



Language Court and the Stagnation of Foreign Language in the Pesantren: Case Study in Bustanul Ulum Langsa, Aceh

محكمة اللغة وركود اللغة الأجنبية في المعهد الإسلامي الحديث:

دراسة حالة بمعهد بستان العلوم لانجسا، آتشية

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ABSTRACT

The stagnation of Arabic and English language learning in Islamic boarding schools not only lowers the linguistic proficiency of students but also affects the institution's reputation. This study aims to analyse the causes of the stagnation in the foreign language environment at Pesantren Bustanul Ulum, Aceh, which appears to stem from the dysfunction of the mahkamah lughah (language court) system. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 24 informants selected through purposive sampling, comprising language coordinators, dormitory supervisors, students (Student Council members and language section representatives), alumni, and parents. Data analysis was conducted thematically. The research findings indicate that the primary factor behind the stagnation of language development is the conflict between the disciplinary sanctions of the 'mahkamah lughah' and the Child Protection Act. This obstacle has triggered resistance from parents, the criminalisation or intimidation of teachers, and has resulted in a policy dilemma for the foundation, which tends to adopt a passive stance. This study recommends the need to reconstruct the Mahkamah Lughah system based on positive, child-friendly discipline without compromising the essence of language enforcement.

Keywords: *Language Court, Language Stagnation, Islamic boarding schools, Child Protection, Language Policy.*

مستخلص البحث

إن ركود تعلم اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية في المدارس الإسلامية الداخلية لا يؤدي فقط إلى انخفاض الكفاءة اللغوية للطلاب، بل يؤثر أيضاً على سمعة المؤسسة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أسباب الركود في بيئة اللغات الأجنبية في مدرسة «بستان العلوم» في آتشية، والذي يبدو أنه ناجم عن خلل في نظام «محكمة اللغة». وباستخدام نهج نوعي مع تصميم دراسة حالة، تم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات متعمقة مع 24 شخصاً تم اختيارهم عن طريق العينات الموجهة، بما في ذلك منسقي اللغات، ومشرفو المهاجع، والطلاب (أعضاء مجلس الطلاب وممثلو قسم اللغات)، والخريجون، وأولياء الأمور. وأجري تحليل البيانات حسب الموضوع. وتشير نتائج البحث إلى أن العامل الرئيسي وراء ركود تطور اللغة هو التضارب بين العقوبات التأديبية التي تفرضها «محكمة اللغة» وقانون حماية الطفل. وقد أدى هذا العائق إلى مقاومة من أولياء الأمور، وتجريم أو تهريب المعلمين، وأسفر عن معضلة سياسية للمؤسسة، التي تميل إلى اتخاذ موقف سلبي. توصي هذه الدراسة بضرورة إعادة هيكلة نظام «المحكمة اللغوية» على أساس نظام تأديبي إيجابي وملائم للأطفال دون المساس بجوهر تطبيق اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: محكمة اللغة، ركود اللغة، المعهد الإسلامية، حماية الطفل، سياسة اللغة.

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INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Arabic and English as foreign languages in Islamic boarding schools is a strategic tool for developing students' competencies. Proficiency in these two languages not only serves as a means to deepen religious knowledge (*tafaqquh fiddin*) but also serves as an important asset in expanding access to global literature and opportunities to pursue higher education, both nationally and internationally (Al Fajar, 2025; Fikri, Harisah, Sutriani, Daroini, & Putra, 2025; Imami, 2022; Martono, Bakar, & Hasyim, 2023). Consequently, many Islamic boarding schools have implemented strict management systems—ranging from student selection to the provision of competent educators—to create an effective language learning environment (Anarki, Fadli, & Al-Idrus, 2025; Hadziq, Mubarok, Fithtriyah, Algatnaini, & Fikri, 2025; Nuha & Musyafaâ, 2022).

However, in practice, the implementation of foreign language instruction in Islamic boarding schools often faces various challenges, both structural and cultural.

A number of previous studies have shown that the weak language proficiency of santri is influenced by various interrelated factors. In terms of institutional management, problems arise in the form of a weak student selection system, a mismatch between learning objectives and graduate outcomes, and a lack of ongoing training for teaching staff (Fajariah, Mustar, & Sumarto, 2025; Nisa, 2026; Wekke, 2015). In terms of curriculum and instruction, there is a disparity between active and passive language proficiency, as well as resistance to modern teaching approaches (Fahrunnisa et al., 2026; Rosyadi & Fata, 2025; Umam, 2025).

Meanwhile, from the perspective of the language environment, weak coordination among language advocates and suboptimal internal regulations also contribute to the low effectiveness of language learning (ABDULLAH, 2022; Muttaqin, Bakheit, & Hasanah, 2024), (Nurmalina et al., 2023; Skourdumbis & Madkur, 2020). Nevertheless, most of these studies tend to focus on educational institutions that have faced resource constraints from the outset or do not yet have a well-established language learning system. Studies examining the phenomenon of regression or stagnation in language implementation at institutions that had previously succeeded in building a strong linguistic tradition remain relatively limited. In fact, this phenomenon is important to study because it reveals complex internal institutional dynamics and has the potential to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of language learning models in Islamic boarding schools.

In this context, the Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Langsa, Aceh, presents an interesting case for study. As an institution established in 1961 – one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in the city of Langsa (Muhaini, Raudhatun, Kota, & Langsa, 2021) and ranked among the top 10 Islamic boarding schools in Aceh (Riza, 2024) – this pesantren has a strong track record of fostering an active foreign-language environment, as reflected in the achievements of its students and the success of its alumni in pursuing further studies abroad. However, in recent years, there has been a significant decline in the use of Arabic and English within the pesantren, a situation described by internal sources as “mandeg” or stagnation.

Although Intan observed that there is a tendency for students to prefer studying Arabic over English “because not many are able to use that language” (Meutia, 2017), the author’s recent observations reveal a decline in language program activities, the ineffectiveness of supporting facilities, and a reduction in the practice of foreign language communication in the students’ daily lives. This phenomenon was also identified by Hafni, who found that students’ limited understanding of the material; low motivation to learn; inadequate teacher competence; and suboptimal management practices at the Bustanul Ulum Langsa Islamic boarding school are not only challenges but also realities currently facing the school (Mawaddah, OK, & Arsyad, 2025).

