

Context-responsive pedagogy in English language teaching in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching (ELT) in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, commonly known as *pesantren*, presents a unique context that requires a tailored pedagogical approach. This study aimed to explore the application of context-responsive pedagogy in ELT within the unique context of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews and classroom observation as data generation methods to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of English language teachers regarding the implementation of context-responsive pedagogy in English language instruction. The findings revealed the importance of understanding learner needs, incorporating authentic materials, promoting cultural sensitivity, and effective use of technology in ELT practices in Islamic boarding school contexts. This study delves into how English language teachers navigated and negotiated their practices with the socio-cultural and religious values entrenched in this institution. It also highlighted the challenges English language teachers in this school context faced in the implementation of context-responsive pedagogy. Eventually, this research provides valuable insights for ELT practitioners, policymakers, and researchers interested in incorporating context-specific pedagogy to optimize ELT in Islamic boarding schools and similar educational contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English language classrooms present unique challenges due to the diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners [1]–[3]. English language learners have specific language goals and contexts for language use. They may require English for academic purposes, while others may need it for professional or social purposes; each context demands different language skills, vocabulary, and cultural competencies [4], [5]. Additionally, English language learners have different proficiency levels and learning preferences. Some learners might be comfortable of the maximum use of English in classrooms, but others may prefer the accommodation of languages other than English [6], [7]. In the context of Islamic boarding schools an Islamic-rooted educational institution in Indonesia, English language teaching (ELT) finds some

significant problems. One of the problems is that Islamic boarding school students (usually called ‘santri’) often perceive of English not useful for their daily lives, making them less motivated to learn English [8]. Another problem is the limited integration of culturally and contextually relevant teaching materials and methods. As the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have unique cultural, religious, and social contexts that differ from conventional educational settings. However, ELT practices in Islamic boarding schools often rely on generic materials and methodologies that do not adequately align with the specific needs, values, and identities of students in these settings. Within Islamic boarding school settings, teaching activities are frequently based on teachers’ lectures or textbook instruction, often lacking in strategies to encourage active student engagement. This misalignment impedes effective language acquisition and fails to harness the rich cultural and religious resources inherent to Islamic boarding school education, rendering ELT less impactful in fulfilling the educational and linguistic needs of the students.

Therefore, implementing an approach which recognizes individual differences, considers learners’ language goals and contexts, accommodates proficiency levels and learning preferences, integrates cultural dimensions, and promotes communicative competence is essential in the teaching of English as a foreign language. To this end, this paper presents importance of a so-called context-responsive pedagogy in ELT, which adapts instructional approaches to the learners’ specific contexts, fostering meaningful and effective language learning experiences. It argues that this approach is in line with the ‘spirit’ of what several scholars write as ‘post-method era’ (see for example [9]–[12] in which the objective in the exploration of language teaching methodology is not to discover a single best way of teaching, but rather to illuminate principles that enable teachers to develop or adopt an approach which is sensitive to their own specific context.

Context-responsive pedagogy is a pedagogical approach that has emerged from the theoretical underpinnings of other instructional frameworks, most notably Littlewood’s construct of context-sensitive pedagogy [13] and Gay’s culturally responsive teaching [14]. Expanding upon these two pedagogical constructs, the idea of context-responsive pedagogy seeks to align the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which prioritizes language learning for effective communication [15], with the socio-cultural dynamics present within educational institutions. Context-sensitive pedagogy in this paper is defined as an approach to teaching and learning that takes into consideration the specific contextual factors that influence the educational process. It recognizes that educational settings vary in terms of cultural, linguistic, social, and institutional factors [16], [17], and therefore, teaching methods and materials should be adapted to suit the particular context in which learning takes place. Meanwhile, culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the importance of incorporating students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences into the instructional process to enhance their learning outcomes. Building upon this foundation, context-responsive pedagogy extends the notion of cultural responsiveness to encompass a broader range of contextual factors that influence learning and teaching in ELT settings.

In the context of ELT, context-responsive pedagogy recognizes that effective instruction goes beyond the mere transmission of language knowledge and skills. It acknowledges the significance of considering learners’ unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds [18], [19], as well as the specific goals, needs and expectations they have for learning English [20]. This pedagogical approach emphasizes the need for instructional strategies that are tailored to the particular context in which English is being learned and taught, thus promoting a more meaningful and relevant learning experience for students. In other words, this approach recognizes that language is not learned in isolation but is embedded in social and cultural contexts, and thus, language teaching should reflect this reality. It aims to create an inclusive and empowering learning environment where students’ diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are valued and incorporated into the instructional process [21]. By integrating cultural responsiveness into ELT, context-responsive pedagogy seeks to bridge the gap between students’ cultural identities and the language being taught.

