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Navigating Pedagogical Challenges: Student-Teacher Experiences in the Amaliyah Tadris Program at Islamic Boarding Schools Learning Interests

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Abstract:
This study explores the real-life challenges faced by final-year high school students participating in the Amaliyah Tadris program at an Islamic boarding school, particularly when teaching English. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, the researcher interviewed eight student-teachers from Darul Hijrah Islamic Boarding School for Female. These in-depth interviews captured their teaching experiences, the difficulties they encountered, and the strategies they used to overcome them. The findings reveal that many student-teachers struggled with nervousness, limited teaching experience, classroom management issues, and time constraints in preparing *I'dad* (Preparation Book). In addition, they faced external obstacles such as unmotivated students, poor classroom conditions, and difficulties in helping students with pronunciation and vocabulary. Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated resilience by preparing independently, using visual aids and engaging activities, adapting their communication styles, and seeking support from mentor teachers. This research highlights the need for stronger guidance, better training, and emotional readiness for student-teachers before entering real classrooms. It also offers practical insights for improving teacher preparation programs, especially within Islamic boarding schools. The study emphasizes the importance of supporting young educators not only pedagogically, but also emotionally and psychologically, to help them grow into confident and capable future teachers.

Keywords: Teaching Practice Challenges; Student-Teachers; Amaliyah Tadris; I'dad; Nervouseness

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Introduction

This study investigates the challenges faced by final-year high school students who serve as student-teachers in the Amaliyah Tadris program at Islamic boarding schools. These challenges include anxiety and lack of confidence when teaching, limited pedagogical experience, difficulties in classroom management, low student motivation, and constraints in preparing the *I'dad* (preparation book). Such issues directly affect the quality of English language instruction and the classroom learning atmosphere. Addressing this issue is essential because Amaliyah Tadris represents a critical stage in preparing future teachers to handle real classroom dynamics. Failure to understand and resolve these challenges risks diminishing the effectiveness of teaching practice and may hinder the professional growth of student-teachers. By highlighting these problems, this study contributes to improving mentoring systems, refining training methods, and strengthening the overall quality of teacher preparation programs in Islamic boarding schools. The author approaches this problem through initial observations during the implementation of the Amaliyah Tadris program, which revealed common teaching difficulties such as unclear explanations and classroom management issues. A qualitative narrative inquiry method was then employed to capture student-teachers' lived experiences, allowing their voices and personal stories to shape the findings. The discussion not only identifies the challenges but also proposes practical recommendations to support student-teachers pedagogically and psychologically, helping them grow into confident and effective educators.

Teaching practice is a fundamental component in preparing prospective educators to gain authentic classroom experience before entering the profession. As Alsharif (2022) emphasizes, it represents a critical stage in student-teacher training. One example of such practice is the Amaliyah Tadris program in Islamic boarding schools, where final-year high school students teach lower-grade classes. This experience enables them to develop pedagogical skills, classroom management strategies, and student engagement techniques (Sayuti and Gaos 2022).

The program particularly emphasizes foreign language instruction, including English, due to its role as a global language. However, English teaching in this context faces challenges, as the instructors are still high school students with limited teaching experience. Common issues include nervousness, lack of confidence, unclear explanations, inappropriate language use, and difficulty maintaining classroom control. Student disengagement further complicates the process, making it difficult to create an interactive and motivating learning environment.

To address these challenges, lesson preparation supported by an *I'dad* (preparation book) is crucial for ensuring lesson effectiveness and fostering student interest (Sayuti and Gaos 2022). This study investigates the specific obstacles encountered by student-teachers during the Amaliyah Tadris program, particularly in teaching English. Unlike previous research, such as Jannah (2022), which focused on university-level teaching internships (PPL), this study examines final-year high school student-teachers who lack formal teacher training but are required to manage real classrooms. By exploring their unique experiences, the research aims to contribute insights into the realities of teaching practice in Islamic boarding schools and provide recommendations to strengthen training and support systems for novice teachers.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry to examine the teaching challenges faced by student-teachers in the Amaliyah Tadris program at an Islamic boarding school. Eight female final-year high school students from Darul Hijrah Islamic

Boarding School for Female were purposively selected for their direct involvement in the practicum. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, supplemented by life history and story completion techniques to obtain rich and reflective narratives. Following Creswell (2007) narrative research procedures, the process included identifying the phenomenon, selecting participants, collecting and re-storying narratives, collaborating with participants for accuracy, and presenting thematic accounts of their experiences. All interviews, conducted within one month in 2025, were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Data were analysed using narrative analysis based on Mishler (1995) and Labov's structural model, involving chronological reorganization of narratives, identification of recurring themes (e.g., nervousness, classroom management, I'dad preparation, and pronunciation difficulties), and synthesis into a collective thematic story. This method enabled a comprehensive understanding of the personal and contextual factors shaping student-teachers' instructional practices.