This phenomenon indicates the occurrence of a regressive *tahawwul al-lughah* (language shift), in which the use of foreign languages is limited to formal situations and is no longer part of everyday communication. This situation reveals a gap between institutional policies and actual practices on the ground, which has the potential to hinder the achievement of language learning objectives in Islamic boarding schools.

Based on the description of the case at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic boarding school in Langsa, which indicates a shift and the loss of linguistic traditions at an institution that has historically been very well-established, this is a crucial issue that has not been widely explored in the literature on the education and learning of Arabic and English as the official languages of Islamic boarding schools. In this regard, this study formulates the following main research questions: What are the dynamics of success and stagnation in the implementation of Arabic and English at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic boarding school in Langsa? What are the determining factors influencing the stagnation of foreign language learning at this boarding school? What roles do the Language Council, the boarding school environment, and institutional governance play in shaping changes in students’ language practices?

In line with this question, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the determining factors that contribute to the stagnation of language implementation and to identify forms of language shift (*tahawwul al-lughah*) in the communication practices of santri. Furthermore, this study also aims to provide a conceptual contribution to understanding the dynamics of language environment decline in pesantren, as well as to offer practical implications for the development of strategies to revitalize foreign language learning in pesantren-based educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using an explanatory case study design. This design was chosen to conduct an in-depth analysis of the causal factors underlying the stagnation in foreign language implementation and the dissolution of the Language Court's executive board at the Bustanul Ulum Modern Islamic Boarding School in Langsa City, Aceh.

Research data were collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, passive participatory observation, and document analysis to achieve triangulation of data sources. Interviews were conducted with 20 key informants who were selected purposively – not based on statistical representativeness, but rather on the basis of their competence, authority (Bernard & Wutich, 2026), and access to information relevant to the research focus (Stokes, 2019; Patton, 2015).

Research informants were selected through purposive sampling, taking into account their involvement and authority in the linguistic dynamics of the pesantren. The group of informants included two teachers serving as language coordinators (one male and one female), eight dormitory supervisors, two student council members, two student chairs of the Language Council, four active students, and two alumni who also served as student guardians to provide a historical perspective.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. Interviews with language administrators and caregivers focused on the factors contributing to the decline of language branding, the determinants of program stagnation, and the background behind the dissolution of the Language Court. Interviews with administrators and students, meanwhile, were aimed at exploring the effectiveness of program implementation and forms of cultural resistance among the students.

To triangulate the data, this study was supplemented by observations of the use of language support facilities, such as language laboratories and Language Club rooms,

as well as a review of documentation regarding language regulations that had previously been implemented.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis techniques, including data reduction, thematic categorization, and descriptive-interpretive presentation. The research findings were then critically analyzed with reference to the theory of language shift (tahawwul al-lughah) and the literature on Islamic educational management to draw conclusions and construct conceptual themes as the study's novel contribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Foreign Languages and the Implementation of the Language Court at Bustanul Ulum

The use of foreign languages (Arabic and English) as the language of daily communication at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Langsa has shown interesting dynamics throughout its history. Based on interviews and field observations, it is evident that the use of foreign languages at this boarding school has experienced periods of significant progress as well as periods of stagnation.

To ensure the validity of the findings, the periods of progress and stagnation were not determined based on assumptions, but rather through the triangulation of three primary data sources: (1) collective memory and the testimonies of key informants gathered through in-depth interviews; (2) institutional archives regarding the dynamics of pesantren regulation; and (3) statistical data on fluctuations in the number of santri continuing their studies abroad – such as in Egypt, Sudan, and Malaysia – which were then contextualized through the researcher's interpretation of the ups and downs in the santri's language proficiency."

Based on the research results, the author classifies the findings into three periods, namely: (1) the golden age from 1990 to 2005 during the leadership of the late Mr. Yunus Nurdin, which was marked by strict enforcement of language discipline by instructors and student organizations, the large number of students who continued their studies abroad, the students' achievements in various foreign language competitions, and active language programs such as language clubs, foreign language speeches, and daily conversation practice. (2) The period of linguistic stagnation at Bustanul Ulum from 2006 to 2020, triggered by a management transition, internal turmoil within the foundation, and the relaxation of sanctions, which led to a decline in the volume of language-related activities, the dissolution of the language tribunal, language instruction being limited to the madrasah program only, the absence of language supervision for students within the

pesantren, and the occurrence of language shift among students during teachers' visits to the dormitories. (3) The period of language program revitalization from the 2020s through 2025, which emerged following the resolution of internal conflicts within the foundation, leading to new policies from the new foundation board.

An overview of the dynamics of this periodization can be seen more clearly in the following diagram, which illustrates the contributing factors for each period of language use at Bustanul Ulum Langsa.

Table 1: Periodization of Language Stagnation Dynamics at Bustanul Ulum Langsa

Period	General Conditions of Foreign Language Implementation	Main Causal Factor	Analysis and Implications
1990–2005 (Period of Progress)	Arabic and English are actively used in communication between students and teachers, both in class and in the dormitory environment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Language institution programs run effectively: Friday muhadasah, language classes after dawn prayers, language club, language court. Strong support from leaders and language teachers. The presence of a positive language atmosphere. 	This period shows the integration between the pesantren tradition and the global orientation of language education. The success of language implementation is supported by consistent policies, continuous development, and effective social control. Language becomes a part of the culture and identity of the pesantren.
2005–2020 (Period of Stagnation)	The use of foreign languages has begun to decline and is limited to formal learning activities only.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Language court program is ineffective. Intervention by certain guardians of students in language policy. Closure of language institutions. Internal conflict within the foundation. 	There has been a shift in institutional orientation from developing language character towards an administrative orientation. Weak management and the absence of control institutions have led to the loss of language culture among students. This period emphasizes that the success of language in pesantren heavily depends on the commitment and continuity of the institutional system.

Period of Advancement: Integration of Language Systems and Culture (1990–2005)

The research results show that between the years '1990 to the 2005s', Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Langsa experienced a golden phase in the implementation of Arabic and English as the language of daily communication among students, as the official language of instruction. This success did not appear spontaneously but was the result of a synergy between ideological, structural, cultural, and psychological aspects. The success and consistency in the application of foreign languages affirmed the pesantren's commitment to developing students' capacities in religious and academic domains.

