

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines several fundamental aspects that form the foundation of this study. These aspects include the context of study, the research questions, and the research objectives to be achieved. In addition, this chapter also outlines the significance of the research, the scope and limitations of the study to clarify the scope of the analysis, and definitions of key terms to avoid misunderstandings regarding the terminology used in this research.

A. Context of Study

English is an international language that is highly important to master because it serves as the primary means of communication in various countries around the world. Although categorized as a foreign language in Indonesia, English still plays an important role in people's lives. This role is reflected in the national education system, where English is taught as a foreign language subject from elementary school to university.¹

English language learning at the elementary school level is a crucial stage in building the foundation of students' language skills. According to Piaget, elementary school-aged children are in the concrete operational stage (approximately ages 7–11), a stage during which children begin to think logically through mental operations such as grouping and sequencing, yet their

¹ Adinda Aulia Rahmah, "Evaluation of the Importance of English as a Foreign Language in Elementary Schools in Indonesia," *Journal Of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* 3, no. 1 (July 2023): 52–63.

thinking remains limited to tangible objects or situations.² Based on these characteristics, learning for elementary school students needs to be presented through concrete, interactive, and hands-on activities so that it is easier for students to understand.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), successful language learning is determined not only by cognitive abilities but also by affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen (1982), through the Affective Filter Hypothesis, explains that positive emotional states facilitate language acquisition, whereas high levels of anxiety can hinder the process. The success of second language learning is influenced by several factors derived from the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. These factors include the amount of input that can be understood by learners and the strength of the affective filter, namely the extent to which learners are open and receptive to the language input they receive. Theoretically, the main basis of this study is the Affective Filter Hypothesis. The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory proposed by Stephen Krashen, particularly the Affective Filter Hypothesis, states that affective factors such as high motivation, good self-confidence, and low anxiety levels can lower students' affective filters, allowing language input to be received and processed more optimally. Conversely, if students experience anxiety, fear, or high emotional pressure, the affective filter will increase and inhibit the language acquisition process. Thus,

² Jean Piaget et al., *The Psychology of Intelligence* (London [u.a.]: Routledge, 2001).

effective English language learning should be able to create an emotionally safe learning environment that supports students' affective development.³

In classroom practice, it is still observed that elementary school students often struggle to use English actively, particularly in speaking situations. Based on direct observations during the English Weekly Meeting at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung, it was evident that fourth-grade students still exhibited fear, shyness, and a lack of confidence when asked to present in English. Some students tend to avoid eye contact, speak in a soft voice, and rely heavily on the text when presenting. This situation indicates that students face not only linguistic challenges but also social pressures that affect their courage to communicate.

This issue indicates that English language learning in elementary school has not fully addressed students' affective aspects. Instruction still tends to focus on mastering content, while students' emotional experiences in using the language have not been a primary concern. Consequently, although students have studied English, they are not yet fully capable of using the language confidently in real-life situations.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the success of English language learning in elementary school is not only determined by teaching methods and materials but is also significantly influenced by students' affective state. Therefore, an educational approach or program is needed that

³ Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, 1st ed, Language Teaching Methodology Series (Pergamon, 1982).

not only focuses on cognitive aspects but is also capable of creating a learning environment that is comfortable, enjoyable, and supportive of students' emotional development, so that they become more active and confident in using English.

Although, in theory, English language learning for elementary school students should take place in an enjoyable, safe, and emotionally supportive environment, the reality on the ground reveals conditions that are not yet fully ideal. According to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, particularly Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, the language acquisition process proceeds optimally when students possess high motivation, strong self-confidence, and low anxiety levels. Under these conditions, students will be more open to receiving and processing language input. However, in learning practice, particularly in performance-demanding activities such as public speaking, elementary school students often still face affective barriers in the form of shyness, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about social judgment from their surroundings.

This gap becomes increasingly apparent in the implementation of practice-based learning programs, such as the English Weekly Meeting, which are ideally designed to enhance students' confidence and language skills through real-world activities. These programs are expected to create communicative and meaningful learning experiences. However, in reality, not all students are able to participate optimally. Some students still exhibit passive engagement, reliance on texts, and anxiety when they have to speak in front of

an audience. This indicates a discrepancy between the program's objective as a space for active learning and students' affective experiences, which remain influenced by emotional and social factors.

