

**English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students'
Experience with English Language Programmes
in Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia
(An Ethnographic study)**

Saifullah Ali

Supervised by

Sarah Galloway PhD, SFHEA
Dr. Lorele Mackie SFHEA
Professor Jane Callaghan

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Declaration

I declare that I conducted this research by myself throughout the entire journey of my PhD studies, and none of the work in this thesis has been submitted for any other degree at any other university. I also used ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) to assist in translating from Bahasa Indonesian to English and proofreading the final draft of the writings. Other than the aforementioned tasks, no generative AI tools were used in the generation or writing of this thesis.

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This PhD journey has been one of the most difficult yet most meaningful chapters of my life. It stretched me in ways I never expected and taught me more than I ever imagined about research, about perseverance, and about myself. I carry deep gratitude for everyone who walked with me through the highs and lows of this long and transformative path.

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A *Déjà Vu* Journey

My academic path has always felt like a repeating story—a journey shaped by struggle, uncertainty, and unexpected disasters. I began my undergraduate study during the conflict in Aceh, trying to learn while the Indonesian army and the Free Aceh Movement were fighting around us. Those years were difficult, but they shaped me. I still remember my student number, 239911070, because it reminds me of how strong I had to be at that time.

I finished my undergraduate degree three months after the great tsunami on 26 December 2004. With almost no facilities left and debris everywhere, I walked through the ruins to complete my final steps. Becoming one of the first graduates after the disaster taught me the real meaning of resilience.

Years later, I started my doctoral study far from my home country, in Scotland, the best place I had ever been—but the *déjà vu* returned. I began during the COVID-19 pandemic, studying alone in a small room with only a laptop and internet connection. There were no classmates, no campus life, and no real interaction. Even my student number, 2910770, felt like an echo of my past, almost repeating the number I carried years before.

And, just like before, I ended this journey with another disaster. On 26 November 2025, the biggest flood in Sumatra's history struck my hometown. My final weeks before the deadline were spent with unstable internet and unpredicted blackouts. Every day felt uncertain.

But one hope stayed strong inside me:
I can do this, and I must finish this journey, with all the support around me,
especially from my supervisors.

This story is not only about earning degrees. It is about surviving, continuing, and believing that determination can take me to the end.

Dedication

First of all, I thank God, the Most Merciful and Compassionate, for granting me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this work. Every step of this journey has been guided by His will, and I am deeply thankful for the opportunities and blessings that have allowed me to reach this point.

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Abstract

EFL Students' Experience with English Language Programmes in Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia

This study explores English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning within the moral, social, and disciplinary culture of an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Indonesia. Centred on *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School in Aceh, the research examines how English education is organised, experienced, and understood by teachers and students, and how pedagogical practices are shaped by institutional discipline, communal life, and Islamic moral values. Drawing on an interpretive, ethnographic design, data were collected through both classroom and out-of-classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The study was guided by two complementary theoretical perspectives: behaviourism, which highlights habit formation and reinforcement in language learning and Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, which illuminates how structures of authority and surveillance produce self-regulating learners within an enclosed learning environment. Findings indicate that EFL learning in the *pesantren* is deeply intertwined with moral and spiritual discipline. Teachers employ memorisation, repetition, and reinforcement not only to develop linguistic competence but also to cultivate virtues such as patience, obedience, and perseverance. Institutional systems such as the *Mahkamah Lughah* (Language Court), peer monitoring, and English-only policies reinforce language use while nurturing collective responsibility. The nature of the environment of the institution allows students to build meaningful interaction among peers and maintain relationships through providing mutual supports that lead to creating supportive learning atmosphere. The study contributes to qualitative research on faith-based education by revealing the intersection between behaviourist pedagogy, disciplinary power, and Islamic educational values within *pesantren* life. It shows that discipline, when internalised as moral practice, can be both regulatory and transformative. The findings offer valuable implications for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and institutional administrators seeking culturally and ethically grounded approaches to English education in Islamic contexts.

Keywords: *EFL learning; Islamic boarding schools; behaviourism; disciplinary power.*

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Glossary and Key Terminologies

To ensure clarity, the key terms used throughout this thesis are defined as follows:

- Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*/IBS): A traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia where students (*santri*) live and study under the supervision of religious teachers (*ustaz* or *kyai*). It combines religious education with general studies and emphasises moral and spiritual development.
- *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School: The research site for this study, a modern *pesantren* in Aceh that integrates Islamic studies, general subjects, and English language education within a disciplined environment.
- EFL (English as a Foreign Language): The learning of English by speakers whose first language is not English, typically in a non-English-speaking country.
- Behaviourism: A learning theory that views learning as a change in observable behaviour shaped by external stimuli and reinforcement.
- Operant Conditioning: A concept from behaviourism developed by B.F. Skinner (1953), which explains how learning occurs through rewards and punishments.
- Disciplinary Power: A concept by Michel Foucault (1995) referring to systems of power that shape behaviour through observation, regulation, and self-control.
- *Mahkamah Lughah* (Language Court): A disciplinary body responsible for investigating and addressing language rule violations within the *pesantren*.
- *Jasus* (Student Spy): A student assigned to observe and report rule-breaking, particularly regarding language use, reflecting internal systems of surveillance.
- Translanguaging: The use of multiple languages interchangeably to communicate and learn; in this study, it describes how students mix English, Arabic, and Bahasa Indonesia in conversation.
- Panoptic Surveillance: A concept from Foucault (1995) describing how individuals internalise the feeling of being observed, leading them to monitor and regulate their own behaviour.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are among the oldest and most influential educational institutions in Indonesia. Historically, they have served as centres of Qur'anic study, Arabic grammar, and moral education, playing a vital role in shaping the nation's intellectual and ethical character (Azra, 2003). Over time, however, many *pesantren* have evolved into more comprehensive educational institutions, offering general subjects such as science, mathematics, and foreign languages. This evolution reflects the continuing effort to modernise Islamic education while preserving its religious and moral foundations.

Among the new subjects, English has gained increasing significance. It is now recognised as an essential skill for accessing global knowledge, pursuing higher education, and participating in international communication. As a result, many *pesantren* have introduced English language programmes to prepare students (*santri*) for global engagement while maintaining their Islamic identity and values (Zarkasyi, 2015). Nevertheless, the integration of English into the *pesantren* curriculum presents key challenges: reconciling traditional religious discipline with modern pedagogical approaches and balancing global aspirations with local moral commitments (Lukens-Bull, 2001).

This study was conducted to explore these dynamics within As-Tsani Islamic Boarding School (IBS) in Aceh, Indonesia. As a modern *pesantren*, As-Tsani IBS combines traditional Islamic values with a structured English language programme that extends beyond the classroom. English functions not only as an academic subject but also as a medium of daily communication, reinforced through institutional mechanisms such as *Mahkamah Lughah* (the Language court), the Language Development Centre (LDC) and students language supervisors (*Mudabbir*) (Hakim et al., 2024; Harahap et al., 2024).

The findings indicated that English learning at As-Tsani IBS is underpinned by behaviourist learning principles, where memorisation, repetition, and reinforcement form the basis of habit formation and language mastery. At

the same time, the study interpreted the school's broader disciplinary system through Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, which illuminates how institutional structures, routines, and surveillance cultivate self-regulation and moral awareness among students.

By connecting behaviourist pedagogy with Foucauldian insights into discipline and power, this research provides a deeper understanding of how English language learning operates as both an academic and moral process within the *pesantren* context. It contributes to the broader discussion on the modernisation of Islamic education in Indonesia, demonstrating how *pesantren* such as *As-Tsani* IBS negotiate global educational demands while upholding their religious and ethical traditions.

1.2 Aims and research questions

This research had two primary aims. First, it examined the implementation of English language learning within the *pesantren* context, focusing on how traditional Islamic educational values, together with behaviourist principles, shaped teaching practices, learning strategies, and language activities. It also explored how the school's structured and disciplined environment supported students in developing communicative competence, the ability to use English effectively in both everyday interactions and academic settings.

Second, it explored the role of discipline in shaping language learning. In *As-Tsani* IBS, discipline is not limited to classroom management; it extends to all aspects of students' daily life. The study investigates how strict supervision, peer monitoring, and institutional control contribute to students' consistent use of English and how these disciplinary mechanisms proposed by Foucault (1977) affect their motivation, attitude, and self-regulation. Based on these aims, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of EFL learning practices in *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS)?
2. How does disciplinary enforcement shape the practice of EFL learning among students at *As-Tsani* IBS?

These questions provide the foundation for understanding how language learning and discipline function together in a structured Islamic educational environment.

1.3 Significance of the study

This research is significant for several reasons. It contributes to the understanding of how English language learning is integrated into the daily life of Islamic boarding schools and how discipline plays a vital role in maintaining the effectiveness of language programmes. The continuous use of English at *As-Tsani* IBS is not only a means of improving linguistic ability but also a method for developing good habits, self-control, and responsibility among students. By combining insights from behaviourist learning theory and Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, the study highlights a dual process in which language learning and moral formation might occur together. It demonstrates that the repetition and reinforcement emphasised in behaviourism are strengthened by the structured discipline and surveillance systems described by Foucault. In this way, language learning in *pesantren* is not only about acquiring communication skills but also about shaping students' behaviour, work ethic, and sense of community.

This study also may have practical significance. For teachers and school leaders, understanding how students experience discipline in relation to language learning can lead to more effective teaching practices. It may help educators create learning environments that are supportive yet structured, promoting intrinsic motivation rather than fear of punishment. For education stakeholders, the findings create opportunity to inform educational reforms that recognise the importance of cultural and institutional context in implementing language policies.

At a broader level, this study may be relevant to discussions on the role of Islamic boarding schools in modern society. As *pesantren* continue to modernise, e.g. integrating English and other global competencies into their curricula, they demonstrate that Islamic education can be both traditional and

progressive. By equipping students with strong language skills and moral discipline, schools like *As-Tsani* IBS prepare their graduates to participate actively in both local and international communities. Thus, this study not only deepens understandings of EFL learning in faith-based settings but also highlights how discipline and education might work hand in hand to produce individuals who are knowledgeable, responsible, and globally aware.

1.4 The nature of the study

This study used a qualitative approach based on focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005). Ethnography is a method that allows researchers to explore and understand social life from the perspective of those who live it. It is especially useful for studying educational institutions like *pesantren*, where daily routines, community interactions, and cultural norms shape students' experiences in powerful ways. The research was conducted over three months in 2023 at *As-Tsani* IBS. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of institutional documents. Observations focused on classroom lessons, extracurricular activities, dormitory interactions, and disciplinary events. Interviews provided insight into how students perceive English learning, discipline, and their relationships with peers and teachers.

The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that people's experiences are meaningful within their specific contexts. It also follows a constructivist epistemology, which recognises that knowledge is built through interpretation rather than objective measurement. The goal is to gain a rich, contextual understanding of EFL learning and discipline as they are lived and experienced in *As-Tsani* IBS.

Two theoretical frameworks guided this analysis: behaviourism and Foucault's theory of disciplinary power. Behaviourism helped explain how students' language learning habits were shaped through memorisation, repetition, and reinforcement, reflecting the institution's efforts to cultivate learning behaviours that align with its educational norms and expectations.

Additionally, Foucault's theory (1977, 1995) helps explain how discipline, surveillance, and power function within institutions to shape behaviour. Together, these frameworks provide tools for analysing both the learning processes and the systems of control that influence them.

The study is both descriptive and analytical. It describes what happens in the daily practice of EFL learning and critically analyses how institutional discipline contributes to that process. Rather than generalising to all *pesantren*, the study provides a detailed case study that offers insights relevant to similar educational contexts in Indonesia and beyond.

1.5 Summary of the thesis

This thesis investigates how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is organised, experienced, and regulated within the moral, social, and institutional life of an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), focusing on As-Tsani IBS in Aceh. The study asks how everyday pedagogical routines and disciplinary mechanisms shape students' language habits and how the *pesantren's* social and physical environments support or constrain English learning. It brings together two complementary theoretical lenses, behaviourism (to explain habit formation, repetition, and reinforcement) and Foucauldian notions of disciplinary power (to analyse surveillance, normalisation, and subject formation), and uses a focused ethnographic design to capture the lived realities of students, teachers, and institutional practices.

Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, aims, and questions, and situates the study within the broader debates on the modernisation of Islamic education and EFL provision in Indonesia. It outlines the significance of studying *pesantren* as residential learning environments where moral education and language education intersect, and it sets out the thesis structure and key definitions that guide the inquiry.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review and theoretical grounding. It critically surveys behaviourist approaches to learning (habit formation, reinforcement, and memorisation), sociocultural perspectives (peer interaction,

communities of practice, and scaffolding), and research on linguistic landscapes or schoolsapes (how physical spaces and visible language mediate learning). This chapter shows how these theories converge in *pesantren* contexts: behaviourist routines shape habit and discipline, sociocultural practices shape participation and identity, and the material environment (posters, signs, dormitories) becomes an ongoing source of language input and moral messaging.

Chapter 3 develops the Foucauldian framework that anchors the thesis' analysis of institutional power. It explicates Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power, panoptic surveillance, normalisation, examination, and the technologies of the self, and demonstrates how these ideas can be applied to the IBS setting. The chapter argues that the *pesantren's* surveillance systems, peer-monitoring practices (e.g. the "Jasus"), examinations, and spatial layout operate as mechanisms that both enforce compliance and enable self-discipline, producing subjects who internalise institutional norms.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology. Located within an interpretivist paradigm and using focused ethnography, the study draws on participant observation, semi-structured interviews (students and teachers), fieldnotes, and document/photo analysis. The chapter explains how participants were selected, how access and consent were negotiated, the procedures for data collection, and the thematic (Braun & Clarke) approach used for analysis. It also addresses ethical issues, researcher positionality, and steps taken to establish the trustworthiness of findings.

Chapters 5 and 6 present and analyse the empirical data. Chapter 5 examines the nature of EFL learning at As-Tsani IBS, highlighting how habit formation, memorisation, translanguaging, public speaking activities, and the roles of teachers and peers shape day-to-day learning. Chapter 6 focuses specifically on disciplinary practices: how surveillance, peer monitoring, language courts, spatial arrangements, and examinations regulate language behaviour and contribute to the internalisation of discipline. Together these chapters show that EFL learning in the boarding schools is produced through a

complex interplay of reinforcement, social mediation, spatial design, and institutional rules.

Chapter 7 concludes by synthesising the study's contributions. It argues that *pesantren* language programmes combine behaviourist pedagogies and Foucauldian mechanisms of discipline to produce learners who are linguistically capable and morally shaped. The conclusion outlines theoretical and practical implications, for EFL pedagogy, institutional policy, and curriculum design in faith-based residential contexts, offers recommendations for practice, notes study limitations, and suggests directions for future research, including longitudinal and comparative studies of disciplinary effects on learning.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has presented the background, aims, key findings, and significance of the research, as well as the theoretical and methodological frameworks that guide it. The chapter outlined how Islamic boarding schools, particularly *As-Tsani* IBS, integrate English language education within structured systems of discipline and routine. The study contributes to the understanding of how traditional Islamic institutions respond to global educational challenges by combining moral training with modern pedagogical approaches. It also examines how behavioural theories of learning and Foucauldian notions of power interact to shape students' motivation and self-discipline.

Overall, this research seeks to offer a balanced view of how English language learning and institutional discipline work together in *pesantren*, demonstrating that such environments can produce learners who are both academically skilled and ethically grounded. The next chapter reviews the existing literature on learning theories, Islamic education, and EFL practices in *pesantren*, forming the conceptual foundation for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LANGUAGE LEARNING IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews key literature that underpins and guides the current study on English language learning in Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren* in Indonesia. *Pesantren* are unique educational institutions where Islamic teachings, moral development, and community life are closely connected to both formal and informal learning processes. In recent years, the teaching of EFL has become an important part of curriculum in many *pesantren* in Indonesia. The integration of English into their curriculum aims to equip students (*santri*) with the language skills needed to access broader global opportunities and enhance their future career prospects. This chapter aims to describe how EFL learning in IBS remains heavily influenced by traditional learning concepts, while at the same time, many *pesantren* indicate an institutional commitment to transform toward modern educational practices.

One of the main theories discussed is behaviourism, which focuses on habit formation, memorisation, reinforcement, and the role of the environment in shaping student behaviour. These ideas are very relevant in boarding schools context, where discipline, routine, and imitation are often used in the learning process. The chapter begins by introducing the concept of learning in IBS in Indonesia, followed by an explanation of behaviourist theory in education. Then, it discusses how EFL teaching in *pesantren* often reflects behaviourist principles through methods like drilling, repetition, and correction. Special attention is given to the role of teachers, not only as instructors, but also as parents, motivators, facilitators, and guides who influence students' learning habits and attitudes. The chapter also discusses the influence of peers, the practice of translanguaging, and the learning environment in supporting language use. This chapter will provide a foundation for the next sections of the study, including the analysis of field data.

2.2 The Concepts of learning in Islamic Boarding Schools

Islamic boarding schools, also known as *pesantren*, are educational institutions that structure their curricula around Islamic teachings and values (Azra, 2001). These institutions play a significant role in shaping the moral and intellectual development of students by instilling Islamic principles in their learning activities and their daily lives. In Indonesia, *pesantren* have been an integral part of the educational landscape since before the country gained independence (Lukens-bull, 2010). They were initially established by Islamic scholars across the archipelago with the primary objective of preserving and spreading Islamic knowledge. Since around the 15th century, *pesantren* have served as centres of religious learning, where students, also called *santri*, receive not only religious instruction but also moral guidance aimed at fostering a deep connection to Islamic teachings (Dhofier, 2011). From this point forward, I will use the terms Islamic Boarding School (IBS), boarding school, and *pesantren* interchangeably, as they refer to the same institution. Similarly, I will alternate between students and *santri*, teachers and *ustaz* (ust) or *kyai* as those terms denote the same group of individuals within this context (see Glossary for more details).

Although the characteristics of *pesantren* may vary slightly from one region to another across Indonesia, their core objectives and methodologies of learning remain fundamentally similar (Hardaker & Sabki, 2018). The main purpose of education in IBS is character formation, emphasising ethical conduct, spiritual discipline, and adherence to Islamic values (Azra, 2001). This institution aims to create students into individuals who exhibit virtuous behaviour, embody Islamic principles, and contribute positively to their communities. This emphasis on character development sets *pesantren* apart from conventional educational institutions, as they prioritise holistic moral and spiritual growth alongside academic knowledge (Dhofier, 2011). Therefore, one of the main characteristics of a *pesantren* lies in its strong emphasis on character development and the integration of religious subjects within its curriculum framework, otherwise, as

Lukens-bull (2010) concludes that “the less an institution emphasizes religious education and character development, the less likely it is to be considered a true *pesantren*” (p. 10). Based on this value, therefore, pedagogical approaches in Islamic schools would often be influenced by the underlying mission.

Based on this fundamental objective, the pedagogical system and instructional approaches employed in this Islamic education institution share a common structure. Since *pesantren* are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, their primary references for educational content are the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (Lukens-bull, 2010). These foundational texts serve as the cornerstone of IBS education, guiding both curriculum development and pedagogical methods. The teaching model implemented in *pesantren* follows a traditional framework centred on Quranic and Hadith-based instruction, a methodology that has been practiced by Islamic scholars for generations. Lessons are often delivered through classical learning sessions, where students engage in rote memorization, group discussions, and direct instruction from religious teachers known as *kyai* or *ustadz* (Lukens-bull, 2010). Through this immersive approach, *pesantren* seek to ensure that students internalise Islamic teachings and integrate them into their daily lives.

Today, Islamic boarding schools education has undergone significant transformations to keep pace with societal changes and the evolving demands of the modern era (Zarkasyi, 2020). As Indonesia continues to develop, and the educational landscape expands, many *pesantren* put their effort to adapt their curriculum and instructional methods to align with contemporary development. This shift has led to the integration of regular subjects such as mathematics, sciences, and English alongside traditional religious studies (Zarkasyi, 2020). However, not all *pesantren* accepted this transformation. Many Islamic boarding schools continue to conserve their traditional educational models, maintaining classical teaching methods that have been passed down through generations (Pohl, 2009). Despite the increasing modernisation of society, these institutions remain steadfast in preserving their conventional pedagogical frameworks, prioritising Islamic scholarship and character education (Bruinessen, 1994).

In contrast, a growing number of *pesantren* have actively modernised their educational approaches by incorporating contemporary methodologies and integrating secular subjects into their curricula. These institutions, often referred to as *modern pesantren* (Azra 2001; Zarkasyi 2015; Lukens-bull, 2001), strive to balance religious education with broader academic and professional competencies. By doing so, they aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate both religious and secular domains. Modern *pesantren* often implement structured learning programmes, introduce new technologies into their teaching practices, and offer vocational training to prepare students for diverse career opportunities. This shift reflects an effort to ensure that Islamic boarding schools graduates remain competitive in an increasingly globalised world while still preserving their Islamic identity.