The author also found that there are doctrines that are constantly socialized by teachers to senior students, so that it becomes common among the students of Bustanul Ulum Langsa that Arabic is the language of heaven, and English is the window to the world. This means that to become a Qurra scholar as envisaged in the vision of the Bustanul Ulum Langsa Islamic boarding school, students are required to have Arabic language skills, and to become a professional intellect, in terms of knowledge and breadth of insight, students at Bustanul Ulum are required to have English language skills. This demonstrates the integration between religious and academic orientations, in accordance with (Jakandar & Wuriyanto, 2026) the theory of the integrated language management model and (Rahmawati, 2022) which states that language learning in Islamic institutions ideally combines spiritual values, linguistic competence, and the institution's strategic direction (Hermawan, 2025).

Foreign language learning at Bustanul Ulum Langsa is indeed one of the flagship programs besides the Quran memorization program, da'wah program, Qur'an recitation institution, understanding and explanation of the Qur'an, as well as arts and sports programs. From the results of the research, the author found that from 1990 until around 2005, Bustanul Ulum Langsa had successfully implemented the bi'ah lughawiyah or Arabic and English Zone program. During that time, an atmosphere was created that reflected pesantren activities conducted by implementing foreign languages, namely Arabic and English. For example, the activities of the students in the prayer hall, in the dormitory, at the canteen and foundation cooperative, on the field, at sports locations, and in every corner of the pesantren could always be heard with the students actively communicating in Arabic and English.

This condition is in line with the concept of language ecology, which asserts that the success of language learning is greatly influenced by the intensity and naturalness of linguistic exposure received by learners (Hamid, Murtadho, Firdaus, & Masturi, 2024; Jasmine, Fallo, & Noviyanti, 2025; Khoirin & Faizin, 2025). Field findings also indicate

that the high intensity of foreign language use in various formal and informal activities is supported by the active involvement of all elements of the pesantren, including caregivers, teachers, and foundation staff. This reinforces the view that the success of language program management is determined by clear planning, a structured implementation system, and continuous supervision (Nuha & Musyafaâ, 2022).

In addition, the use of Arabic and English in the daily lives of the students is driven not only by individual awareness but also by systemic support from the institution. Teachers and educational staff are involved in language training programs to improve their competence. In addition, activities such as language competitions and the strengthening of the role of the Language Court also enrich the language experience of the students. The presence of teaching staff from outside the region, including from Gontor and the Middle East, also makes a significant contribution to the transfer of more effective learning methods.

Thus, a planned and institutionalized learning system is capable of forming a stable and sustainable language culture, which ultimately accelerates the language acquisition process through intensive and meaningful interaction. This condition aligns with research findings that emphasize that the institutionalization of language regulations by the pesantren authorities is the key to transforming classroom instruction into a natural social habituation, thereby enabling the students to experience acceleration in contextual foreign language mastery (Siti Imaniatul Muflihatin, 2022; Wahyuni, Fauzi, Khuryati, & Nufriзал, 2025).

This research finding also identifies eight main factors that contribute to the success of Arabic and English as flagship programs at Bustanul Ulum Langsa during that period.

1. Ideological and Philosophical Factors:

In the indoctrination of the santri conducted by teachers and senior santri, foreign languages, namely Arabic and English, at Bustanul Ulum Langsa are not merely used as a means of communication, but contain symbolic and ideological values; where Arabic is also believed to be the language of heaven, considered sacred, associated with religious knowledge, and a requirement to understand the Qur'an and classical texts. Meanwhile, English is indoctrinated as a window to the world, a symbol of the advancement of knowledge and globalization. Therefore, the effort of Bustanul Ulum santri indoctrination in mastering two foreign languages through a combination of religiosity and modernity, in order to become outstanding santri and have uniqueness among other

pesantren santri, is relevant to (Rahman, Bahruddin, & Nurhadi, 2025; Yahya, Mahmudah, & Rochma, 2021) who highlight how Arabic is used in religious and social contexts to strengthen the unity of Muslims.

2. Factors of the Institution's Vision and Mission

For the leadership at Bustanul Ulum Langsa, after repeatedly conducting studies with the guardians of the students as well as stakeholders and alumni, they saw that these two foreign languages are part of the leaders' strategic mission to realize the modern pesantren vision. Therefore, support from the foundation regarding Arabic and English is made a flagship program on par with other programs such as tahfizh, da'wah, and tilawah. In fact, to improve the language skills of the students, the leadership established special supervisors and dormitories for language learning modeling at that time, for example, the 'Khalid bin Walid' dormitory for male students, and the Cut Meurah dormitory for female students. The implementation of foreign languages is done preventively and systematically, not merely as an additional program, but as part of the institutional identity.

The foundation's policy has become an important factor in the success of foreign languages at Bustanul Ulum Langsa. Learning Arabic and English is not just an additional activity but part of the institution's vision and mission. Both languages are included in the formal and non-formal curriculum and are made flagship programs. This policy demonstrates the institution's strategic planning in building language-based competitive advantages. From an educational management perspective, Dick and Carey (2019) state that the success of a program is determined by the alignment between the institution's vision, program implementation, and consistent resource support.

3. Factors of Teacher Exemplary Behavior and Stakeholder Support

This study shows that the success of implementing a language environment at Pesantren Modern Bustanul Ulum Langsa is greatly influenced by the example set by the caregivers, teachers, and senior students. Consistent language modeling has shaped a communication culture based on Arabic and English among the students. This finding confirms that the aspect of modeling plays a strategic role in creating a vibrant language ecosystem in the pesantren.

This phenomenon can be explained through social learning theory (Bandura & Doll, 2005), which emphasizes that human behavior is formed through processes of observation and imitation of valued models. In the context of pesantren, caretakers and teachers function as significant models who are imitated by students, both in terms of

language and social behavior. When these examples are consistently demonstrated in everyday communication, then the habit of using a foreign language is no longer seen as an obligation, but becomes an internal culture of the students.

The success of creating a language environment cannot be separated from the exemplary behavior (*uswah*) of the teachers as well as the collective support of all elements of the pesantren. The consistent language practice of the teachers serves as a strong role model for the students in building linguistic habits. This finding aligns with Habibah's view, which emphasizes that the role of teachers or caregivers in creating a language environment—through supervision, implementation of the Language Court, and exemplary behavior—is a key factor in improving foreign language proficiency.

