

# Meaningful Habit for EFL Learners

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## Abstract

*Learning a foreign language needs a big effort from the learner itself to make their language ability grows better day by day. Among those, they also need a support from all around them including teacher, friends, as well as activities which support them to speak the language. When those activities developed well as a habit which are done regularly, it will help improving the students' language competence. It was a qualitative research which aimed to find out and describe some activities implemented in Pesantren Al Mawaddah, Ponorogo, in order to teach the students a foreign language. In collecting the data, the researcher used interview, questionnaire, and documentation. From the study, it was found that Pesantren Al Mawaddah had successfully built the language habit on the students to speak the target language. More than 15 hours a day students were compelled to speak foreign language, Arabic or English, in turn. It aimed to habituate the students to keep in touch with the target language. The habit was developed through daily language activities, such as dawn vocabs giving, dictionary handling, daily language use, speech training and language intensive course, daily language input, and night vocabs memorizing. That habit then developed the students awareness towards the language learned as well as promoted their language mastery.*

**Key words:** *Habit, Daily Language Activities.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different people have different habit in their life. In forming their habit, they try hard to repeat some action continually in order to be used to that action. After sometimes of repetition, they will be used to that thing and automatically they will do that action everyday. Here, their new habit has been formed.

Covey defines a habit as the intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire. Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the what to do and the why. Skill is the how to do. And desire is the motivation, they want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three. In addition, he stated that habits are powerful factors in our lives. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character and produce our effectiveness or ineffectiveness. As Horace Mann, the great educator, once said, "Habits are like a cable.

We weave a strand of it everyday and soon it cannot be broken." I personally do not agree with the last part of his expression. I know they can be broken. Habits can be learned and unlearned. But I also know it isn't a quick fix. It involves a process and a tremendous commitment.

From the statement above, it is clear that habit relates the people character or attitude that is formed by the consistent effort of doing an action continuously. In related to this, students' habit on changing the previous language (their first language) to the target language (language learned) is very essential to their language development. It means, to improve students' language competence it can be started by habituating the students on using the language everyday. In repeated using, the students fluency and accuracy will also slowly increase.

Indeed, In teaching English as second or foreign language, doing such repetition is not

an easy thing for every people, their change from old habit to the new one will make a strange feeling on that people. The change on the students language from their first or second language to English language make them difficult to be accustomed to this. For Indonesian students for example, the difficulties in forming the language habit is not only obstructed by their tongue that has been shaped and fluent in pronouncing the words and sentences of the first and second language, but also difficulties in changing their thought to produce the target language vocabularies that extremely different to the first and second language vocabularies.

However, Pesantren has been successful to overcome those problems. Pesantren has a special rules to create a habit to the students in using the target language daily. Living together in a dorm enable Pesantren to obligate the students to speak foreign language (Arabic and English). Besides, Pesantren also develops some daily language activities which aims to promote the foreign language learning, the activity is including: (a) giving daily vocabularies to enrich their vocabularies capacity so they can use it in learning the language, (b) moreover, for language practice Pesantren also manage the use of 2 foreign languages, Arabic and English, in one week the students is obligated to speak Arabic in their daily, and on the other week they should speak English fully, (c) the other way to enable the students use the target language, Pesantren also support it with the weekly language activities, as speech training, language endorsment, conversation practice, and language fair.

For those, this article will describe more about the research result on the process implemented by Pesantren in order to support the foreign language learning which absolutely different with the process and method implemented in the regular school. This qualitatie research done in Pesantren Al Mawaddah Ponorogo which has successfully taugh two foreign languages.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Definition of Habit

Habit has close relationship with character, when some activity done regularly it becomes a habit, and habit will bear a character. Covey defines a habit as the intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire. Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the what to do and the why. Skill is the how to do. And desire is the motivation, the want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three.

However, to build a new habit is not an easy thing, to change the old habit to the new one needs a big effort and will to do the same thing continously and make it as a routine. Clear in Transfrom your Habit implies a way to build a habit, there is a simple 3–step pattern that every habit follows. I call this pattern the “3 R's of Habit Change” and it goes like this:

1. Reminder (the trigger that initiates the behavior)
2. Routine (the behavior itself; the action you take)
3. Reward (the benefit you gain from doing the behavior)



Design of 3 R's of Habit Formation

Macknight (2006: iv) adds, Habits formed through repetition. Bad habits formed more easily, because they require less effort. Once formed, habits are difficult to break. And habits formed when we are young are likely to stay with us all our lives.

