



Challenges and Strategies of Technology-Free Autonomous Learning among Islamic Boarding School Daarul Hufadz

Vivi Zurniati¹, Indri Astuti², Mayuasti³, Rezi Junialdi⁴, Dedy⁵

Nahdlatul Ulama University of West Sumatera, Seven Oceans Maritime Academy Padang

zurniativivi@gmail.com, indri.astuti2289@gmail.com, mayuasti@gmail.com
junialdi.r@gmail.com, dedimatahari4@gmail.com

Abstrak: This study aims to reveal the challenges and strategies undertaken by students of the Daarul Hufadz Padang Islamic Boarding School in learning English autonomously outside the classroom. The learning conditions in Islamic boarding schools that do not allow the use of digital tools and internet connections create a challenge for students to obtain additional information needed to understand the material compared to public school students who do not have such limitations. This research uses a qualitative research approach with a descriptive method using interview instruments. The researcher made 8 questions consisting of 4 questions about challenges and four questions about strategies. From the results of processing the interview data, the research results were obtained. The challenges of English subject difficulties such as vocabulary and inadequate facilities make auto learning activities difficult to carry out. And in terms of strategies to overcome these challenges, students carry out autonomous learning by discussing and asking seniors and uztadz/uztadzah using books or dictionaries.

Keywords: *auto learning, boarding school.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, often referred to as pesantren in Indonesia in other parts of the Muslim world, are among the oldest educational institutions within Islamic civilization. These schools are recognized not only for implementing Islamic religious subject but also some particular non-Islamic subjects including English among their students (Susilowaty, 2022). One of the features of education in many Islamic boarding schools is the strong emphasis on auto-learning where the students' self-initiated and self-managed pursuit of knowledge using digital tools or internet connection. The term auto-learning or self-learning defines as the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions implementation of those decisions (Unal:

2021). This circumstances are one of the reasons for students studying alone is because the students have to live in Islamic boarding schools and do not have access to digital tools or internet networks.

Moreover, auto-learning has gained increasing attention in modern education theories. However, long before it became a popular pedagogical concept, Islamic boarding schools had already incorporated elements of extracurricular as their part of routines in the the process of education running in boarding house (Zurniati et al: 2024). All of requirements should be fulfilled by studying in the classroom only with teacher due to disallowance to digital equipment and internet network. Therefore, this article aims to review the challenges and strategy the students do to overcome the situation. Or in this case is

the implimentation of students auto-learning in Islamic boarding schools.

Furthermore, the tradition of student auto-learning in Islamic education traces its roots back to early Islamic history. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge, stating, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." and the early madrasah system, students were expected to take personal responsibility for their learning by attending study circles (halaqah), memorizing vast amounts of information, and engaging in debates and discussions independently or being dictated by the teachers (Mogammad: 2016). Anyway, the progress over time and technological developments, The ability of students studying Islamic religious studies also requires mastery of general knowledge such as English.

Similarly, the pesantren system evolved to instill a culture where students (santri) develop strong self-discipline, spending long hours studying religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Arabic grammar, often without close supervision. Auto-learning in Islamic boarding schools is supported through several mechanisms. Firstly, independent study where students are given access to key religious texts and are expected to study them during designated times (Muslim & Mahbub : 2023). This can involve reading, memorizing, and writing commentaries .

Peer learning is the step of senior students often tutor junior students. This creates a layered learning environment where teaching others becomes a form of reinforcing one's own knowledge. Students who en-gaged in more online self-regulatory learning behaviours generally had a more positive perception of blended courses (Lim et.al : 2020). The next is minimal supervision, teachers (ustadz) act more as mentors or facilitators rather than lecturers, encouraging students to ask questions and seek knowledge proactively. Najeb in 2012, stated that

autonomy as involving an ability to operate independently with the language and use it to communicate personal meaning in real, unpredictable situation (Najeb : 2020). Auto learning means that much of the learning is done by the students themselves, especially those who study in Islamic boarding schools that are not allowed to connect to the internet.

However, the characteristics above can lead to an understanding that auto learning provides its own challenges for students to be able to learn independently, where regular school students already have access and tools to obtain information about the knowledge they need to learn. Auto learning in learning at Islamic boarding schools has its own challenges, although there are advantages, namely that they can easily learn together because they live in dormitories (Imran & Dela : 2020). Therefore, somehow Islamic boarding school students also have advantages in terms of auto-learning because they have longer and closer access to learning together.

