



Student's Perception Of English Language Learning Through The Wajar Dikdas Programme (Compulsory Education) At Sidogiri Banat 1 Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore students' perceptions of English language learning through the Wajar Dikdas (Compulsory Education) programme at Sidogiri Banat 1 Islamic Boarding School, focusing on its usefulness and English teachers' characteristics. A qualitative descriptive method was employed using questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. The participants consisted of 72 students involved in English learning activities within the programme. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively using percentages, while interview data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of English learning through the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education), particularly in improving understanding, motivation, and classroom interaction. English teachers were perceived as friendly, motivating, and supportive. However, some students reported neutral perceptions regarding their confidence in speaking English. These findings suggest that while the programme effectively supports English learning in pesantren contexts, improvements in communicative teaching strategies are still needed.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, English Learning, Wajar Dikdas Programme (Compulsory Education)

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INTRODUCTION

English plays a significant role as a global language that is widely used in education, science, technology, and international communication. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the success of English learning is not solely determined by instructional materials or curriculum design, but is also strongly influenced by learners' perceptions, attitudes, and motivation. Positive perceptions toward English learning tend to enhance students' engagement and willingness to participate actively in the learning process, whereas negative perceptions may hinder language acquisition and learning outcomes. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is considered an important aspect in evaluating the effectiveness of English language learning programmes, particularly in EFL contexts such as Indonesia, where exposure to English outside the classroom is relatively limited (Marsenda & Susiati, 2025; Pupah & Syuhda, 2024).

In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are long-established educational institutions that primarily emphasize religious education and character formation. In response to social and educational developments, many pesantren have incorporated general subjects, including English, to equip students with skills needed to face global challenges while preserving religious values. Nevertheless, English learning in pesantren faces particular

challenges, as students often have limited communicative practice and tend to prioritize religious studies. Consequently, the effectiveness of English instruction depends on the implementation of learning programmes and teachers' ability to facilitate instruction that aligns with students' needs and the institutional context. Previous studies suggest that students' perceptions of English learning in pesantren are influenced by instructional approaches, teacher characteristics, and the learning environment (Kadaruddin, 2017; Novira & Rani, 2025).

Compulsory education constitutes a fundamental obligation of the government to ensure equitable access to education for all citizens (Soegarda&Harahap, 1982; Umar, 2019). The term *Wajar Dikdas* is translated into English as *compulsory education*, referring to a legally mandated program that obliges parents to ensure their children attend school up to a specified level of education (Imam, 1988; Umar, 2019). Based on this definition, compulsory education implies an element of obligation requiring parents to enroll their children

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a crucial role as traditional educational institutions in shaping santri's character and knowledge. The *Wajar Dikdas* (Compulsory Basic Education) programme in pesantren seeks to integrate religious and general education, including English, enabling santri to develop foreign language competence while maintaining a primary focus on religious studies. This initiative aligns with the joint agreement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which positions pesantren as an alternative pathway for implementing national compulsory education. Through this programme, pesantren are expected to strengthen their role in supporting santri to achieve comparable academic competencies and equal opportunities to pursue higher education (Kemenag, 2001).

Students' perceptions of English language learning significantly influence their engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In educational research, perception is defined as learners' subjective interpretation of the learning environment, instructional approach, and teacher behavior, which ultimately shapes their attitudes toward language learning (Tatipang et al., 2022). Positive perceptions are linked to increased motivation and participation during classroom activities, while negative or indifferent perceptions can lead to disengagement and reduced classroom interaction.

In EFL settings, where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, students' perceptions become even more critical. Research on EFL learners shows that perception affects not only learners' motivation levels but also their willingness to practice and use English communicatively (Ahsanul Arifin et al., 2025). For example, a positive perception of the learning environment and teacher affective support correlates with students' willingness to take part in classroom discussions and language activities. Conversely, low perception of relevance or usefulness may result in decreased student engagement and passive learning behavior, especially when English is perceived as less immediately practical or less aligned with students' future goals.