Despite the increasing presence of modern *pesantren*, there is lack of academic literatures providing details on how the terms “*modern pesantren*” has been used to describe Islamic boarding schools that have accepted transformation. However, various sources indicate that one of the defining characteristics of modern *pesantren* is the inclusion of foreign language programmes, particularly Arabic and English (Zarkasyi, 2020). The implementation of the language programme serves multiple purposes. While Arabic is essential for understanding Islamic texts in their original form, English proficiency enhances students' access to global knowledge and broadens their academic and professional opportunities (Kamaluddin, et.al, 2020; Rohim, 2020). As a result, many *pesantren* have established intensive language programme, requiring students to engage in daily language practice and immersive learning environments. Majority of these institutions adopt a bilingual approach, ensuring that graduates are equipped with good linguistic proficiency that can benefit them in both religious and professional contexts (Dewanti, 2016).

In practice, however, various studies suggest that Islamic boarding schools, including those classified as *modern* ones, are still influenced by traditional teaching methods, particularly classical instructional approaches,

such as behaviourist learning models (Mufida, 2018; Ishomudin, et. al., 2023). Behaviourism, which emphasises learning as a process of habit formation through conditioning, has been deeply embedded in *pesantren* education for generations. A study conducted by Mufida (2018) reveals that behaviourist principles still play a dominant role in shaping its pedagogical framework. In her research, she examined the effect of several classical methods under behaviourism concepts used in teaching and learning process in a *modern pesantren* in Indonesia, such as the teacher-centred nature of instruction, memorisation, and drills. The result shows that the methods used improve students' achievement and increase their engagement level in learning.

Mufida's (2018) study also underlines some practices that show how the learning structure under this model is designed in a relatively tight schedule. The daily routines are strictly regulated, leaving little room for flexibility for students. In addition, the learning activities are systematically structured, and students' engagement is closely monitored to ensure compliance with the institution's educational standards (Mufida, 2018). This controlled environment reflects a traditional approach to education, in which habit forming, behaviours conditioning, and discipline form the foundation of the learning process (Gardner & Lally, 2018). Therefore, the research mentioned above shows evident that characteristics of the behaviourist learning system are still practiced within the *pesantren* learning culture, a kind of learning practices that are common among Islamic boarding school settings.

Furthermore, the spatial design, environment setting and location of IBS reflects their support for the behaviourist perspective, which asserts that learning is fundamentally shaped by environmental conditioning. From a behaviourist perspective, the environment plays a crucial role in the learning process, including behaviour formation. Consequently, the classroom layout, physical environment and overall school-scaping may directly influence the process of forming learning habit. What is more, Muhja and Wijaya (2024) claim that the educational environment such as climate, geographical location, and customs influences student behaviour and development. In that respect, Islamic boarding

schools develop specific design of environment layouts: enclosed and isolated, in order to make it easy for the schools to control and manage the entire system of education in the site. School leaders work on the assumption that any negative interference from outside the boarding complex may bring negative effect to IBS students (Hidayat, 2015; Murzaki & Suryadi, 2022).

The adoption of the abovementioned notions suggest that, in general, the educational philosophy in *pesantren* remains deeply rooted in classical learning models, particularly those associated with behaviourism. Even as modern educational research promotes more dynamic and student-centred teaching strategies, many Islamic boarding schools have been slow to adopt such approaches. The persistence of traditional methodologies can be attributed to several factors, including the strong influence of religious conservatism, institutional resistance to change, and the belief that established pedagogical methods have been effective in maintaining Islamic educational values. However, as education continues to evolve in response to technological advancements and global shifts in pedagogy, there is an increasing need to re-evaluate the efficacy of these traditional models, particularly in the context of foreign language instruction. However, given how IBS may be aligned with behaviourist approaches to pedagogy, below I introduce behaviourism in more details as it might relate to this research..

2.2.1 *Habit formation: Behaviourist perspective*

Behaviourism is a learning theory that emphasises observable actions while disregarding internal mental processes. It views learning as a process of acquiring new behaviours through what is known as conditioning (Pritchard, 2018). Behaviourism conceptualises learning as a measurable and observable change in behaviour that results from the interaction between an individual and their environment. Central to this theory is the stimulus-response (S-R) model, which asserts that behaviour can be shaped and reinforced by environmental stimuli. In this framework, learning is not defined by internal cognitive processes

but rather by the external behaviours that are elicited and maintained through repetition and reinforcement (Skinner, 1953; Watson, 1913).

According to Budiningsih (2005), learning in the behaviourist sense is a process of behaviour modification that emerges when a specific stimulus elicits a particular response. The success of learning is determined by the degree to which a change in behaviour can be observed. Desmita (2014) emphasises that behaviourist theory approaches human behaviour through a materialistic and objective lens, where internal mental states such as intentions, beliefs, or motivations are considered irrelevant or secondary to the learning process. The focus is instead on how external conditions, such as teaching strategies, reinforcements, and the environment, can shape students' actions over time. Thus, the behaviourist approach is heavily reliant on empirical observation and experimentation to determine what constitutes effective learning.

From this standpoint, behaviour can be seen as a product of conditioning, either classical or operant. Classical conditioning, introduced by Pavlov, describes how associations are formed between naturally occurring stimuli and responses. Operant conditioning, developed by Skinner, focuses on how voluntary behaviours are strengthened or weakened based on their consequences either through positive reinforcement (rewards) or negative reinforcement (punishments) (Pitchards, 2018). Both models share the belief that behaviour is not innate or autonomously developed but rather shaped and sustained by environmental interactions (Desmita, 2014). This concept aligns with a widely held belief in Islamic education that "every child is born in a state of purity, and it is the parents who shape them" (Sundari & Muslih, 2023, p. 318).

In Islamic view, each child is considered to be born in a pure and natural state (*fitrah*), and their character develops based on the education and upbringing they receive from their parents and environment. This idea is akin to John Locke's concept of *tabula rasa*, which asserts that the human mind at birth is a blank slate, gradually shaped and filled through education and life experiences derived from the surrounding environment (Mudin & Rohman,

2021). Although the two may differ in contexts, both views highlight the crucial role of external factor such as education, environment, and experience in shaping human behaviour, a perspective that also suggests the principles of behaviourist theory.

The topic of behaviour serves as a point of convergence between the paradigm of Islamic education and Western educational philosophy, as both traditions place significant emphasis on the understanding and formation of human behaviour. This intersection illustrates a shared concern with how individuals act, develop, and respond to their environments, highlighting a common ground where values and principles from distinct philosophical frameworks align. In Islamic views, education aims not only at producing knowledgeable individuals but also to nurture morally upright and socially responsible human beings. Islamic scholar such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (751 H) defines education not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as a continuous process of personal refinement and moral elevation. As cited in Arif (2022, p. 6), education is described as:

“Teaching activities, providing moral values and maintenance, given by parents and schools to the child to gain his knowledge and perfection with a gradual pattern from certain behaviours to other behaviours, from a less good character to a better one and so on, to become a perfect person.”

This definition aligns with the behaviourist perspective on learning, which views behavioural change as a gradual process achieved through habit formation. Within this framework, education is conceptualised as a structured and continuous effort to transform an individual behaviour, character, and values. This view reflects the Islamic educational concept of *ta'wid* (Nurjanah & Abdussalam, 2024, p. 544), which refers to a pedagogical approach where learners are repeatedly exposed to a particular stimulus or information until their response to it becomes automatic or diminishes in conscious attention. In essence, *ta'wid* emphasizes habituation, where repetition leads to familiarity, reducing the need for deliberate focus and thereby fostering internalised behavioural patterns.

Habit formation is considered a critical component in behavioural development, especially within learning contexts. Behaviourists such as Watson (1913) and Skinner (1975) assert that behaviours become habitual when particular responses to stimuli are repeated under consistent environmental conditions. In addition, as Carden and Wood (2018) observe, behaviourists such as Hull (1943) and Skinner (1938) argue that repeated exposure to stimuli leads to conditioned responses, particularly when these responses are reinforced through praise, reward, or avoidance of negative outcomes. Over time, these reinforced responses become automatic. Gardner and Lally (2018) further assert that external cues and structured environments provide critical support in this process, especially in early stages of habit formation.

In language learning framework, behaviourists view language as a set of linguistic habits, and these habits are formed through the process of identifying and strengthening the associations between stimuli and responses (Wu, 2019). Therefore, in behaviourism, repetition or reinforcement plays crucial roles in the habit formation process. Through repetition and practice, the associations between stimuli and responses are reinforced, which eventually helps learners in establishing new linguistic habits. As learners engage repeatedly with specific language inputs and are positively reinforced for correct responses, linguistic behaviours become increasingly automatic and internalised (Field, 2004). For instance, a student practices saying “Good morning, teacher!” each day at school. When the teacher responds with praise, this positive reinforcement encourages the student to repeat the phrase. In turns, the greeting becomes a habit, reflecting how repetition and rewards help form linguistics habits.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, behaviourist principles are frequently observable in both formal and informal educational settings. Formal settings involve structured programs that intentionally apply reinforcement techniques to establish desired linguistic behaviours. These include activities such as vocabulary memorisation, oral drills, dialogic performance, and reading aloud, all of which are standard practices in many IBS (Nurjaman, 2016; Ma’arif et al., 2020; Kamaluddin et al., 2020). In these activities, students are expected

to actively participate, internalise linguistic structures, and reproduce them accurately. Repeated exposure to these routines ensures that students acquire language habits through constant reinforcement. Teachers or language instructors play a critical role in this process by guiding, correcting, and reinforcing correct behaviours.

Meanwhile, informal learning environments in *pesantren* also serve as powerful reinforcers of language behaviour. These environments are characterised by the presence of naturalistic stimuli, such as English-language signage, English-labelled facilities, e.g. “Kitchen”, “Bathroom”, “Principal Office” etc., English-delivered announcements, and informal peer interactions in English. Such informal exposure supports what Krashen (1982) distinguishes as “acquisition” rather than “learning”, a process by which language is acquired subconsciously in natural contexts (Shaul, 2014, p. 23). This mixed-structured of reinforcement contributes to a holistic language environment that reinforces language use both in the classroom and outside the classroom within the boarding complex.

From a behaviourist perspective, both formal and informal learning environments contribute to the process of habit formation, provided that they elicit the desired responses and facilitate reinforcement. Informal settings tend to support this process more naturally, as learners are exposed to repeated stimuli within their daily routines, allowing responses to emerge and be reinforced with minimal external intervention. In contrast, formal instruction often requires intentional enforcement, such as directives, tasks, and assessments, which may not be as intrinsically motivating for all students. Thus, teachers and supervisors must create external motivations through consequences—rewards for participation or punishments for noncompliance. This approach aligns with Skinner’s (1957) operant conditioning model, where behaviours are strengthened or weakened based on their outcomes (Field, 2004).

This distinction is particularly relevant in the context of IBS, where structured language programmes dominate. Here, the role of intervention becomes more dominant, aligning with B.F. Skinner’s (1957) concept of operant

conditioning. According to this model, behaviour is shaped by its consequences, responses followed by positive reinforcement are likely to be repeated, while those followed by negative reinforcement or punishment may be suppressed (Field, 2004, p. 30). Skinner (1957) exemplifies this process to a child acquiring language by imitating a parent who simultaneously serves as both a model and a source of reinforcement, providing either praise or corrective feedback. This dynamic illustrates how operant conditioning underpins the development of linguistic habits in formal educational settings.

This concept is particularly relevant to the present study, as some aspects of behaviourist theory were applied in the analysis chapter (Chapter Five) to interpret how language learning occurs within the structured environment of As-Tsani IBS. Specifically, the behaviourist notions of reinforcement and habit formation were used to explain how students internalised English language practices through repeated exposure, imitation, and feedback, where positive reinforcement encouraged the desired linguistic behaviour. The following section explains how English language learning is organised and practiced within the context of Islamic boarding schools.

2.3 EFL in Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia

2.3.1 *English language programme in IBS*

The history of how English was first introduced in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is not well documented in academic sources. However, Umam (2013) suggests that the first initiative to include English in the *pesantren* curriculum began as a response to an international event, namely, the Islamic World Conference held in Hijaz, Saudi Arabia. At this event, every participating Muslim country was asked to send a representative who could speak both Arabic and English fluently. At that time, Indonesia faced difficulties in finding a suitable candidate who could master both languages. As a result, the organizers allowed Indonesia to send two delegates instead: one who spoke Arabic and another who spoke English (Umam, 2013; Humas, 2015). Although the exact year of the event is not clearly stated, this moment is often seen as a turning

point that raised awareness about the importance of English in Islamic education.

In response to this challenge, the leader of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, a leading Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, made the decision to reform the school's curriculum. English was officially added as a compulsory subject, alongside Arabic, with equal status and emphasis (Umam, 2013; Zarkasyi, 2011). This change aimed not only to improve students' language skills but also to prepare them for global interactions. To support this goal, Gontor adopted a communicative approach to teaching English. The focus shifted from memorising grammar rules to using English in real-life situations. Language learning activities were designed to help students speak, understand, and use English in their everyday conversations within the boarding school environment (Mahmud, 2017).

Over time, this model inspired many other *pesantren* across Indonesia to adopt similar changes. Many traditional Islamic schools that once focused only on classical religious texts began to modernise their curricula. English became a symbol of progress and innovation in these institutions. What was once seen by some as a "Western" or even "non-Islamic" language began to be accepted as a valuable tool for religious students. This shift in perception reflects a broader understanding that English is not just a foreign language, but a global medium that can support Islamic education and give students access to international opportunities.

Today, English is taught in many Islamic boarding schools across the country. The main goal is to help students use the language for communication, not just to pass exams. Learning activities such as vocabulary building, daily conversation, public speaking, and discussion are used to develop practical language skills. Students are encouraged to practise English regularly, especially in speaking and listening, so they become comfortable using it in everyday situations. This approach has produced positive outcomes. Many *pesantren* graduates have successfully continued their studies in universities abroad, particularly in English-speaking countries. Their ability to speak and

understand English opens up new academic and career opportunities. It also shows that *pesantren*, once viewed as purely traditional institutions, are now actively contributing to global education through the integration of modern language skills such as English.

2.2.2 Language learning activities

In general, the implementation of English language program follows similar pattern in almost all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. This phenomenon may have correlation to the first initiative about introducing English into Islamic curriculum that was originated from Gontor. Thus, adopting and copying the practice from a single source (institution) could lead other boarding schools fall under the similar model of practices. However, because *pesantren* curriculum is independent, each *pesantren* has the right to determine what approach they want to use to develop the language program in their institution. Moreover, English program is claimed as the most popular characteristic of modern Islamic boarding schools beside computer program (Nilan, 2009; Zarkasyi, 2015). Similar to other contexts in a global sense, the advantages of offering English program in Islamic education institutions are also obvious.

Today, we can find many boarding schools alumni working for international companies, police, banks, and pursuing their education to international universities abroad (Astuti, Riyanti & Annisa, 2021). In practice, English is taught both as subject and as extracurricular program in Islamic boarding schools. As a subject, English is taught in the same way many regular schools and madrasah adopted, including the use of text books, teaching methods and evaluation scheme. At the final stage, students will sit for national exams for their school qualifications certificate. Meanwhile, English as an extracurricular program is aimed to improve students' speaking ability. Therefore, the focus of the program is usually on improving speaking skills.

Nurjaman (2016) outlines two types of English learning activities in an Islamic boarding school in West Java: daily and weekly sessions. The daily Morning Vocabulary task requires students to memorise ten English words each

day and use them in example sentences. Weekly activities include Morning Conversation every Wednesday, where students pair up and practice dialogues on pre-assigned topics, supervised by the Central Language Improvement (CLI) team. Additionally, a Speech Practice session is held every Saturday evening, where selected students from each grade level deliver speeches to their peers to enhance public speaking and vocabulary application skills.

Additionally, Rohim (2020), in his study at Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, outlines a comprehensive language program aimed at developing students' English proficiency through a variety of structured activities. Core speaking-focused practices include Speech (weekly public speaking sessions reviewed by the Foreign Language Development Institute), Discussion (thrice-weekly group discussions on contemporary topics), and Debate (weekly, using the Asian Parliamentary System, targeted at senior students). Writing skills are developed through monthly Composition and Translation activities, where students produce essays or translated texts, both assessed using a graded rubric. Additional creative tasks such as Morning-talk (role-playing tour guides) and Native-day (pronunciation imitation exercises) aim to boost fluency and pronunciation. Lastly, Audio-visual sessions involve watching English films and completing listening tasks to enhance comprehension. These diverse practices reflect an integrated approach to language acquisition, combining speaking, writing, and listening in meaningful, context-based learning environments.

Furthermore, in her ethnographic study of an Islamic boarding school in Jakarta, Hardianti (2020) identifies three primary components of the English language program: Mufrodat, Muhadastah, and Muhadharah. These Arabic-derived terms represent common instructional practices across many *pesantren* in Indonesia. Mufrodat refers to structured vocabulary-building exercises considered foundational to language acquisition. Muhadastah focuses on conversational practice, often implemented through activities such as morning talks, English-week programs, and small group discussions designed to maximise spoken language use. Muhadharah involves public speaking practice, where students prepare and deliver brief speeches in English, typically lasting

five to seven minutes. While each *pesantren* may adapt these activities differently, the overarching emphasis consistently lies in enhancing students' speaking fluency rather than other language domains.

Table 3.1: Summary of typical EFL learning activities in IBS (adopted from the three studies, Nurjaman, 2016; Rohim, 2020; Hardianti, 2020).

Author	Activity	Description	Frequency	Purpose/Focus
Nurjaman (2016)	Morning Vocabulary	Students memorise 10 words and create example sentences	Daily	Vocabulary building
	Morning Conversation	Paired conversation based on prior topic; supervised by CLI	Weekly (Wed)	Speaking, fluency
	Speech Practice	2–3 students per group deliver speeches in front of peers	Weekly (Sat night)	Public speaking
Rohim (2020)	Speech	5 students present speeches; reviewed by FLDI	Weekly	Public speaking, pronunciation
	Discussion	Short talk + group discussion (10–15 students)	3 times/week	Expressing ideas, fluency
	Debate	Advanced students follow formal debate structure (APS)	Weekly	Critical thinking, argumentation
	Composition	Students write essays; graded A–D	Monthly	Writing skills
	Translation	Text translation Eng-Ind or Ind-Eng; graded A–D	Monthly	Translation, writing accuracy
	Morning-talk	Role play as tour guide/tourist within boarding school	Occasional	Speaking, description skills
	Native-day	Students mimic English audio; pronunciation practice	Occasional	Pronunciation, listening
	Audio-visual	Watch English films, fill in missing words from dialogue	Monthly	Listening comprehension
Hardianti (2020)	Mufrodat (Vocabulary)	Students build vocabulary lists as a foundation	Regular	Vocabulary mastery

Author	Activity	Description	Frequency	Purpose/Focus
	Muhadastah (Conversation)	Group discussion, English-week, role play	Varies	Fluency, real-life speaking
	Muhadharah (Speech)	Students prepare & deliver 5–7 min speeches	Regular	Public speaking, fluency

Among the various English language learning activities implemented in Islamic boarding schools, three key stages are commonly emphasized in the learning process. The first is vocabulary building, which serves as the foundational focus of language instruction. This stage aims to expand students' lexical repertoire, enabling them to acquire the vocabulary necessary for subsequent stages of language learning (Nurjaman, 2016). Without sufficient vocabulary, students' ability to engage in meaningful conversation remains limited. The second stage is speaking practice, often referred to as *Muhadatsah* within the *pesantren* context, which means engaging in dialogue or conversation. While vocabulary is essential, the ability to apply it through active communication is equally important. Conversation activities provide students with opportunities to use the vocabulary they have acquired in contextually appropriate ways.

The third typical activity is public speaking, or *Muhadharah*, where students practice delivering speeches in English. Hardianti (2020) argues that this activity not only enhances speaking fluency but also builds confidence and rhetorical skills in using a foreign language. These three components, vocabulary building, conversation, and public speaking form the core framework of the English curriculum originally developed by Gontor. Although each *pesantren* maintains the autonomy to adapt its language program according to local needs and contexts, these three practices have become the foundational elements of English instruction across many *pesantren*. They reflect a common pedagogical orientation aimed at developing students' communicative competence in English, both for academic purposes and broader real-world engagement.

2.4 Learning strategies

In EFL learning context, strategies are crucial because they serve as active and self-directed interventions necessary for developing communicative competence that will enable students to effectively use language to convey meaning and achieve communication goals in real-life situations. By actively engaging in language learning strategies, students take control of their learning process and actively work towards improving their language skills. Language learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning about the target language. Cohen (1998, p. 4) states that language learning strategies are;

“those processes which are consciously selected by the learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning of second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about the language.”

Adopting appropriate language learning strategies can contribute to enhancing students' proficiency levels in English and improve their self-confidence (Oxford, 1990). By systematically using strategies such as memorisation, integrating local language with English, and building and maintaining interaction among peers, seniors or language supervisors, students can effectively acquire and retain language knowledge and skills. Moreover, as students become more proficient in using various strategies to learn and communicate in English, they develop a sense of competence and confidence in their abilities to engage in English-speaking activities. This increased self-confidence which can motivate students to continue practicing and improving their English skills, leading to further proficiency development.

