because my vocabulary is still limited. So, I get confused about what I want to say. It's like forgetting, what's the English word for this?"*

In addition to her limited vocabulary, Anna also feels that a lack of practice can affect her English proficiency. In her view, language skills need to be continuously used and practiced so they don't diminish over time. She noted that *"if you don't practice, you lose what you've learned."*

Another challenge Anna faced was feeling nervous when she had to speak English in front of a large audience. She explained that at the beginning of her studies, her lecturers often asked students to speak English in front of the class. This made her feel very nervous because she wasn't used to speaking in front of a large audience. Anna explained, *"I*

was really nervous. I didn't even know what to say, I was so nervous, I just blanked out."

According to Anna, that nervousness actually began back in high school. She said she lacked confidence when she had to give a speech or tell a story and often avoided activities that required her to speak in public. Anna explained that *"whenever I was asked to give a speech, I'd back out right away."* However, once she started college, she could no longer avoid such situations because the academic requirements forced her to actively speak in English in front of the class.

When facing these challenges, Anna felt nervous and embarrassed. These feelings arose especially when she had to speak in front of the class and struggled to recall or find the vocabulary she wanted to use. When asked about her feelings when facing such situations, Anna replied that she felt *"nervous and embarrassed."*

To overcome these challenges, Anna tried to give herself time to think and recall the vocabulary she wanted to use. When speaking in front of the class, she usually asks the lecturer for a moment to reorganize her thoughts. Anna explained, *"I like to ask the lecturer for a moment to think about the English vocabulary, like... 'just a moment, Sir' or 'just a moment, Ma'am.'"* This method helped her to continue speaking even when she has difficulty finding the right words.

These findings indicated that limited vocabulary and nervousness when speaking in front of others were the main challenges Anna faced in learning English. Her lack of vocabulary made it difficult for Anna to express her ideas verbally, while her nervousness caused her to lose focus when speaking in front of a large audience. To overcome these challenges, Anna makes an effort to set aside time to memorize the necessary vocabulary and gradually gets used to speaking in front of others through the experiences she gains during her classes.

c. Belle

The main challenges Belle has faced in learning English relate to speaking skills, particularly a limited vocabulary and a lack of confidence when speaking in public. Belle explained that one of her difficulties stems from her limited vocabulary, as she isn't used to memorizing new words. She explained, *"What I'm dealing with is mainly about vocabulary, because honestly, I'm really lazy when it comes to memorizing vocabulary."*

This limited vocabulary directly impacts her ability to convey ideas verbally. Belle explained that when giving a presentation, nervousness often causes the lines she's prepared to slip her mind. In such situations, her limited vocabulary makes it difficult for her to find the right words to continue the discussion. She explained, *"For example, when we don't have a lot of vocabulary, it's like we're confused about what to say, so we*

get stuck when speaking.” This statement shows that limited vocabulary and nervousness are interrelated in affecting the fluency of speaking English.

Besides that, Belle also experienced feeling really nervous when she had to speak English in front of a large audience, especially during her college years when giving presentations. This made her lose focus and unable to convey what she had prepared beforehand. Belle stated, *“When I’m nervous, it’s like I’ve forgotten everything I memorized.”* She also described her feelings at the time as *“extremely nervous and feeling very embarrassed. Because I could only stay silent.”*

This lack of confidence even led Belle to avoid using English in certain situations. She shared that on one opportunity, she was asked to introduce herself in English. However, because she felt nervous and worried about making mistakes, she chose to use Indonesian. Belle explained, *“I chose to introduce myself in Indonesian because I was afraid my vocabulary would be wrong, so I played it safe.”*

Facing this challenge, Belle had prepared for the presentation by taking notes and memorizing the material she was going to present. However, when her nerves got the better of her, she forgot the parts she had prepared beforehand. Although she brought her notes, she didn’t use them during the presentation because they were difficult to open, and she felt embarrassed to unfold such a large sheet of paper in front of the class.