Teacher characteristics also fundamentally shape students' perceptions and learning experiences in EFL classrooms. Previous studies highlight that teacher qualities such as friendliness, clarity in instruction, socio-affective skills, and interaction patterns are among the most valued attributes by students. For instance, Tatipang et al. (2022) found that socio-affective competence — including empathy, patience, and the ability to motivate — is identified by EFL learners as a distinctive trait of effective English teachers because it fosters a supportive and communicative learning atmosphere. Similarly, research indicates that clear teacher explanations, positive teacher–student interaction, and emotional support enhance students' confidence in using English and improve their participation in class activities (Rifdhah et al., 2024). These findings suggest that teacher characteristics should be understood not only in terms of pedagogical skills, but also in relation to how teachers relate to and motivate their students, particularly in settings where English exposure is limited.

Considering both programme structure and teacher characteristics, it becomes essential to explore how students perceive English learning within the *Wajar Dikdas* framework. Understanding students' views on both the usefulness of the programme and the characteristics of English teachers contributes to identifying strengths and challenges in pesantren-based EFL education. Therefore, examining students' perceptions serves as a

foundation for improving instructional practices and programme implementation to better support English learning outcomes for pesantren learners.

Some previous studies have elaborated on students' perceptions of English language learning, such as research conducted by Randy Irawan "Persepsi siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris secara daring menggunakan platform google" This study aims to determine the student's perception of effectiveness Google platform in online learning in English for student grade XI. The results showed that the effectiveness of online learning in English in Covid-19 pandemic situation at SMA Muhammadiyah Tanah Grogot. Research conducted by Alma Sri Andriyani "Student PERCEPTION in learning english through blended learning" This recent study aims: (1) to investigate how the blended learning process is operated, and (2) to determine students' perceptions in learning English through blended learning. This study indicated that learning English through blended learning showed positive behavior like attending the class regularly and enthusiastically. Research conducted by Izzati Ulya "Student PERCEPTION of english day and speaking skill at As Shiddiqi islamic boarding school" The research aimed to investigate the impact of English Day on students' speaking skills in Islamic schools, using questionnaires to gather data on students' perceptions of English Day. The results showed that English Day positively affects speaking skills.

Several previous studies have examined students' perceptions of English language learning in various instructional contexts, including online learning, blended learning, and English programmes implemented in Islamic boarding schools. These studies generally report positive student attitudes toward English learning initiatives. However, empirical research that specifically explores students' perceptions of English language learning through the Wajar Dikdas programme (Compulsory Education) in Islamic boarding schools remains limited, particularly with regard to programme usefulness and English teachers' characteristics. In response to this gap, the present study aims to investigate students' perceptions of English language learning through the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) at Sidogiri Banat 1 Islamic Boarding School, focusing on the perceived usefulness of the programme and the characteristics of English teachers involved in its implementation.

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative-descriptive method, which included a questionnaire and an interview as instruments. Qualitative research is an approach that uses case studies, individual experiences, interviews, observation, and interaction to talk about problems, events, and activities (Nassaji, 2015). The participants of this study were 72 students in grade XIII in programme wajar dikdas (compulsory education) Sidogiri Banat 1. A total of 72 students were selected who had participated in English language learning for at least one semester. The data for this study was gathered through questionnaires and interviews. The respondents were given a questionnaire with 15 questions in Bahasa Indonesia to fill out to collect data. The data was collected using a Google form. From 15 questions, 8 questions were designed about the usefulness, while 7 questions were asked about English teacher characteristics. The questionnaire itself employed a five-option Likert scale that entails: (5) strongly agree; (4) agree; (3) neutral; (2) disagree; (1) strongly disagree. The data were presented descriptively using percentages and discussed descriptively to demonstrate the tendencies of students' perceptions. While the interview data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. The Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing data with the aim of discovering patterns and themes that have been collected by researchers (Nassaji, 2015; Asnawi, 2022). Finally, the findings of students' response were grouped and separated based on categories and presented in figure form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION**Findings**

Students' perceptions of learning English through Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) in terms of its usefulness. This finding discussed to the usefulness of Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) in learning English classes. Table 1 shows the students' perceptions of English language learning that are discussed descriptively.