Research in the field of second and foreign language acquisition has consistently demonstrated that learners employ a range of strategies to facilitate independent learning and improve language proficiency. These strategies are often shaped by individual differences such as motivation, personality, learning style, and linguistic background (Ghani, 2003; Oxford, 1990). In formal and semi-formal learning environments such as Islamic boarding schools, where

English is used as both a subject of study and a medium of communication, learners are often required to develop their own approaches to language learning in order to cope with institutional expectations. Scholars note that strategic learners are typically more successful because they take an active role in managing their own learning process, consciously selecting strategies that suit their needs and goals (Griffiths, 2008; Cohen, 1998; Wenden, 1987).

Among the various strategies identified in the literature, memorisation remains one of the most prevalent in EFL learning, particularly in contexts that emphasise structure, discipline, and repetition. Memorisation as a cognitive strategy involves storing and recalling linguistic information, such as vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical patterns, through repetition and practice (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). In many Asian and Islamic educational contexts, this method is deeply embedded within the pedagogical tradition of rote learning, which values mastery through repetition (Azmi, 2020). Beyond its cognitive function, memorisation serves an affective and behavioural purpose—it encourages learners to build confidence and linguistic fluency through habitual engagement with the target language. As Ellis (1997) observes, repetitive practice contributes to the automatising of linguistic forms, allowing learners to retrieve and produce language more effortlessly in communicative situations.

Another frequently discussed strategy in EFL research is language mixing, or *translanguaging*, where learners combine elements of their first language (L1) with the target language (L2) to facilitate comprehension and maintain communication. García and Wei (2014) describe translanguaging as a dynamic process in which bilingual or multilingual speakers draw upon their full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning and sustain interaction. For EFL learners, this strategy helps manage linguistic gaps and reduces anxiety in communication, allowing them to engage more confidently in conversation (Canagarajah, 2011). Moreover, translanguaging reflects learners' adaptive capacity to navigate between linguistic systems, creating a bridge between their existing knowledge and the target language (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). This approach, while sometimes discouraged in strictly monolingual settings, has

been recognised by contemporary scholars as an effective pedagogical and communicative strategy that enhances participation, comprehension, and language development (García & Lin, 2016).

A further category of strategies widely recognised in the literature is social interaction or collaborative learning strategies, which involve communication and cooperation with peers, teachers, or mentors. Social strategies are considered vital for developing communicative competence, as language is inherently a social phenomenon (Vygotsky, 1978; Oxford, 1990). Through peer interaction, learners negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and practice authentic language use. This aligns with socio-cultural theories of language learning, which emphasise that knowledge is co-constructed through social engagement and mediated activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Studies have shown that collaborative learning environments promote not only linguistic proficiency but also confidence and motivation, as learners feel supported by their peers (Donato, 2004; Gass & Mackey, 2015). In addition, interactions with more proficient speakers, such as senior students or mentors, can serve as a form of scaffolding that enables learners to operate within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

In summary, existing research highlights three interrelated strategies, memorisation, translanguaging, and peer interaction, as key components of effective EFL learning. Each of these strategies contributes to the development of communicative competence through different but complementary processes: memorisation reinforces linguistic accuracy, translanguaging sustains fluency and comprehension, and social interaction strengthens communicative confidence and motivation. Together, they form a holistic framework of learner autonomy and self-regulated practice, particularly relevant in structured and discipline-oriented educational settings such as Islamic boarding schools. The following sections will further elaborate on these three strategies, drawing on theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from prior research.

2.4.1 Role of memorisation in EFL

Theoretically, the study of memory and its association with brain function is widely acknowledged as a domain of discussion within cognitivist theory. However, proponents of modern behaviourism also posit that memory plays an important role in the process of habit formation, as memory possesses the capacity to store information obtained from recurrent experiences (Lally, et, al., 2010). In other words, memory functions as a repository for the patterns of behaviours that lead to specific consequences, e.g. positive consequences generate rewards, while negative consequences result in punishments.

In the same voice, IvyPanda (2021) asserts that memory assumes a pivotal role in the operant conditioning concept, where people tend to remember behaviours that linked with anticipated rewards and motivating them to replicate such behaviours. In contrast, individuals also recollect negative behaviours that lead to unfavourable consequences, which drive to avoiding them from repetition. From this theoretical perspective, memory is seen as a tool or repository where information about behaviours and their consequences are stored and retrieved for the future anticipation.

In the context of language learning, the utilisation of memory through a process of memorisation is regarded as a learning strategy that relies on the memory's capacity to store language inputs. Oxford (1990) defines memorisation as a strategic approach that helps learners store and retrieve new information. Furthermore, Dansereau (1985) extends the scope of memorisation to include both information and behaviours as units of acquisition, storage, or retrieval through the memorisation process. Meaning that memory accommodates the storing and retrieving of not only information but also behaviours. In addition to its role in storing and recollecting information, memorisation is also regarded as a valuable strategy for learners during their learning processes, helping them to better understand, learn or remember new information (Richards and Platt, 1992). Therefore, this strategy has been widely employed in the process of teaching and learning languages, particularly English as a second or a foreign language.

Numerous studies have explored the role of memorisation in language learning, especially the application of memorisation strategies among novice learners. This emphasis is driven by the fact that memorisation techniques have been applied across various stages of foreign language acquisition (Oanh & Hein, 2006; Ozkan & Kesen, 2008; Yusuf, 2010; Li & Chun, 2012; Porter, 2014; Khamees, 2016; Hoque, 2018). An investigation conducted by Ozkan and Kesen (2008) explore students' attitudes and preferences regarding the utilisation of memorisation method in the context of English as a second language learning. The study reveals that majority of the respondents expressed a preference for the memorisation strategy when acquiring English language skills, particularly for the purpose of vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, the study finds that most participants favoured the use of the memorisation strategy in written language tasks as opposed to oral communication.

Furthermore, Khamees (2016) investigates several language aspects that are most frequently learned through memorisation, and figures out the reasons behind the practices. The study indicates that memorisation strategy helps students in learning vocabularies, texts and specific terminologies as well as helping the students increase their confidence. Also, the study suggests that meaningful and context-based memorisation methods are more preferable in language learning rather than just the rote memorisation. This study underline an important point that memorisation followed by good understanding of the memorised materials is helpful for students in their language learning. Moreover, for those who learn English for everyday use like in Islamic boarding school institutions.

Another study carried out by Porter (2014) comparing the benefits of two learning strategies: memorisation, and conceptual understanding, with a focus on knowledge acquisition and knowledge retention among 7th-grade students. Participants were from CTE Introduction classes at Frontier Middle School, situated in the Alpine School District within the state of Utah. The study procedure included dividing the students into two groups, each group receiving instruction through one of the two methods: memorisation or conceptual

comprehension. The results show that the group instructed through the memorisation technique demonstrated a significant and positive trend in both knowledge acquisition and knowledge retention when compared to the group that received instruction using the conceptual comprehension approach. This outcome suggests that memorisation was more effective in facilitating the students' learning and retention of knowledge in the context of the study.

A study by Hoque (2018) suggests that despite many teaching techniques available nowadays, such as active learning, creative teaching and other teaching strategies, memorising still play essential roles in learning, especially language learning. He argues that although this technique is considered conventional, it remains relevant to be adopted today. More importantly, he suggests that with the current development of humankind, we can create many strategies to train our brain for memorisation. In this regard, Hoque (2018) proposed various memorising strategies that may help people to maintain their memory, for example mnemonic, chunking words activities, students teaching others and using mental imagery.

Within the framework of educational practices in Islamic boarding schools, memorisation constitutes a classical yet fundamental teaching method. This method has been passed down through generations since the establishment of *pesantren* in the Indonesian archipelago (Iqbal & Akram, 2020). Memorisation is considered an effective technique for acquiring knowledge because through memorisation, students can absorb information as it is presented in the original sources of the texts they study at the institution. For students (*santri*) and teachers (*ustaz*) within Islamic boarding schools, several Arabic proverbs serve both as inspiration and reinforcement for the important role of memorisation in the pursuit of knowledge. For instance:

علما تغده فلا , الحمام صاحبه مع يدخل لا علم كل

[Any knowledge that cannot be taken into the bathroom is not considered knowledge] (al-'Askari, cited in Alfatih, 2021).

This saying defines the knowledge as something that can be memorised and carried anywhere because it lives in you. It metaphorizes that knowledge can be taken with you when you go for a shower because it resides in your mind, and it is genuine knowledge, whereas knowledge that is written in books would become wet if taken into a shower. In the same manner, another Arabic proverb says:

السطور في لا الصدور في العلم فإنما حفظنا، كما واحفظوا أخذنا، حيث من خذوا

[Take from where we have taken, and memorise as we have memorised, for knowledge is in the hearts, not in the lines (writings)] (Az-Zuhairi, cited in Alfatih, 2021).

Az-Zuhairi's definition of knowledge suggests that knowledge is what has been mastered through memorisation, not what remains written in books. According to the belief held within *pesantren* communities, comprehension follows memorisation, as expressed in the saying, "Alfahmu ba'da hifzh" (Ulul, 2021, p. 15). Such understandings serve as the fundamental basis for the beliefs of aspiring scholars in *pesantren*, that are still practiced until today. From a practical perspective, Boyle (2006) contends that the culture of memorisation in Islamic education is influenced by the obligation of scholarship to preserve the Quran as the primary source of Islamic knowledge. Islamic scholars memorise the Quran verbatim and perfectly identical to its original sources, considering the Quran as the foundational knowledge upon which the development of other Islamic disciplines is based. Drawing from this tradition, memorisation has become a widely employed technique in the pursuit of various fields of knowledge, including English language learning.

It is undeniable that vocabulary is central in language acquisition, whether in first, second or other additional languages (Decarrico, 2001). The importance of building vocabulary repertoire, even, comes prior to learning grammatical rules of the language because "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Wilkins, 1972, p. 111 as cited in Benkhenafou, 2015).

However, several studies demonstrate that memorisation, like rote, are basically ineffective for learning, including language because relying excessively on memorisation can lead to students becoming slow learners and hinder their ability to produce language naturally. Scholars argue that memorisation is less effective since students may store irrelevant and unused information in their memories, which leads to its loss. Furthermore, an excessive reliance on memorisation, even to the extent of becoming a habit, can impede students' ability to communicate naturally in a foreign language, and they may struggle to convey expressions without relying on memorised phrases (Miller, et.al., 2002; Garii, 2002).

Although the claims might be true, it is a phenomenon that memorisation has become an essential approach to learning in the boarding school, particularly for new students learning foreign language. This phenomenon confirms a study conducted by Nida (2014) in an Islamic boarding school, stating that students place more emphasis on the use of memory and cognitive strategies in developing their language skills. This is evident from the average response of students that they prefer memorising their speech texts when they have to deliver a speech rather than just remembering the key points. The students admitted that their conversational skills developed more quickly by memorising English words and sentences (Nida, 2014).

2.4.2 Translanguaging in communication

Another strategy in the language learning practices in IBS is the frequent mixing of students' first language (L1) with English, especially for novice students. In daily communication, students often switch from the target language (TL) to their mother tongue or another language, as a means of accessing their full linguistic repertoire in order to enhance their communicative abilities. This process is widely recognized as translanguaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; García & Leiva, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012). A substantial body of research supports the notion that the L1 plays a crucial role in second or foreign language acquisition, particularly during the early stages of learning

(Madriñán, 2014; Krashen, 2003; Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Brooks, 1994). In many cases, the first language serves as a cognitive and communicative bridge, assisting learners in constructing TL sentences based on L1 structures (Krashen, 1993).

Despite institutional efforts to enforce English-only policies in some IBS contexts, translanguaging remains a common practice among students. These policies aim to ensure that only foreign languages, particularly English and Arabic, are used in daily communication. However, for students who are in a transitional phase of language development—typically within the first 7 to 24 months of study—translanguaging becomes an essential tool for navigating the demands of language rules while maintaining meaningful interaction. This practice enables learners to manage the gap between their developing proficiency and the institutional expectations, while also avoiding potential disciplinary consequences from language authorities such as the Language Development Centre (LDC).

In multilingual environments like *As-Tsani* IBS, students actively employ all available semiotic resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 250) to engage in interactions. While students generally strive to use English during peer communication due to institutional requirements, language barriers often prompt them to code-switch into Bahasa Indonesia or Arabic to sustain conversation. These alternative linguistic resources are crucial for maintaining communicative flow and allow students to continue expressing ideas when gaps in vocabulary or grammar arise. As multilingual speakers, these students are frequently placed in situations where they must navigate and negotiate meaning using all of their linguistic tools (Canagarajah, 2011). Consequently, even in environments with strict language regulations, the L1 continues to serve as a vital support system for real-life interactions.

In *pesantren*, many students commonly switch between Arabic, English, and Bahasa Indonesian to improve fluency and sustain social communication. This code-switching not only reflects their multilingual competence but also signals a strategic approach to language learning that supports engagement and

comprehension. While English and Arabic are formally recognized as the “appropriate” languages within the institution (Bonacina-Pugh, 2020), the first language is often used discreetly to clarify meaning, seek support, or express concepts that cannot yet be articulated in the TL. According to Copland (2012), this reflects a wider concept of “acceptability” in language choice, wherein certain practices are informally negotiated and tolerated within particular social or institutional settings, even if they technically contradict formal language policies.

The differing status of English, Arabic, and Bahasa Indonesian within the *pesantren* setting also suggests a hierarchical perception of language prestige. English and Arabic are viewed as the “official languages” (Martin, 2005 as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2020), associated with academic and religious authority, while Bahasa Indonesian holds a more limited, transitional role—often reserved for newly arrived students or for use in discreet support roles. Nevertheless, the practical reality shows that students rely heavily on their first language as a functional means of overcoming communication breakdowns. Despite the institution’s efforts to separate language domains, translanguaging remains embedded in students’ learning strategies.

This translanguaging behaviour is further shaped by the institutional environment and peer dynamics. While using L1 is discouraged and may even result in penalties, students often find creative ways to incorporate their first language into interactions, particularly in informal contexts. By embedding a few L1 words within a sentence in English or Arabic, or by phrasing questions in English while referring to unknown words in L1, students navigate institutional boundaries without fully breaking language rules. Such strategies also contribute to vocabulary acquisition in contextually meaningful ways, as learners are exposed to relevant vocabulary at the point of communicative need.

The use of translanguaging in peer interaction not only facilitates communication but also contributes to the emotional and cognitive aspects of language learning. Translanguaging practices help create an “emotional safe space” (Dryden et al., 2021, p. 3), particularly for learners who experience

anxiety or fear when using a foreign language. Within such safe spaces, students can initiate conversations more comfortably, support each other, and gradually build the confidence to communicate more fluently in the TL. In group settings, strict adherence to English-only rules can sometimes inhibit interaction, especially when some members feel inadequate or are unsure of their language proficiency. By allowing language mixing, the learning environment becomes more inclusive, fostering greater participation and engagement among students (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Furthermore, translanguaging zones offer opportunities for peer correction and collaborative learning. Students with stronger language skills often assist peers who momentarily rely on their L1, thereby creating moments of knowledge exchange and language awareness. These informal interactions contribute to learners' metalinguistic awareness, helping them identify gaps in their language knowledge and focus on specific areas for improvement. Thus, translanguaging does not only function as a communicative bridge but also serves as a pedagogical tool that supports language development through peer-assisted learning and contextualised vocabulary acquisition.

In sum, the use of L1 in EFL learning within Islamic Boarding Schools remains a common and, to some extent, necessary practice. While it may be seen as a violation of formal language policies, translanguaging enables students to navigate communicative challenges, support one another, and continue participating in language learning. It also reflects a dynamic interplay between institutional language ideologies and the practical realities of language use in multilingual educational settings. Despite the controversies surrounding translanguaging, its strategic use in EFL contexts can offer significant cognitive, emotional, and linguistic benefits, especially for learners with emerging English proficiency.

2.5 Communicative interaction

In the context of EFL learning, peer interaction plays a pivotal role in facilitating communicative competence and language development. Among

students, particularly in boarding school environments, peer collaboration often manifests through questioning, negotiation of meaning, and clarification of linguistic elements. These interactions enable learners to access their full linguistic repertoires and engage in dynamic, meaning-making exchanges (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009).

Peer interaction, especially with more proficient students or senior peers, provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input, negotiate meaning, and produce output—essential components of second language acquisition (Mackey, 2007). These communicative exchanges can significantly enhance vocabulary retention, especially when learners encounter unfamiliar words in spontaneous conversations. When gaps in understanding occur, students often rely on their peers for repetition or clarification, highlighting the supportive role of peer scaffolding in language development (Sharp & Huett, 2005).

In formal classroom settings, such peer interaction may vary depending on the level of student proficiency and the pedagogical style of the teacher. In some classrooms, students may be less active in initiating questions, leading teachers to adopt a more facilitative role to elicit responses and foster engagement. In such settings, certain students often emerge as more dominant contributors, playing a key role in mediating classroom discourse and assisting less proficient peers.

Teachers frequently employ bilingual strategies, such as alternating between English and the local language, to ensure student comprehension. This code-switching approach serves both pedagogical and affective functions, making input more accessible while also reducing student anxiety. However, student preference for peer assistance over direct teacher engagement is often observed, particularly when learners experience language-related anxiety or fear of negative evaluation (Dörnyei & Tseng, 2009; Valmori, 2016). In these cases, learners perceive their peers as more approachable and less intimidating sources of support.

The use of peer assistance is not only limited to vocabulary clarification but also extends to broader aspects of classroom interaction. Peer exchanges about lexical items, grammar, and pronunciation support the development of linguistic accuracy and fluency. These interactions underscore the importance of collaborative learning environments, where learners benefit from shared knowledge and mutual support (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Oxford, 1997).

Furthermore, literature on cooperative learning emphasizes the value of peer tutoring and study groups in language classrooms. Students often learn more effectively when engaged in joint problem-solving and mutual teaching, especially when the learning environment encourages social interaction and learner autonomy (Johnson et al., 2000; Udvari-Solner, 2012b). Through such collaboration, students can construct knowledge collectively and develop deeper understanding of language structures.

In lower-secondary classrooms, younger learners may display a greater tendency to seek clarification directly from teachers, particularly in relation to unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical structures. In such contexts, the teacher often serves as an expert scaffold, providing accurate models and corrective feedback (Nurfaidah, Khairunnisa, Syukri, & Jamilarin, 2024). The use of both English and L1 in instructional discourse helps bridge comprehension gaps while promoting gradual immersion in the target language.

Outside formal classroom settings, student interactions are often characterized by informal, peer-to-peer exchanges in communal spaces such as dormitories, canteens, and sports areas. In these informal domains, communicative practices tend to be more relaxed, allowing students to practice English in authentic contexts and experiment with newly learned vocabulary. Such interactions contribute to the internalization of language forms through repeated and meaningful use, aligning with Krashen's (2003) theory of comprehensible input and the process of language acquisition via internalization.

Overall, the literature suggests that peer interaction—both in and beyond the classroom—serves as a crucial mechanism for language learning. It fosters

a collaborative learning culture, reduces affective barriers, and supports the acquisition of communicative competence. These findings affirm the importance of peer support and collaborative strategies in EFL pedagogy, especially within the context of language-focused Islamic boarding schools.

2.6 Roles of teachers

In education, teachers' responsibilities are not only just simply teaching lessons or explaining subject matters, but also helping students build good learning habits and develop positive behaviour. Teachers create a safe and structured environment where students can feel supported, learn routines, and become more responsible person. As good teachers, they guide students through the learning process, help them stay motivated, and support their emotional and personal growth. Clark (1993) asserts that "an effective teacher not only increase students' knowledge but also go beyond that" by shaping their attitudes and behaviour (p. 10). Teachers often play many different roles, depending on the situation and the needs of their students. Suprihastiningrum (2013) outlines that teachers can be educators, helpers, motivators, and researchers. In addition, teachers also act as facilitators, communicators, evaluators, innovators, moral role models, and class managers Hamalik (2008). These multiple roles of teachers highlight their responsibility in supporting students' development both academically and personally.

In Islamic boarding schools, the multifaceted roles of teachers become more important. Subarno (2024) classifies two main responsibilities of the teachers in *pesantren*: academic and non-academic. The academic role includes planning lessons, managing the classroom, tutoring, and assessing students. These tasks help students build habits like discipline, focus, and responsibility in their studies. Outside the classroom, teachers take on a non-academic role. Since students live at school and away from their families, teachers often act like parents. They give moral support, supervise daily life, and help students learn good behaviour and manners (Sikes, 1998; Muis et al., 2022).

One of the most important roles teachers have in forming behaviour is being a motivator. In behaviourist theory, students are encouraged to repeat good actions when they receive rewards or praise. For example, in *pesantren*, students may be motivated to speak English by getting verbal praise, public recognition, or special privileges. This kind of positive reinforcement helps students build habits through repetition, which in turn, speaking English can become a natural part of their daily routine. Furthermore, learning environment also plays a big role in habit formation. According to De Porter and Hernacki (2001), a fun and stress-free environment helps students feel relaxed and ready to learn. In *pesantren*, teachers can help create an English-rich school environment by using English for building names, signs, announcements, and other visual displays. Programs such as “English Day” and “English Camp” provide students with more opportunities to practise the language regularly and develop positive language habits (Natsir, 2021). These activities encourage students to use English in real-life contexts, not just in classroom exercises.