From those, habit is a form of repeated action which is done regularly and the people who do this action feels joyful as if they really have a great need on doing that habit.

## **B. Language Teaching and Learning**

The term of teaching is quite different with learning, learning is defined as a process of getting or acquiring an information which involves active and conscious effort of the learners, while teaching, according to Brown (2000: 7) means guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the condition for learning. So learning is done by the learner, and teaching is done by the teacher. When it is combined in term of “language teaching and learning” refers to the activity done by both the teacher and learner in the process of mastering the second or foreign language.

Richard (2006: 4) stated that language learning is seen as resulting from processes such as:

1. Interaction between the learner and users of the language
2. Collaborative creation of meaning
3. Creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language
4. Negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding
5. Learning through attending to the feedback learners get when they use the language
6. Paying attention to the language one hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into one’s developing communicative competence
7. Trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things

Those activities should be promoted by the teacher in order to run the language teaching and learning well. Here, the teacher gives a large opportunities for the learners to interact with the target language, so it will habituate them to use their language.

## **C. Best Opportunities for Language Learners**

The majority of foreign language learning in Indonesia is done in the classroom, with a very limited time and activities, so it can not really give an opportunity to the students to practice their language. This condition is failed to optimize the students mastery on the target language. As states in Marsh (2012: 1) “Optimal” conditions for effective language learning have been identified and characterized in a number of studies, but the most general and most cited (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999) include the following:

1. Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience.
2. Learners are involved in authentic tasks.
3. Learners are exposed to and are encouraged to produce varied and creative language.
4. Learners have opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning.
5. Learners have enough time and feedback.
6. Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.
7. Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level.
8. Learner autonomy is supported.

Based on the above statement, the best language learning is hopefully could create a large opportunities for the students in order to practice the language learned, because the aims of language learning is to use the language in the communication. So, the language teacher’s role is to help and encourage the students to develop their skills, beside delivering the knowledge, advice, and information.

## **III. METHOD**

It was a field research by using a phenomenology approach, where the researcher needs to study the real condition of the foreign language developing pattern in the Pesantren through Daily Language Activities.

The results of this research will be explained in qualitative descriptive way, so it will be very clear in describing the implementation of Daily Language Activities in supporting the development of the students' communicative competence

This research was done in Pesantren Putri Al Mawaddah of Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. This place was chosen with some reasons, such as: this Pesantren was one of the Modern Boarding School in Indonesia, which has implemented Daily Language Activities in the process of foreign language learning, supported by language discipline and curriculum which enabled the students to learn the foreign language easily.

In collecting the demanded data, the researcher used some instruments, they were: interview and observation. The interview was used to get the data from the students there about their response towards the implementation of Daily Language Activities. It used unstructured interview to get the complete and real description. While the observation was used to see and observe the process of Daily Language Activities implementation in Pesantren. The process is including take a look to the Daily Language Activities done by the students, the curriculum, regulation or language discipline made by the teacher, and how to build the awareness on using the target language.

The data gotten from the interview and observation are analyzed by inter-sectionist phases as follows: that is the interview data will be reduced by clustering it, then choosing the most important one. While the observation data is used to record and explain the data descriptively. Finally, those analyses is used to clarify the data in order to get the clear and complete data about the implementation of daily language activities in enhancing the students' communicative competence.

#### **IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

##### **A. Opportunities on Using the Target Language**

It has been said that most Foreign language learning takes place in the classroom. In Indonesia, especially, English language learning usually done twice a week in about 120 minutes. With so many materials and skills should be taught, it is very difficult for the students to reach mastery.

Pesantren, with its unique system, has been successful to give a large opportunities for the students to learn the language. Almost 24 hours can be used by the learners to have full access to the target language, Arabic and English, which is scheduled by turn in every week. One week the students must use and speak the Arabic language, and another week they should speak English everytime and everywhere they are.