Therefore, she chose to improvise her explanation using vocabulary she still knew. Belle explained that *“I immediately shifted the narrative to something else, but using English I put together myself with the vocabulary I knew and felt confident about.”* When she had trouble explaining a certain part, she also chose to move on to the next section of the material that she could still explain. She said, *“I immediately shifted the topic to the next paragraph, but kept the topic connected.”* This strategy helped her continue the presentation despite her limited vocabulary and nervousness.

These findings indicate that the main challenges Belle faced in learning English related to her limited vocabulary and lack of confidence in speaking in public. These two factors are interrelated and affect Belle’s ability to express her ideas spontaneously in English. Nevertheless, she tried to overcome these challenges by employing various communication strategies so that she could still convey the messages she wanted to share.

d. Alice

The challenges Alice has faced in learning English are related to her limited opportunities to actively interact in English, especially with peers who have English proficiency levels equal to or better than hers. She revealed that one of her main difficulties is the lack of friends with whom she can practice speaking English. Alice explained, *“My problem is mainly that I don’t have enough friends to speak English with.”*

Although she has opportunities to use English with her family, Alice felt that this was not enough to support the development of her speaking skills. She explained that at home she could practice with her parents and younger sibling, but their conversations were generally limited to daily activities. Meanwhile, when speaking with friends at school, she feels she doesn't get the chance to improve because their English skills aren't good enough to create interactions that mutually encourage skill development. Alice explained, "*When I talk to them, they learn things from me, but I'm the one who doesn't improve.*" This statement indicates that she needs speaking partners who can provide challenges and opportunities for mutual learning.

She began to feel this challenge more deeply when she entered senior high school. Alice explained that in junior high school, she had a friend who was very proficient in English and was often someone she could practice speaking English with. However, when they chose different majors in senior high school, the frequency of their interactions reduced. Alice revealed that during that time she "*felt a sense of loss, like I'd lost a speaking partner.*" Losing a friend who could serve as a partner for practicing English made her use the language less actively outside her family environment.

In addition to limited interaction, Alice also realized that her social environment had a significant impact on the development of her

pronunciation. She explained that during senior high school, she began to be influenced by her friends' less-than-accurate pronunciation. Alice gave an example of the word "invite" being pronounced as "impit," and without realizing it, she began to mimic this pronunciation. She explained, *"My pronunciation started to follow my friend."* She only realized this mistake when her parents corrected her pronunciation at home. This experience made Alice realize that a language environment can influence a person's language habits, both positively and negatively.

That experience triggered a strong emotional reaction. Alice admitted to feeling embarrassed when her father corrected her, as she realized her pronunciation had been influenced by her friends. She explained, *"At first, I was embarrassed,"* and felt uncomfortable because *"my pronunciation had followed my friend's instead of staying consistently correct."* In addition to feeling embarrassed, she also felt frustrated by the situation because she realized that the language habits of the people around her could affect the English skills she had previously built. She revealed that she *"felt really annoyed"* when she realized this influence.

In facing these challenges, Alice admitted that she has not yet found a truly effective strategy. She explained that she *"just goes with the flow"* and feels that *"there's nothing she can do about it."* Nevertheless, she continued to practice speaking English with her family at home to

maintain her conversational skills. However, she believes that this practice cannot replace the need for English-speaking partners outside the family. Alice emphasized that she “*still wants to have conversation partners who aren’t family members*” because conversations at home are different from interactions with peers. She explained that conversations outside the home allow for a wider variety of topics, such as “*talking about personal matters with friends in English,*” which cannot be achieved through daily interactions within the family environment.

These findings demonstrate that Alice's main challenges in learning English are not only related to a lack of opportunities to practice speaking, but also to limited access to conversation partners who can support the ongoing development of her skills. In addition, the influence of her environment on her pronunciation is another challenge that affects her confidence in using English. This experience highlights the importance of a supportive interactive environment for the consistent development of English language skills.

e. Olaf

The challenge Olaf has faced in learning English is related to the lack of friends with whom he can practice speaking English. He explained, “*Maybe there aren’t enough friends I can talk to in English.*” Aside from the difficulty of finding a conversation partner, Olaf did not mention any other challenges and said, “*None.*”

Olaf began to feel this challenge since entering college. Previously, while in boarding school from junior to senior high school, he had many opportunities to use English because speaking practice was part of his daily routine. He explained, *“It was easy at the boarding school. In fact, speaking English was mandatory there.”* However, after entering college, those opportunities became more limited. According to him, English is generally only used in academic activities in class, especially during presentations. Olaf explained:

“Maybe during college, in the classroom, we could practice speaking there’s a space for us to give presentations in English because we’re required to use it. So that might help practice speaking in that setting. However, once we’re no active in the classroom, there’s no longer a space to practice speaking English like that.”