In addition, research (Wahyuni et al., 2025) shows that caregivers have a significant contribution in enforcing discipline through strict control mechanisms, including the imposition of sanctions for language violations. Although the aspect of exemplary behavior is still applied, disciplinary control proves to be more dominant in shaping the behavior of students. Other similar findings also state that students tend to imitate the linguistic behavior of teachers they respect (Hidayah, 2020; Juryatina & Amrin, 2021). Thus, the success of language programs is not only determined by the curriculum and teaching materials, but also by the role of teachers as role models in daily practice. This is further reinforced by Rahmawati et al., who emphasize the importance of the dimension of exemplary behavior in supporting the effectiveness of language programs.

Nevertheless, the study conducted by (Yenuri & Muhaimin, 2025) provides an interesting perspective regarding the implementation of foreign language programs as an instrument for discipline training in pesantren. Meanwhile, Rahmatika observes that the students experience significant changes in communication behavior, namely becoming more courageous in public speaking and more confident. The fear of making pronunciation mistakes (anxiety) gradually decreases through an interactive and supportive daily evaluation system in pesantren (Wijaya et al., 2024).

The research results indicate that the mandatory foreign language program has a positive impact on changes in student behavior. These findings suggest that the aspect of disciplinary control has a more dominant influence compared to mere role modeling. Therefore, the effectiveness of the language environment is not only determined by exemplary figures but also by the strength of the disciplinary system, which in practice is greatly influenced by the social context and the leadership style applied in the

pesantren environment.

4. Language Environment Factors (Bi'ah Lughawiyah) that are Conducive

The period from 1990–2005 is referred to as the golden age of the Bustanul Ulum Langsa language environment, which is marked by:

- a. Students speak foreign languages throughout the pesantren area: the prayer hall, dormitories, canteen, field, and even the cooperative.
- b. The presence of whiteboards as wall magazines (mading) in the student dormitory areas, in the prayer hall, in the canteen, in the madrasa, and in the sports area, as a medium and facility for students to express creativity through their writings using foreign languages. Also, the distribution of vocabulary/word lists and Arabic–English sentences in every corner of the pesantren.
- c. The implementation of student activities such as making announcements, delivering sermons or speeches in the prayer hall after dawn or after sunset, and daily conversations are carried out in the two official languages of the pesantren, namely Arabic and English.
- d. The dormitory environment is enhanced by playing sounds through speakers, such as muhadrasah sessions, speeches, and news in foreign languages, in each student dormitory at certain times.

A living language environment (bi'ah lughawiyah) is the main characteristic of the success of Bustanul Ulum Langsa. During the period 1990–2005, students were accustomed to using Arabic and English in all daily activities, whether in class, the prayer hall, dormitory, cafeteria, or sports field. Daily announcements, speeches, and informal conversations were also conducted in foreign languages. Regarding this matter, Unsi (2021) and Samin (2024) also emphasized that the language environment greatly affects students' language abilities.

This situation aligns with Krashen's language acquisition theory, which states that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in a low-anxiety environment. In other words, wide, continuous, and enjoyable exposure will accelerate the language acquisition process. Bustanul Ulum succeeded in creating such an atmosphere, making foreign languages truly come alive in the pesantren environment.

5. Factors of Teaching Resources and Method Transfer

The research results indicate that the success of establishing a language environment at Pesantren Modern Bustanul Ulum is supported by: (1) the presence of qualified teaching staff (teachers from outside the region such as Pondok Modern Gontor, even from abroad such as Egypt), and (2) the availability of internal training (courses) for teachers and staff as part of capacity building. In addition, the transfer of learning methods from established institutions – such as conversation drills,

discussions, and language clubs – becomes an important instrument in forming an effective and systematic foreign language learning system.

Bustanul Ulum's decision to bring in teachers from other regions and abroad, as well as to organize internal courses for teachers and staff, can be considered a factor that supports the increase in the capacity and quality of language learning. Teachers with a broader background (for example from Gontor or Egypt) bring proven experience, methods, and learning culture, resulting in more structured language learning systems (drills, discussions, language clubs) and improved student outcomes in that language environment.

“In line with” research by Vold (2017) which shows that the education and overseas experience of language teachers contribute to their readiness to teach foreign languages and the quality of teaching. From this exposition, the author finds that the presence of qualified teachers and internal training mechanisms at Bustanul Ulum are the main contributing factors in the creation of an effective foreign language learning system.

6. The Factor of Discipline Through the Language Court

The Language Court is a special innovation in the formation of language discipline at Bustanul Ulum. This system applies rewards and punishments for students who violate language rules, especially in dormitory and school environments. At the beginning, the Language Court was effective in enforcing discipline and fostering the habit of using a foreign language.

However, in its development, this system experienced a dilemma due to the absence of a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and adequate supervision. Punishments that were supposed to be educational often turned into physical punishments, causing internal conflicts and violations of human rights values. As a result, the Language Court was then discontinued, and along with it, the spirit of language discipline began to decline.

This finding indicates that assertiveness without an ethical and educational system has the potential to generate resistance. Conversely, a humanistic disciplinary approach (Noddings, 2002) can be a more constructive alternative in cultivating the character and language of students.

7. Motivation Factors and Social Prestige

Motivation becomes the main driver of language success. The students of

Bustanul Ulum are encouraged to be active in using language because they feel proud to be part of a pesantren widely known for its proficiency in Arabic and English. The habit of using language is also strengthened through competitions, study clubs, and routine announcements in the mushalla.

According to Deci & Ryan's motivation theory (1985), a combination of intrinsic motivation (the drive to be curious and to be skilled) and extrinsic motivation (social rewards, prestige, and punishment) can improve learning performance. This is evident in the experience of Bustanul Ulum students who are enthusiastic about speaking because of factors of pride and social recognition.

8. Reputation and Appeal Factors of Pesantren

The ability of Bustanul Ulum students in Arabic and English makes this pesantren a symbol of modern education in Aceh. Many parents from various regions send their children to Bustanul Ulum because of its high language reputation. This phenomenon shows how language becomes the branding and identity of an institution, as well as a social magnet that expands the influence of the pesantren at the regional level.

