

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Communication is a vital and dynamic process that occurs in our daily lives. According to Ansari (2021), people spend a significant portion of their time communicating, whether to share or receive information, through various channels. Ari et al. (2023) emphasized that communication involves interactions between two or more individuals, where they exchange thoughts, emotions, ideas, and factual information. One essential component of communication is known as interpersonal communication skills, which refers to the ability to effectively connect with others in either one-on-one or group settings. These skills are crucial in helping individuals navigate personal, academic, and professional environments successfully.

Interpersonal communication skills encompass a variety of social abilities such as face-to-face interaction, human relational competencies, and other soft skills. According to Martin et al. (2019), mastering these skills requires understanding how to communicate in ways that foster mutual understanding and collaboration. Effective communication involves several important elements, including verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, active listening, problem-solving, decision-making, assertiveness, resilience, negotiation, teamwork, and patience (Ansari, 2021). Developing these abilities is fundamental for achieving effective interpersonal communication, which in turn enhances relationships and promotes a more supportive and productive environment.

In the context of language learning, speaking is considered one of the most essential skills that enables learners to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively (Masuram and Sripada, 2020). Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires learners to think and respond in real time, which makes it both a challenging and dynamic aspect of language acquisition. According to Apriyanti and Ayu (2020), mastery of speaking skills allows learners to participate actively in conversations, express opinions, ask questions, and interact meaningfully with others. It also plays a vital role in academic, social, and professional settings where oral communication is frequently required. Therefore, creating learning environments that encourage regular speaking practice is crucial in supporting learners' overall language development and helping them gain confidence in using the language spontaneously and effectively.

Furthermore, Hargie (2021) emphasizes that speaking is the most essential component of daily interactions, as it plays a key role in shaping first impressions and reflects an individual's ability to communicate effectively. In language learning, especially English as a foreign language, developing speaking skills is not solely dependent on mastering grammar rules or memorizing a wide range of vocabulary. Instead, confidence and consistent practice in real conversational settings are far more effective in helping students improve their speaking abilities. Engaging in conversations allows learners to apply language in context, respond spontaneously, and become more familiar with natural patterns of communication (Ayedoun et al., 2019). So that, through regular conversational practice, students gradually build fluency, enhance pronunciation, and gain the confidence needed

to express their ideas clearly and making conversation a vital strategy in strengthening overall speaking skills.

Based on the observations conducted at Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School, the researcher found that one of the main language programs implemented in the pesantren is the 'Morning Conversation Program'. This program is specifically designed to enhance students' English-speaking skills by encouraging them to engage in daily conversations using English. The activity takes place every Saturday morning for 30 minutes after the congregational Subuh prayer. All students, who live in the dormitory, are instructed to participate in this program. Although students are generally required to practice three languages—English, Arabic, and Indonesian—on a weekly rotation basis in their daily communication, the Morning Conversation Program serves as the core initiative to improve their English fluency. Its focused schedule and consistent implementation make it a key element in the school's language development strategy.

In addition to observations, the researcher also conducted informal interviews with several students following the completion of the program. One student expressed that the Morning Conversation Program significantly helped boost their self-confidence when speaking English. Another student highlighted that the program was very useful in improving their fluency and spontaneity in speaking. Most of the students interviewed shared a positive perception of the program, describing it not only as an academic requirement but also as an enjoyable and engaging activity. What they appreciated the most was the freedom they were given, there were no strict themes or topics, and they could talk about

anything with a partner of their choice. This relaxed and flexible approach contributed to creating a supportive environment where students felt comfortable expressing themselves in English.

Based on the results that the researcher found explain above, the implementation of conversation as a method in language learning is strongly supported by various language acquisition theories. According to Toro et al. (2019), meaningful interaction in the target language plays a vital role in developing communicative competence. Regular conversational practice exposes learners to authentic language use, which contributes significantly to the development of fluency, accuracy, and confidence. It allows students to apply grammatical structures and vocabulary in real-life contexts while encouraging spontaneous language use as a core element of communicative ability. This is closely aligned with the objectives of the Morning Conversation Program, which gives students the freedom to express their ideas without being restricted by predetermined topics or rigid grammatical structures.