Olaf didn’t express any particular feelings regarding the difficulty of finding a speaking partner. He explained, *“Maybe... I don’t really have any specific emotions about it.”*

To deal with this situation, Olaf chose to continue learning English through watching videos. He linked this approach to his early experiences when he first was introduced to English. Olaf explained, *“Since I don’t have a partner, maybe the strategy is to go back to how I first learned English. Back then, I started learning English by watching videos. Well, back then I watched TV, but now I watch YouTube.”* In addition, he also

regularly watches various English-language content. He said, *“So maybe the way to deal with not having a speaking partner is to watch a lot of content where people are speaking, watch content where people are reviewing things I watch a lot of English-language review content.”*

These findings showed that the main challenge Olaf faced was a lack of partners to practice speaking with once he started college. To keep practicing English, he chose to watch various English-language videos on YouTube.

B. Discussion

This study employs the Photovoice approach, which is grounded in the Theory of Reflective Practice, in which participants reflect on their English language learning experiences through selected photographs and accompanying narratives (Wang & Burris, 1997; Schön, 2017). Through this method, participants can highlight the most meaningful learning moments in improving their skills, as well as the challenges they face. The following discussion outlines the research findings based on the themes of improvement and challenges that emerged from these reflections.

1. Improvement

a. Formal English Learning

Belle gained a new understanding of pronunciation by observing a teacher who consistently corrected students' pronunciation errors and had

them repeat the words until they were correct. Through this process, Belle realized that some pronunciations she had previously considered correct were actually still wrong. This finding aligns with research by Danial and Sari (2023), which shows that students feel that they learn more when teachers provide corrections to their speaking performance because such corrections help them recognize and correct their mistakes. This finding is also supported by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), who state that teachers need to be aware of the pronunciation problems students face and provide corrections when pronunciation errors occur. In the context of formal learning, Belle's experience demonstrates that feedback and corrections from teachers can enhance students' awareness of pronunciation accuracy. Thus, these findings indicate that teacher feedback and corrections play a role in increasing EFL learners' awareness of pronunciation errors and in developing more accurate pronunciation.

Meanwhile, Anna's experience shows that the daily vocabulary activities conducted at the Islamic boarding school helped her expand her vocabulary while also providing opportunities to practice English in everyday communication. This finding aligns with Fardina (2025), who found that Daily Vocabulary Practice activities at Islamic boarding schools contribute to the improvement of students' vocabulary, speaking skills, self-confidence, and interest in learning English. Additionally, the requirement to use English within the boarding school environment helps

create a language environment that supports the development of Anna's English language skills. This is also consistent with Hidayatullah (2023), who states that the language environment has a significant influence on the acquisition of English-speaking skills. Through continuous exposure to and use of English in daily life, Anna gains more opportunities to practice the language she is learning.

b. Non-formal English Learning

The findings are in line with Danial and Sari (2023), who found that non-formal English language learning environments that apply interactive activities, such as educational games and student-centered activities, can create a fun learning atmosphere and make students enjoy the learning process more. A similar situation was found in Elsa's experience during the program at Mr. Bob English Camp, where learning activities were presented through games, icebreakers, and an atmosphere that was neither too formal nor stressful, allowing her to enjoy the learning process. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that an interactive and enjoyable non-formal learning approach can create a positive learning experience for EFL learners.

c. Informal English Learning

The research findings indicate that watching English-language TV series contributes to the development of Alice's English language skills outside of formal learning. Alice acquired new vocabulary, understood

the use of the language in the right context, and became familiar with everyday conversation and slang through the series she watched. These findings align with Sockett and Toffoli (2012), who state that learners can acquire vocabulary indirectly through activities not specifically meant for language learning and by observing how native speakers use language in daily life. Furthermore, Alice's interest in understanding how native-speaker express various concepts in English indicates the presence of a personal passion that drives her engagement in informal language learning activities. This finding aligns with Kiaer and Lo (2025), who state that personal passion can motivate learners to engage meaningfully in informal digital learning and support self-directed language development.