Results and Discussion

This study investigates the pedagogical challenges encountered by student-teachers during the Amaliyah Tadris program at an Islamic boarding school, specifically in the context of English language instruction. Using a narrative inquiry approach, data were collected from eight final-year high school students engaged in teaching practice. The analysis is organized into two main themes: the challenges faced by student-teachers and the strategies they employed to address those challenges.

Challenges in the Amaliyah Tadris Teaching Practice

Student-teachers encountered several difficulties during their teaching practice, which can be categorized into four major areas:

1. Psychological Factors: Nervousness and Lack of Confidence. Nervousness surfaced as one of the most prevalent internal issues. The majority of participants reported feeling worried about teaching for the first time, particularly while delivering challenging English subject or managing student behaviour. Common symptoms included shaking hands, trembling voices, and linguistic disfluency, such as hesitations and fillers. These findings are consistent with Khrisinta Dewi (2022) findings, which highlighted the prevalence of verbal and nonverbal anxiety signs among student-teachers. Interestingly, those who had previous public speaking or organizational experience reported feeling more confident and composed in front of the class. This emotional response was not restricted to mental anguish; it also manifested physically. Several student-teachers mentioned how their hands trembled and their bodies tightened as they approached the classroom. Many students had significant levels of stress due to anxiety of being the center of attention, making mistakes with pronunciation, or delivering the content correctly. The first teaching performance, particularly in front of actual pupils, was described as a hard personal trial. In addition to physical symptoms, cognitive strain exacerbated their anxiousness. Some student-teachers expressed concern about the pupils' ability to absorb the material, especially when the class included complicated grammatical issues like passive voice. In several circumstances, they observed that pupils did not understand required topics such as the active voice, causing student-teachers to alter their teaching tactics on the fly.
2. Classroom behaviour and student disengagement also contributed to the psychological strain. A lot of student-teachers acknowledged difficulty in keeping students focused and engaged. Some students were uninterested, drowsy, or simply ignored directions, leaving the new teachers feeling invisible and ineffective. This lack

of reactivity added to their stress, raising concerns about their capacity to educate and communicate effectively. Nonetheless, not all student-teachers were scared to the same extent. Those who had previously participated in school organizations, public events, or committee chores reported feeling more secure when speaking in front of the class. Their prior experience with public speaking helped them regulate their nervousness and retain their cool under pressure. This supports the findings of Chalidaziah and Nasir (2021), who note that student engagement in extracurricular activities can build confidence, self-awareness, and communication skills traits essential for teaching. Interestingly, some of the anxiety reported was not rooted in fear of failure, but rather in a strong sense of responsibility. Several student-teachers confessed that they were concerned not with their own performance, but with whether the students genuinely understood the material. They were concerned that their explanations would be too advanced or too rapid for lower-grade students. This shows a growing knowledge of learner-centered pedagogy and a mature understanding of what it means to be a responsible teacher.

In conclusion, anxiousness and lack of confidence were important but frequent psychological problems in the early phases of teaching practice. These feelings are part of the normal learning curve, particularly for student-teachers who have not received formal pedagogical training. Structured mentoring, supportive environments, and more opportunities to practice can help to gradually remove these psychological barriers, paving the way for more confident and competent instructors in the future.

3. *I'dad* Preparation and Material Readiness

Many student-teachers faced difficulties preparing their *I'dad* (teaching preparation book), primarily due to time constraints and limited access to supervising teachers. Some relied on outdated formats, while others had to revise their plans entirely due to changes in guidelines. These challenges highlight the importance of clear instructional guidance and mentorship, as emphasized by Dahlan and Maulana (2022), and reaffirm the role of *I'dad* as both a planning and reflective pedagogical tool. The constraints in preparing the *I'dad* were mostly related to technical and logistical factors. Several student-teachers reported that they only received their teaching material a few days before the teaching performance, leaving them with insufficient time to prepare thoroughly. The short preparation window, compounded by a tight academic schedule, often forced them to complete their *I'dad* in haste, sometimes without the opportunity to consult properly with their mentors. Access to supervisors became another major obstacle. Some student-teachers were supervised by teachers who were not based within the boarding school, which made it difficult to schedule regular consultations. In some cases, they had to wait for the supervisor's availability or coordinate outside of school hours, which caused delays and affected the quality of feedback they received. Without timely guidance, many student-teachers were unsure whether their *I'dad* met the expected standards or followed the correct format. Another challenge arose from the continual updates to the *I'dad* handbook
or teaching guidelines. Some student-teachers mentioned that the format had changed from the previous years, requiring them to discard old templates and start from scratch. This process was described as confusing and frustrating, particularly when previous examples no longer matched the new structure. The lack of clarity in the new format made them feel insecure about their planning, especially with the fear of having to revise it multiple times after supervisor corrections. Even when examples or previous handbooks were available, not all student-teachers found them helpful. While some could adapt their *I'dad* from existing materials, others found inconsistencies or