This study delves into the principles of context-responsive pedagogy for ELT in Islamic boarding school contexts as well as the challenges. It explores the significance of understanding learner needs, incorporating authentic materials and real-world tasks, promoting cultural sensitivity, and effectively utilizing technology. The challenges of implementing this approach in English language classroom contexts are also elaborated. The research gap that this article would like to highlight is the limited exploration and application of context-responsive pedagogy in the field of ELT. Although there have been studies on this pedagogical approach and related theories in other educational contexts, its implementation and investigation specifically within ELT remain relatively scarce. This gap suggests that there is still much to explore regarding how context-responsive pedagogy can be effectively integrated into ELT practices. Investigating the potential benefits, challenges, and strategies for implementing context-responsive pedagogy specifically in ELT contexts would be a valuable contribution to the field.

The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of the application of context-responsive pedagogy specifically within the context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. This study contributes to the existing literature by examining how pedagogical approaches can be tailored and adapted to the unique cultural,

religious, and educational context of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. By focusing on the specific case of Islamic boarding schools, the article offers new insights and practical implications for ELT practices in this specific context, addressing the gap in research on context-responsive pedagogy within Islamic educational settings in Indonesia. The study, therefore, unveils novel technical results that bear implications for pedagogical practices within a uniquely challenging and rich environment.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the phenomenon under investigation in-depth within a specific context, i.e., how context-responsive pedagogy was enacted by English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools. Following Stake [22], case study was chosen in this study because it allowed us as the researchers to capture the comprehensive and significant aspects of real-life events. In addition, it ensures that the richness and meaningfulness of the phenomena under investigation are maintained [23].

2.1. Participants

The participants in this study were selected purposefully based on their length of teachings and the Islamic boarding schools located in different areas in the Province of Lampung. A total of five English language teacher participants were included in the study. They currently working in different Islamic boarding schools in five different regions; Bandar Lampung, Metro city, Lampung Timur, Lampung Tengah, and Pesawaran.

The participants in this study had varying lengths of experience in ELT, ranging from 5 to 10 years. Prior to their participation in this study, the participants were informed that the aim of the research was to gain an understanding of how context-responsive pedagogy was enacted in their ELT practices within the context of Islamic boarding schools. With the approval of the school principal, we contacted potential participants who were English language teachers and provided them with a consent form. To ensure confidentiality, none of the participants are identified in this paper; instead, they are referred to as Teachers 1-5. Teachers 1-3 teach in junior secondary school level while Teachers 4 and 5 in senior secondary school's level. The participants were fully informed of their rights, including access to their own information, the ability to request additional information, and the right to withdraw their participation from the research at any stage.

2.2. Data generation technique and analysis

Data were generated through two primary methods: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observation allowed for the direct observation of the phenomenon in its natural setting while semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to gather rich, in-depth insights from the participants to reinforce the observation. Classroom observations were conducted to directly observe the phenomenon being investigated [24]. We did one observation in each teacher participant's classrooms, observing the teaching practices, interactions between teachers and students, and the overall dynamics of the learning environment. Detailed field notes were taken during the observations to capture important details and contextual information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant individually to provide them with the opportunity to express themselves authentically and share their personal thoughts and feelings [25] regarding their teaching practices. The interview questions were carefully designed to elicit detailed and nuanced responses related to the research objectives. The interviews lasted about 60 minutes were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken during the interviews to capture non-verbal cues and observations.

Following the data generation process by Miles *et al.* [26] qualitative data analysis was conducted, which involved four sequential steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and data. This data analysis framework helped me as the researcher to systematically analyze the data generated through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for a rigorous and structured examination of the collected data, facilitating the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights relevant to the context-responsive pedagogy in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools' ELT practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result of classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with a particular focus on exploring the features of context-responsive pedagogy as shown in Figure 1 developed from the notion of context-sensitive pedagogy [13] and culturally responsive teaching [14], namely: understanding learner needs, incorporating authentic materials, promoting cultural sensitivity, and utilizing

technology effectively. In addition, the challenges English language teachers faced in implementing this approach within Islamic boarding schools were also presented.