Based on the findings of the supporting factors for the realization of foreign languages as a flagship program and becoming the "crown of the pesantren" at Bustanul Ulum Langsa, it is evidence that the implementation of foreign languages "Arabic and English" at Bustanul Ulum Langsa during its golden era was the result of the interaction of many factors, both structural and cultural. These factors can be categorized by the author into three main dimensions, namely;

1. Structural Dimension: support of the institution's vision and mission, foundation policies, and a clear managerial system.
2. Cultural Dimension: teachers' exemplary behavior, collective commitment, and strong bi'ah lughawiyyah traditions.
3. Psychological Dimension: students' motivation, sense of pride, and high competitive spirit.

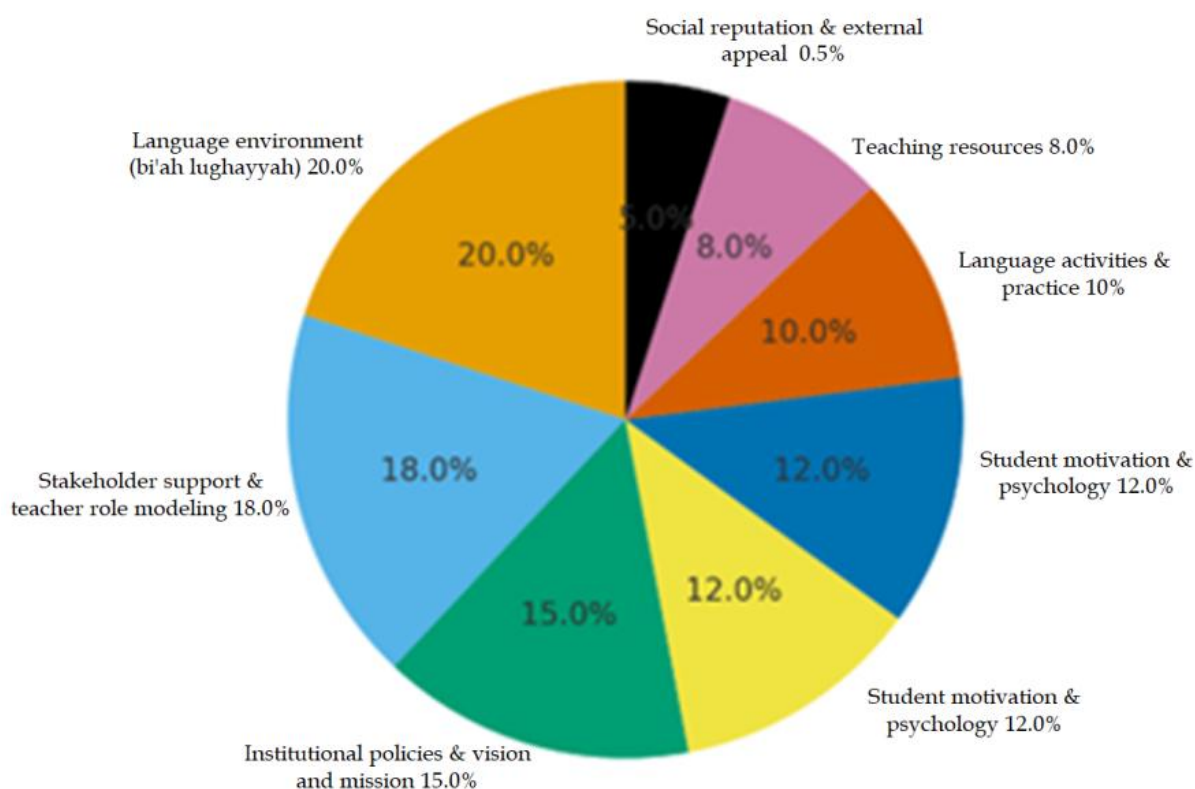
These three dimensions reinforce each other and form a synergy that truly makes Arabic and English the crown of Bustanul Ulum Langsa boarding school.

However, the dynamics of the Language Court show that success does not come without challenges. When discipline is no longer balanced with an educational and humanistic approach, the spirit of language gradually fades. Therefore, revitalizing the language program in the pesantren needs to prioritize a system based on motivation, exemplary behavior, and a humanistic approach, so that the crown of language can shine

again in the Bustanul Ulum Langsa environment.

The results of the qualitative analysis indicate that the success of Arabic and English as flagship programs at Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Langsa is supported by a number of factors that interact systemically. To show the proportion of relative influence among the factors, an analytical estimation was carried out based on the intensity of theme occurrences in interview data, observations, and documentation. The results of this estimation are visualized in a pie chart in the following figure:

(Image 1: Diagram of the Dominance of Supporting Factors for the Foreign Language Program at Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Langsa)



The diagram shows that the language environment (bi'ah lughawiyah) occupies the most dominant position with a proportion of 20%. This emphasizes that the success of language learning in pesantren highly depends on an environment that supports natural and continuous language practice. A conducive environment allows for the process of language acquisition through exposure (input) and daily interaction, as emphasized by Krashen's Language Acquisition Hypothesis (1982).

The next factor is stakeholder support and teacher role modeling, contributing 18%. Structural support from leaders, foundation policies, and the role modeling of teachers who actively use Arabic and English are the main drivers of the sustainability of the language program. Teacher role modeling strengthens the affective aspect and

shapes an academic culture that encourages students to imitate and adapt to the language community.

Institutional policy factors and vision-mission contribute 15%, indicating the importance of institutional policy direction in making foreign languages an integral part of the pesantren education system. Language is not merely an additional program, but becomes part of the institutional identity as stated in the vision and mission of Bustanul Ulum Langsa as a modern pesantren.

Next, the language court and disciplinary system contributed 12%. Although its implementation experienced dynamics, this system proved effective in the early period because it was able to foster the discipline and sense of responsibility of the students towards language rules. This was followed by the motivation and psychology of the students at 12%, which shows that intrinsic drive (the desire to understand religious and modern knowledge) and extrinsic drive (social recognition) also reinforced the success of the language program.

Activity and language practice factors contribute 10%, such as the implementation of speech contests, debates, courses, and announcements in foreign languages that enrich language experience. Meanwhile, teaching resources (expert teachers and training) contribute 8%, and the social reputation of the pesantren is 5%, indicating that the success of the language program also impacts the public image of the pesantren at both local and regional levels.