vague instructions in those documents, leading to misinterpretation and additional revisions. This further emphasizes the need for clear instructional support, as even the availability of materials does not guarantee effective planning without proper mentoring. Beyond formatting issues, the deeper challenge in preparing *I'dad* was pedagogical in nature. Student-teachers were not only responsible for organizing lesson content, but also for ensuring that their materials were appropriate for younger students with limited English proficiency. Many admitted to struggling with language adjustment selecting vocabulary that was neither too easy nor too difficult and structuring their lesson flow in a way that supported gradual understanding. This supports Pranoto (2022) view that *I'dad* should reflect not only content knowledge, but also a teacher's sensitivity to learner needs. Additionally, the *I'dad* process forced student-teachers to reflect on their own understanding of the material. Several of them stated that they had to revisit grammar concepts, pronunciation, and vocabulary to ensure they could explain them clearly. In this way, *I'dad* became more than just a formal requirement it functioned as a reflective learning experience that pushed student-teachers to engage more deeply with the content and anticipate classroom realities.

Shortly, the challenges of *I'dad* preparation reveal gaps in both institutional support and personal readiness. While the *I'dad* serves as a critical tool for instructional planning, its effectiveness depends greatly on the availability of timely feedback, clarity of guidance, and the teacher's own pedagogical insight. Addressing these challenges through more structured training, accessible mentorship, and clearer documentation could significantly improve student-teachers' ability to plan and deliver effective lessons in the Amaliyah Tadris program.

4. Classroom Management and Student Engagement. Managing large, diverse courses was tough, especially when students were distracted, drowsy, or acted disruptively. Sessions lasting only 45 to 52 minutes made it difficult to include interactive elements such as games or icebreakers. Environmental factors, such as poor classroom settings, hampered student participation. These findings support Jenal Mutaqin (2021) argument that both physical and psychological classroom conditions have a major impact on learning outcomes. Student-teachers regularly stated that keeping discipline and focus in the classroom was one of the most difficult aspects of their teaching experience. Several participants stated that students frequently spoke between themselves, disobeyed directions, or appeared inattentive during class. These behaviours fostered a sense of detachment between the teacher and the students, making it difficult to maintain a regulated learning environment. When student-teachers attempted to carry out their planned activities, they frequently had to pause to refocus pupils' attention or repeat instructions several times. Fatigue and lack motivation among pupils also contributed to classroom management challenges. Because the teaching sessions were held in the evening or after other lengthy activities, many pupils appeared fatigued and unresponsive. Some students even lay their heads on the desk or closed their eyes during the session. This lack of energy restricted engagement and involvement, leaving the class feeling passive and one-sided. As a result, student-teachers had to continually change their tone, movement, and approach in order to keep pupils aware and engaged. The short length of the sessions further limited the capacity to use unique teaching strategies. With approximately 45-52 minutes per class, there was little time to incorporate enjoyable features such as games, storytelling, or group discussions. Some student-teachers said that, despite having planned engaging activities, they were frequently compelled to omit or

abbreviate them due to time constraints. This time constraint hampered not only student participation but also the teacher's capacity to experiment with different teaching strategies. Environmental elements, such as classroom infrastructure, have a negative impact on student involvement. A number of student-teachers stated that the classroom circumstances were far from optimal, with leaking roofs, insecure seating, and inadequate ventilation making both teaching and learning difficult. In some situations, pupils were distracted by background noise or physical pain caused by crowded sitting arrangements. These physical restrictions hampered effective classroom management, supporting Jenal Mutaqin (2021) theory that the learning environment has a direct impact on pupils' psychological preparedness to learn. In response to these settings, several student-teachers attempted to use fundamental engagement tactics, but were not always successful. Some teachers attempted to develop rapport by beginning the lesson with short energizers or informal pleasantries, while others modified their teaching tempo and provided more repetition to keep pupils on track. However, the efficacy of these tactics varied according to the mood of the class and the students' level of cooperation. Without prior classroom management training, student-teachers frequently depended on intuition and trial-and-error tactics to control the situation.

Overall, the challenge of managing a dynamic classroom environment highlights the complexity of teaching beyond just delivering material. It requires the ability to observe student behavior, make quick decisions, and balance structure with flexibility. The findings also suggest a need for pre-teaching workshops that focus specifically on classroom control, student motivation, and adaptive instruction strategies skills that are essential, yet often overlooked in the early stages of teacher training.