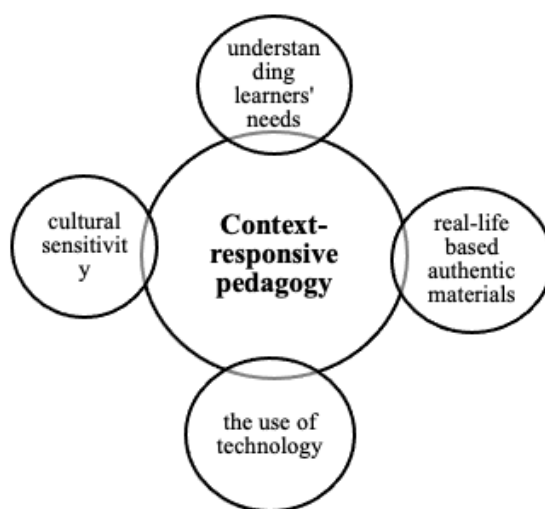


Figure 1. Features of context-responsive pedagogy

3.1. Understanding learners' needs

One of the foundational pillars of context-responsive pedagogy in ELT is a thorough understanding of learner needs. By conducting needs assessments, English language teachers can tailor their instructional approaches to meet the specific requirements of their learners. Regarding this principle, the data were mainly taken from interview extracts. The following are some examples:

"In the first meeting of the term, I made some kind of diagnosis test to see how far the English proficiency of my students. Their proficiency mostly is considered in low category because I think English is no longer a priority in elementary school level." (Teacher 1)

"In addition to English subject-related questions, I also asked about their perceptions of learning English. You know like what do you think about English? What is your preferred way to learn English? and so on." (Teacher 4)

These two teachers' responses indicated how they attempted to understand their students' needs. Teacher 1 focused on students' proficiency and Teacher 2 and Teacher 5 expressed the similar focus as him. Meanwhile, Teacher 4 added learning style and motivation aspect in her students' need assessment. The strategy practiced by these teachers to understand learners' needs by recognizing that learners come from diverse backgrounds with varying proficiency levels and learning styles is important to conduct a needs assessment to identify learners' language proficiency levels and categorize their areas of strengths and weaknesses [27]. Understanding learners' educational backgrounds can provide valuable insights into their prior knowledge and experiences. This knowledge can be leveraged to establish connections between new language concepts and learners' existing knowledge, facilitating comprehension and retention [28]. In the context of English language learning, students' learning outcomes are enhanced when they initially tap into their existing knowledge, which significantly contributes to improving the academic literacy of English language learners [29]. The process of activating prior knowledge involves both extracting the students' existing knowledge and providing them with the foundational knowledge necessary to comprehend forthcoming content [30]. Acknowledging and building upon learners' prior knowledge is therefore useful for English language teachers to generate a more meaningful and cohesive learning experience.

Another aspect to consider when understanding learners' needs is motivation. Studies have highlighted that motivation also plays a significant role in language learning (see for example [31]–[33]). Some learners may be intrinsically motivated, driven by their personal interest in the language and culture, while others may be extrinsically motivated, pursuing language learning for academic or professional reasons [34]. By understanding learners' motivations, English language teachers can design activities that tap into their interests and goals, making the learning experience more relevant and meaningful.

Different from other participants, Teacher 3 did not do such test in the beginning of the semester. Instead, he did “*formative test which involves students’ feedback to capture information around English learning process*” (Teacher 3). This is also a crucial component of understanding learners’ needs is continuous formative assessment. Assessment for a formative purpose is intended to direct students’ learning processes and enhance students’ academic outcomes, including in English language learning [35], [36]. Regularly assessing learners’ progress and collecting feedback, according to Van der Kleij *et al.* [37], allows English language teachers to gauge the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and make necessary adjustments. Through feedback, students can identify and improve some inadequate or poor knowledge or skills that hinder their learning progress [38], [39]. In other words, feedback from learners can provide valuable insights into their learning experiences, preferences, and areas where additional support may be needed.

3.2. Using authentic materials and real-world tasks

Context-responsive pedagogy in ELT recognizes the importance of incorporating authentic materials and real-world tasks to enhance language learning outcomes. Authentic materials here refer to materials that are created and reflect the language as it is used in real-life situations. They are selected to engage students in developing English language skills and showcasing their abilities both within and beyond the classroom setting [40]. These materials can include authentic texts such as articles, books, newspapers, and magazines, as well as multimedia resources like videos, podcasts, and online content. With the incorporation of authentic materials in English classrooms, learners are exposed to the natural language forms, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that are prevalent in the target language [41]. This exposure helps learners develop a deeper understanding of the language and its nuances, improving their listening, reading, and comprehension skills.