Meanwhile, Olaf's experience showed that repeated exposure to English through English-language cartoons helped gradually improve his listening skills. This finding supports the view of Sockett and Toffoli (2012) that language acquisition in informal contexts depends on frequent and sustained exposure to the language in meaningful contexts. Overall, these findings also support Benson and Reinders (2011), who state that language development depends not only on classroom learning but also on learners' efforts to use and learn the language outside the classroom.

2. Challenges

- a. Lack of Speaking Partner in Social Circles

The findings related to Alice and Olaf indicate that a lack of conversation partners is a major challenge faced by both of them, although in different contexts. Alice stated that her problem was a lack of friends to speak English with, while Olaf confessed that he, too, lacked friends with whom to practice speaking English. This challenge can be understood through the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), which emphasizes that interaction with conversation partners who facilitate the negotiation of meaning is crucial for the development of speaking skills, as this process productively links input, the learner's cognitive capacity, and output.

This is reflected in Alice's statement that her interactions with her peers were actually unproductive because they were not at the same level. She explained that when she spoke with her friends, it was actually they who learned from her, while she herself made no progress. Olaf experienced a similar pattern, he found that these challenges intensified after moving from a boarding school (where speaking a foreign language was required every day) to college, where there were no regular opportunities to practice speaking outside of class presentations. These findings are consistent with research by Buckingham and Alpaslan (2017), which emphasizes that providing ongoing opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom contributes significantly to

students' development of speaking skills and their willingness to communicate.

The lack of competent speaking partners in her social circle also had an indirect impact on Alice; her previously correct pronunciation became less accurate because she unintentionally imitated her friends' incorrect pronunciation habits, such as pronouncing the word "invite" as "impit." This phenomenon aligns with Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 2023), which explains that individuals naturally adjust their speech patterns, including pronunciation, to adapt to their conversation partners in social interactions through a process of convergence that can occur without the speaker's awareness. The embarrassment and frustration Alice felt when her father corrected her did not stem from a fear of speaking, but rather from the realization that unintentional convergence with her environment, which lacked competent conversation partners, actually diminished the quality of the language she had previously mastered correctly.

As part of their strategy, Alice continued to practice with her family at home, while Olaf, who had absolutely no opportunity for two-way interaction, chose to watch YouTube videos. Although family interactions provided Alice with opportunities for two-way conversation, according to the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), these interactions remain limited to the same conversation partners and everyday topics, and

thus do not yet meet her need for the negotiation of meaning with equal and diverse conversation partners outside the family environment, as emphasized by Alice herself, who expressed that she still wants to have conversation partners who are not members of her family.

b. Vocabulary Limitations in Communication

The research findings indicate that a limited vocabulary is one of the main challenges Anna and Belle face in their English language proficiency. Anna revealed that she often struggles when she does not know or has forgotten the vocabulary needed to convey an idea. She explained that her limited vocabulary makes it difficult for her to determine what she wants to say, causing her to forget the English words needed to express it. Belle experienced a similar situation, finding it difficult to express her thoughts when she lacked sufficient vocabulary for spoken communication. She explained that when someone does not have a large vocabulary, they feel confused about what to say, causing them to get stuck while speaking.

The statements from both participants indicate that a limited vocabulary affects their ability to express ideas orally and maintain smooth communication. This finding aligns with research by Khan (2018), who found that a limited vocabulary is one of the main barriers to English speaking ability. A lack of vocabulary makes it difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to express their ideas and

convey the meaning they intend to convey. Khan (2018) also explains that an inadequate vocabulary can trigger anxiety when speaking and hinder the fluency of communication. This was evident in Anna, who felt nervous when she could not find the right words, and Belle, who had difficulty continuing the discussion due to her limited vocabulary.