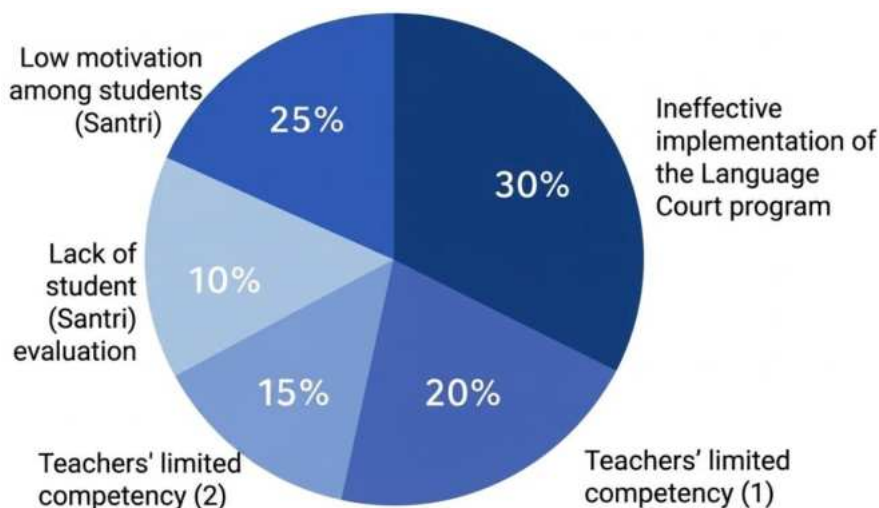
Overall, the results of this analysis show that the success of the language program at Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Langsa is not the result of a single factor, but rather a dynamic collaboration between structural, cultural, and psychological aspects. The language environment and teacher role modeling occupy a central position because they function as the main drivers of the formation of language culture in the pesantren environment.

Foreign Language Stagnation In Bustanul Ulum Langsa

Research results show that between around 2005 and 2020, Bustanul Ulum Langsa experienced stagnation or a vacuum in the use of foreign languages. During this period, Arabic and English seemed to be in a state of dormancy, and their presence was no longer heard in this pesantren. Unlike the period when Bustanul Ulum reached the peak of Arabic and English language adoption, during this period there was no longer the “spirit” of the language or the “crown of the pesantren”.

Based on the results of the author's research, this condition is caused by a

combination of several factors, including: the “Language Court” system which creates a dilemma, injustice and resentment among students, parental intervention, the burdens of student caretakers, as well as conflicts within the foundation and unhealthy seniority. After analyzing internal and external factors, this diagram provides a visual overview of the critical points that contribute to the decline in foreign language learning quality at Bustanul Ulum Langsa Islamic boarding school.



(Image 1: Diagram: Factors Causing Language Stagnation)

The pie chart above shows the percentage distribution of the dominance of each factor. The most dominant factor is the ineffectiveness of the implementation of the Language Court program due to the absence of SOPs (30%), which emphasizes the importance of a clear program management structure. Next, the limitation of teacher competence ranks second (25%), indicating the need to enhance the professional capacity of instructors through language learning methodology training. The lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure (20%) is also significant, as access to learning materials and media plays a role in the motivation and quality of students' language practice. Low student motivation (15%) and the lack of continuous supervision and evaluation (10%) are additional factors that slow the development of the program, but are still relevant in the context of developing a comprehensive language learning strategy.

However, after analyzing more deeply, the author found three main factors causing the stagnation and vacuum in the application of Arabic and English at Bustanul Ulum Langsa, which are as follows:

1. The Paralysis of the Language Court

In general, this stagnation is seen in the weak communicative ability of the students in Arabic, even though they have long been in an Islamic boarding school environment that uses various learning facilities and programs. However, in the early 2000s, the Language Court system at Bustanul Ulum, which was designed as an effort to create a conducive language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyyah*) through reward and punishment, was indeed able to create language habits, as seen in studies at boarding schools that found that "Skinner's behaviorism principle was applied through daily Arabic conversations programs, vocabulary memorization, thematic speeches, and fines/punishments for violators (Khofifah, Setiyawan, Al Ghifari, & Umam, 2025)."

However, the behaviourist approach, which emphasises only stimulus-response mechanisms and external reinforcement, has been criticised by Noam Chomsky (Chomsky, 1959), who argues that language acquisition cannot be adequately explained as mere habit formation, but rather involves an internal cognitive capacity that enables individuals to generate linguistic structures creatively and meaningfully

In the context of Bustanul Ulum, although in the history of the successful implementation of foreign languages at Bustanul Ulum Langsa (1990s-2005), the existence of a "Language Court" also became a fairly supportive factor for the language institution program, however, with some cases of physical punishment and discriminatory actions by seniors, while the control of the boarding students' supervisors began to be low, it generated feelings of resentment and hurt among junior students. Even the challenges and problems related to physical punishment at that time began to conflict with Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection. This then impacted the paralysis of the language court, and there was a stagnation in the practice of Arabic and English in the Bustanul Ulum Langsa environment.

From the aspect of implementing reward and punishment, although the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2002 has begun, which has impacted the reduction of physical punishment on students in pesantrens, the author observes that some pesantrens still maintain the practice of language court, which emphasizes reward and transforms the form of punishment into educational punishment. According to Anto and Rahman (Anto & Rahman, 2018), academic assignments such as writing essays, translating texts, making vocabulary lists, and writing compositions are forms of punishment applied in pesantrens that are educational in nature, not physical punishment. At Pondok Pesantren Annajah Pebayuran Bekasi, for example, punishments that are intellectual and educational are implemented (Puspitasari, 2005).

2. Parental Intervention Factor

Another significant factor causing the stagnation of foreign language implementation at Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Langsa is parental (santri guardian) intervention in the institution's internal policies, especially those related to the implementation of the Language Court program. This program was originally designed as a system to monitor language discipline within the pesantren environment. Through the Language Court, any violations of foreign language usage rules are dealt with firmly, either in the form of warnings or sanctions, with the aim of creating a strong *bi'ah lughawiyah* (language environment).

However, in practice, the implementation of the Language Court faces various issues. Based on interviews with the leadership and senior teachers of Bustanul Ulum, it was found that most protests arise due to the application of physical sanctions by the student council administrators against students who violate language rules. In some cases, these sanctions caused physical injuries, requiring students to receive medical treatment. Although such cases are individual in nature and can be resolved internally, some parents choose to report them to the police. This legal action directly impacts the closure of the Language Court program by the institution.