Besides motivating students, teachers in *pesantren* also serve as facilitators who support students in becoming active and independent learners. Sanjaya (2008) explains that teachers should provide appropriate learning materials, apply effective teaching methods, and build respectful relationships with students. This type of support encourages students to take greater responsibility for their learning and helps them develop positive study habits. However, Sultan (2015) notes that some teachers still dominate classroom interactions, show a lack of patience, or disregard students’ input. These practices may hinder student growth and conflict with Islamic values such as humility, patience, and collaborative learning. In this regard, a good teacher adopts a supportive and facilitative attitude, which not only gives students the space to grow but also sets a positive example. Such behaviour can serve as a role model for students, allowing them to observe, imitate, and eventually internalise these values in their own character.

2.7 Roles of peers in learning

In behaviourist learning theory, peer groups play an important role in shaping students' personality and behaviour. Peers are not only social companions they also help students grow emotionally, socially, and academically. According to Santrock (2011), peers support children by being friends, providing stimulation, giving emotional and physical support, offering social comparison, and sharing affection. Yusuf (2018) adds that peers give students chances to interact outside their families, guide social behaviour, help develop age-appropriate skills, and allow for the exchange of ideas and concerns. In addition to their social role, peers also strongly influence academic performance. Supportive peers can increase students' motivation to learn, while negative peer pressure may lead to a lack of interest and lower achievement (Kasaralkar & Jogi, 2016). This means peer groups affect both students' social behaviour and academic success. Peer interaction also gives individuals access to a wider social world beyond their homes.

Kelly and Hansen (1987, as cited in Kasaralkar & Jogi, 2016) identify six key positive roles of peer groups in shaping adolescent development:

1. Controlling aggressive behaviour – Through peer interaction, teenagers learn to solve problems without using violence.
2. Providing emotional and social support – Peers help students take responsibility and grow more independent from their families.
3. Improving social and thinking skills – Talking with peers helps teenagers express thoughts and feelings better and solve problems more effectively.
4. Shaping gender roles and views – Teens learn about gender identity and behaviour by observing and interacting with peers.
5. Developing moral values – Peer interaction gives students a chance to think about right and wrong and build their own values.
6. Building self-confidence – Acceptance and support from friends help students feel better about themselves.

Peer groups also play a key role in shaping students' religious identity and discipline, especially in character development. In Islamic boarding schools, students live together and practise religious routines as a group. These shared activities help shape spiritual habits, which happen through modelling and reinforcement among the students. Students observe their peers performing

religious actions, such as praying, reading the Qur'an, or attending religious classes, and copy them. When such actions are praised or approved by the group, students are more likely to repeat them (Munjiat et al., 2025).

Over time, these repeated behaviours can turn into regular habits that become part of the students' daily lives. Moreover, the sense of belonging and shared values within the group strengthens the motivation to continue these practices. Similarly, French et al. (2011), in a study of Muslim adolescents in Indonesia, found that students in strong religious peer groups were more likely to practise religion actively and that their religious habits improved over time due to peers' positive reinforcement. When religious behaviours are encouraged through peer support and group approval, students want to continue those behaviours. The desire to be accepted and respected by their peers helps students adopt and repeat these actions until they become regular habits.

Furthermore, the environment of Islamic boarding schools, where students live as an integrated community, supports habit formation through mutual support among peers. Peers often act as informal teachers by offering reminders, encouragement, or constructive corrections. This creates a consistent system of reinforcement, where positive behaviours are repeated and strengthened over time (Lally & Gardner, 2013). This process aligns with the behaviourist perspective, which states that habits are built through repeated actions and positive feedback (Lally et al., 2010). So, in IBS life, peer groups not only create a social environment but also act as a form of education where students learn and grow through everyday interactions with one another. Such a peer-based reinforcement is even more obvious in EFL learning practice both in formal and informal settings. Peers group help create an environment where language use is encouraged, corrected, and practised together.

In formal learning settings, for instance, peers or usually senior students, are given roles such as *Mudabbir* (language supervisors), where they help enforce English usage and assist teachers in language programmes (Rizki, 2019). These students help with vocabulary practice, guide public speaking activities, and make sure English is used in daily communication. Their position

gives them authority to support the learning process (Podungge & Habibie, 2022). In informal settings, additionally, peer interaction happens in a more relaxed and natural way. Amiruddin and Jannah (2019) explain that students often practise speaking English with friends during breaks, meals, or in the dormitory. These casual conversations offer real-life opportunities to use the language and help build confidence. In these moments, peers act as supportive partners, offering help and encouragement. Through such friendly environment students create opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction and negotiate meaning, a process that is very crucial in improving communicative competence (McGuire, 1992; Yuan and Wang, 2006).

2.8 Role of the environment in EFL

The learning environment plays essential roles in shaping students' engagement, motivation, and success in EFL learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Archee, 2012; Nugroho, Zamzami & Ukhrowiyah, 2020). In the context of this study, the environment is understood through two key dimensions: the social environment and the physical environment. The learning environment includes not only the physical spaces where learning takes place but also the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics that influence students' behaviour and attitudes. Research in education consistently shows that learning outcomes depend not only on cognitive ability but also on environmental conditions that sustain focus, participation, and positive emotions (Dörnyei, 2001; Santrock, 2007). In Islamic Boarding Schools, the environment plays an even larger role because learning extends far beyond the classroom into dormitories, dining halls, prayer areas, and shared activities. The *pesantren* therefore operates as an academic space, a moral community, and a social ecosystem that continuously shapes students' linguistic and personal development.

From a behaviourist perspective, both the social and physical environments function as sources of stimuli that trigger, reinforce, or modify learning behaviours. Skinner (1953) and Pritchard (2009) argue that consistent environmental reinforcement, such as repetition, feedback, and reward, helps

learners form strong habits and desirable responses. This aligns closely with the structure of education in Islamic boarding school settings, where daily routines serve as a system of behavioural conditioning. Regular prayers, study schedules, dormitory regulations, and structured English practice create stable patterns that shape study habits and self-discipline. The predictability of *pesantren* routines conditions students to associate discipline with success, gradually reinforcing persistence and attentiveness. Over time, these environmental reinforcements, both social and physical, help build automatic behaviours that support both language learning and moral development. Given their importance, the following sections examine each dimension in detail, drawing on studies that investigate how both the social and physical environments shape students' language development, particularly within *pesantren* contexts.

2.8.1 Social environment

In language learning, the social environment is one of the key elements that may help facilitate learners' achievement. Socio-cultural perspectives highlight that learning is deeply embedded in social interaction and cultural participation. Vygotsky's (1978) argues that cognitive growth occurs through dialogue, collaboration, and shared activity. Building on this, Lave and Wenger (1991) conceptualise the learning environment as a *community of practice*, where knowledge is co-constructed through participation and mentorship. Within *pesantren*, this social dimension is particularly strong. Students live, learn, and worship together, forming a tightly knit community where language learning occurs naturally through daily communication. The *pesantren* environment fosters collaborative learning through group discussions, peer tutoring, and language clubs, where learners negotiate meaning and co-develops linguistic competence. Informal conversations in dormitories and communal spaces often become spontaneous opportunities for language use, reinforcing what students learn formally in class. In this sense, the *pesantren* functions as a living laboratory for language education.

Empirical research supports the idea that the learning environment significantly influences EFL achievement. Muhja and Wijaya (2024) found that when students are surrounded by a supportive and linguistically rich environment, characterised by access to learning resources, peer interaction, and institutional encouragement, they demonstrate higher motivation and confidence in using English. Similarly, Hidayat (2015) notes that *pesantren* settings, by their enclosed and structured nature, or so called “holy prison” translated from Indonesian words “*Penjara Suci*” (A’la, 2006, p. viii), reduce distractions and strengthen adherence to learning norms. The continuous routine acts as a form of disciplinary structure, what Foucault (1977) might describe as a *disciplinary space*, where time, space, and behaviour are organised to foster productive habits. However, this environment is not merely restrictive; it enables students to internalise discipline, responsibility, and independence. As students adapt to these rhythms, they learn to manage themselves, transforming external regulation into internal motivation, an essential step in both language mastery and personal formation.

Another common practice in boarding schools is integrating new and senior students within the same dormitories. Research on peer-assisted learning suggests that this structure encourages modelling, feedback, emotional support, and faster language development among newcomers (Topping, 2005; Donato, 1994). *Pesantren* studies confirm that senior students often act as informal tutors who guide new students and correct their errors (Solichin, 2021). This system becomes an informal but effective form of scaffolding that helps new students build vocabulary, practise speaking, and gain confidence through supportive peer interactions.

In addition, studies also highlight the role of learner agency in maintaining a strong social environment. While institutional rules provide structure, students often need to create their own spaces for practice—such as peer groups or “English circles”—especially when the broader environment becomes less active linguistically. These peer-led groups offer emotional support, shared problem-solving, and collective motivation, which all improve engagement and proficiency

(Storch, 2002; Murray, 2014). Evidences are reported by several studies in the context of Islamic boarding school. For example a study conducted by Abror, Haikal Hariri (2024) suggests a conclusion that conducive learning atmosphere can enhance students' motivation by creating an active environment that contributes to more effective language learning in IBS context. Similarly, Amiruddin and Jannah (2019) report that students who often practice using English in their daily social interaction are more fluent because they can receive more inputs and negotiate meanings during their communicative interaction. These reflect that an effective language environment may contribute to students' language acquisition process.

Beyond linguistic exposure, the social environment of *pesantren* also plays a major role in sustaining motivation and emotional resilience. Communal living fosters a sense of belonging, solidarity, and shared purpose, which Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) identify as key components of group motivation. Students live among peers who share similar goals and challenges, allowing them to draw encouragement and moral support from one another. Daily routines, from joint prayers to study circles and meal gatherings, reinforce community bonds and reduce feelings of isolation. This collective ethos nurtures mutual respect and cooperation, creating what Gardner and Lally (2018) describe as *positive affect* that help reinforce repetition and strengthens habit formation. Thus, such emotional stability lowers anxiety and increases students' willingness to take linguistic risks, speak more often, and stay engaged in communication. In this environment, motivation is not only individual but shared, strengthened by group identity and collective progress.

These literatures suggest that the social environment plays an important role in supporting students' English development, especially in residential settings like *pesantren*. Drawing on sociocultural theory, many studies show that learning grows through collaboration, peer interaction, and participation in a shared community. In *pesantren*, where students live, study, and worship together, everyday communication naturally becomes a source of language exposure and practice. Research also indicates that such socially rich settings

can boost motivation, confidence, and language skills, particularly when routines, senior–junior guidance, and peer study groups are in place. At the same time, the communal atmosphere offers emotional support and group encouragement, helping students feel less anxious and more willing to use English.

2.8.2 *Physical environment*

The physical environment is just as important as the social environment in language learning. A school's spatial design influences how often and how meaningfully students encounter the target language (Malinowski, Maxim & Dubreil, 2023). In *pesantren*, the spatial layout is usually compact and deliberately organised, bringing dormitories, classrooms, prayer halls, libraries, and courtyards together within one compound (Lukens-bull, 2010). This close arrangement supports continuous supervision, quick communication, and strong social cohesion. Song and Yaacob (2025) note that this design reinforces discipline, as students are always within institutional visibility, resembling Foucault's idea of panoptic supervision. At the same time, the layout creates constant learning opportunities outside formal lessons, students often review materials in corridors, practise vocabulary in dormitories, or use foreign languages during leisure time. In this way, the physical space becomes part of the learning process, functioning as an architecture that encourages engagement, order, and reflection.

Traditionally, *pesantren* architecture has been inward-looking and enclosed, designed to foster focus, discipline, and religious commitment Lukens-bull (2010). Previous studies describe this separation from the outside world as a form of “holy prison” that protects students from distractions and strengthens communal formation (Awalliah, Salamah & Adnan, 2024). More recent research suggests that this spatial isolation can also support foreign-language learning by creating an immersive environment where students interact, study, and follow daily routines within a controlled linguistic setting (Rohman & Wulandari, 2025). This finding aligns with broader language-learning research showing that

immersive environments increase opportunities for repeated input, peer interaction, and informal practice.

The literature on linguistic landscapes offers a useful perspective on how *pasantren* intentionally integrate English into their physical space. Landry and Bourhis (1997) argue that visible language displays serve both informational and symbolic roles, providing learners with input while shaping the perceived importance of the language. Brown (2012) extends this idea through the concept of schoolscape, highlighting how schools use space to communicate language policies, reinforce teaching goals, and shape identities. In *pasantren*, English posters, whiteboards, room labels, and noticeboards operate as deliberate semiotic tools that reflect institutional aims of developing foreign-language proficiency and supporting modernisation.

Research on schoolsapes also shows that accessible and regularly updated displays help students absorb language in low-pressure, incidental ways (Van Mensel et al., 2016). In many boarding schools, these displays include functional expressions drawn from everyday student life. Such forms of “living English” are simple, memorable, and contextually relevant, making them effective for building communicative competence, especially among beginners (Gillam et al., 2010). Although these materials may give less attention to pronunciation or prosody, peer interaction and teacher scaffolding often compensate by providing corrective feedback and chances for oral practice.

Beyond functional language, schoolsapes often include motivational slogans, idiomatic expressions, and behavioural reminders. Scholars interpret these as semiotic tools that communicate both linguistic knowledge and wider moral messages (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). Expressions like “watch your language!” illustrate this dual function: they introduce everyday English while reinforcing norms of politeness and respectful behaviour. This reflects findings that schoolsapes often act as ideological spaces where institutional values and expectations are communicated (Pietikäinen et al., 2011). English labels on facilities, such as “Guardian Office,” “Mosque,” or “Kitchen,” represents another common schoolscape strategy: embedding the target language into spatial

practices and material culture (Shohamy, 2012). Similarly, disciplinary messages like “No Bullying,” “No Littering,” and “Keep Clean” convey behavioural rules while providing repeated exposure to English vocabulary. These practices support research showing that environmental print contributes to both language acquisition and character education, especially in residential settings where students encounter these messages throughout the day.

The *pesantren*’s physical environment also supports language immersion. English posters, wall notices, and signage create a visually rich environment that exposes students to vocabulary in everyday contexts. Dedicated English zones and resource rooms extend this exposure through access to books, media, and audio-visual materials. This aligns with Gass and Selinker’s (2008) argument that continuous exposure strengthens acquisition by linking input with opportunities for output. In this sense, the campus becomes an “active teacher,” offering learning stimuli beyond the classroom. Furthermore, dormitory life is another key part of this physical environment. Shared living spaces teach cooperation, empathy, and time management, while also providing natural opportunities to practise English through casual conversations and peer discussions. Besides, routine tasks and collective responsibilities also deepen discipline, and constant proximity to peers reinforces social learning.

Also, the spatial design of *pesantren* carries symbolic and moral meaning. The central placement of the mosque within the compound reflects the integration of faith and knowledge, reminding students that learning has both intellectual and spiritual purposes (Murzaki & Suryadi, 2022). Daily movement between dormitories, classrooms, and the mosque creates a structured rhythm of behaviour, echoing Foucault’s (1977) ideas about how space and time shape disciplined and self-aware individuals. In this sense, the *pesantren*’s physical environment serves as more than a backdrop, but it acts as a pedagogical system. Every structure and routine, from classroom arrangements to prayer schedules, reinforces discipline, mindfulness, and community. The environment itself becomes a silent teacher, shaping students’ habits, values, and ways of thinking.

In conclusion, the physical environment clearly plays crucial roles in shaping and supporting language learning in *pesantren*. Its compact layout, constant visibility, and organised movement help maintain discipline and create an immersive setting where students meet English both inside and outside the classroom. Studies on linguistic landscapes and schoolsapes also highlight how posters, signs, and English labels offer continuous, low-pressure exposure to the language. Together with daily routines, shared living, and the symbolic design of the campus, these spatial features create an environment that supports academic, moral, and behavioural growth. In this way, *pesantren* architecture becomes an active part of the learning process, shaping students' habits, values, and engagement with the target language.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown that language learning in Islamic Boarding Schools is deeply shaped by a behaviourist orientation that emphasises routine, discipline, and habit formation. Although many *pesantren* are adopting modern curricular elements such as English programmes, their underlying pedagogical culture continues to follow classical models rooted in repetition, memorisation, and environmental conditioning. The behaviourist framework helps explain why structured routines, reinforcement systems, and teacher authority remain central to learning processes. These practices not only support academic mastery but also reflect the institution's broader mission of character education, where discipline and moral development are inseparable from language learning.

The chapter also demonstrated how the structure of daily life in *pesantren* strongly aligns with behaviourist assumptions. Students experience highly regulated schedules, close supervision, and repeated exposure to specific linguistic and behavioural routines. In such settings, learning is shaped by constant reinforcement, whether through praise, correction, senior guidance, or institutional rules. These patterns help form automatic habits, making English use a regular part of students' lives rather than merely a classroom activity. The strong parallels between behaviourist conditioning and Islamic concepts of

habituation (such as ta'wid) further explain why many classical teaching approaches remain deeply embedded in *pesantren* practice.

At the same time, this chapter highlighted that learning in IBS is not only driven by external reinforcement but also by powerful social dynamics. Peer groups play a central role in modelling behaviour, providing emotional support, correcting mistakes, and sustaining students' motivation. Senior–junior relationships, peer tutoring systems, and informal conversations all contribute to a socially rich learning environment where language habits are continuously practiced and reinforced. Research shows that such peer-based learning accelerates linguistic development and helps students negotiate meaning, build confidence, and remain engaged—especially in residential settings where interaction is constant and unavoidable.

Another key point discussed is the important role of translanguaging in students' daily communication. Despite English-only language policies in many *pesantren*, students regularly draw on their L1 and multilingual repertoires to negotiate meaning, reduce anxiety, and maintain interaction. These practices reveal the gap between institutional expectations and learners' developmental needs, but they also show how students creatively use all available linguistic tools to support comprehension and communication. Translanguaging becomes not a sign of failure, but an adaptive strategy that helps students bridge knowledge gaps while gradually building proficiency in English.

Finally, the chapter emphasised the significant contribution of both the social and physical environments in shaping language learning outcomes. The *pesantren*'s compact architecture, constant visibility, and spatial organisation create a disciplined atmosphere where learning extends beyond classrooms and into daily routines. Linguistic landscapes, English-labelled facilities, and motivational signage serve as semiotic tools that reinforce language exposure in low-pressure ways. At the same time, cramped dormitories, shared facilities, and continuous interaction foster collaboration, emotional support, and motivation. These features together form an immersive environment that actively shapes behaviour, attitudes, and language use.

In summary, the literature reviewed in this chapter illustrates that language learning in IBS is a holistic process shaped by behaviourist principles, social relations, environmental design, and institutional culture. English learning emerges not only from formal instruction but also from everyday routines, peer interactions, disciplinary structures, and spatial arrangements unique to *pesantren* life. This chapter therefore provides the theoretical foundation for analysing the field data in later chapters, especially in understanding how behaviour, habit formation, and social dynamics influence EFL learning at As-Tsani IBS.

CHAPTER 3: FOUCAULT'S CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Michel Foucault's theory of power and how it helps explain the role of discipline in modern institutions. Foucault offers a new way of understanding power, not just as something held by governments or leaders, but as something that operates in everyday life through relationships, rules, and social norms. Power shapes how people behave and think, often without the use of force or obvious control. This chapter begins by outlining Foucault's general ideas about power, then focuses on his concept of disciplinary power, which works through systems like schools, hospitals, and prisons by organising time, space, and behaviour.

Since Foucault's concept of disciplinary power serves as the central theoretical lens of this study, it is discussed in a separate chapter. This separation allows for a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of his ideas before they are applied to the empirical analysis. As the overarching framework guiding the interpretation of data, Foucault's theory provides the conceptual foundation for examining how power, discipline, and subject formation operate within the context of Islamic boarding schools. Presenting this theoretical discussion independently ensures that the subsequent analysis chapters can draw upon a well-established conceptual base and demonstrate how these ideas illuminate the lived realities of students and teachers in the *pesantren* setting.

The chapter then applies these ideas to the context of IBS or *pesantren* in Indonesia. It examines how disciplinary power functions in these schools employing power mechanism like surveillance, hierarchical observations through agents of authority and examination. In this setting, discipline is maintained not only by teachers or leaders, but also through peer pressure and self-monitoring among students. By using Foucault's framework, the chapter aims to show how power is both organised and experienced in *pesantren*, and how it influences students' actions, beliefs, and sense of self.

3.2 Foucault's theory of power

Before we examine Foucault's concept of *disciplinary power* in more detail, it is important for us to first overview the broader context of Foucault's theory of power. Foucault challenges the traditional view that power is something possessed by individuals or institutions in a centralised form. Power is not concentrated in a specific authority or institution; rather, it is embedded within social relationships and operates at all levels of human interaction across different areas of life (Lynch, 2011).