To address these issues, Daarul Hufadz Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic boarding schools in the city of Padang, where this Islamic boarding school has an old tradition where students are required to live in a dormitory during the learning process for one semester, where they can go home during holidays and/or other certain circumstances. In this Islamic boarding school there is one female dormitory and one male dormitory which are separate, the first floor for male and female students is on the second floor and is divided into several rooms. In addition, facilities such as classrooms, prayer rooms, toilets, canteens, soccer fields. The library has been provided in each dormitory with a number of books around 20 copies located in each dormitory. Meanwhile, based on the initial research conducted by the researcher, students study or do homework together in activities outside of learning that make it easier for them because they live in the

same dormitory. However, their auto-learning has its own challenges and strategies because of the prohibition on having a cellphone or digital device and internet connection, so research needs to be conducted to see what challenges and strategies they do to continue to understand the subjects, especially English, so that they can understand it optimally.

Therefore, this research will be able to provide an overview of the auto-learning conditions of Islamic boarding school students who have limited access outside the classroom and only a few sources that they can obtain.

2. REVIEW

Similar research has also been conducted by researchers to look at auto learning in English language learning. The first was conducted by Boonma who conducted research at an international college in Thailand. There were 19 respondents studied in this study. Furthermore, this study produced results that most students carried out autonomous learning in every dimension of their learning (Swatevacharkul & Boonma : 2021). The dimensions referred to in the results of this research are technical, psychological, political-philosophical, sociocultural. Of the four dimensions above, the most prominent dimension is the psychological domain. From these results it was found that students have extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in learning English.

Other studies have also been conducted to examine auto learning in English language learning. Rao in 2018 (Rao : 2018) states that he researched several problems that occurred in the implementation of student auto-learning in the classroom, such as lack of teacher involvement or dominance, lack of student freedom, excessive dependence on teachers, and several other problems such as supporting facilities and management. So this research concludes that auto

learning in learning needs to be carried out because it is a demand of the current era, even though there are problems that color its implementation, so these problems need to be overcome even in various ways

The next research was carried out by Hermagystiana and Annagriyani in 2019 which resulted cultivated in a number of situations, such as: when they meet an assessment deadline for their work; when they have to find their own resources for learning, such as through internet; and when they have responsibility for their learning experiences. (Hermagystiana & Annagriyani : 2019)

The conclusion of this study is that auto-learning activities carried out by students are often carried out outside the classroom, but they have an impact on their in-class activities, but both teachers and students have an equal role in the auto-learning activities themselves. It can be concluded that the implementation of auto learning activities still involves teachers and requires facilities for implementation.

The latest research that was reviewed in this research was experimental research conducted by Due in 2020. This study provides results that autonomous learning has a positive impact on increasing the level of English language proficiency of college students, where the results of this experimental study show that there is an increase from the pre-test to the post-test results by applying auto-learning to students. (Due : 2020)

From this research, it can be seen that the application of auto-learning has been carried out and researched by experts so that it can be seen that auto-learning has been implemented and has been successful in improving the English language skills of college students. So that it can be concluded that auto-learning has a positive impact on English language learning. From this research, it can be seen that the application of auto-learning has been carried out and researched by experts so that it can be seen that auto-learning has been implemented and has been successful

in improving the English language skills of college students so that it can be concluded that auto-learning has a positive impact on English language learning. (Wael et al : 2023)

From the previous studies above, researchers have the same domain, namely studying auto learning in English learning, in the first study auto learning was seen from its characteristics, and there was also quantitative research in the study. However, this study will highlight the challenges faced by students in learning English. The challenge here is due to learning conditions that do not allow internet access and there are no digital technology tools in the lives of students at Islamic boarding schools, and throughout the semester they have to live in the dormitory.

In addition, the strategies used by students in learning English as a compulsory subject outside the classroom, such as in doing homework or studying for exam preparation, also have their own strategies for being able to learn independently or self/auto learning. Therefore, it is felt that there is a need for research that reveals the challenges and strategies to overcome these challenges in student auto-learning. This research focuses on the two things above.

3. METHODOLOGI

The type of research approach is qualitative with a qualitative descriptive method (Nurhayati : 2020). Qualitative descriptive means a research method based on postpositive philosophy (Sugiyono : 2019), used to examine the condition of natural objects where researchers are key instruments (Santoso : 2021). Purposive sampling method is used to determine which universities will be used as samples from the entire population (Nikolopoulou : 2022). Seven students from grade IX of Islamic Boarding School Daarul Hufadz Padang were interviewed as respondents of this research where they will answer six

questions related to their auto learning activities while studying at the Islamic boarding school. The following is personal data of respondents:

No	Name	Grade	Sex
1.	Arya Jamil	IX	Male
2.	M. Hafizh Azka	IX	Male
3.	Kahiran Rizky	IX	Male
4.	Kamil Iskandar	IX	Male
5.	Deca Hasanah	IX	Female
6.	Sofiyyah Kurniasih	IX	Female
7.	Dyan Agustin Nurahmah	IX	Female

Table 1: Respondents' Personal Data

Furthermore, this research question asked about what challenges they face in learning on their own and what strategies they do to face the challenges of limited tools such as digital technology and even libraries. This question, which is the instrument, was asked to students to obtain appropriate research results and reveal the answers to research questions.