From a socio-educational perspective, this condition reflects the tension between the authority of educational institutions and the role of parents in nurturing students. On one hand, parental involvement in supporting language policies is a positive aspect of educational participation. However, when such intervention is accompanied by legal pressure and without effective communication, it actually undermines the legitimacy of the institution's internal policies.

Furthermore, research findings show that the absence of structured communication and mediation mechanisms between the pesantren authorities and the students' guardians is the main cause of conflict. The lack of an educational dialogue pathway in problem-solving causes the Language Court policies to lose social legitimacy. As a result, the function of language supervision becomes weak, language violations increase, and students' motivation to use foreign languages—especially Arabic—declines significantly.

In fact, the creation of a language environment involves not only the boarding school management, dormitory staff and students, but also requires the support of extensive social interaction through effective communication with students' guardians, alumni and the wider community. This is in line with the concept of Language

Socialisation, which emphasises that language practices are formed through participation in social structures (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011), and is supported by the importance of interaction, input and output within the language environment (Muttaqin et al., 2024).

Pedagogically, this event shows that the implementation of language policies in pesantren cannot be separated from the principles of educational communication and a humanistic approach. Language discipline programs need to be based on educational and persuasive values, not just a repressive approach. Without synergy between institutions and parents, the sustainability of the language environment will be difficult to maintain, and the students' language enthusiasm will stagnate or even decline. Even the involvement of the students, the teachers' assistants in the application of language today is very relevant to the intensification of technology implementation (Samin; 2025).

The closure of the Language Court program at Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has had a fairly significant socio-pedagogical impact on the dynamics of student life, particularly in terms of cultivating language culture and linguistic discipline. Before the program was discontinued, the Language Court functioned as an effective social instrument for enforcing language discipline within the boarding school environment. Its presence created a competitive atmosphere, a sense of responsibility, and collective awareness among the students to communicate using Arabic and English in their daily lives.

However, after the program was discontinued, symptoms of a drastic decline in the intensity of foreign language use in the pesantren environment emerged. Based on field observations and interviews with several language teachers, it was found that the students began to revert to using local languages and Indonesian in daily interactions, both in the dormitory and in the classroom. This phenomenon indicates that the role of the Language Court was not only administrative but also symbolic as a moral and social reminder that using a foreign language is an intellectual identity of the Bustanul Ulum students.

From a pedagogical perspective, the loss of the language supervision system has led to a weakening of the students' intrinsic motivation to learn Arabic. Students no longer feel they have an internal drive to maintain consistency in using the language, because there is no system providing reinforcement for positive linguistic behavior. Guntur even observed that students experience demotivation due to internal factors such as fear, value conflicts, lack of self-confidence, and boredom. This aligns with

researchers' findings that intrinsic motivation weakens due to unsupportive environmental conditions (Guntur, A. H., Munir, M., & Haniah, H., 2016). On the other hand, language teachers face new challenges in rekindling enthusiasm for language use, as the supervision program that previously functioned as an educational social control has disappeared.

Moreover, socially, the closure of the Language Court has caused a shift in the value of discipline among the students. Language discipline that was previously maintained through a system of collective supervision has now shifted to individual responsibility, which is not always well internalized. Some students who were previously active as language drivers have lost their space for actualization, while other students no longer see the use of foreign languages as a moral obligation of the community. In the context of social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), the loss of modeling or environmental role models also contributes to the decline of positive linguistic behavior among the students.

Furthermore, the closure of the Language Court also impacted the formation of a psychological distance between the institution and the students. Some students believe that the institution has relaxed its commitment to language policies, while some teachers feel a loss of moral authority in maintaining language culture. In the long term, this condition can hinder the process of internalizing language education values based on discipline, responsibility, and collectivity.

Thus, the socio-pedagogical impact of the closure of the Language Court does not only stop at the practical aspect of reduced foreign language use but also touches the psychological and cultural dimensions in the lives of the santri. This situation demonstrates the need to redesign language development strategies that are more humanistic, communicative, and collaborative, involving teachers, santri, and guardians proportionally. The revitalization of a language supervision system oriented towards character building in linguistics without physical violence becomes a strategic step to revive the *bi'ah lughawiyah* at Pesantren Bustanul Ulum.

Nevertheless, researchers also found some pesantren that have begun to make revitalization efforts, such as implementing the communicative approach model, task-based learning, and the use of digital media. These efforts have been proven to significantly increase the motivation and competence of students, as reported in the IAIN Parepare Journal (2024). Pesantren that implement these innovations show a paradigm shift from memorization-based learning to understanding- and communication-based

learning.

Thus, the stagnation of Arabic language implementation in pesantren can be understood as the result of an imbalance between the cognitive dimension (understanding the structure of the language) and the performative dimension (using the language in real contexts). The implementation of an integrative learning model that combines the strengths of Salafi tradition and modern approaches becomes a strategic step to revive the linguistic enthusiasm of students in the era of globalization.

Although role modeling and discipline play a major role, this study found that the continuity of guidance is a major challenge. When there is a change of administration or a decrease in teacher motivation, language practices tend to stagnate. Therefore, institutional factors such as boarding school policies and facility support also need to be strengthened so that the language culture can be sustainable.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the successful implementation of Arabic and English at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Langsa during the period 1990–2005 did not stand in isolation, but was the result of a strong combination of the leadership's vision, the exemplary conduct of teachers, and the enforcement of rules. Conceptually, these findings are consistent with the concept of language socialisation (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011), which emphasises that language acquisition does not occur through formal instruction alone, but rather through an individual's active engagement in meaningful social practices. Language is learnt when students participate in real-life interactions, use language in authentic contexts, and internalise the communication norms of their community.

At Bustanul Ulum Langsa, the institutional vision and the exemplary conduct of teachers act as stimuli (inputs), whilst the Language Tribunal serves as an instrument to safeguard the continuity of these interactions. In this context, ideological factors, the institutional vision, the exemplary conduct of teachers, and the disciplinary system through the Language Tribunal serve as the main foundations for fostering a strong *bi'ah lughawiyyah*.