For Foucault, power is not something people or groups simply own, but something that works through relationships and everyday actions (Foucault, 1978). Power is not just about laws or authority, yet it is always active, like an on-going struggle between different forces. It exists within all social interactions, such as in families, schools, workplaces, or governments. Power does not only come from those in charge but it also starts from the bottom up, through the small actions and choices people make, such as a choice to wear a certain clothes for a certain purpose (Foucault, 1995). Even though power works toward certain goals, it is not controlled by any single person or group. It can shape people's behaviour without them even realising it, which raises questions about how free people really are. However, Foucault also points out that power always creates the possibility for resistance (Foucault, 1995). This means that people can question, challenge, or change the way power works, and this is what keeps freedom possible in society.

According to Foucault, there are three main types of power: sovereign power, disciplinary power, and bio-power (Foucault, 1995, pp. 36; 187). Sovereign power refers to the traditional form of power exercised by monarchs or the state through the use of force and the right to take life. Disciplinary power, which will be the main focus of this discussion, develops in modern societies through institutions such as schools, prisons, and hospitals, and works to regulate and normalise individual behaviour. Bio-power, on the other hand, involves the management of populations through administrative practices. The latest includes wider social issues like health, reproduction, and mortality. In his

1977–78 lectures at the Collège de France, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault uses examples like "do not steal" and "do not kill" to explain sovereign power, disciplinary power, and bio-power (Foucault, 2007, p. 19). Under sovereign power, which was common until the late 1600s, people who broke these rules were punished based only on what they did. For example, a thief or murderer might be executed, exiled, or fined.

When disciplinary power became more common in the 1700s, the focus became shifted. Authorities still punished criminals, however they also wanted to figure out the rationale and person behind the crime, such as what led them to do it, their background, and mental state. This was to help predict and prevent future crimes. As a result, punishments became more about controlling a person's behaviour over time, using prisons, therapy, parole, and surveillance (Taylor, 2011). Later in the 1700s, bio-power developed. This kind of power looks at the population as a whole, not just individuals. It is concerned with things like whether crime is increased or decreased, which groups commit certain crimes, and how to manage these trends. While some methods from disciplinary power are still used, the main goal of bio-power is to monitor and manage crime across the entire society.

Although Foucault's discussions of power, particularly sovereign power and bio-power, primarily address large-scale structures such as monarchies and states, these forms of power are not limited to the macro level. In fact, their pattern and mechanisms can often be observed in smaller, local institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools. This is because in certain aspects of the schools' internal governance reflect characteristics of sovereign power. For instance, the leadership of *Kyai* is often hereditary, passed down within particular families, suggesting a model of authority rooted in lineage rather than institutional meritocracy or democratic selection. Additionally, many *pesantren* are privately owned which make a *Kyai* the central figure in the institution whose significant control over internal affairs and decision making (Dhofier, 1982). Another characteristic is that *pesantren* institution is closed and offers limited access to the outside world, which further echoes the closed and centralised

nature of sovereign power. These features support Foucault's idea that power is not only found in governments but also appears in everyday institutions and can resemble older forms of control (Foucault, 1978; Foucault, 2007).

Another example of sovereign power in such institution is the use of public punishment. This can often be seen in classrooms, where a teacher might punish a student who cannot read by making them stand in front of the class so that everyone can see (Abbas & Reflianto, 2018). The goal of this punishment is usually to make the student feel regretful and to warn other students to avoid making the same mistake. Similarly, such practices also happen outside the classroom. For example, students might be made to wear a sign that says "I did not pray", or "I don't speak English" or female students might have to wear a certain coloured hijab, referring to certain mistake they committed, e.g., red hijab for not praying, blue for not attending the class, etc. (Nuriah, 2023). In some cases, students may have their heads shaved or even receive physical punishment (Ma`arif & Kartiko, 2018). These examples confirm that sovereign power influence is still present in schools today, even though this kind of power is considered unsuitable in modern society.

Foucault explains that sovereign power is mainly repressive, hence, it is also called "repressive power" (Taylor, 2011, p. 48). This type of power is held by certain people and institutions, such as kings, the military, judges, leaders like *Kyai*, and teachers. A key feature of sovereign power is that it must be visible to the public. Power needs to be seen in order to make people obey and to create fear (Taylor, 2011). Because of this, public punishment becomes an important tool. By punishing people in front of others, those in power show that they are in control. In this system, punishment is not just about correcting behaviour but also about showing the consequences of disobeying the law. The body becomes the main target of punishment. Within this type of power, rulers or authorities had the right to decide whether someone who broke the law should live or die (Foucault, 1995). This shows how sovereign power works through fear and control over people's lives and bodies.

Foucault challenges the idea of repressive power, arguing that it no longer fits the needs of a modern and complex society. In the past, power was held by a few figures, like kings or judges, and was used in forceful ways, such as punishment or control through fear. This type of power aimed to make people obey through fear. However, as society has developed, Foucault argues that power has changed. It works quietly through everyday routines, rules, and social norms. This newer form, which he calls *disciplinary power*, shapes how people act and behave without using force. It operates through systems like schools, prisons, and hospitals by organising behaviour through rules, surveillance, and normalisation. In the next section, we will explore this type of power more closely, focusing especially on how it functions within the education system.

3.2.1 *Disciplinary power*

Foucault's concept of disciplinary power is fundamentally a critique of the disciplinary practices commonly employed by those in power, which often exploit the vulnerabilities of the human body (Havis, 2014). The concept of disciplinary power is not about the arbitrary authority to control others. Rather, it functions within and through various social, intellectual, economic, and familial relationships. In this context, power is not merely about legality, punishment, or coercion, but about the dissemination of knowledge and the normalisation of behaviours, utilising the productive capacities of the body. During the transition from the 17th to the 18th century, discipline was generally understood as "domination" (Foucault, 1995, p. 168). However, Foucault argues that discipline is not the imposition of another's will but rather a self-imposed practice. Therefore, discipline must be distinguished from the obedience of a slave acting under a master's command, as well as from monastic discipline, which is dictated by a higher religious authority. Instead, people voluntarily behave in certain ways because they have learned, from their daily interactions, what is expected and is considered "normal" within their immediate environment. In this sense, discipline produces individuals who are both controlled and self-controlling, making it a more effective form of power.

In this form of power, human body is viewed as a resource to help individuals regulate their own sense of control (Foucault, 1995). Discipline cannot be instilled through physical coercion or by weakening the body; rather, it is cultivated through strategic mechanisms that lead individuals to comply voluntarily. While sovereign power directly targets the body, disciplinary power focuses on the soul and mind, shaping behaviour and way of thinking, rather than relying on physical force (Taylor, 2011). Foucault emphasises that the ideal form of discipline should focus on imparting knowledge. When individuals understand what they ought to do, excessive coercion, akin to a slave's obedience to a master, becomes unnecessary. Discipline should serve as a model for a "new form of punishment," one that no longer targets the body but instead influences the internal realm of the individual, addressing their consciousness, imagination, awareness, and reasoning. For Foucault, physical punishment for wrongdoing is as cruel, if not more so, than the offense itself.

Foucault (1995) argues that the most significant forms of power in modern society do not repress but operate in subtler, less visible ways, which he terms disciplinary power. Disciplinary power produces an organic individuality by exerting a control over bodily activities. This individuality is "organic" in so far as it lends itself to disciplinary practices all on its own, as if spontaneously and naturally (Foucault cited in Hoffman, 2011, p. 29). In disciplinary power, individuals become more prominent because they are regarded as both "objects and as instruments of exercising power (subjects)" (Foucault, 1995, p. 170). This means that disciplinary power transforms objects of power into subjects in the sense that individuals are encouraged to manage their own power. In this approach, every individual is expected to have self-control over his/her behaviour by adhering to societal norms appropriate to their time and place. For instance, students will behave well, being polite, discipline, and respectful, because they understand that these behaviours are expected of them as students. They internalise these expectations as the norm set by society.

While repressive power compels individuals to act against their will, disciplinary power operates more subtly by aligning individual desires with the

expectations of the community. As a result, people act in accordance with societal norms not through coercion, but through internalised consent. This form of power thus plays a critical role in shaping what individuals perceive as normal, influencing their beliefs, preferences, and decisions in ways that appear voluntary, yet are deeply rooted in social power relations. As Foucault (1990a, p. 93) famously stated, “power is not an institution [or] a structure,” nor merely an individual capability, but rather a complex and dynamic network of forces operating throughout society. Although disciplinary power is exercised at the level of the individual, it is society that provides the framework within which such power is formed and sustained. Individuals live in environments where norms are continuously reinforced and circulated, making the internalisation of those norms both possible and likely. In this way, disciplinary power functions to produce "good" members of society, those who accept prevailing values and behave in accordance with the social expectations around them.

Foucault explains that disciplinary power operates across a wide range of institutions, each governed by its own set of rules and norms, such as hospitals, prisons, and schools like Islamic boarding schools. Within these settings, individuals are subject to various mechanisms designed to regulate behaviour and instil discipline. In Islamic boarding school, for instance, students are shaped through structured routines and institutional rules aimed at cultivating disciplined conduct in daily life. These institutions often require students to engage in collective, scheduled activities, including the performance of obligatory and voluntary prayers in congregation, Quranic study sessions, formal schooling, and other community-based practices (Mustofa, 2017). Such practices exemplify how disciplinary power functions not through overt repression, but through the organisation of space, time, and activity to normalise certain behaviours and foster self-regulation.

In the context of Islamic Boarding Schools (IBS), the operation of disciplinary power can be observed in the institution's sustained efforts to guide students toward accepting and internalising the normative practices and expectations related to foreign language learning (Nashihah, 2022). These

efforts include adherence to a structured series of language learning activities, compliance with language regulations, and consistent use of the target language in daily interactions. Through these mechanisms, the institution seeks to instil these practices as part of the students' personal dispositions, what Foucault (1995, p. 227) refers to as the process of "normalisation." The aim is for students to regard these norms as natural and expected behaviours within their immediate environment. As a result, students gradually develop a sense of voluntary self-discipline, recognising that following these norms contributes positively to their educational development. Ultimately, this internalisation reduces the need for external enforcement, as students come to regulate their own conduct in alignment with institutional expectations.

This process of normalisation is evident in several aspects of students' daily routines within the IBS environment. For instance, students are required to participate in regular language drills, such as morning vocabulary sessions and evening conversation classes, which are designed not only to enhance proficiency but also to reinforce routine behaviour (Wahab, 2014). Moreover, language policies are strictly enforced in dormitories, classrooms, and public areas, encouraging students to interact exclusively in the target language. Over time, these repeated practices become habitual, and students begin to internalise them as part of their identity as members of the IBS community (Sera, 2023). As a result, speaking the target language and following scheduled academic and religious activities are no longer seen as external obligations but as self-driven practices aligned with communal expectations. This illustrates how disciplinary power, through structured routines and consistent reinforcement, shapes individuals to conform willingly and consistently to institutional norms.

One of the propositions on how the mechanism of disciplinary power works is the idea of *power relations* (Lynch, 2011). Power is not located only in formal institutions like the government or legal systems; rather, it exists in all social relationships, even in simple interactions between two individuals. Within this framework, every person is seen as a subject who possesses power over themselves and can choose how to act based on their social position and the

expectations of those around them. In other words, people do not simply follow rules because they are forced to, but because they internalise what is considered normal or acceptable through their interactions with others. For example, a student in a classroom may behave and complete their tasks not only because the teacher demands it, but because they believe that being disciplined is part of being a “good student.” Similarly, in a *pesantren*, students might conform to specific religious practices or dress codes not just out of obedience, but because these behaviours are internalised as part of being a faithful member of the community. Thus, power in this form is not imposed solely from above, but operates through individuals themselves as they participate in and reproduce social norms.

By focusing on the individual’s role within power relations, Foucault demonstrates that power takes multiple forms and is embedded in various social contexts (Sergiu, 2010). According to Foucault (1995, p. 103), such operations of power involve entire “relational groups” rather than isolated individuals. In the context of IBS, these power relations are concretely observable in several ways: in the spatial and functional relationship between dormitories, the mosque, and the *Kyai*’s residence; in the interactions within the mosque as a central site for both religious and educational activities; in the teaching-learning processes within madrasahs as mechanisms for internalising values and knowledge; and in the communicative dynamics among students, *ustadz*, and the *Kyai*, each of whom holds a specific and meaningful role within the cultural system of the *pesantren* (Achmadin, et al., 2024). These layered interactions exemplify how power circulates through institutional structures and everyday practices within the IBS environment.

The interactions within a *pesantren* environment are generally intense and intimate, owing to the continuous and close engagement among its inhabitants, both in terms of frequency and quality, within a confined setting (Kebung, 2002). This high level of communication implies a correspondingly high degree of power relations operating within daily life. As a result, *santri*, functioning simultaneously as subjects and objects within these dense networks

of interaction and communication, become embedded in complex structures of power. The hierarchical organisation of authority within the Islamic Boarding School illustrates the intricacy of these power dynamics. The establishment of student-level organisations represents a strategic initiative by the *Kyai* to extend his authority to even the lowest levels of the institution, the students. This approach ensures that his influence remains pervasive and continues to shape the community, even in his physical absence (Evi & Zaini, 2020).

In Islamic boarding schools, students are the primary subjects of disciplinary mechanisms. Their bodies are constantly monitored, with every movement scrutinised under strict supervision (Taylor, 2011). Even in moments when they are not actually being watched, students experience a pervasive sense of surveillance, reflecting the effects of panoptic discipline imposed by the school authorities. This form of discipline operates discreetly, ensuring compliance without a clearly identifiable source of authority. In most *pesantren*, disciplinary measures include the enforcement of rules, punishments, detention, disciplinary councils, and restrictions on students' activities. These mechanisms regulate various aspects of students' lives, including their dress, behaviour, speech, interests, and religious practices. Adherence to these norms serves as the benchmark for assessing discipline. Consequently, IBS function as sites of individual formation, shaping students into disciplined subjects (Haryatmoko, 2002, p. 14).

In his phenomenal work of *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1995) writes:

"Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific techniques of a power that regards individuals as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (p. 170).

In Foucault's view, discipline is fundamentally connected to the exercise of power, as it represents a distinct technique through which power operates directly upon individuals. This technique functions by regulating behaviour via mechanisms such as surveillance and hierarchical observation, ultimately producing what Foucault refers to as "docile bodies"—individuals who internalise

norms and conform to institutional expectations (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). Within this process, individuals are positioned as objects of disciplinary operations. A clear example can be seen in gaol setting, where inmates are constantly controlled and directed by prison guards. In similar way, individuals may also function as agents of disciplinary power. In IBS context, for example, *Mudabbir* (student supervisors), who are selected from among the students themselves, play authoritative roles in overseeing their peers. This dual function exemplifies Foucault's notion that within disciplinary systems, individuals are constituted both as objects and as subjects of power.

For Foucault, discipline is a way of using power to control people to make them both obedient and useful. He views discipline as a political technology that works directly on the body, influencing how individuals act and respond to authority. Those in power who wish to maintain their control over society must find ways to make people obey and conform to established rules. One of the most effective ways is by creating systems of discipline that regulate people's actions and encourage compliance (Taylor, 2011). In this sense, discipline is not just about punishing people when they break the rules. Instead, it is about structuring society in a way that conditions individuals to follow rules automatically, without the need for constant force. This is the core function of disciplinary power. It is to shape people's behaviours in such a way that they become more obedient as they become more useful to the system. To this sense, Foucault concludes that disciplinary power ensures "the body becomes more obedient as it becomes more useful" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138).

The discipline of the body is closely related to the power exercised over it. As Foucault asserts, discipline is a means by which power exerts control over individuals, ultimately producing obedient and useful subjects. The body becomes the primary target of discipline, undergoing training to enhance its skills and utility (Nanang, 2014). The mechanisms of power operate throughout the training process, subjecting the body to regulated movements, precise timing, and controlled posture (Hardiyanta, 1997). Discipline entails the subjugation of individuals to shape them into productive members of society. In

his discussion of bodily discipline, Foucault frequently refers to the concept of *power* emphasising that a disciplined body is one that can be controlled and regulated. Therefore, individuals who can master and regulate their own body achieve a level of discipline that proves beneficial to life.

Bodily discipline is a fundamental component of the art of governance (Hardiansyah, 2012). The body serves as the primary site where discipline is exercised, shaping individuals into controlled, productive, obedient, and normatively responsible members of society. According to Foucault (as cited in Hardiansyah, 2012, p. 63), bodily discipline as a method serves four key purposes: (1) dissemination of discipline, (2) control of activities, (3) strategies for optimizing time and productivity, and (4) the structuring of individuals as organized forces. Foucault's notion of "enclosure" (1995, p. 141) illustrates a place in which the strategy of control is centralised and concentrated. He describes "disciplinary spaces" such as boarding schools as an ideal environment for enforcing discipline, as "it is the protected place of disciplinary monotony" (p. 141). Within such spaces, individuals can be divided and grouped according to the needs of disciplinary enforcement. This process, which Foucault (1995) refers to as "*partitioning*" serves as a strategy for establishing comprehensive control, with the objectives:

"to establish presence and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits" (p. 143).

Within this enclosed space, disciplinary power produces an organic individuality by exerting a control over bodily activities which in turn creates a docile body, bodies that were both efficient in performance and obedient to authority (Foucault, 1995).

The criteria of the "protected place" described by Foucault closely align with the environment of *pesantren* in Indonesia, both physical and social environment. IBS are designed to be closed and isolated from the outside world in order to ensure that *santri* can experience a total transformative process

aimed at improving their behaviour and character (Mariaty, 2020; Manshur, 2019). To do so, students must remain unaffected by influences from the outside world. In similar way, the implementation of English language learning within the boarding schools also expects students to continuously engage in an environment that has been modified and conditioned as a language-learning space, where only English or Arabic is permitted for communication. This controlled setting reinforces immersion, ensuring that students develop their language skills within a structured and disciplined framework.

Fundamentally, I am persuaded by Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, however, I also find Haugaard's (2022) critique to be helpful. He argues that, at certain points, Foucault does not clearly explain how non-centralised power works. In his theory, Foucault argues that power is not concentrated in a single centre but is dispersed and present throughout society. However, in practice, he still acknowledges the functioning of power structures in which individuals are seen solely as objects of power. This contradiction is particularly relevant in the context of the *pesantren*, where the purpose of discipline is to promote self-discipline (Nuriah, 2023), at the same time, there is also a strong top-down power structure in place. The *santri* are often seen as individuals who must obey the authority of the *Kyai* or the school's leadership. This shows that there is a kind of contradiction in Foucault's idea of power. Alternatively, it may suggest that under certain conditions, both decentralised and centralised systems of power can operate concurrently.

Under disciplinary power (decentralised), IBS seek to implement a process of normalisation, in which students are encouraged to adapt themselves to the social life and routines of the *pesantren* environment. This includes participation in religious activities, structured language programmes, and interaction patterns aligned with the institutional culture (Nuriah, 2023). To some extent, this sense of "normality" can be observed in the behaviour of senior *santri*, who have internalised these routines and now regard them as ordinary aspects of daily life. Over time, this habituation contributes to the development of self-discipline.

In contrast, for new *santri*, the process of normalisation often requires institutional coercion and strict supervision (Mariaty, 2020). In this sense, while the objective is to cultivate disciplinary power within the students, the influence of repressive power from the institution remains evident. This suggests that the process involves elements of sovereign power, such as coercion, surveillance, and punishment, particularly during the early stages of adaptation. As a result, the development of disciplinary power in the *pesantren* context can be seen as hybrid in nature, combining both repressive and normalising mechanisms. In other words, although the ultimate aim of disciplinary power is to foster internalised discipline and self-regulation among students, the initial phase of implementation necessarily involves practices characteristic of repressive power.

Such practices, consequently, raise important questions regarding the effectiveness of disciplinary implementation within the *pesantren* environment. The first question concerns the students' actual orientation toward discipline: do they behave according to institutional norms because they have genuinely internalised personal discipline, or do they comply primarily out of fear and constant surveillance by the authorities within the *pesantren*? This question is crucial, as the fundamental aim of discipline is to cultivate individuals of noble character who are capable of self-regulation without the need for external pressure. A second question involves the impact of such disciplinary practices: do the *santri* emerge as outcomes of disciplinary power or do they become shaped by repressive power, in which their discipline depends on continuous coercion and external monitoring? Addressing these questions is essential to evaluating whether the *pesantren*'s disciplinary system truly fosters moral autonomy or simply reinforces conformity of strict control through power mechanism

3.2.2 Mechanisms of power

Observation is one of the key elements in the concept of disciplinary power by Foucault. Hierarchical observation functions by “making subjects

constantly visible and knowable, through a single gaze that sees everything constantly” (Taylor, 2011, p. 163). In discipline enforcement within a society, authorities must conduct objective and efficient control and monitoring. Within the concept of hierarchical observation, Foucault frequently refers to various terms commonly used in the implementation of this multi-level surveillance, such as panoptic surveillance, machinery of power, agents of authority and many others (Foucault, 1995, pp. 35, 138, 321). These terms represent strategies and mechanisms employed to carry out observation effectively and efficiently

3.2.3 The panoptic surveillance

In modern society, discipline is analysed as one of the technologies of power which commonly exercised in various institutions such as factories, military camps, hospitals, and prisons. The power authority creates a system of disciplinary methods and techniques that aim at ensuring the effective and efficient operation of the power. The panoptic method, developed from Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon* prison model (1791), is one of the successful techniques in conducting comprehensive, effective and efficient observation upon certain targets of individuals. This panoptic model is well-known for its architectural design that makes the enforcement of discipline more manageable because:

“All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell... a worker or a schoolboy... one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery” (Foucault, 1995, p. 200).