Moreover, Whipple (2020) emphasized that conversation-based programs are effective because language is best acquired when learners receive comprehensible input in a low-anxiety environment. When learners feel relaxed, confident, and motivated, their affective filter is lowered, which facilitates more effective language absorption and internalization. The Morning Conversation Program creates such an environment by allowing students to select their own discussion partners and topics, thus fostering a more engaging and stress-free learning experience.

Omar et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of interactive learning in language education. They argue that learners achieve better outcomes when they actively participate in the learning process rather than passively receiving information. Interactive speaking activities, such as pair and group conversations, promote peer engagement, build confidence, and improve oral fluency. The Morning Conversation Program encourages such interaction by allowing students to take control of their learning process, thereby fostering learner autonomy, a key factor in successful language acquisition.

Several previous studies have explored students' perceptions of language learning activities that support speaking skill development. For instance, a study by Harzanah et al. (2024), titled "Students' Perception Toward English Meeting Club of Their Speaking Skill", revealed that most students had a positive perception of the English club. The students believed that participating in such a club could enhance their speaking abilities, particularly in terms of pronunciation and communication skills. Moreover, the program was perceived as beneficial for students who struggled with public speaking anxiety and low self-confidence.

Similarly, Liando et al. (2018), in their study entitled "English Major Students' Perceptions Towards Watching English Movies in Listening and Speaking Skills Development", found that English major students acknowledged the benefits of watching English movies for improving listening skills. Subtitles were noted as useful in understanding conversations, and movies were considered more effective than other media for teaching purposes. While students believed that watching movies had a greater impact on listening than speaking, they also

recognized its potential to improve overall language skills. Another related study by Sinaga (2018), titled “Students’ Perception on the Role of English Day Program in Speaking Skill Development”, showed that students were highly motivated to improve their speaking abilities and viewed the English Day Program as a potential tool for that goal. However, only slightly more than half of the participants showed enthusiasm for the program, largely due to its previous ineffective implementation.

Based on the results of previous observation and previous studies above, the researcher finds it necessary to conduct a more comprehensive study entitled **"STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION TOWARD MORNING CONVERSATION PROGRAM AT DAYAH DARUL IHSAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL."** This research aims to examine students’ responses, experiences, and attitudes toward the program as a key component of their English language practice. By investigating their perceptions, the study aims to gain deeper insights into how the program influences their speaking skills, confidence, and engagement in language learning within the boarding school context.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background presented above, the research question of this study is “What are the students’ perceptions toward the Morning Conversation Program at Dayah Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School?”

1.3 Aim of Study

Based on the research question above, the aim of this study is to find out the students’ perceptions toward the Morning Conversation Program at Dayah Darul Ihsan Islamic Boarding School.

1.4 Significance of Study

This study holds significance in several aspects:

a. Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to the understanding of students' perceptions in the context of language learning programs. It may also provide support for existing theories regarding learner attitudes, motivation, and engagement in second language acquisition.

b. Practical Significance

The results of this study may offer useful insights for educators and program organizers to better understand how students perceive conversation-based learning activities. This understanding can help improve the planning and implementation of similar programs in educational settings.

c. Academic Significance

Academically, this study can be used as a reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring students' perceptions toward language learning programs. It adds to the growing body of research focused on learner-centered perspectives in education.

1.5 Definition of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and to ensure clarity, the following terms used in this study are defined as follows:

a. Perception

Perception is the process of observing, analyzing, and responding to environmental information. It begins with sensory processing, where

individuals receive stimuli through their sensory organs—such as the eyes, ears, skin, tongue, and nose (Hopkins, 2019). Perception in this study refers to students' thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes toward the implementation and experience of the Morning Conversation Program.

b. Morning Conversation Program

This refers to a scheduled English-speaking activity held every Saturday morning after the dawn prayer, in which students are instructed to engage in free conversation in English for about 30 minutes with selected partners.

c. Islamic Boarding School

An Islamic boarding school in this context is a residential educational institution (dayah) where students live, study, and follow both religious and formal education, including language development programs.