More specifically, the Language Court serves not only as an instrument of control, but also as a mechanism for the internalisation of linguistic norms. From the perspective of the sociology of education, the Language Court is an agent that shapes a new '*bi'ah*' or '*habitus*' – a system of internalised dispositions that guides the students' everyday

language practices without them realising it (Bourdieu, 1991). Through the application of *bi'ah lughawiyah*, the enforcement of mandatory language rules and consistent discipline, foreign language learning is no longer regarded merely as classroom subject matter. The language has become a source of pride and part of the students' identity in their daily interactions within the pesantren. Consequently, the students' linguistic traditions can serve as a brand, a selling point, and a distinctive feature of the pesantren.

These findings not only reinforce the arguments put forward by Huda, as well as Muzammil and Jannah (Huda, 2025; Muzammil & Jannah, 2023) regarding the importance of integrating formal policies and social practices, but also expands upon them by demonstrating that the implementation of a language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) in Islamic boarding schools requires an enforcing structure during the initial phase of its formation so that it becomes internalised as a group culture. This is precisely what has been implemented at Bustanul Ulum, where, during the first six months following the new students' arrival at the pesantren, they are introduced to foreign languages every morning through '*muhadasah yaumiyah*' sessions, which are organised thematically around the students' various activities within the pesantren. Consequently, after six months, the students are required to use Arabic and English as their everyday means of communication.

Interestingly, this study also uncovered a significant contradiction: the occurrence of regression (stagnation) in institutions that actually already possess a well-established linguistic tradition. Until now, several studies – such as those by Alfitri, Jamil and Agung (Alfitri, Supriyady, & Saproni, 2020; Jamil & Agung, 2021) – have concluded that linguistic decline in pesantren is triggered by economic constraints or a lack of facilities. The study at Bustanul Ulum Langsa refutes this assumption. Set-back actually occurs when physical facilities are already adequate, yet the commitment to internal governance begins to falter. This indicates that maintaining a language environment is far more difficult than establishing one, as the system requires stable management that is resilient to internal conflict.

When the Language Court began to malfunction and lose its influence, the impact immediately undermined the social structure of language within the pesantren. Without clear rules, students lost the opportunity to practise their skills consistently. Consequently, a massive linguistic shift (*tahawwul al-lughah*) occurred; students faced a crisis of motivation and restricted their use of foreign languages to formal occasions such as examinations or official speeches. Meanwhile, in casual, everyday interactions,

they reverted to using their mother tongue or Indonesian. This phenomenon highlights the wide gap between policies set out on paper and the actual practices of students on the ground.

This situation was exacerbated by negative interference from outside parties and internal conflicts amongst the foundation's management. In line with the arguments put forward by Nurmila, Siti and Nur (Nurmila, Syauky, & Jannah, 2025; SITI & NUR, 2022), parents' overly protective attitudes or objections to language sanctions have been shown to undermine the pesantren's authority in the eyes of the students. At the same time, disputes at foundation level have disrupted management's focus, leading to lax language supervision. The spirit of togetherness, which had once been the driving force during the golden age (when a foreign language was implemented as the students' daily language of communication—the 'crown' of the pesantren), has gradually shifted towards individualistic practices. The use of a foreign language is no longer collectively upheld but is left entirely to the individual awareness of each student, which is, by its very nature, still unstable.

As a solution to this complexity, this study proposes a Language Programme Evaluation Model based on the Tri-Centre Education Integration (Formal, Non-formal and Informal). This model aims to break away from the traditional evaluation methods, which have always been biased towards classroom examination results alone. Through this new model, the success of language programmes is measured comprehensively based on the students' social activities outside the classroom. This is achieved by involving parents as supervisory partners at home, as well as organising regular evaluation sessions and competitions across boarding schools. This step is crucial for maintaining the students' social motivation and a spirit of healthy competition in the long term.

Furthermore, when compared with the 'golden age', there appears to have been a shift from a collective-based system towards more individualistic and relaxed practices. In the earlier period, all elements of the pesantren—teachers, students and administrators—were actively involved in preserving the linguistic culture. However, during the stagnation phase, this involvement waned, causing the linguistic environment to lose its social control. This reinforces the argument that the success of *bi'ah lughawiyah* is heavily dependent on the collective participation and consistency of key actors within the institution.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that the stagnation of language learning

in pesantren is not solely caused by technical factors related to teaching, but is the result of the complex interplay between ideological, institutional, social, and cultural factors. Consequently, efforts to revitalise the language environment must be comprehensive, not only through curriculum improvements but also through the re-establishment of disciplinary systems, the reconstruction of language culture, and the establishment of a more stable and consistent institutional governance framework.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the ups and downs in the use of Arabic and English at the Bustanul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Langsa can be divided into three phases: the heyday (1990–2005), the period of decline or stagnation (2005–2020), and the period of revival (2020–2025). During the heyday, foreign languages successfully became part of everyday culture due to alignment between the pesantren's vision, the positive example set by teachers, a supportive boarding school environment, and the strict enforcement of rules by the Language Council. However, during the stagnation period, this language culture collapsed due to the Language Council's relaxation of rules, internal conflicts within the foundation's management, and interference from the students' parents. Consequently, the foreign language is now used only during examinations or formal events, whilst for casual everyday conversation, students revert to using Indonesian or their local dialect.

Generally speaking, the main reasons for the stagnation of these language programmes are the lack of clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) at the Language Council, weak supervision by the management, and a lack of facilities and effective communication with the students' parents. In essence, the boarding school environment and the management of the pesantren play the most crucial role in determining whether students are willing to practise a foreign language or not. When all these elements work in harmony, a language-rich culture will flourish; but if management breaks down, the students' discipline will also weaken. Therefore, to revive the use of foreign languages in Islamic boarding schools, the management needs to improve the governance of the boarding house, implement a more student-friendly disciplinary approach, and rebuild consistent cooperation amongst the management team.

Limitations of the Study

As an honest note for future improvement, this study still has several limitations. Firstly, this study examines only one location, namely the Bustanul Ulum Islamic

Boarding School in Langsa, covering a fairly long period (1990–2025). Therefore, the issues of foundation conflicts or parental protests identified here may differ if they were to occur at other Islamic boarding schools with more modern management. Secondly, as this study utilised interviews and historical accounts, the data obtained relies heavily on the recollections of alumni, senior teachers and former administrators, which may be subjective or inaccurate. It is hoped that this limitation will serve as a point of consideration for future researchers to conduct comparative studies across several Islamic boarding schools simultaneously, in order to obtain a broader and more comprehensive picture of the language barriers involved.

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