According to Foucault, the panoptic system instils a perpetual awareness in those being observed that they might be watched at any moment, which ensures the automatic functioning of power. This system enables continuous, automatic surveillance without the need for constant monitoring. Consequently, it effectively achieves compliance and order. Besides the institutions mentioned above, schools are educational institutions that often adopt panoptic disciplinary methods as the technique for enforcing discipline to regulate, order, and normalise individuals (Foucault, 1995). This is because schools claim that, as

norm-setter, they aim to instil norms in students with the goal of creating individuals who are normal and possess good moral character. The implementation of panoptic surveillance mechanisms on students' physical presence, language use, attendance records, examinations, routine checks of belongings, and so on, leads us to conclude that school is a prison in disguise (Barker et al., 2010; Hall, 2003). In this context, students are compelled to accept such practices as normal and view them as routine and acceptable. They normalise being monitored and monitoring since they are socialised in the surveillance culture (Taylor, 2012). In other words, the panopticon takes advantage of the uncertainty and acceptance nature experienced by those who have been shut down for being disciplined (Lyon, 1994).

In the panopticon this is a literal mechanism, but Foucault treats this kind of visibility as a metaphor for how power works on subjects more broadly (Taylor, 2011, p. 163). Foucault illustrates the concept of surveillance in disciplinary power through the model of the *panopticon*, in which a single observer can monitor individuals from a central watchtower without them knowing whether they are being watched. Those under surveillance internalise the awareness that they are constantly being monitored. At the same time, this mechanism detaches power from any specific authority figure, as those being observed cannot know exactly who is monitoring them (Lyon, 1994). The panopticon functions as a technology that automates power, not through a sovereign ruler, but through the dispersion of individuals, systematic surveillance, and regulatory mechanisms. These elements establish power relations that discipline and control the body, making the panopticon a powerful representation of modern disciplinary practices.

The concept of *panopticism* originates from the prison model developed by Jeremy Bentham (1843 as cited in Foucault, 1995), which facilitates disciplinary enforcement through architectural design (Haryatmoko, 2002, p. 15). The panoptic prison consists of a circular arrangement of cells surrounding a central watchtower. While inmates are constantly visible from the tower, they cannot see their observers. Each cell has two open windows: one facing the

tower, ensuring full visibility of the prisoner, and another facing outward to allow light to enter. This design ensures that inmates are perpetually visible without ever knowing when they are being watched. According to Foucault (1995), the panoptic system instils in prisoners a state of conscious and permanent visibility, ensuring that power functions automatically. Even if direct surveillance is not continuous, the mere potential of being watched guarantees compliance and order (Haryatmoko, 2002, p. 16).

The spatial arrangement of *pesantren* buildings is specifically designed to produce panoptic effects. The proximity of the mosque, administrative offices, dormitories, and the *Kyai's* residence creates an environment in which students constantly feel under surveillance. Power relations thus operate continuously, even in the absence of direct observation. Foucault (as cited in Haryatmoko, p.15) asserts that in a panoptic system, constant physical surveillance is unnecessary; intermittent observation suffices to maintain order. Panoptic power is elusive and omnipresent, embedded within every relationship and form of knowledge, ensuring its pervasive functionality (Haryatmoko, 2002, p. 16). These spatial arrangements exemplify the automatic operation of power within the *pesantren*, sustaining a state of permanent visibility.

Besides architectural design, other disciplinary mechanism, such as the judicial tribunals, punishments, written regulations, attendance report and student-based disciplinary councils and organisations, intensify the panoptic effect, extending its influence over students' bodies. Even when direct physical monitoring is irregular, the knowledge of its existence perpetuates disciplinary control. In IBS context, there are several organisations created for several purposes, including monitoring the implementation of disciplinary procedures. For instance, IBS student's association, language advisory councils, language centre, language court (*Mahkamah Lughah*) (Hakim, OK, Salminawati, 2024). Although the actual names may vary from one IBS to another, majority of modern *pesantren* adopt the culture of creating students' organisations within Islamic boarding schools (Nurjaman, 2016; Rohim, 2020).

The implementation of panoptic disciplinary methods, as explained by

Foucault, shows how modern institutions, especially schools like *pesantren*, use systems of surveillance to control and guide student behaviour. The layout of the IBS and its student organisations reflect the Panopticon model, where students are made to feel they are always being watched, even if no one is physically monitoring them. This system helps maintain order, but it also raises important questions about whether students are truly learning self-discipline or simply following rules out of fear. Over time, students may come to see being watched as normal, which can blur the line between discipline and control. This discussion helps us better understand how power works quietly but effectively in educational settings, and why it is important to think carefully about the balance between guiding students and controlling them too much.

Agents of Authority

The mechanism for implementing disciplinary methods in the boarding school generally does not rely on technology or specific tools, but instead utilises the resources from within the student body itself as agent of authority to enforce discipline at lower levels. Students are classified based on their cohort; those from higher class or more senior have a greater opportunity to join the disciplinary forces, individuals that Foucault (1995) calls as the “machine”, the “instrument”, or the “vehicle of power” (p. 164) responsible for enforcing the rules. Senior students, serving as members of the *Mudabbir* (language supervisors), and gain a certain prestige with the positions and responsibilities assigned. As part of the LAC members, these senior students play a crucial role in ensuring the discipline system functions, ensuring compliance with the rules and preventing violations. As agents of power, senior students occupy a position between the subjects and objects of power. This means that, as enforcers, they also face a significant risk of being evaluated by higher administrators if the implementation of the disciplinary system is deemed unsuccessful.

The role of the *Mudabbir* within the *pesantren*'s language learning environment exemplifies a strategic mechanism of disciplinary power. Positioned as both facilitators and monitors, these student supervisors are involved in

nearly all aspects of language instruction, including vocabulary drills, repetition exercises, and public speaking. Their responsibilities extend beyond pedagogical assistance to include the enforcement of behavioural norms, thereby blurring the boundary between teaching and surveillance. Eligibility for this role is typically limited to senior students with demonstrated proficiency in foreign languages, reinforcing hierarchical structures within the student body. The function of the *Mudabbir* can be understood as a multi-layered disciplinary apparatus wherein instructional support and behavioural monitoring are simultaneously enacted.

In many occasions, *Mudabbir* plays a double role like “killing two birds with one stone.” In other words, besides helping the language teacher with activities like listening to students recite words they have memorised, correcting their spelling or grammar, they also monitors “troublemaker” students. They mark down compliant and non-compliant students during learning. From Foucault’s (1995) perspective, he describes this surveillance approach as an “integrated system” where multiple missions are carried out simultaneously: “teaching proper, ensuring knowledge acquisition and hierarchized observation” (p. 176). In this sense, surveillance is conducted as an inseparable part of the teaching and learning process itself. Foucault adds that this approach is chosen by many institutions for resource efficiency in exercising disciplinary power. Furthermore, such mechanisms can establish power automatically and anonymously at the lower levels. Although power rests with individuals, the power network functions well through teachers and supervisors (Foucault, 1995).

Furthermore, students are constantly aware of the presence of authority figures through their dormitory rooms. They are monitored and supervised even while they sleep. *Mudabbir* are assigned to each dormitory room as a preventive measure by the authorities to monitor students’ behaviours when they are in their rooms (Hazzbulloh et al., 2024). This indicates that no space is left for shadows; all areas are under surveillance. This effort aims to ensure that students adhere to the established schedules, minimise the likelihood of

disciplinary violations, and restrict opportunities for them to consolidate and plan resistance. In Foucauldian terms, this spatial and temporal organisation of surveillance reflects the extension of panoptic power, where control is decentralised but omnipresent.

Another panoptic surveillance approach that is highly feared by the students is the method of spying, known as "*Jasus*," a term derived from the Arabic word meaning spies or espionage. *Jasus* is a standard term and a commonly used method of monitoring language practice in all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Azra, 2003; Lukens-Bull, 2010; Nurjaman, 2016; Rohim, 2020; Zarkasyi, 2020). This is a unique method for enforcing disciplinary procedures because it practically employs students who have violated the rules to find and report other offenders to the disciplinary force. Rule offenders, i.e., language rules, will be tried at the language court and will be charged based on the severity of their offenses. *Jasus* is the most alarming approach of a close surveillance because of the undetected nature of the observation carried out by unidentified personnel. Students are fully aware that they are being observed and monitored anytime, anywhere without knowing who is monitoring them, a condition that identically reflects the panopticon effect.

In practice, punished students are given a piece of paper consisting of list of information need to be found out, such as: name of offender, type of offense, and when it occurred. They are given a period of time to find other rule-breakers, who come from their own friend, and record their mistakes to be eventually pass them to the disciplinary forces (Rizki, 2019). The *Jasus*, basically, functions as Justice-collaborators who engage in cooperative efforts with legal forces to identify other violators of disciplinary norms. In his seminal work "Discipline and Punish," Foucault (1995) underscores the profound impact of this surveillance system, as it instils significant apprehension among the community. He argues that such surveillance, which reflects Panopticon mechanism, can bring about "homogeneous effects" once it is applied to any context, meaning that it can cause uniform and consistent effect to those being monitored in any condition (p. 202). The nature of *Jasus* operatives as temporary, by unidentified

observers, and unknown number of personnel, bring more uncertainty and intense effect for the students. Foucault (1995) emphasises:

“The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed. The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power.” (p.202)

Due to the intense social interaction within the dormitory arenas, it is not difficult to find violations committed by their own friends. The penetration of spy forces is very extensive and profound, fostering a sense of vigilance among students that might prevent them from engaging in behaviours that could potentially violate regulations. The anonymity and uncertainty nature of this operation, results in students developing their awareness of being under direct and permanent supervision. It is a form of surveillance that enables obedience and orderliness by minimizing unpredictable actions. Surveillance is continuous without the physical presence of authorities being known, and its effects are also continuous. Such conditions illustrate that within the boarding school, the practice of power operates automatically. This is the essence of the panoptic system, causing students to be perpetually under surveillance or in a state of permanent visibility (Haryatmoko, 2002).

Although the *jasus* method is considered one of the most effective techniques for instilling discipline among the students, particularly in relation to the implementation of foreign language programs in *pesantren* (Rizki, 2019), this practice is principally unreasonable as it can lead to psychological impacts on the students, such as the loss of a sense of empathy, brotherhood, and unity. When students are assigned to monitor and report on their peers, trust within the student community may deteriorate, fostering an atmosphere of suspicion and competition rather than cooperation. Furthermore, interpersonal conflicts are likely to arise between students, particularly between the spies and their targets (Anto & Rahman, 2018). These tensions can lead to broken friendships, feelings of exclusion, and even lasting resentment among students. When students are used as tools to monitor each other, their relationships become unequal, turning

into hierarchical power dynamics, undermining peer relationships. This weakens the sense of unity and togetherness that schools and *pesantren* aim to build.

3.2.4 The panoptic landscape

In his closing statement in the interview on “*Question on Geography*”, Foucault (1980) indicates that in the next few years, he intended to analyse how the formation of discourse and the genealogy of knowledge were utilised by those in power as tactics and strategies for disseminating power. This dissemination undergoes through control of territory or the organisation of domains, which he termed geopolitics that involves “the campaigns, the movements, the colony, and the territory” (p. 77). Although he was discussing this in a broader context, at national level, in his previous paragraph, he also mentioned the context of institutional environments where the dissemination of micro-power takes place. This intersection, broader concepts for a local context, gives me the basis for our analysis of how school areas or environments, what is referred to as the “school-scape” (Menken, et al., 2018; Brown, 2012 as cited in Wedin, 2021, p.152) are controlled, monitored, organised, and utilised as strategies for the dissemination of power.

The spatial arrangement of Islamic boarding schools has traditionally followed a specific pattern. Most of these institutions feature a typical and uniform layout. In his work “*Madrassa by Any Other Name*,” Lukens-Bull (2010) describes that, the structural design of the Islamic schools or *pesantren*, *pondok*, or *madrassa* is similar in their development design. These Islamic schools have a mosque at the centre of the area, and the house of the *Kyai* is located at the main entrance and occupies a central position, allowing the *Kyai* to oversee the entire *pesantren* environment (Suharya, et al., 2018). Sometimes, the *Kyai*’s house is situated in the middle, acting as a barrier between the female and male students’ areas to ensure there is no interaction between the two genders. In this context, the placement of the *Kyai*’s house is not merely based on land availability but is intentionally designed to function as a panoptic tower, enabling continuous monitoring of the students’ behaviours.

Furthermore, the layout of the school buildings typically creates a panoptic effect. The entire *pesantren* area is enclosed by high walls, limiting accessibility to the outside world and creating an atmosphere comparable to a prison. Additionally, the proximity of student dormitories, the administration office, and the residence of the *Kyai*, the owner of the school, which is located directly opposite the dormitories, positions the *Kyai*'s house like a panoptic effects (Armia, 2014). This arrangement allows for continuous monitoring of students' activities within the dormitory environment, creating a situation where students feel constantly under supervision and find themselves in a state of ubiquitous surveillance.

Additionally, in the boarding school where this study was conducted, the male students' dormitory is located right next to the mosque, the centre of religious activities, compelling the students to maintain quiet and respectful behaviours (Zarkasyi, 2015). In Islamic teachings, the mosque is a sacred structure, similar to a church for Christians or a temple for Buddhists, typically used for worshipping god and other religious practices. So, engaging in any form of wrongdoing in the vicinity of the mosque is considered highly inappropriate and inconceivable for any Muslim, especially for the students at this Islamic boarding school (Qadri, et al., 2024). Therefore, the location of the mosque exerts psychological influence on the students who reside in the surrounding area, as they feel responsible to honour and respect this place of worship. This spatial arrangement reinforces a culture of reverence among the students, promoting a disciplined environment that can be maintained even without the presence of supervisors.

What is more, it is very common that IBS have *Balee*, small building like a hut, which located in a strategic corner within school environment (Marzuki, 2011, p. 223). This hut functions as a sub-panoptic tower, where teachers can constantly monitor the movements and behaviours of students around the school buildings area. The hut functions effectively during school hours, as during this time, some teachers use the hut as gathering spot, sitting and chatting, while waiting for the next classes they have. Although the hut does not

have a formal surveillance function, its presence can be perceived similarly to a micro–panopticon Tower, because it is occupied by individuals who represent the power. For students, teachers play multiple roles; in addition to being educators and parental figures, they also act as disciplinary forces who can administer punishment to students whenever they commit violations.

Another important element in the utilisation of the school-scape is the effort of the institution to employ the "linguistic landscape" (LL) (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p 23) both as media for learning as well as for the campaign of power. On the one hand, LL is prepared as a learning medium which may help students in learning foreign language. On the other hand, the landscape is also used as a medium for the distribution of power, through which the power is displayed in the form of written language. It represents the presence of authority within the school community. For instance, on the walls of buildings or standing boards, we can find information such as announcements, codes of conduct, restrictions, dos and don'ts, etc., which articulate the commands of power. An example (Picture 1 below) of how formal uniform should be worn during formal learning sessions. Although no supervisor is physically standing there, the messages on the walls are always alive and able to remind members of the boarding school community that they are constantly monitored. Therefore, showing obedience to the silent voices of power will always benefit them.

3.2.5 Examination

Examination is a highly ritualised mechanism of discipline since it allows power to qualify, to classify and to punish, and it becomes procedures through which individuals can be clearly differentiated and judged (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). For Foucault, examination is the ceremonial moment where the deployment of force and establishment of the truth are celebrated. Examination is the moment to evaluate how all discipline efforts that have been invested work and satisfy all expectations of the power. At the same time, it is a sacred moment for the subjects of power to completely defer and accept to be classified and ranked according to the standards set by the authorities. Webb et al. (2009)

assert that standardised tests serve as a surveillance mechanism installed on the act of "No Child Left Behind", used to classify and match individuals with lower capabilities to more easily manageable low-paying positions. In other words, standardised tests are utilised as a measure to categorise individuals according to their qualifications, which subsequently determines their job placements and wages.

The assertion that classification and judgment are the primary purposes of an examination is undeniable. This practice is implemented in almost all educational institutions. In fact, classification occurs even before a student begins their academic journey through what is known as *diagnostic tests*, *placement tests*, and so on. Through this classification, schools as the ruling regime can clearly monitor the characteristics of their students and seemingly measure their physical and mental abilities. Through tests, individuals become visible and thus easily classified and judged (Foucault, 1995). Tests or evaluations conducted periodically, similar to regular monitoring, enhance the visibility of students with their various abilities. There is even no need for schools to make a significant effort to ascertain the abilities of particular students, as everything is already identified and labelled. For instance, the difference in the skill levels of students in a low-achievers class versus those in high-achievers class is very obvious.

Examination or test is seen as a standard process administered by the school, or the state as the authority with the power to classify, measure and judge individuals according to what he/she can give on that day. In fact, sometimes the exam ignores the students' effort that they have invested during their studies because they cannot answer the questions of the exams and ends up getting poor marks. Examinations play a significant role in judging and categorising students within the school community. However, this emphasis often leads students to prioritise exams and its outcomes over the genuine process of acquiring knowledge. Consequently, some students end up with unethical means such as cheating to secure high grades or advance to prestigious academic groups. When students chase after awards and praise,

they might forget the real meaning of learning about knowledge. It means that sometimes, the desire for fame and recognition can make education focus more on artificial accomplishments than on really understanding and growing intellectually.

During 'the moments of the truth' or examinations, the evaluation of achievement is not merely based on students' ability to answer the tested questions, which is typically reflected in their grades. Rather, the evaluation also considers a series of disciplinary forces invested during the initial phases of learning, far before the examination day. This is what Foucault (1995) refers to as the examination is a 'ceremonial moment' where authorities also measure the effectiveness of power deployment. This moment is used to assess the approaches taken and to make revision where necessary, as this ritual will continue to repeat in the future. According to Foucault (1995, p. 186), "Examination did not simply mark the end of an apprenticeship; it was one of its permanent factors; it was woven into it through constantly repeated ritual of power."

This statement describes Foucault's ideas about exams as more than just tests of what students know or how well they answer questions. Foucault sees exams as an important moment where power dynamics in education come into play. It is not just about testing students' ability, but it involves using discipline and authority throughout the learning time. So, how exams evaluate students shows how well this authority is used during education. In Foucault's view, exams are not just tests at the end. They are always part of how education keeps and changes who holds power in schools. Through regular assessments, observation, and record-keeping, the exam becomes a tool that ranks, classifies, and tracks students over time (Hoffman, 2011). This helps institutions control behaviour, enforce standards, and shape students into ideal subjects. In this way, exams act as a form of surveillance, where students internalise the pressure to perform and conform, even without direct supervision.

In educational context, Foucault refers to school exam as one of the forms of examination used by institutions like Islamic boarding school. In

pesantren, examinations are conducted through multiple stages and forms, including academic subject tests, practical exams, language assessments, and Quran recitation evaluations (Khaeruddin, 2022). As Foucault (1995) argues, the examination is not merely an assessment tool but a mechanism of disciplinary power that ranks and documents individuals, making them more visible and thus more easily controlled. Hoffman (2011) illustrate that through examination, students leave their academic record that helps the schools to identify them, ultimately easily classify them into various ranks. For example, the exam results will show who should be classified as high-achiever students, low-achiever students, and or talented students.

Furthermore, in the context of *pesantren*, the assessment is even more complex. It does not only evaluate knowledge and skill but also reinforce conformity to institutional values and behavioural expectations. For example, language exams often include public speaking, and students are graded not only on how well they speak, but also on how they behave, follow rules, and fit into the Islamic boarding school's culture. As students are expected to meet these standards repeatedly, they begin to self-regulate their actions to avoid failure or public embarrassment. This illustrates how the exam serves as a mechanism of control in line with Foucault's concept of disciplinary power. In this way, the *pesantren*'s examination system functions both as a pedagogical tool and a disciplinary mechanism, embedding surveillance into everyday educational practices while simultaneously cultivating obedient and self-disciplined subjects.

3.3 Self-Disciplines

In this discussion, I use term *self-discipline* to describe the ultimate goal of the disciplinary process, both generally and within educational contexts, particularly in Islamic boarding schools. Gorbunovs, Kapenieks and Cakula (2016) define self-discipline as an individual's ability to regulate themselves and consistently take the necessary actions to achieve their goals despite distractions or difficulties. Within the *pesantren* setting, self-discipline means the internalisation of institutional rules and norms, enabling students to live

according to communal expectations while pursuing personal and academic goals. Crucially, this process stems not from external enforcement but from inner motivation and personal commitment.