Furthermore, from the above instrument, the interview questions above will be asked to student respondents and then analyzed to obtain research answers. Data analysis of research means the process of systematically inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data to discover valuable information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making (Crabtree & Nehme : 2024). The data results were analyzed by tabulating the interview results. From the percentage, results will be obtained that show the challenges and strategies in autonomous learning of Islamic boarding school students.

No	Question
	Question related to challenge
1.	How often do you do auto learning of English outside the formal pesantren schedule?

2.	What are the biggest challenges you face when doing auto learning of English?
3.	How are the learning facilities at the pesantren in supporting auto learning of learning?
4.	Does the pesantren environment support you to study autonomously (for example in terms of atmosphere, friends, or ustadz/ustadzah)?
Question related to strategies	
1.	What strategies or methods do you usually use to study English autonomously?
2.	Do you have a special schedule or personal English learning target? Can you explain?
3.	What English learning resources do you use when studying autonomously? (for example, books, books, internet, videos, friends' notes)
4.	Have you ever had discussions or studied English in groups to understand the material autonomously?

Tebale 2: Interview question

In order to obtain the expected research results, the research was carried out by collecting data from interview results based on the interview questions above. First of all, the researcher would conduct an interview with students under the permission of the teacher who had a mandate for the respondent class. Then the researcher asked the researcher questions in turn answering the research questions conducted outside the classroom by making a recording. After getting the interview results, the researcher then analyzed the results of the interview and then made a presentation of the results and tabulates them to get the research results. These results would be described in the results section of this research in percentage form to then be made into a tabulation in which this result is the target achievement of this research.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the results of interviews conducted with student respondents, the following results were obtained:

No	Answer	Percentage
Response on challenges		
1.	Students rarely do English auto-learning activities outside the classroom.	70%
2.	The biggest challenge in auto learning is limited vocabulary mastery.	45%
3.	Auto learning is supported through collaborative learning	75%
4.	Learning facilities does not support auto learning	85%
Response on strategy		
1.	Students study with friends, seniors to discuss or ask questions to uztazdah	100%
2.	Students have a special schedule for autonomous study	45%
3.	Students use books or ask friends to study independently	100%
4.	Students often discuss in groups when learning English	60%

Table 3: Tabulation of interview results

From the tabulation results of the interviews above, the following results can be found:

Results related to the challenge;

Students are lazy to learn English autonomously due to limited abilities

Autonomous learning is a self-study activity that requires internal motivation and sufficient ability to learn and understand on its own. Both cognitive and motivational factors are crucial for successful autonomous learning, and autonomous learning, where individuals take charge of their own learning, benefits from both cognitive abilities to process information independently and motivational factors to sustain effort and engagement (Dewi : 2023). In addition, students of the Islamic boarding school where this research took place are Islamic boarding schools specifically for memorizing the Qur'an where they already have a busy schedule for *halaqah* (memorizing the Qur'an) and other Islamic meta-lessons that are more important in terms of curriculum.

Furthermore, students at Islamic boarding schools who have different foundations from students at public schools do not have the demands to have cognitive abilities as are aimed at public school students. The curriculum of the Daarul Huffadz Islamic Boarding School in Padang City focuses on memorizing the Qur'an (Tahfidz) and academic education. This Islamic boarding school program offers a curriculum that combines Tahfidz 30 juz (75% curriculum) with academic education (25% curriculum) (Wahid : 2019). Therefore, even though there are autonomous learning activities in learning activities at Islamic boarding schools, they are rarely carried out by students because their implementation requires motivation.

Students' autonomous learning is carried out collaboratively because the facilities are less supportive

Autonomous learning is done by studying independently which will require

more resources to make the process of studying independently easier. Islamic boarding school life without internet facilities and technological tools is an obstacle to obtaining additional information needed to study English subjects. However, the living conditions at Islamic boarding schools require students to live in dormitories, making it possible to study in groups with classmates.