Table 1. Questionnaire data about the usefulness Wajar Dikdas programme

No Questionnaire Statements	Responses N = 72 (100%)				
	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	DA (1)
1. Using the Wadas programme can improve my understanding of English.	5,6%	45,8%	36,1%	2,8%	2,8%
2. Learning English in Wadas class makes it easier for me to communicate with my English teacher.	5,6%	45,8%	36,1%	9,7%	2,8%
3. Learning English through the Wadas programme has motivated me to study English more diligently.	4,2%	48,6%	37,5%	5,6%	4,2%
4. Receive many benefits from the Wadas programme, such as get new experiences in learning English	6,9%	62,5%	23,6%	5,6%	1,4%
5. Learning English through Wajar Dikdas is fun and interesting.	6,9%	44,4%	38,9%	6,9%	2,8%
6. I can express ideas or answers in English with confidence through Wajar Dikdas.	2,8%	38,9%	40,3%	15,3%	2,8%
7. I like face-to-face English classes in the Wajar Dikdas programme because the material is presented clearly.	11,1%	47,2%	29,2%	9,7%	2,8%
8. In class, Wadas gave me more things to learn in English.	2,8%	44,4%	30,6%	18,1%	4,2%

Adopted by Asnawi Muslim

Based on the data presented in Table 1, students generally perceive the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) as useful in supporting English learning. Most students agreed that the programme provided new learning experiences (62.5%) and improved their understanding of English (45.8%). In addition, 48.6% of students reported increased motivation to learn English, while 44.4% perceived English learning through the programme as fun and interesting. The programme also facilitated interaction with teachers, as indicated by 45.8% of students who agreed that it made communication easier, and 47.2% who agreed that face-to-face instruction helped clarify learning materials. However, a relatively high neutral response (40.3%) regarding confidence in expressing ideas in English indicates that, although the programme is useful in enhancing understanding and motivation, its contribution to developing students' speaking ability remains limited.

Overall, the findings in Table 1 indicate that students hold positive perceptions of the usefulness of the Wajar Dikdas programme in English language learning. The programme is viewed as effective in improving understanding, learning motivation, interaction, and learning experiences. Nevertheless, the neutral responses related to speaking confidence

suggest that further attention is needed to support students in developing greater confidence in using English orally.

The findings from the processed observation data show indicate that most students perceive English learning in the Wajar Dikdas programme as interesting and beneficial in providing new knowledge. This suggests that the programme has succeeded in raising students' awareness of English and introducing basic language concepts. However, these positive perceptions have not yet translated into the development of productive skills, particularly speaking ability. Students reported that the learning activities were insufficient to support active oral practice, resulting in limited speaking competence. In addition, a small number of students viewed English learning in the Wajar Dikdas programme as boring and difficult, mainly because they prioritised religious studies, which remain their primary focus in the pesantren context. This finding highlights that while the programme is useful at the cognitive level, its effectiveness in enhancing communicative skills is still constrained by students' learning preferences and the institutional emphasis on religious education.

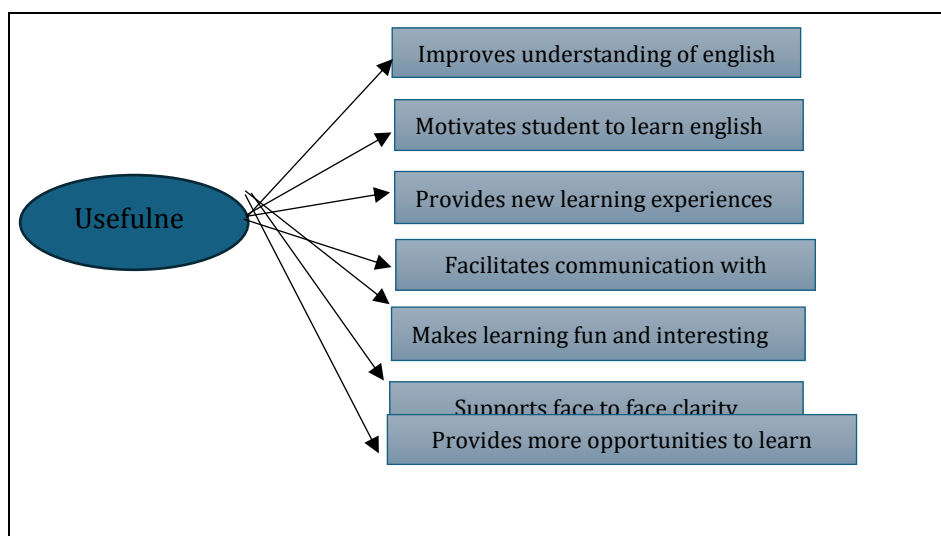


Figure 1. Usefulness of Wajar Dikdas Programme in English Learning

Figure 1 shows that students generally perceived the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) as useful for English language learning. The programme was reported to improve students' understanding of English, increase learning motivation, and provide new learning experiences. It also facilitated communication between students and teachers and created more engaging learning activities. In addition, students perceived that the programme offered more opportunities to learn and practice English. However, some students still considered face-to-face learning clearer than programme-based learning, particularly in terms of material explanation.