Furthermore, the findings regarding Belle indicate that her limited vocabulary is also related to her lack of engagement in learning new words. Belle explained that the problem she faces is primarily related to vocabulary, as she admitted that she is indeed very lazy when it comes to memorizing vocabulary. This finding can be explained through the concept of learning load proposed by (Nation, 2001), who states that the learning load of a word is the amount of effort required to learn it. According to (Nation, 2001), vocabulary mastery requires a process of learning and repetition so that the words can be mastered and used effectively in communication. In the context of this study, Belle admitted that she was not used to memorizing English vocabulary, which indicates her low level of engagement in the vocabulary learning process. This situation is also reflected in the limited vocabulary she demonstrated when speaking English.

These findings are also supported by Adam's (2016) research, which states that a lack of vocabulary can hinder effective communication among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In this study,

limited vocabulary not only affected Anna and Belle's ability to express ideas orally but also hindered their communicative fluency when speaking English. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in supporting EFL learners' oral communication skills, as limited vocabulary can hinder the expression of ideas and speaking fluency. Furthermore, these findings support Nation's (2001) view that vocabulary acquisition requires a certain amount of learning effort, making students' active engagement in vocabulary acquisition a key factor in supporting more effective English language use.

c. Low Self-Confidence in Speaking English

A lack of self-confidence is one of the challenges Anna and Belle face when they have to speak English in front of others. Anna revealed that she often feels so nervous that she loses her concentration when speaking in front of the class. She explained that she gets so nervous she doesn't even know what she wants to say, and has even tended to avoid public speaking since her time at the Islamic boarding school. Meanwhile, Belle said that she chose to use Indonesian when asked to introduce herself because she was afraid of making mistakes in English. She explained that she chose to introduce herself in Indonesian because she was afraid of using the wrong vocabulary, so she chose the path she considered safer.

These findings are consistent with the concept of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997), who states that individuals tend to avoid activities and situations they believe are beyond their ability to handle. This statement suggests that individuals tend to avoid activities they perceive as exceeding the abilities they believe they have. In this study, Anna has avoided public speaking since her time at the Islamic boarding school, while Belle chose to speak Indonesian because she lacked confidence in her English skills.

These findings are also consistent with the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Krashen explains that language users who possess self-confidence and a positive self-image tend to perform better in second language acquisition. In this study, the nervousness, shyness, and fear of making mistakes experienced by Anna and Belle appear to act as affective barriers to their use of English. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that low self-confidence can hinder EFL learners' courage to use English orally, especially in situations that require them to speak in front of others.

d. Fear of Making Grammatical Mistakes

The research findings show that grammar is the main challenge Elsa faces in learning English. Although she feels she understands the meaning and how to speak in English, her concern about grammatical accuracy makes her reluctant to actively use English. Elsa explained that grammar

makes her feel lazy to speak English and reluctant to improve her English skills.

She also admitted that she often wondered whether her grammar was correct whenever she spoke English and worried about how others would judge her language skills. This finding is consistent with Horwitz's (1986) view, which states that language learners often experience anxiety due to a fear of making mistakes and receiving negative judgments from others. This condition is clearly evident in Elsa, who lacks confidence in using English because she is worried that others will consider her grammar to be incorrect.

This finding is also aligned with Young's (1991) view, which explains that language anxiety can arise when learners are afraid of making mistakes, afraid of being judged negatively, or worried about appearing incompetent when using the target language. The concerns Elsa expressed indicate that her focus was not only on the use of English itself, but also on the possibility that others might judge the accuracy of her grammar.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can be understood through the Monitor Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which explains that consciously acquired grammatical knowledge is used as a monitor to check and correct the language being produced. In Elsa's case, her tendency to constantly question the accuracy of her grammar while speaking indicates

that excessive attention to linguistic accuracy can reduce her comfort and fluency in using English. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that anxiety about grammar can be a barrier to oral communication because learners focus more on the possibility of making mistakes than on conveying the message they intend to convey.