The development of self-discipline progresses alongside intellectual maturity. As children's reasoning advances, they become increasingly capable of self-regulation. Psychology highlights the close link between discipline and self-control, noting that without the ability to manage impulses, discipline remains shallow and externally imposed (Baumeister et al., 2007). Unaradjan (2003) argues that human development depends on both discipline and maturity—discipline shaped through structured teaching and guidance, and maturity nurtured by family, peers, and society. Yet such accounts often focus on external control, overlooking the deeper, internal dimension of discipline.

Michel Foucault offers a more profound view, linking discipline to the ethical formation of the self. In his later writings, he shifts from describing discipline as institutional control to viewing it as a practice of self-governance (Rabinow, 1997). For Foucault, discipline is not merely obedience but a process through which individuals reflect upon themselves, understand their desires, and transform external rules into personal ethical commitments. Concepts such as *self-mastery* and *care of the self* (Foucault, 1988) express this ideal, where self-discipline becomes a form of *ethical subjectivity*—a state in which individuals act responsibly through self-awareness and inner motivation.

Foucault's notion of self-discipline as an ethical relationship with oneself aligns closely with Islamic teachings. The concept of *mujahadah al-nafs* (striving against the self) (Azizah & Subaidi, 2022; Harahap et al., 2024) highlights the moral effort required to control one's desires and achieve spiritual growth. The Qur'an praises those "who restrain anger and pardon others" (3:134, in Syofrianisda et al., 2025), and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described true strength as the ability to master one's anger. Similarly, *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) encompasses self-control, self-development, and self-empowerment (Ma'muroh et al., p. 834). Like Foucault's idea, Islamic discipline

becomes meaningful only when internalised, growing from within as a source of moral and spiritual strength.

In *pesantren* education, self-discipline forms part of a broader effort to shape students' moral and intellectual character. *Santri* are guided by teachers and administrators but are also encouraged to cultivate habits that foster independence. Practices such as *muhasabah* (self-reflection), *dzikir* (remembrance of God), and structured routines help students develop inner awareness and responsibility. While external rules, punishments, and rewards provide initial guidance, the ultimate goal, as echoed by both Foucault and Islamic tradition, is the movement from external enforcement to internal conviction. Over time, practices such as prayer, fasting, and language rules evolve from obligations into personal commitments rooted in self-discipline.

The daily life of *santri* exemplifies this transformation. Early compliance with routines, such as Qur'an recitation or English-speaking rules, may begin from obligation or fear of sanctions, but gradually becomes part of the student's identity. A *santri* who once spoke English because it was required may later use it naturally as an expression of personal growth. Similarly, religious practices initially performed out of duty evolve into acts of inner devotion. Thus, *pesantren* life demonstrates how structured discipline fosters the transition toward genuine self-discipline, reflecting both behaviourist reinforcement and Foucault's notion of ethical self-care.

External influences from family, school, and society also shape self-discipline. Families provide the moral foundation, schools reinforce structure, and societies sustain norms and shared values (Unaradjan, 2003). Yet, as Foucault reminds us, these are preparatory stages. True self-discipline emerges when individuals internalise external guidance and transform it into ethical identity. In Islamic education, the ultimate responsibility lies with each person to cultivate self-discipline grounded in *taqwa* (God-consciousness) and moral integrity.

In summary, self-discipline may be viewed psychologically as self-control, educationally as structured training, or spiritually as moral refinement. Foucault,

however, unites these perspectives by framing self-discipline as an ethical project—the *care of the self*. Within *pesantren* education, structured routines and moral guidance are not ends in themselves but means of nurturing autonomous, reflective, and ethically grounded individuals. In this way, self-discipline represents not mere conformity but the highest form of personal and moral achievement, harmonising Foucault's philosophy with the spiritual vision of Islamic pedagogy.

3.3.1 The four folds of subjectivation

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume II: The Use of Pleasure* (1985), Foucault shifts his focus from external systems of discipline to the inner processes through which individuals shape themselves as moral beings. He argues that genuine ethical development does not come merely from following external rules, but from a person's conscious effort to guide and transform their own behaviour. Ethics, in this view, is a relationship with oneself, a reflective and transformative practice where individuals learn to control their actions, desires, and intentions according to certain moral values (Rabinow, 1997). Foucault calls this process *ethical subjectivation*, which he explains through four inter-related dimensions: *the ethical substance*, *the mode of subjection*, *the practices of the self*, and *the telos*. These elements describe how people internalise moral principles and turn external rules into part of their moral identity.

In the context of the *pesantren*, this idea is relatively relevance. Students' lives are guided by strict routines and religious practices, yet the ultimate purpose of such discipline is to nurture self-awareness and moral independence. The ethical substance here is the *nafs* (soul) — the inner self that must be disciplined, purified, and directed toward divine awareness. However, in the *pesantren* tradition, the cultivation of a pure soul and religious ethics is firmly grounded in Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Thus, while the goal of self-formation resembles Foucault's idea, the path toward may be differences as it follows a theocentric framework rooted in divine revelation rather than philosophy alone.

In this study, Foucault's framework is used as an analytical tool to understand how *pesantren* students (*santri*) develop ethical awareness and self-discipline — showing how external discipline becomes internalised and transformed into self-governance. The next section therefore outlines Foucault's fourfold model of ethical self-formation, which provides the theoretical foundation for analysing the development of self-discipline in IBS context.

3.3.1.1 *Ethical Substance*

The first dimension in Foucault's fourfold framework of subjectivation is the *ethical substance*, which refers to the part of the self that becomes the focus of moral reflection and transformation. The ethical substance marks the inner domain—desires, thoughts, and intentions—upon which ethical work is performed. As Foucault (1985, p. 26) explains, it is “the material with which the individual works in order to transform himself into an ethical subject.”

Unlike moral theories that link ethics to obedience or universal law, Foucault views it as a personal relationship with oneself. Morality, therefore, is not imposed from outside but developed through reflection and self-discipline. This notion aligns with the classical idea of *care of the self*, where ethical formation involves continuous practice, self-examination, and restraint. The ethical substance thus represents the field where individuals confront and reshape their impulses, transforming external expectations into internal conviction.

In the context of education, this idea helps explain how learners develop self-awareness and responsibility. Learning is not only about acquiring knowledge or following rules but also about cultivating the capacity for reflection, self-regulation, and moral growth. In this way, the ethical substance highlights education's deeper purpose — to form individuals who are capable of guiding their own conduct and transforming learning into a process of ethical self-development.

Scholars such as Tamboukou (2012) and Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) emphasise that the ethical substance is the foundation of Foucault's idea of

freedom as self-mastery. It is through attention to the ethical substance that individuals gain the capacity to transform themselves — to turn external discipline into internal virtue. This transformation involves both recognition and resistance: recognition of the norms that govern one's conduct, and resistance in the sense of reinterpreting those norms through self-reflection. Foucault thus redefines ethical subjectivity as a creative act of self-formation, not a passive acceptance of rules. The ethical substance becomes the site of personal agency where individuals rework imposed disciplines into chosen forms of life.

In summary, the ethical substance represents the initial and most fundamental dimension of Foucault's fourfold model of subjectivation. It identifies the specific part of the self that becomes the focus of moral work and self-transformation. Moving beyond mere conformity to external authority, the ethical substance signifies the internalisation of discipline as an ethical practice — a turning inward through which individuals shape their conduct in accordance with moral ideals.

3.3.1.2 Mode of subjection

The second dimension in Foucault's framework of ethical subjectivation is the mode of subjection, which refers to the way in which individuals recognise their moral obligations and the sources of authority that justify their ethical conduct. In other words, it concerns *how* people come to see themselves as bound by certain moral codes, whether through divine command, rational understanding, social expectation, or personal conviction. According to Foucault (1985), the mode of subjection defines the relationship between the individual and the moral code: it explains *why* individuals choose to obey particular norms and *how* they justify their commitment to them. This dimension reveals that ethics is not only about behaviour or self-transformation but also about the *framework of authority* that renders moral action meaningful.

Foucault's analysis of modes of subjection illustrates that moral conduct is historically contingent, shaped by different regimes of truth and authority. Each society or institution defines not only *what* counts as virtuous behaviour

but also *why* such behaviour should be pursued. In modern secular contexts, the mode of subjection often takes the form of adherence to social norms, laws, or professional ethics, where legitimacy arises from rationality or collective consensus. In religious institutions, however, moral obligation is rooted in faith and divine command. Foucault's point is that the justification of morality is not fixed; it evolves with the epistemological and cultural frameworks that shape human self-understanding. As Taylor (2011) argues, the mode of subjection determines the moral "grammar" of a society — the underlying logic that gives ethical practices their authority and emotional force.

When applied to educational settings, Foucault's notion of the mode of subjection provides valuable insight into how students internalise the authority of institutional norms. Schools operate within specific moral frameworks that justify discipline as both necessary and beneficial. For instance, the authority of teachers, school rules, and academic standards is legitimised by broader social values such as order, achievement, and citizenship. Devine (2013) and Gore (1998) observe that students learn not merely to follow rules but to perceive those rules as meaningful expressions of collective good. This process transforms external authority into internal motivation: learners come to see discipline not as coercion but as the condition for self-improvement and social belonging. In this way, the mode of subjection in education operates through both visible and invisible mechanisms, formal regulations and tacit moral expectations that guide students' understanding of responsibility and respect.

In Islamic Boarding Schools, the mode of subjection is deeply embedded in religious and moral frameworks derived from Islamic theology and traditional pedagogy. The students' moral obligations are not justified primarily by institutional authority or social consensus but by spiritual devotion to Allah and respect for the *kyai* as a moral and religious guide. The *kyai* embodies a dual role: as a teacher who imparts knowledge and as a moral exemplar whose character represents the living interpretation of divine guidance (Dhofier, 1999; Lukens-Bull, 2010). In this context, the mode of subjection operates through devotion and obedience to the teacher and adherence to routine are framed as

forms of worship. The students' compliance is not merely a response to institutional discipline but an expression of faith, aligning their actions with spiritual principles.

This religious mode of subjection demonstrates how disciplinary practices can acquire moral and transcendent meanings. Foucault (1985) argues that individuals are always shaped by the ways in which they relate to moral codes; in *pesantren* context, these codes are anchored in the Qur'an, Hadith, and long-standing pedagogical traditions. The process of moral internalisation is therefore both theological and pedagogical. Students learn to connect obedience with piety, routine with devotion, and self-regulation with spiritual purification. As Hardaker and Sabki (2018) note, *pesantren* discipline does not merely enforce behavioural conformity but cultivates a moral consciousness that integrates faith and practice. Through daily rituals like prayer, study, communal chores, and reflection, students embody ethical principles as living practices, transforming institutional rules into moral commitments.

3.3.1.3 *Ethical work (Practices of the self)*

The third dimension in Foucault's framework of ethical subjectivation is the *practice of the self*, often referred to as *self-practice* or *technologies of the self*. This dimension focuses on the concrete actions and reflective techniques through which individuals transform their ethical substance and live according to their chosen mode of subjection. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume II* (1985) and *Technologies of the Self* (1988), Foucault defines these practices as the deliberate exercises — both mental and physical — that individuals use to shape their conduct, refine their desires, and develop self-mastery. Such practices may include self-examination, meditation, confession, prayer, writing, or disciplined routine. They represent the methods by which the self becomes both the subject and object of ethical work: one acts upon oneself in order to become a particular kind of person.

As McNay (1992) and Oksala (2005) note, Foucault's analysis of self-practice signals a shift from his earlier focus on domination to a more nuanced

understanding of power as enabling ethical agency. The individual is not merely formed by social structures but actively participates in their own moral constitution. This process involves both *self-observation* and *self-correction*, the practice that produces self-awareness and accountability. Tamboukou (2012) emphasises that these practices are not merely introspective but socially situated, embedded in institutional and cultural contexts that give them meaning. In schools and other educational institutions, self-practices are encouraged through reflection, evaluation, and personal discipline, which help students to internalise institutional norms while developing autonomy and self-regulation. Thus, Foucault's idea of the practice of the self can be understood as the bridge between external discipline and internal moral consciousness.

In the context of education, the concept of self-practice is particularly relevant for understanding how learners develop autonomy within structured systems of regulation. Ball (2013) argues that educational institutions promote self-practice through assessment, reflection journals, and performance review, which encourage students to monitor their progress and adjust their behaviour in line with institutional expectations. While these practices are disciplinary in origin, they also empower students to become self-aware and goal-oriented. Gore (1998) similarly observes that pedagogical processes often seek to cultivate *self-governing learners* — individuals who can regulate their emotions, time, and study habits. This transformation marks the internalisation of power, where learners reproduce institutional discipline as part of their self-conception. In this sense, education exemplifies what Foucault calls *governmentality*: the subtle art of governing individuals through their own freedom and sense of responsibility.

3.3.1.4 *Telos (Moral goal)*

The final dimension of Foucault's framework of ethical subjectivation is *telos*, defined as the moral goal or ultimate purpose toward which self-formation is directed. It refers to the "mode of being" an individual seeks to attain through ethical practice (Foucault, 1985), expressing not just how one acts morally but

why. For Foucault, telos is historically and culturally contingent: in Greek ethics, it meant *sophrosyne* (self-mastery), while in Christian morality it was salvation and purification of the soul. As McNay (1992) and Oksala (2005) observe, this dimension reintroduces the possibility of freedom and creativity within Foucault's account of power, the capacity to consciously shape one's moral identity.

In education, telos represents the broader moral purpose that gives meaning to discipline and learning. Schools and religious institutions implicitly define what it means to be a "good subject", disciplined, responsible, and morally upright (Ball, 2013; Gore, 1998). These ideals orient students' self-discipline toward moral and social goals, transforming obedience into ethical aspiration.

Similarly, within the context of Islamic boarding schools, telos assumes a distinctly spiritual form. The ultimate aim of education is to cultivate *insan kamil*, the complete human being who unites knowledge (*'ilm*) with moral excellence (*akhlaq*). Discipline and religious practice serve this moral end, guiding students toward sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadhu'*), and devotion (*taqwa*). As Dhofier (1999) and Lukens-Bull (2010) explain, learning in *pesantren* is a continuous process of self-purification and nearness to God, where teachers and kyai act as moral exemplars. Through repetition, prayer, and obedience, students internalise these virtues until discipline becomes embodied morality (Nurkholifah, 2018), a lived expression of faith and ethical awareness.

This telos extends beyond individual piety to collective responsibility. The ideal *santri* is not only devout but also socially engaged, contributing to the welfare of others with compassion and justice (Lukens-Bull, 2010). Here, Foucault's notion of ethical freedom resonates strongly: true autonomy arises not from rejecting discipline but from transforming it into conscious moral purpose. The *pesantren* thus embodies an ethical system in which education serves both spiritual refinement and social harmony, the integration of faith, knowledge, and virtue as the ultimate moral goal.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored Michel Foucault's concept of discipline and its relevance to understanding how power operates within Islamic boarding schools. Foucault redefines power as something that functions not only through authority or coercion, but through everyday interactions, social norms, and institutional routines. His classification of power, sovereign, disciplinary, and biopower, shows the historical movement from overt domination to more subtle and pervasive forms of control. In modern contexts, disciplinary power becomes the most effective mechanism of regulation, as individuals internalise authority and begin to monitor their own behaviour in accordance with institutional expectations.

Within the *pesantren* environment, disciplinary power is clearly visible through structured routines, hierarchical relations, and continuous surveillance. The system reflects Foucault's notion of "disciplinary spaces"—enclosed, ordered, and constantly observed. Mechanisms such as *Mudabbir* (student supervisors) and *Jasus* (peer spies) demonstrate how power circulates within the student body itself, ensuring discipline through peer monitoring and self-regulation. The arrangement of dormitories, the mosque, and the *Kyai's* residence creates what Foucault might describe as a "panoptic landscape," where authority is ever-present, both physically and symbolically. Written rules, wall notices, and moral messages further reinforce discipline by embedding power into the spatial and linguistic environment of the school.

The practice of examination also serves as a key disciplinary mechanism. Beyond testing knowledge, it functions to classify, rank, and normalise students, turning assessment into a ritual of both power and truth. Through these mechanisms, *pesantren* discipline students' bodies and minds, shaping them into self-aware and compliant subjects. Yet, such constant regulation also raises ethical questions about whether discipline in this context truly encourages self-awareness or merely enforces conformity.

Ultimately, the goal of discipline in *pesantren* education is not only control but transformation. Over time, external enforcement is expected to evolve into self-discipline, where students internalise values and act out of genuine moral awareness. Drawing on both Foucault's later idea of the care of the self and Islamic concepts such as *mujahadah al-nafs* (striving against the self) and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification), the chapter highlighted how discipline becomes a means of moral and spiritual refinement. Through prayer, reflection, and routine, students gradually convert institutional norms into personal conviction.

Foucault's fourfold model of subjectivation (*ethical substance, mode of subjection, practices of the self, and telos*) helps explain this transformation. The *nafs* (*soul*) becomes the ethical focus of discipline; obedience to God and the Kyai establishes the moral framework; daily routines form the practices of the self; and the ultimate goal (*telos*) is *insan kamil*, the complete and virtuous human being.

In conclusion, Foucault's framework provides a powerful lens for analysing the subtle operations of power within *pesantren* life. It reveals that discipline is both restrictive and productive that maintaining order while shaping ethical consciousness. The *pesantren* experience shows the coexistence of sovereign and disciplinary power, blending coercion with moral cultivation. Ultimately, both Foucauldian and Islamic perspectives share a common aim: to guide individuals towards self-mastery, moral integrity, and the ability to govern themselves ethically from within.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive description of the methodology employed in this study. The main objective of the research was to investigate students' experiences in EFL learning within a language programme implemented in an Islamic boarding school in Aceh, Indonesia. The investigation included an overview of how EFL teaching and learning were carried out, the methods and strategies adopted, as well as the disciplinary mechanisms enforced to achieve the language learning outcomes expected by the institution. In addition, the study aimed to examine how these practices and students' experiences shaped their perceptions of the language learning process in that particular context. To guide this investigation, the study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of EFL learning practices in *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS)?
2. How does disciplinary enforcement shape the practice of EFL learning among students at *As-Tsani* IBS?

Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the selected research methodology, clarify the underlying philosophical paradigm, and outline the data collection methods along with the tools used for data analysis. The chapter begins with a discussion of the preliminary study, which both informed my research experience and helped shape the design of the current study. It then elaborates on the overall research design, including the study context, participant selection, and data collection procedures. This is followed by an explanation of the data analysis process, together with considerations of trustworthiness and ethics to ensure the research meets rigorous academic standards. Through this overview, the chapter aims to clearly present the methodological framework and highlight its relevance to the Islamic boarding

school setting.

4.2 Preliminary study

At the end of the first year of my PhD, a preliminary study was conducted as part of a research module within this doctoral programme, called TESOL Research Practice. The initial pilot study may be considered as the foundation that shaped the current research about EFL learning practices and Islamic boarding school. The objective of the preliminary study was two-fold: 1) to develop research skills and help stimulate the development of the present study; and 2) to gain preliminary understanding on the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents on English language programme in Islamic boarding schools. The study described and analysed participants' perceptions on the implementation of the English language programme at one of the Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. It included their views about the status (significance) of English in the boarding school, advantages and disadvantages, their perceptions of English learning activities and their expectations for further improvement of Islamic boarding schools in the future.

The data was collected from the *Wahid Islamic boarding school* (pseudonym), one of modern Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. Using closed-ended questionnaires, one hundred participants from both male and female students at the boarding school took part in quantitative data collection. For qualitative data collection, five students (2 males and 3 females) two teachers, and two parents participated in telephone interview sessions. Data analysis was carried out using the six-phase thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) (See table 4.5 for details). Following the analysis, four main themes emerged from the dataset: (1) the status of English in Islamic boarding schools, (2) the advantages of the language programme for the institution, (3) the need for further improvement, and (4) students' personal learning experiences. The findings indicated that most participants held positive views on the language programme at Wahid IBS. In general, participants regarded the programme as highly significant for both students and the institution, highlighting

its role in shaping students' academic growth, supporting institutional development, and enhancing the relevance of Islamic boarding schools in a modern educational context.

The majority of student participants agreed that the language programme was one of the main reasons they chose to study at the researched boarding school. Most of the participants believed that English plays an important role in their personal development and future opportunities, especially in gaining access to the global market and pursuing higher education. In addition, participants also viewed the use of English as beneficial for the institution, positioning the boarding school as more competitive and attractive to prospective students and parents. The integration of English was often described as a marker of modernisation within Islamic education, reflecting a shift from purely traditional religious instruction to a more balanced curriculum that combines religious and modern knowledge.

While students generally valued the programme, they also pointed out areas that required further improvement. Some believed that the rules were applied inconsistently, which reduced their motivation, while others suggested more varied and interactive teaching methods beyond grammar-focused lessons. They also highlighted the need for better resources, such as English books, learning media, and opportunities to interact with native speakers. At the same time, students' personal experiences revealed both strengths and challenges: many students gained confidence and pride in using English, but some struggled with limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and the pressure of strict rules. These reflections suggest that although the programme was largely successful, its impact differed according to students' backgrounds, motivations, and learning styles and further development is still needed to meet their diverse needs.