For this principle, classroom observations indicated that English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools attempted to make some improvisations in creating authentic materials taken from students’ daily lives. For instance, when explaining some topics related to English grammar, the teachers often made English sentences by referring to common daily activities done in Islamic boarding schools. The information delivered in the sentences are derived from common activities in Islamic boarding school environment and therefore familiar to the students. In Table 1, there are some examples of the sentences taken from field notes made during classroom observations:

Table 1. Examples of English sentences containing daily lives in Islamic boarding schools

Examples of authentic materials	Source
We bring our own plates and queue up for their lunch.	Teacher 1
I bow my body and kiss my teacher’s hands to show my respect to him.	Teacher 2
Some students often eat together using only a tray.	Teacher 3
Parents can visit their children in Islamic boarding schools three times a year	Teacher 4
Classrooms in Islamic boarding schools are separated between males and females.	Teacher 5

According to the teachers, addressing students’ daily lives in English materials can make them “*more engaged and attracted to discuss the sentences and make them feel that English close to and useful in real lives*” (Teacher 4). Other teachers further elaborated that this kind of teaching strategy eased their works because it increased students’ understanding of a material content. Furthermore, the materials which reflected the language used in real-life Islamic boarding school settings provided students with exposure to the specific vocabulary and discourse patterns they encounter regularly. This exposure enhances their language acquisition skills. This case indicates that the adoption of context-responsive pedagogy in Islamic boarding school contexts worked better compared to traditional methods like the grammar-translation method, which predominantly concentrate on language forms rather than its practical application [42]. While the Grammar-Translation method may excel in imparting grammatical rules and vocabulary, it often falls short in equipping students with the essential skills for real-world communication.

The English language teachers’ use of authentic materials also showed in how they choose and modify the content of textbooks provided by government. For example, when teaching reading, the teachers changed the passages provided in English textbooks with the passages containing some Islamic-related contents. To illustrate this, teachers used a short passage about the history of Prophet Muhammad and his families when explaining the narrative text (Teacher 3). Meanwhile, when elaborating descriptive text, teachers utilized a passage describing some Islamic terms such as “What is *Hajj*?”, “*Shalat*: Muslim’s main worship”, and so forth (Teacher 1, Teacher 4). One of the examples of passage used is as follows.

The power of *Istighfar*

One day, Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal, a renowned Islamic scholar and theologian, was traveling and stopped by a city to pray. After the prayer, he decided to spend the night in the mosque courtyard as he didn't know anyone in the city. However, an unfamiliar mosque guard refused to allow him to stay in the mosque and dragged Imam Ahmed out. Witnessing this, a baker felt sorry for Imam Ahmed and offered to host him for the night.

During his stay with the baker, Imam Ahmed noticed that the baker continuously recited *Istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from Allah). Imam Ahmed then asked the baker if constantly reciting *Istighfar* had any impact on his life. The baker responded by informing Imam Ahmed that Allah had granted all his requests, except one, which was the privilege to meet the famous scholar Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal.

Upon hearing this, Imam Ahmed remarked that Allah not only heard the baker's prayers but also brought him to the doorstep of the baker's house.

This passage was taken from learning module made by Teacher 5. She obtained this short story from an Indonesian book and then translated the story into English. She chose this story because it tells us about *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness from God), which is very familiar to students because it is taught and implemented in daily routine of Islamic worships. These efforts of English language teachers in these schools are in line with the spirit of contextualization in ELT practices. Establishing context at a lesson by incorporating contextual situations, engaging topics, and talking points give the learners an opportunity to connect their prior experiences with how to use new English vocabulary well [43].

Regarding the use of real-world tasks, the teachers gave the learners some tasks such as telephoning for information, preparing a dinner, greeting and introduction, telling an opinion, and so forth. the teacher expected that by doing these tasks, learners are encouraged to apply their language skills to communicate, negotiate meaning, and solve problems. These tasks stimulate students to engage with learning process via role-plays, simulations, problem-solving activities, debates, and project-based learning [44]. Furthermore, the real-world tasks which learners with opportunities to use language in meaningful and authentic ways that simulate real-life situations [45], [46].