A study of the English Full Day program at MTs (equivalent to junior high school) confirms that the main barriers to speaking skills include a lack of vocabulary, courage or confidence, and fear of making mistakes. All of which are components of a high "affective filter" according to second language acquisition theory. These findings suggest that experience-based learning activities play a crucial role in helping students manage affective barriers, thereby better preparing them to use English in learning situations.⁴

One effort to create a learning environment that supports students' affective aspects is through communicative and activity-based learning programs. At SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung, there is a program called the English Weekly Meeting Program which is carried out regularly. This program is designed to provide students with opportunities to use English through various activities, such as speech practice, poetry reading, practicing to be an MC, drama performances, and reading the Qur'an and its English translation. These activities require students to perform, express themselves, and interact actively using English in a more flexible atmosphere than formal classroom learning. The students who participate in this program are selected by teachers based on their English language skills, which are assessed to be above average compared

⁴ Eko Bayuningsih, *Manajemen Program English Full Day School Untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris di MTs Negeri 3 Cilacap*, 2024.

to their classmates. Therefore, only about 10 to 12 students in each class, from third to sixth grade, participate in this program. In each class, there are three tutors who are responsible for guiding the students from the beginning to the end of the program. At the end of the program, students who have participated in a series of program activities on a regular basis will present the results of their training to the principal, teachers, and friends.

Although various studies have examined practice-based English language learning programs, most still focus on program effectiveness or improvements in students' language proficiency. Rohman et al. (2025), in their study titled "EFL Students' Experience in a Language Immersion Program: A Diary Study," demonstrate that students' learning experiences in immersion programs can influence both their language development and their emotional well-being. However, that study was conducted in a more general context and did not specifically highlight the dynamics of elementary school students' affective experiences in performative situations such as public speaking.⁵

Maziyah et al. (2023) in their study "The Implementation of Weekly English Conversation in Learning Speaking among EFL Learners" assert that regular speaking practice can help increase student engagement in English language learning.⁶ Similarly, Habib Salim (2021) in "Exploring the English Speaking Program at an Islamic Boarding School in Kudus" demonstrates that

⁵ Daffani Nur Rohman and Sri Wulandari, *EFL Students' Experience in a Language Immersion Program: A Diary Study*, 13, no. 1 (2025).

⁶ Faizatul Maziyah et al., "The Implementation of Weekly English Conversation in Learning Speaking among EFL Learners," *JADEs Journal of Academia in English Education* 4, no. 1 (2023): 89–107, <https://doi.org/10.32505/jades.v4i1.5756>.

speaking programs can boost students' confidence in communicating.⁷ However, both studies remain focused on program implementation and its impact on language skills, without delving deeply into how students subjectively experience this emotional process.

The study by Mattarima et al. (2022), titled “English Study Club: How Students' Mental Attributes Reflect Their Motivation,” does indeed begin to examine affective aspects, particularly motivation, in English language learning. However, this study focuses more on the relationship between mental attributes and motivation and has not comprehensively discussed the interaction between motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as a unified affective experience of students.⁸

Various weekly or daily programs at Islamic institutions, such as the English Morning Program held three times a week at 6:30 a.m. at an MTs, have proven to provide structured practice opportunities (poetry, conversation, etc.) that increase language opportunities and spark student motivation. The research is by Aisyah Yasmin Azizah (2024) entitled “Exploring the English Morning Program as a Medium for Practicing Students' English Language Skills at an Islamic Junior School,” indicates that language practice programs can boost students' self-confidence. This format and rhythm are in line with the “Weekly Meeting” held by SDI Al Azhaar (reading poetry and speeches, drama, reciting

⁷ Habib Salim Ak, *Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Gaining the Degree of Education Bachelor in English Language Education*, 2021.

⁸ Siti Maria Ulfa Mattarima et al., “English Study Club: How Students' Mental Attributes Reflect Their Motivation,” *Celtic : A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics* 9, no. 1 (2022): 120–34, <https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v9i1.18975>.

the Qur'an with English translations, becoming an MC), making it contextually relevant. However, the study highlights the program's outcomes and benefits rather than students' in-depth experiences during the process.⁹

At the elementary school level, local empirical evidence on how Weekly Meetings, which combine Islamic content and performance, affect students' affective aspects is still limited. Given that affective barriers have been identified as the main obstacle to fluency in English, studies that map the affective experiences of elementary school students in such programs are urgently needed to improve activity design and teacher assistance. The existing literature largely continues to focus on learning outcomes, general perceptions, or program implementation, and few studies have examined students' affective experiences in depth, particularly at the elementary school level. Furthermore, studies employing a phenomenological approach to understand how students experience motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety within the context of performance-based learning programs remain relatively limited. So far, evaluations of similar programs have often focused more on student outcomes or performance, while students' subjective experiences during the program are rarely studied in depth.