Table 2. Questionnaire Data about English Teachers' Characteristics

No	Questionnaire Statements	Responses N = 72 (100%)				
		SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	DA (1)
9.	Teacher is friendly and motivated	22,2%	54,2%	18,1%	1,4%	4,2%
10.	Teacher conducts questions and answers activities through wajar dikdas class.	12,5%	55,6%	27,8%	2,8%	1,4%
11.	Teachers continue to supervise students during English language learning in the basic education	13,9%	51,4%	18,1%	13,9%	2,8%

programme in the classroom.					
12. Teachers use easy-to-understand English in class.	18,1%	54,2%	18,1%	6,9%	2,8%
13. Teacher gives enough time to finish a task at the class wajar dikdas	19,4%	56,9%	19,4%	2,8%	1,4%
14. Instructions given by the teacher in wajar dikdas during English learning are easy to understand.	11,1%	45,8%	34,7%	4,2%	4,2%
15. Student can easily understand English material explained by the teacher through wajar dikdas.	15,3%	51,4%	23,6%	5,6%	4,2%

Adopted by Asnawi Muslim

The findings indicate that students hold predominantly positive perceptions of English teachers' characteristics in the Wajar Dikdas programme. Most students agreed that teachers were friendly and motivating (54.2%) and actively engaged students through question-and-answer activities (55.6%). Teachers were also perceived to consistently supervise students during learning (51.4%), use easy-to-understand English (54.2%), and explain materials clearly (51.4%), indicating instructional competence and clarity. The highest agreement was found in teachers' provision of sufficient time to complete tasks (56.9%), reflecting supportive classroom management. However, a notable proportion of students selected neutral responses regarding the clarity of teachers' instructions (34.7%), suggesting that although teacher characteristics are generally positive, further improvement in instructional delivery is still needed.

Overall, the findings in Table 2 indicate that English teachers in the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) were perceived as friendly, motivating, and instructionally competent. Teachers' classroom management, clarity of explanation, and supportive attitudes contributed positively to students' perceptions of English learning.

Observation data indicate that most students perceived the English teacher in the Wajar Dikdas classroom as motivating and supportive. The teacher created a pleasant learning atmosphere, delivered generally comprehensible materials, and occasionally used English in casual interactions, which fostered positive student engagement. However, some students still experienced difficulties in understanding the explanations, and a few perceived the teaching as monotonous, reducing their learning interest. Overall, these findings align with the questionnaire results, suggesting that although teacher characteristics are largely positive, more engaging and differentiated instructional strategies are needed.