The authentic materials and real-world tasks allow English learners to experience language in context, enabling them to understand how language is used for specific purposes and in different social and cultural settings. The context-responsive approach fosters a deeper appreciation of the cultural aspects embedded within the language and enhances learners' intercultural competence [47]. Moreover, the use of authentic materials and real-world tasks encourages learners to engage in meaningful communication rather than focusing solely on language form. Learners are motivated to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, using the language for genuine purposes [48]. However, it is worth to note that using authentic materials and real-world tasks requires careful selection and adaptation to suit learners' proficiency levels and interests. English language teachers can scaffold the tasks and provide necessary support to ensure learners' success while gradually increasing the complexity of the materials and tasks as learners progress. It is essential to strike a balance between challenging learners and providing them with achievable goals that promote continuous growth and development.

3.3. Promoting cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity involves acknowledging and respecting the cultural diversity of learners in the classroom. It entails recognizing that language is not separate from culture, but rather intertwined with it [49]. In the context of Islamic schooling context, promoting cultural sensitivity is even considered more important due to some perceptions of English as a global language which tends to bring Western culture. Linguists such as Phillipson [50] and Pennycook [51] have contended that the global prevalence of English stems from the exercise of political and economic power by English-speaking nations, particularly the British and the Americans, who sought to maintain control over the dissemination of the English language. In the context of Indonesia, the discourse on English and colonialism may have diminished significance due to the country's historical colonization by the Dutch rather than English-speaking countries like England or the USA. Nonetheless, Lauder [52] notes that some Indonesian scholars and policy makers express concerns about the potential negative cultural impact of English on Indonesia's language and national identity. This apprehension can be viewed as a contemporary manifestation of colonialism, wherein cultural and economic imperialism occurs through the exploitation of English's dominant linguistic power [53].

In Islamic boarding schools, there is a common shared belief that the teaching of any subjects cannot ignore the existing cultural norms and values which are based on Islamic religious teachings. This is to maintain the learners' religious identity as a Muslim while able to learn non-religious subjects including English [54]. Therefore, being aware of this specific contextual condition, English language teachers in this schooling context attempted to integrate Islamic values into their ELT practices.

Observation notes as well as interviews indicated how English language teachers promoted cultural (religious) sensitivity in their practices. For example, all teacher participants started the class by Islamic greeting (*assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wa barakatuh*), which means “peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings”. Then, teachers invited students to recite *bismillahirrahmanirrahim* which mean “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful”. Afterwards, teachers asked students to recite the prayer of seeking knowledge together. When clarifying the reason of such classroom practice, all teachers have a relatively similar explanation. Teacher 1, for example, stated that:

“By doing all of these [Islamic greeting, class opening, and prayer], we want to ensure that our values, i.e., all knowledge is actually from God, are also ingrained in English classroom, not merely in religious subject teaching.” (Teacher 1)

What English language teachers had enacted that they considered learners’ cultural identities, norms, beliefs, values, and communication styles when designing instructional activities and materials [55]. By integrating cultural elements into the curriculum, English language teachers can create a learning environment that reflects learners’ cultural backgrounds and facilitates meaningful connections to the language being taught. The other strategy English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools did to promote cultural sensitivity is by acknowledging the learners’ diverse linguistic repertoires. One of languages that most students at Islamic boarding schools are good at is Arabic language, in addition to Bahasa Indonesia and local languages (mostly Javanese). Arabic plays key role of Arabic as the main language in the instruction of Islamic subjects in Islamic boarding schools, therefore teachers often involves the use of Arabic in their ELT practices. Teachers in also allowed students to use other languages when they do not know how to deliver their messages in English. To illustrate this point, have a look at an observation note below from Teacher 4’s classrooms when she delivered materials about how to use preposition in English.

- Teacher 4 : “Today, we are going to learn about prepositions. Has anyone already known about it?”
 Students : “No...”
 Teacher 4 : “Alright, read this sentence loudly: I put the laptop on the desk in my bedroom. (teacher and students read the sentence together). Now can somebody translate it into Bahasa?”
 Student 1 : “Can I bu? *Saya meletakkan laptop di atas meja di dalam kamar*”
 Teacher 4 : “That’s correct. Thank you. So the prepositions in the sentence are the word ‘on’ (*di atas*) and ‘in’ (*di dalam*).”
 Student 2 : “So, preposition is like *kata depan in Bahasa Indonesia ya bu?*”
 Student 3 : “And in Arabic, I think it is called ‘*kalimat harf*’ bu...!”
 Teacher 4 : “Excactly.. good job! Now can I have more examples of English prepositions?”
 More students : “in front of classroom..., behind the door..., at school...”