The 24 hours language activity is divided as follows: the formal teaching learning process in the classroom which uses foreign language as an instructional language, is around six hours. The teacher and the students interact fully in a target language. Besides, the textbook are written in English and Arabic, so the students directly practice the language learned in reading and understanding the book. This six hours of formal teaching involved the learners much to the target language.

From the schedule of Pesantren daily activity, it is clear that the time and opportunities provided in Pesantren to learn the foreign language is much wider than that is given in a regular school in Indonesia. As a result, it enables the students to master the target language better.

##### **B. Promoting the Students Language Habit with Daily Activities**

There are so many activities which promote the language learning in Pesantren, some of them done daily, once or twice a week, a month, or a year. Those activities aims to succeed the language teaching and learning, to habituate the students to live together with the people who speak on the target language,

and to live up the supportive language learning environment. All those purposes can be reached by the following daily language activities, such as:

1. Dawn vocabs giving

This activity aims to give a different vocabulary for each day, so the students' vocabulary will increase day by day. They will get 5 to 10 vocabularies, then they try to construct sentences from those vocabs, after that they write it on their vocabs note and use it in their everyday conversation. This activity is done in early morning because in a fresh mind will ease the students to remember all the vocabs given.

2. Handling the dictionary

To ease the students speak the target language, Pesantren obligate the students to bring the dictionary wherever they are and whatever their activity, so when they have difficulties in saying some words in the target language they can directly consult their dictionary, so they have no reason not to speak the target language.

3. Daily foreign language use

To promote the language teaching and learning, the most important rules for the students is to speak the language everytime. In this case, Pesantren encourage the students to speak and communicate in the target language by arranging the schedule of using the foreign language, Arabic and English by turn. For example, if the schedule is English, it means all students should speak English in all activities both inside or outside the classroom.

4. Speech training and intensive language course

Speech training is done three times a week, it aims to train the students speak in front of the audience, strengthen their bravery, develop their idea, even increase their language capacity, because in this activity the students is given 10 minutes to deliver a speech which is made by them selves. While intensive language course is

done everyday for new students, to give a knowledge about the language, so they can adapt the Pesantren language rules.

5. Language Input (listening news, announcement, and reading newspaper in the target language)

To give sufficient input to the students, Pesantren always turn on the radio or TV news of BBC and other, to habituate the students listening the foreigners. Besides, in a breakfast or lunch time is always followed by the English songs. an English newspaper is also hung up on the wall magazine. Every announcement is announced in the foreign language, Arabic and English. By thus is hopefully can give enough language input for the students.

6. Night vocabs memorizing

Before going to sleep, all students should review and memorize the vocabulary given in the morning in order to sharpen their memory to that vocabs, so they will be able to use it in their communication.

**C. How to Maintain dan Monitor the Language Improvement**

After all, Pesantren also has responsibility to maintain the language learning process, then monitor it whether there is improvement or not. In the process of language maintenance, teachers will be directly involved in supervising all language activity, which actually run by the Student Organisation, then in once a month will be held a language fair program. This program aims to examine the students mastery of the foreign language, so the students will perform some performance using the foreign language such as speech, drama, poetry, song, etc. All these performance will be competed and the winner will get a reward.

In this program, the student organization and the teacher will evaluate and make a correction on some language errors which generally made and used by the students. They will get book consists of false idiom, affixation, sentence form or tenses.

#### **D. Benefits of Learning the Foreign Language in Pesantren**

There are so many benefits gotten from the process of language teaching and learning done in Pesantren, are as below:

1. A large opportunities is given to the students on practicing the language, it means they are not only learn the theory of language, but they learn how to use it in a real context of communication.
2. A direct communication develops a supportive language environment for the student, so they feel as if they live in the target language country.
3. Daily activities will raise the students motivation to speak the language, and will develops a habit to the students on using the language, this habit, slowly, will be a strong character on the students.
4. By designing a meaningful activity will change the language learning process to unconscious acquiring the language.
5. The students can master the language competence well, both the grammatical and communicative competence.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

From the findings it can be concluded that learning the language has a close

relationship to forming the habit. The teacher can design an activity which is done regularly everyday, so the students will be familiar to the language learned. When the language learning is made as a habit, a students will be familiar to the language, habituated to speak it, read, write, and listen to the language. The students will feel joyful keep in touch with the target language.

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