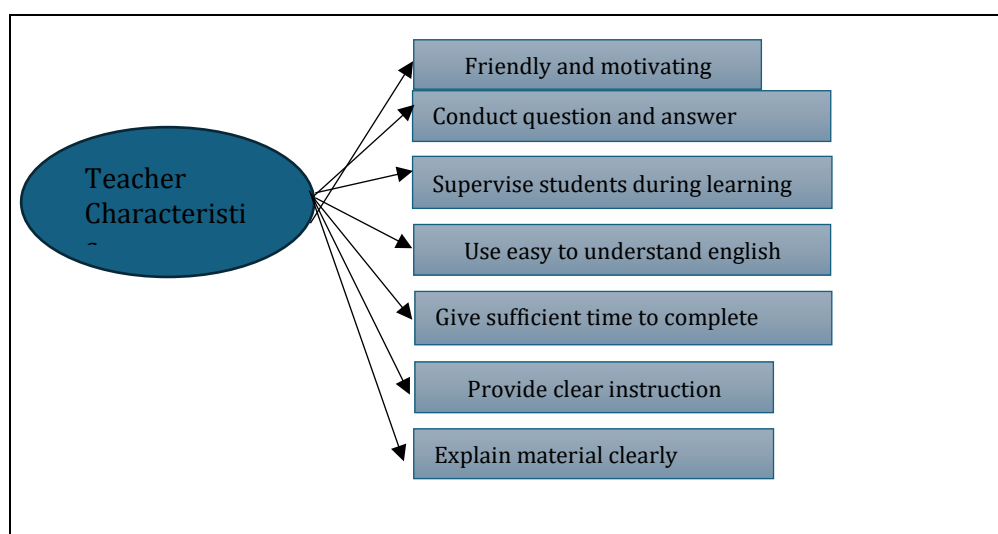


Figure 2. English Teachers' Characteristics in Wajar Dikdas Programme

Figure 2 shows that students generally perceived English teachers in the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) positively. Teachers were viewed as friendly and

motivating, actively engaging students through question-and-answer activities, and consistently supervising the learning process. Teachers were also perceived to use understandable English, provide clear explanations, and give sufficient time for completing tasks. However, some students expressed neutral perceptions regarding the clarity of teachers' instructions, indicating that instructional delivery may still need improvement.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of English language learning through the Wajar Dikdas (Compulsory Education) programme at Islamic Boarding School Sidogiri Banat 1. These positive perceptions are shaped by both the perceived usefulness of the programme and the supportive characteristics of English teachers, which together play a crucial role in fostering students' engagement in English learning within the pesantren environment.

The positive perceptions regarding programme usefulness suggest that the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) effectively supports students' English learning by improving comprehension, increasing motivation, and creating enjoyable learning experiences. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that students' positive perceptions contribute significantly to motivation and engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning (Marsenda & Susiati, 2025; Pupah & Syuhda, 2024). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, where religious studies are often prioritized, the ability of the programme to generate interest and motivation toward English learning is particularly important.

Despite the overall positive responses, students' neutral perceptions regarding confidence in speaking English indicate that receptive skills and understanding may develop more strongly than productive skills. This condition reflects common challenges faced by EFL learners in pesantren contexts, such as limited exposure to spoken English and anxiety in using the language orally. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which highlight the need for increased communicative activities to enhance students' speaking confidence (Pebriani et al., 2022; Madani et al., 2023).

Teacher characteristics were also found to significantly influence students' perceptions of English learning. The findings demonstrate that English teachers in the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) are perceived as friendly, motivating, and instructional competent. Teachers' clear explanations, effective classroom management, and supportive attitudes contribute to a positive learning atmosphere, which is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of teacher behavior and instructional clarity in shaping students' learning experiences (Wijaya, 2017; Tatipang et al., 2022; Fadhilah & Warni, 2024).

Moreover, in pesantren-based education, teacher support and approachability are essential due to the traditional learning environment and students' diverse academic backgrounds. The positive perceptions of teacher characteristics found in this study suggest that English teachers play a vital role in bridging general education and religious instruction, thereby helping students adapt more comfortably to English learning within the Wajar Dikdas framework.

Overall, the discussion highlights that the effectiveness of English learning through the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) is influenced by a combination of programme structure and teacher characteristics. While the programme has successfully fostered positive perceptions and supportive learning conditions, further pedagogical efforts—particularly the integration of communicative and interactive teaching strategies—are necessary to enhance students' active use of English, especially speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of English language learning through the Wajar Dikdas (Compulsory Education) programme at Islamic Boarding School Sidogiri Banat 1, focusing on the programme's usefulness and English teachers' characteristics. The findings indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions toward the implementation of English learning within the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education). The programme is perceived as beneficial in improving students' understanding of English,

increasing learning motivation, facilitating interaction with teachers, and providing meaningful learning experiences in the pesantren context.

Furthermore, English teachers in the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) are perceived as friendly, motivating, and supportive. Teachers' clear explanations, understandable language use, effective classroom management, and sufficient time allocation for tasks contribute positively to students' engagement and learning experiences. However, some students expressed neutral perceptions regarding their confidence in using English, particularly in speaking. Therefore, while the Wajar Dikdas programme (compulsory education) shows strong potential in supporting effective English learning in Islamic boarding schools, continuous improvement in communicative teaching strategies and teacher professional development is necessary to enhance students' active language use and learning outcomes.

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