The inclusion of Arabic and other languages in English instruction reflects an acknowledgment of students’ diverse linguistic abilities and proficiencies. In this context, Islamic boarding schools English language teachers recognized that Arabic, along with other languages, can serve as a valuable resource rather than a hindrance for students in their acquisition of English. These teachers’ practices demonstrated that employing multilingual teaching strategies is more effective at promoting cultural sensitivity compared to a widely implemented monolingual approach that enforces exclusive English usage in ELT [56] and fails to recognize the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity [2]. Moreover, this multilingual approach serves various purposes, including the expression of identity, the connection of instruction with values and cultural elements embedded in the school environment, and the cultivation of positive social relationships within educational settings [57]–[59].

English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools also found the use of languages other than English in their classrooms helped them better communication and teacher-student as well as student-student interactions. This also involved teaching learners how to navigate cultural differences, engage in effective cross-cultural communication, and adapt their language use to different cultural contexts [2]. With giving opportunities for learners to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds, English language teachers can encourage the development of interpersonal and intercultural competence. Teachers themselves also play a crucial role in modelling cultural sensitivity [60], [61]. Furthermore, demonstrating respect for all learners’ cultural backgrounds and perspectives enables English language teachers to create a safe and inclusive learning environment [62].

3.4. Applying effective use of technology

In this 21st century, technology has become an integral part of education, including ELT. Regarding the context-responsive pedagogy, the use of technology can support the implementation of the other previously elaborated principles as technology provides opportunities for authentic language use, promoting learner engagement, and facilitating personalized learning experiences [63], [64]. English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools take benefit of technology to access to authentic language resources. In this case, one of the teachers shared his experiences:

“For me, technology is very helpful to find sources and references to develop learning materials. For examples, I can find many texts, videos or even games which I can choose as a supplementary material for my classroom activities.” (Teacher 2)

What Teacher 2 had done indicates that today technology plays a vital role in education, including in the field of ELT. Digital platforms, online databases, and multimedia resources provide learners with access to authentic texts, videos, podcasts, and other real-life materials created for native speakers. These resources expose learners to the natural language forms, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that are prevalent in the target language. Other benefits of technology that English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools found was that technology stimulates engaging interactions in classrooms. Classroom observations showed that the teachers used virtual simulations, educational games, and multimedia presentations to create dynamic and immersive learning experiences that motivate learners and increase their active involvement. Regarding this, Teacher 5 noted:

“One of digital applications I use is WhatsApp where I create a group to communicate with my students as well as to share learning materials. Students can also ask a question to me or to their peers in this group. In my experience. These interactive tools can be used to reinforce language skills, practice vocabulary and grammar, and engage in virtual conversations. You know some students are anxious of talking in face-to-face classrooms and this tool can reduce this anxiety while learning English.” (Teacher 5)

This statement confirms other studies that found technology is beneficial in term of offering various interactive tools and applications that promote learner engagement and participation [65], [66]. Furthermore, technology facilitates communication and collaboration among learners and between learners and English language teachers [67]. Online discussion forums, video conferencing tools, and collaborative platforms allow learners to interact with their peers and engage in meaningful language exchanges, even outside the physical classroom. Through online communication, learners can practice their speaking and writing skills, receive feedback from peers and English language teachers, and engage in authentic conversations with speakers of the target language. Technology bridges geographical boundaries, providing opportunities for learners to connect with diverse cultural perspectives and develop their intercultural competence. However, not all English language teachers can do the same thing as Teacher 5 or other teachers due to the different rule regarding the use of technological devices in Islamic boarding school environment. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 experienced this issue. Their schools did not allow students to bring their technological devices such as handphone, laptop, ipad and so forth. Consequently, their instructions do not incorporate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) due to the limited access of students to technology.

It is worth to note that the effective use of technology in context-responsive pedagogy requires thoughtful planning and pedagogical considerations. English language teachers should select appropriate technologies that align with learning objectives, promote meaningful language use, and enhance instructional strategies. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure equitable access to technology resources and provide support and training for both English language teachers and learners to effectively integrate technology into the learning process.