5. Student Difficulties in Pronunciation and Vocabulary. Student-teachers indicated that many of their students struggled with English pronunciation and unusual vocabulary, particularly irregular or silent-letter phrases like recognize, listen, and every night. This is consistent with Kadek Eniati and Numertayasa (2024) claim that phonological and lexical issues are widespread among early English learners in Indonesian environments. Many student-teachers said that students regularly mispronounced words or hesitated when speaking English publicly. Common errors included deleting silent letters, emphasizing incorrect syllables, and writing words phonetically based on how they sound in Indonesian. This sometimes resulted in confusion, particularly when students attempted to read aloud or answer vocabulary problems. For example, some students pronounced listen as "liss-ten" or recognize as "rekog-nize," indicating a lack of exposure to English pronunciation guidelines. Apart from difficulties with pronunciation, a major obstacle was the use of unfamiliar words. Students frequently struggled to understand even basic adjectives, adverbs, or action verbs unless they were translated into Indonesian or included visuals, according to student-teachers. When students came across abstract or uncommon words, the vocabulary gap became very apparent. Because they were afraid of making a mistake, pupils avoided speaking, which decreased their confidence and involvement. Limited exposure to English outside of the classroom made these challenges even worse. The Islamic boarding school's students' capacity to improve their speaking and listening proficiency was limited because the majority of them were non-native English speakers and had minimal exposure to the language outside of Amaliyah Tadris sessions. Accurate pronunciation and poor vocabulary retention persisted in the absence of regular practice. Student-teachers frequently used code-switching, repetition, and simpler explanations to overcome these difficulties. Several student-teachers stated that in order to communicate meaning, they had to either translate some words into

Indonesian or utilize realia, pictures, and hand gestures. Although this temporarily improved comprehension, it also made clear the need for more immersive and captivating teaching methods to support students' internalization of terminology in context. Furthermore, the general dynamic of the classroom was impacted by the students' lack of confidence brought on by their restricted vocabulary. Even when they knew the answer, some students choose to keep quiet out of concern that they may pronounce the word incorrectly or face public correction. This emotional barrier limited interaction and made it difficult for student-teachers to gauge the actual level of understanding among the class. As Kasenda (2019) notes, supportive correction strategies and a positive classroom climate are essential in helping language learners feel safe enough to take risks and make mistakes.

In reflection, these pronunciation and vocabulary challenges emphasize the importance of scaffolding and sensitivity in language instruction. Student-teachers must not only present vocabulary but also contextualize it, model its use, and provide repeated exposure. At the same time, institutions should consider equipping student-teachers with more structured resources and training in phonology, pronunciation techniques, and vocabulary teaching methods, especially for early-level learners.

Strategies to Overcome Teaching Challenges

Despite the barriers, student-teachers adopted several practical strategies to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching:

1. Independent Practice and Self-Preparation. A number of participants talked about independently rehearsing their lessons before class. This preparation improved confidence and fluency while lowering anxiety. Self-directed practice became a crucial coping strategy when mentor support was infrequent. This is in line wit Aida (2024), who highlights the value of practice and planning in boosting teaching confidence.
2. Use of Media and Visual Aids. To help students acquire terminology and hold their interest, the majority of student-teachers used visual aids including flashcards, posters, and printed images. These tools helped close the gap between spoken explanations and student understanding by giving abstract ideas a more concrete form. These tactics are in line with the ideas put forth by Elisabet et al. (2024), who emphasize the value of interesting media in supporting purposeful language learning.
3. Active Student Support and Error Correction. Student-teachers used non-threatening correction strategies, like imitating pronunciation and promoting repetition, to help pupils who were afraid of making mistakes. Some utilized encouraging remarks and asked shy kids to engage without pressure. This method exhibits emotional sensitivity and backs up Kasenda (2019) results that improved language acquisition outcomes are a result of feedback and a secure learning environment.
4. Mentor Teacher Feedback. Despite frequently having little access to mentors, student-teachers who got helpful criticism reported significant gains. Typically, comments focused on topics like time management, word selection, and explanation clarity. This supports the claim made by Maharwati (2020) that structured mentoring is essential to the growth of new teachers' instructional competency and capacity for self-reflection.

The findings of this study show that student-teachers tend to face similar challenges in their first teaching practice, not only from internal factors such as limited

ability and experience, but also from external factors such as lack of support and learning environment conditions.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that final-year student-teachers in the Amaliyah Tadris program encountered a range of internal challenges such as nervousness, low self-confidence, and limited teaching experience alongside external obstacles, including less supportive classroom environments, low learner engagement, classroom management difficulties, and technical issues in *I'dad* preparation. Pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension problems were also identified as recurrent barriers for both student-teachers and their learners. To address these issues, participants implemented various strategies, including independent practice and preparation prior to teaching, the use of visual aids and ice-breakers to enhance learner motivation, providing constructive yet encouraging feedback on student errors, and seeking direct guidance from mentor teachers. Collectively, these approaches contributed to fostering a more engaging, supportive, and adaptable learning environment.

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