At the Daarul Hufadz Padang Islamic Boarding School, students are required to live in the dormitory during the active semester, so that English learning activities outside the classroom can be carried out autonomously. Classmates, seniors, and uztad/uztadzah can provide assistance in learning English subjects if needed during the semester process. Therefore, the limitations of technological tools and internet networks are helped by the possibility of independent learning with friends, seniors, or uztad/uztadzah.

Students learn autonomously with colleagues at specific times.

Although in its implementation, students learn autonomously with different levels where there are lazy students, but in its implementation, students learn and or ask their colleagues in this case classmates, seniors and uztadz/uztadzah in the dormitory. So, learning activities outside the classroom are carried out with joint activities and not alone. However, based on the results of the interview, there are also students who prefer to study independently using a dictionary or studying with LKS (student worksheets)

Some people prefer to learn visually by looking at pictures or diagrams, some prefer to learn auditory by listening to explanations, and some prefer to learn kinesthetically by doing or practicing directly (Majdid : 2021). Like this theory, differences in students' learning styles cannot be avoided, including in this research location, students also have differences in their autonomous learning,

where some study in groups and some study alone, although most of them study together.

Students' autonomous learning is done in groups using books or dictionaries

From the research results in the previous point, limited access to the internet and digital tools makes conventional sources such as dictionaries and books the most frequently used learning sources. However, from the previous interview answers, it can be seen that students carry out their autonomous learning activities in groups using books or dictionaries. This proves that students have the motivation to learn even without technological tools and internet connections.

This result is a positive sign that students of Islamic boarding schools have a learning awareness, although not all students are like that. However, the results of this study indicate that students of the Daarul Hufadz Padang Islamic boarding school carry out independent learning outside the classroom without being supported by technology, but by discussing with colleagues and asking their seniors and uztadz/uztadzah.

Results related to strategy;

Students study with friends, seniors to discuss or ask questions to uztadzah

In circumstances that require students to live in dormitories without any means of accessing global information, students are expected to be able to learn in these conditions. Even though in limitations, this situation actually has an advantage, namely their proximity to colleagues, seniors and ustad/ustazah to ask or discuss. The absence of distance between them and these people makes it an

advantage to get information from friends who may understand better, seniors and supervisors in the dormitory who can help.

The existence of people around can be an oasis in the midst of the desert of limited digital access that students must feel. Although the oasis is not as wide as the digital internet, these people can more or less provide the assistance they need in learning English as one of the general subjects that must be studied.

Students have a special schedule for autonomous study

In the life of the Islamic boarding school dormitory, there is a schedule that is followed by students for learning general subjects, for example there is a special time, namely from after the Dhuhur prayer to Asr from Monday to Friday. In each day of these activities, there is time that can be used by students to study alone or with friend. Because they are in the same dormitory, they can use their free time to study with friends or ask questions about subjects or difficulties they are facing.

The free time that they can use is before going to bed, after Asr prayer, or on weekends. This time is the time that can be used for studying. The absence of digital technology for learning requires students to be able to use time to study or ask questions.

Students use books or ask friends to study independently

It is true that the proverb says that books are a storehouse of knowledge (Tajudin & Firatmaja (2025)). In relation to one of these student strategies, it is by studying English material with their Student Worksheet book accompanied by the help of a dictionary. By studying the material in the book where difficult words are seen for their meaning using a dictionary.

Books are the main reference due to the absence of electronic technology and digital access. In addition, the use of a

dictionary also helps in learning, namely by translating difficult words. Therefore, the books and dictionaries owned by students become a source of English knowledge amidst the limitations of accessing information using digital tools.

Students often discuss in groups when learning English

Limited access and external resources make students have to find other sources that can help them learn English in the boarding school dormitory. The condition of students who live in the dormitory makes their interactions more intense than regular school students who sometimes live far from their classmates or seniors. This is different from boarding school students who live in their dormitories in carrying out group learning activities whenever in between memorizing the Qur'an or studying religious subjects and or playing and resting as part of their daily activities in the dormitory. So, group learning activities are one of the student strategies to be able to understand English material.

5. CONCLUSION

The challenges experienced by students of the Daarul Hufadz Islamic Boarding School in studying independently outside the classroom are the level of difficulty of the English subject itself, such as limited vocabulary, limited facilities, and motivation. Meanwhile, the strategy is to conduct learning together in groups with classmates and seniors as well as uztadz/uztadzah using books and dictionaries.

In conclusion, the auto learning or independent learning activities outside the classroom of students at the Daarul Hufadz Padang Islamic Boarding School are carried out by collaborating with colleagues or asking higher authorities.

This is a good sign in learning English as a subject that only contains 25 percent of it. This means that general subjects such as English are not neglected by students, but are still studied outside the classroom.

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