4. CHALLENGES IN CONTEXT-RESPONSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

While context-responsive pedagogy in ELT offers numerous benefits, it is not without its challenges. English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools may encounter various obstacles that can affect the effectiveness of instruction and hinder the achievement of desired learning outcomes. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for successful implementation of context-responsive pedagogy to create meaningful, engaging, and culturally responsive learning experiences for English language learners.

4.1. Time constraints

Implementing context-responsive pedagogy requires careful planning, curriculum adaptation, and instructional design. English language teachers may face time constraints in terms of curriculum coverage, especially when trying to integrate authentic materials and create meaningful learning experiences [68]. Moreover, in Islamic boarding schools, where a diverse range of Islamic subjects are supplemented with additional subjects required by the Indonesian national curriculum, students face the dual challenge of dedicating their time to multiple fields of study i.e., religious subjects and non-religious subjects. The limited instructional time available within the Islamic boarding schools setting amplifies the need for streamlined and strategic pedagogical approaches. Teachers must make deliberate choices regarding content selection and instructional methods to maximize the impact of their lessons while accommodating students' multifaceted educational commitments. This intricate juggling of linguistic and cultural aspects within a tight timeframe exemplifies the intricate nature of context-responsive pedagogy in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

4.2. Technological challenges

While technology offers immense potential in facilitating context-responsive pedagogy, it also presents challenges. Some English language teachers in Islamic boarding schools especially those located in rural areas experienced unequal access to technology and reliable internet connections which then can create disparities among learners [69]. English language teachers need to ensure equitable access to technology resources and consider alternative strategies when technology is not readily available. Moreover, English language teachers must be equipped to address a range of technical issues that may arise during the use of technology, as well as bridge digital literacy gaps among students. Ensuring that students are proficient in using digital tools is crucial for their success in context-responsive pedagogy. For example, the teachers should be well-versed in the selection and implementation of technology tools and platforms that align with their pedagogical goals. Moreover, they should be prepared to adapt and innovate their teaching methods to fully harness the potential of technology, while maintaining the integrity of context-responsive pedagogy.

4.3. Professional development

The next challenges English language teachers faced is the lack professional development opportunities to learn and enhance their understanding and implementation of context-responsive pedagogy. However, access to relevant training and resources may be limited. The participants of this study expressed that they had never had training regarding how to best contextualise ELT with the contextual situation of such Islamic schooling. Thus, it is expected that Islamic boarding schools facilitate professional development programs to help English language teachers stay abreast of current research, effective instructional strategies, and technological advancements that support context-responsive instruction [70]. A well-structured professional development program can provide English language teachers with insights into best practices for integrating language learning with cultural understanding. It can empower them to explore innovative teaching methodologies that resonate with their students and contextualize their pedagogy effectively within the Islamic boarding school setting.

5. CONCLUSION

Context-responsive pedagogy helps teachers optimize ELT situated within the complex contexts of Islamic boarding schools. By understanding learner needs, incorporating authentic materials, promoting cultural sensitivity, and utilizing technology effectively, English language teachers can create engaging and meaningful language learning experiences for English language learners in Islamic boarding schools. While the result of this study may have been found in previous ELT research, a deeper examination unveils its unique contribution. This study delves into how English language teachers navigated and negotiated their practices with the socio-cultural and religious values entrenched in Islamic boarding school's institutions. In doing so, it underscores the distinctiveness of ELT practices within Islamic boarding school's contexts and the invaluable contribution this study makes to this evolving field. The exploration of context-specific pedagogy in this paper has implications for English language teachers' practice and research. English language teachers should strive to create learner-centered environments, provide diverse and culturally relevant resources, empower learners to take ownership of their learning, and leverage technology as a tool for enhancing language acquisition. Continuously refining our understanding and implementation of context-responsive pedagogy helps us to ensure that ELT remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of diverse learners in an increasingly interconnected world. The recognition of locally developed cultures and values in school contexts within the broader pedagogical theories becomes an asset not only for Indonesian Islamic boarding schools but also for the wider global context of English language education.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One limitation is the focus on Islamic boarding school contexts in a province, which may not fully represent the diversity of Islamic boarding schools across Indonesia. Additionally, the study primarily relies on qualitative data, and while this provides rich insights into teacher practices, it may benefit from complementing quantitative data to offer a more comprehensive view. Therefore, further research to explore some issues such as the effectiveness of context-responsive pedagogy in different instructional settings, investigate the impact of specific strategies on learner outcomes, and examine the role of technology in facilitating context-responsive language learning is needed.

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