In fact, student learning experiences are a crucial aspect that plays a role in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and impact of a learning program as perceived by students. Through the exploration

⁹ Aisyah Yasmin Azizah, *Exploring English Morning Program as A Media For Practicing Students' English Language Skills at Islamic Junior High School*, 2024.

of learning experiences, it is possible to identify how students interpret learning activities, the emotional responses that arise during their involvement, and various factors that contribute to or hinder student participation. In English language learning, student learning experiences are closely related to the affective aspect as stated in Krashen's theory, so that studies of these experiences are relevant and significant to research. This gap opens up opportunities for theoretical and practical contributions in the context of Islamic elementary schools.

This study highlights the affective experiences of fourth-grade students in the English Weekly Meeting Program at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung. Therefore, this research offers a more in-depth perspective by analyzing students' experiences through a qualitative phenomenological approach, using the Affective Filter Hypothesis as an interpretive framework to understand students' motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety in the learning process.

This approach remains relatively limited in the context of elementary schools, particularly in Islamic school settings, which have traditionally been studied primarily from the perspective of language proficiency or the implementation of learning programs. This study specifically emphasizes the interplay between motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as an integrated part of students' affective experiences, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding from the students' own perspective.

Thus, this study complements previous research also focuses not only on what occurs during the learning process but also on how students perceive, respond to, and interpret these experiences. By employing a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study aims to uncover the essential meanings of students' experiences in participating in the English Weekly Meeting program, particularly in relation to motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Thus, this study is expected to contribute to enriching research on English language learning in elementary schools, particularly regarding students' affective aspects, and to serve as a basis for consideration by teachers and program administrators in designing learning activities that are not only cognitively effective but also support students' emotional development.

B. Research Questions

Regarding to the context of study above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How do the fourth-grade students at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung experience the English Weekly Meeting program in relation to motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety?
2. How do the fourth-grade students at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung experience the process of reducing affective barriers through the English Weekly Meeting program?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the research questions above, the present study is directed to:

1. Explore fourth-grade students' experiences in the English Weekly Meeting program in relation to motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety
2. Understand students' experiences in reducing affective barriers through the English Weekly Meeting program.

D. Significance of Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful contributions and generate valuable insights for the development of knowledge as well as for practitioners, educators, and future researchers who are concerned with this field.

1. Theoretical: To provide a contextual understanding of the application of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis in English language learning at the elementary school level, particularly with regard to the dynamics of student motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.
2. Practical: To provide guidance for teachers, schools, and program administrators in designing English language learning activities that are not only effective but also create an emotionally supportive environment, thereby helping to reduce students' affective barriers.
3. Academic: Contributes to enriching the study of elementary school students' affective experiences in the context of language learning programs, particularly in weekly meetings, a topic that has previously been studied primarily at the secondary education level.

E. Scope and Limitations of Study

This study is limited to the fourth-grade students at Al-Azhaar Tulungagung Elementary School who participate in the English Weekly Meeting Program. The focus of the study is only on affective aspects (motivation, self-confidence, anxiety).

In this study, the researcher acknowledged his own involvement in the context of the English Weekly Meeting program. This position allowed the researcher to gain a closer understanding of the learning situation, but it also had the potential to influence the data collection and interpretation processes. Therefore, the researcher practiced reflexivity by being mindful of potential biases throughout the study and ensuring the credibility of the data through the triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentation.

F. Definition of Key Term

To avoid misunderstanding of the terms used in this study, they need to be defined as follows:

1. Exploring Experiences

Exploring experiences refers to the process of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups give to their lived experiences related to a social or human phenomenon.¹⁰ It focuses on gaining deep insights into participants' perspectives and interpretations of their experiences. It involves collecting qualitative information about how the fourth-grade

¹⁰ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches," *SAGE*, 2018.

students experience learning activities under the English Weekly Meeting framework.

2. Fourth-Grade Students

Fourth-grade students refer to learners who are in the fourth year of primary education at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung, typically aged 9–10 years old. These students are considered to be in the middle stage of elementary education.

3. English Weekly Meeting Program

English Weekly Meeting program at SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung held three times a week, involving activities such as make a speech, poetry reading, drama, reciting the Qur'an with English translations, and hosting (MC). The activities are conducted after school for one hour. They will perform everything they have practiced at the end of the month in front of their parents, teachers, and friends.

4. SDI Al Azhaar Tulungagung

It refers to the specific educational institution where this study is conducted. It is an Islamic elementary school located in Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia, implementing the English Weekly Meeting Program for its fourth-grade students. The school serves as the research site for data collection through observation and interviews.