The pilot study had several limitations, especially in terms of data collection procedures and sample size. Since the main goal was to explore the genuine perspectives of participants who involved in the English programmes, the more appropriate way to gather data would have been through direct

fieldwork using participant observation and in-depth interviews. Pilarska (2018) notes that participant observation is particularly effective for capturing insider perspectives, as it allows researchers to see life from within (p. 123). However, unfortunately, these approaches could not be applied due to the restrictions caused by the COVID19 pandemic during the data collection period. The small sample size was another limitation, as including more participants would have provided richer and more varied perspectives. These shortcomings were taken into account and addressed in the design of the current research project.

The preliminary study was very important in shaping the design of the current research. It provided useful guidance on several practical aspects, such as how to recruit participants by identifying suitable student groups and ensuring their willingness to join the study. It also clarified how to obtain consent, including explaining the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. In addition, it highlighted important ethical considerations, such as protecting participants' confidentiality and ensuring that the research would not interfere with their daily routines. These lessons directly informed the methodology of the current research, ensuring that the procedures for data collection and analysis were both rigorous and appropriate for the boarding school context.

In addition, during the data collection period, the study highlighted the crucial role of a gatekeeper who acted as a liaison between me, as the researcher, and the participants. This role was particularly important in facilitating communication, arranging interview schedules, and ensuring participants felt comfortable engaging with the study. The experience also underlined the importance of building trust and maintaining strong relationships with participants, which was especially significant given that the interviews were conducted remotely by phone. Despite this limitation, the preliminary study offered valuable "hands-on" experience in conducting interviews, helping me to practice effective questioning, active listening, and maintaining participant engagement in a non-face-to-face setting. In summary, the preliminary study served as a meaningful "learning-by-doing" process that not only improved my

research skills but also directly informed and refined the design of this main study. The table below outlines the specific ways in which the preliminary study contributed to the present research.

Table 4.1 Summary of key points adapted from preliminary study

Description	Participant recruitment	Data collection	Ethical consideration	Building Relationship
Preliminary study	Participants were recruited through assistant and less students wanted to participate	Interviews were through telephone; thus, body language could not be observed.	Anonymity was an issue within the immediate school environment as the interview took place near to teachers' room	It was difficult to organise the research through phone via an assistant
Main study	Meeting directly with students, building rapport with them and many students wanted to take part.	Talking directly face to face with participants, where their voices and feelings were expressed freely. Their body language could be observed	I could manage and set up the place where it was far from observation of others, but still in public areas (interviews were not conducted in unusual places, like private room, etc)	Self-direct involvement as researcher allowed the organisation of the study easier, communication with school administrator easy and certain.

4.3 Design of the study

The main goal of this study is to examine EFL learners' experiences with the English language programme at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School. First, it explores the nature of language learning practices, focusing on how students' views and beliefs influence their engagement with English. This aspect relates to behaviorist ideas, as it considers how repeated practice, reinforcement, and external stimuli shape learning strategies and outcomes. Second, the study investigates how disciplinary methods, a defining feature of Islamic boarding schools, are adapted to English education. This connects to Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, where rules, routines, and surveillance regulate learning and produce disciplined learners. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how English learning is both practiced and governed in the boarding school context.

Guided by the research objectives, this study is framed within an interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to understand participants' subjective experiences, including their perceptions, beliefs, and cultural contexts (Farrow et al., 2020). Ontologically, it adopts a relativist stance, assuming that reality is not singular but can be understood through multiple interpretations shaped by particular circumstances and contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Epistemologically, the study is informed by a constructivist perspective, which recognises that individuals construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world through lived experiences and reflection (Honebein, 1996). Methodologically, it employs a qualitative ethnographic approach, enabling the researcher to examine the "local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and consider how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures" (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 13). Together, these orientations provide the philosophical and methodological foundation for the research design, ensuring that the study captures the complexity of students' experiences within the Islamic boarding school setting.

4.3.1 Philosophical framework

Research Paradigm

This study is situated within the Interpretivist paradigm, which prioritises understanding individuals' subjective experiences, including their perceptions, beliefs, and cultural contexts (Farrow et al., 2020). Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and therefore best understood through the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Importantly, these meanings cannot be detached from context; as Reeves and Hedberg (2003) argue, the interpretivist paradigm requires analysis within the settings where experiences occur. In this study, the knowledge, values, and perceptions of students in Islamic boarding school are understood not as objective measures, but as products of relational and experiential processes shaped by both internal and external factors within their lived environment.

Moreover, Researchers with an interpretivist stance view reality as multiple and subjective, shaped by different contexts, situations, and personal perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Instead of assuming one fixed truth, relativism recognises that a phenomenon can have different interpretations, each valid within its own context, which helps researchers explore complex social realities and better understand how people create meaning (Creswell, 2007). Building on this, the present study adopts a constructivist epistemology, where knowledge is seen not as a fixed truth to be discovered but as something formed through experiences, interactions, and interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This reflects Lincoln and Guba's (2005, p. 237) "antifoundational" view, which rejects universal rules for defining truth and instead understands knowledge as flexible, context-dependent, and co-created between researchers and participants. Within Islamic boarding schools, this perspective makes it possible to study how students build their understanding of language learning through daily routines, relationships, and their wider social environment.

To this extent, this study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and a constructivist epistemology which view reality and knowledge as socially constructed, context-dependent, and influenced by multiple perspectives. Within

this stance, students' experiences in Islamic boarding schools are not regarded as objective facts but as meanings developed through their daily practices, relationships, and interactions in their environment. These ontological and epistemological assumptions support the study by recognising that participants' behaviours and experiences can only be understood through their own perspectives. Therefore, reaching conclusions about students' realities requires direct engagement by observing their daily activities, interacting with them, and listening to their voices, while also acknowledging that each participant may bring different life stories based on their beliefs and social backgrounds.

This philosophical orientation underpins the methodological choices of the study, ensuring alignment between its assumptions and the strategies for data collection and analysis. For the analysis, Foucault's conception serves as the main conceptual framework underpinning much of the discussion in this study. His concept of disciplinary power, as outlined in Chapter Three, provides the principal reference for analysing the implementation of discipline at As-Tsani IBS, which will be presented in Chapter Six. The next section outlines the methodological approach used to investigate students' experiences in EFL learning in the *pesantren* context.

4.3.2 Qualitative research approach

This study employed a qualitative approach that is commonly used in ethnographic research to explore behaviours, practices, and experiences within specific communities. Qualitative methods emphasise the use of words as data to uncover deeper meanings behind observed phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This is particularly relevant to Islamic boarding schools (IBS), where students' experiences of English learning cannot be separated from the routines, values, and interactions that characterise *pesantren* life. By focusing on human relationships, institutional practices, and social dynamics (Mohamed, Abdul Majid & Ahmad, 2010), qualitative inquiry enables a closer examination of how language policies and teaching methods shape students' engagement and language development in ways that quantitative measures would overlook.

In this study, a qualitative, ethnographic lens was adopted to capture how English is taught, practiced, and lived in the unique context of *As-Tsani* IBS. Observing teaching and learning in its natural setting allowed the research to analyse how classroom instruction, peer influence, and extracurricular activities collectively influence students' language learning experiences. Such an approach provides detailed insights into how students navigate English learning in an environment that blends modern educational practices with traditional Islamic discipline and values. As Creswell (2018) and Sofaer (1999) suggest, qualitative research offers not only rich descriptions of social phenomena but also deeper understanding of the complexities of human interaction, insights that are crucial for investigating language learning in the *pesantren* context.

4.3.3 Focused ethnography method

In the literature, there is basically no difference noted between focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) and what is called conventional or traditional ethnography. However, the key difference lies in the scope and duration of fieldwork. Traditional ethnography is typically characterised by long-term immersion in the field, during which the researcher often participates directly in the everyday life of the community under study. As Fetterman (2010) explains, ethnographers in this tradition may spend from six months to several years in the research setting, gradually acquiring an in-depth understanding of its cultural, social, and linguistic practices. This prolonged engagement often begins with learning foundational aspects of the community, such as its language, demographic composition, kinship networks, and cultural norms, before progressing to more intensive forms of data collection and analysis. Such extensive fieldwork reflects the ethnographer's commitment to capturing the holistic, lived realities of the community in its natural context.

Focused ethnography emerged as an adaptation of traditional ethnography to accommodate the needs of contemporary researchers who face practical limitations such as time and financial constraints. According to Knoblauch (2005), focused ethnography investigates specific cultural or social

phenomena within a shorter timeframe, making it particularly suitable for research contexts where prolonged immersion is not feasible. While the duration of fieldwork is reduced, this limitation is balanced by the use of technology such as audio recordings, camera and computer-assisted software in both data collection and analysis process. In the context of this study, focused ethnography is particularly appropriate for examining students' EFL learning experiences within the *pesantren*, as it allows for the close observation of classroom practices, daily routines, and social interactions, while remaining manageable within the scope of a doctoral research project.

The present study employed a focused ethnographic approach, primarily due to time and financial constraints that made long-term fieldwork unfeasible. Conducting extended visits to the research site was not possible within the limited timeframe required for project completion and submission. Focused ethnography offered a practical alternative, allowing the researcher to investigate specific aspects of students' EFL learning experiences in the *pesantren* context within a shorter period. In this approach, the use of audio recordings during semi-structured interviews served as an effective strategy to capture rich data while avoiding the lengthy and complex note-taking processes typically associated with traditional ethnography.

One of the key strengths of ethnographic research relates to the interpersonal relationship between the researcher and participants since the first step in a fieldwork is often to build rapport before any formal research activities begin (Copland & Creese, 2015). In this study, I found that such relationships developed strongly between the students and myself, as reflected in the way they communicated openly with me and offered assistance when needed. My background as an alumnus of an Islamic boarding school also gave me confidence to move through the school environment as part of the community, positioning me as an insider who shared a common cultural and educational experience. At the same time, I also positioned myself as an outsider, maintaining the necessary distance to listen carefully to participants' voices and represent their experiences in a balanced and meaningful way.

4.4 Context of the study

4.4.1 Research site: *As-Tsani Islamic Boarding School*

To situate the study within its educational and cultural context, it is necessary to provide background information about the research site. As this research adopts a case study approach, only one institution was selected as the focus of analysis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of its pedagogical practices and learning environment. All details regarding the school's profile are drawn from its official profile book published in 2022. In line with ethical research practices, the institution is referred to by the pseudonym "*As-Tsani*" Islamic Boarding School (*As-Tsani* IBS)." Likewise, the names of administrators and, where relevant, specific locations have been replaced with pseudonyms to safeguard anonymity and ensure confidentiality throughout this study.

As-Tsani IBS is a modern Islamic educational institution adopting the boarding school system. It integrates curricula from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The idea to establish this institution was sparked by the current leader (*Kyai*) after he completed his studies at one of the universities in the Middle East in 1986. His motivation was to dedicate his knowledge to educating young generations to become devout servants of God who contribute positively to society and become valuable members of their community, with the goal to prepare students with good character, a strong understanding of Islamic teachings, and the skills to excel in science and technology, along with proficiency in foreign languages.

As-Tsani IBS was officially founded in 1988 through Notarial Deed No. 50, dated March 23, 1988. In 1989, the first building was constructed, consisting of six classrooms as well as other necessary facilities and infrastructure, with significant support from the local communities. The teaching and learning process officially started in the 1991/1992 academic year, with the admission of 70 male students as the first cohort. Female students were admitted for the first time in the 1995/1996 academic year, with an initial intake of 80 students. The teachers were recruited from diverse educational backgrounds, including graduates from traditional Islamic boarding school (*Dayah*) institutions, modern

Islamic boarding schools in Java (GONTOR), as well as graduates from local universities.

As the boarding school developed, it continued to enhance its educational offerings by expanding from junior high to senior high level education, starting in the 1994/1995 academic year. The first batch of senior high school students was composed of graduates from the junior level students. In response to the growing demands, the school introduced a vocational school in January 2004, with a starting cohort of 11 students and consistently growing year by year. Currently, the total number of students at all levels, both male and female are 1,600, all of whom reside in dormitories in two separated complexes (male and female).

Based on my observation, particularly in the male complex, there are three blocks of two-floored buildings for school classrooms, along with an administration office and teacher rooms arranged in a U-shape layout. This design creates a centralised learning environment, which encourages interaction and collaboration among students and teachers, fostering a sense of community. Between these buildings, there are two football pitches and a volleyball court, which are popular spots where students often gather to play sports and enjoy their leisure time.

The dormitory consists of two blocks of three-storey buildings utilised as accommodation for students. The student dormitory area is also equipped with a mosque, located directly in front of the dormitory building. It is used for both worship and study which may foster a sense of community and spirituality. Beside the mosque, there is food court where students can grab snacks and drinks during their breaks or free time. In addition, there is a communal kitchen area located next to the canteen where students come together for meals. Overall, the complex is designed to support both academic and social development, allowing students to socialise and build close relationship among each other.

4.4.2 The language programme

Nowadays, English has been introduced in many Islamic boarding schools across Indonesia. Many traditional boarding schools have shifted from a conventional curriculum to a modern one, with English playing a key role. This shift in the Islamic education system has broadened perspectives, leading to the acceptance of English as an essential asset within the curriculum (Zarkasyi, 1999). The previous conservative view of English as a Western language potentially threatening Islamic identity and values has evolved, particularly with the success of Islamic boarding schools significantly developed and are able to compete in the global world with the roles of English (Raihani, 2017). Furthermore, Nilan (2009) highlights that *pesantren* graduates with strong English skills are increasingly taking on roles in various sectors of the Indonesian economy, including Islamic finance, international relations, and tourism. This development has reinforced the view of English as a valuable skill for students in Islamic boarding schools, further promoting the integration of language education in these institutions.

At *As-Tsani* IBS, English is taught both as a formal school subject and as an extracurricular activity in the boarding school. As a subject, English is taught in the classroom similarly to how it is taught in other schools and madrasah, with the use of textbooks, a focus on grammar and language structures, and standard evaluation methods. Upon the completion, students are required to pass exams to meet their academic qualifications. On the other hand, the extracurricular English programme focuses on enhancing students' speaking skills. The primary goal of this programme is to improve spoken proficiency. In general, there are two types of English learning activities at *As-Tsani* boarding school: daily and weekly activities. Daily activities, such as the *morning vocabulary* session and *repetition* exercises, require students to participate every day to reinforce their language skills regularly.

The *morning vocabulary* task takes place early in the morning before breakfast. During this session, students are asked to present the five vocabulary words that were assigned the previous night for memorisation. Along with each

word, students must also provide an example sentence. The main purpose of this activity is to help students expand their vocabulary. Additionally, around 2 PM after lunch, students gather again in front of their dorms for a repetition activity. This session is intended to review the vocabulary memorised and presented earlier in the morning. The activity is similar to the morning vocabulary presentation but is conducted in smaller, dispersed groups. Both activities are mandatory, and student attendance is monitored. Therefore, students who miss the activities without prior notice or a valid reason are subject to disciplinary action.

In addition, every Tuesday, there is a weekly routine called *Morning conversation*. During this session, students pair up to prepare and practice an English conversation based on a topic assigned the previous week. Students stand in two lines facing each other, practicing the conversations they have prepared. This activity is supervised by the Language Development Centre (LDC). Another weekly activity is *Public speaking*, held every Thursday evening. The goal of this activity is to equip students with public speaking skills in English, using the vocabulary they have mastered. Students are divided into groups of 20-30 participants based on their grade levels. In each session, 5-8 students present their speeches to their peers, giving them practical experience in delivering speeches in front of an audience.

The final activity, which is a key feature of the foreign language programme, is *Daily communication* or *Communication practices*. In this setting, all students who are required to speak a foreign language (second-year students and above) must no longer use Bahasa Indonesian in their daily communication and interactions, whether with peers or teachers. This is not a scheduled or formal activity with specific procedures, but rather a way to encourage students to actively practice their English skills in their everyday interactions while in the boarding school complex. This practical activity is closely monitored by the LDC staff members who assigned to ensure that students adhere to the language practice. It helps foster an immersive language environment, promoting

consistent use and mastery of foreign languages. Below is the summary of language learning activities at *As-Tsani* IBS.

Table 4.2. Language program activities at *As-Tsani* IBS (Adopted from LDC curriculum)

Activity	Type (Daily/ Weekly)	Time & Setting	Format & Procedures	Main Objectives	Monitoring/ Discipline
Morning Vocabulary	Daily	Early morning, before breakfast	Students present 5 assigned words with example sentences	Expand vocabulary knowledge and usage	Attendance mandatory; absence may lead to sanctions
Repetition Exercise	Daily	Afternoon, around 2 PM, after lunch	Group-based review of previously memorised vocabulary	Reinforce memory and strengthen recall	Supervised by seniors (<i>Mudabbir</i>); attendance noted
Morning Conversation	Weekly (Tuesday)	Morning session	Paired practice of prepared dialogues on assigned topics	Improve conversational fluency and confidence	Supervised by Language Development Centre (LDC)
Public Speaking	Weekly (Thursday evening)	Evening, divided into grade-based groups	5–8 students deliver speeches in front of peers	Develop public speaking and presentation skills	Group-based supervision; peer evaluation included
Daily Communication	Continuous (unscheduled)	Everyday interactions in dorms & school grounds	Students (from 2nd year onward) required to speak English/Arabic instead of Indonesian	Create immersive language environment; encourage habit	Enforced by LDC staff and <i>Mudabbir</i> monitoring

4.4.3 *Mahkamah Lughah (Language court)*

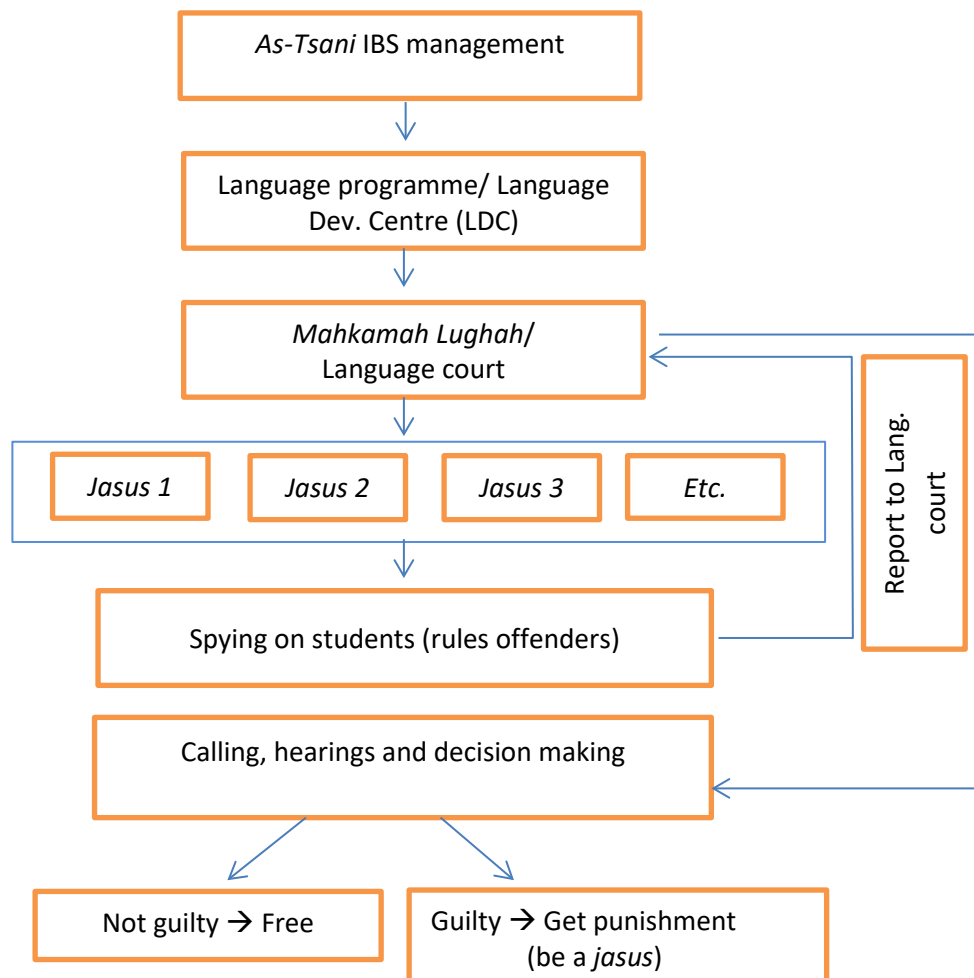
Mahkamah Lughah, or the *Language Court*, is an informal body within modern Islamic boarding schools that functions as a disciplinary mechanism to enforce language regulations in the *pesantren* environment (Rizqi, 2019; Harahap & Nasution, 2025). This institution is typically established by the Language Development Centre (LDC), which is responsible for supervising the implementation of language policies, particularly the use of English and Arabic in daily communication. The *Mahkamah Lughah* serves as an internal court that handles breaches of language rules, such as failure to attend language activities or the use of Bahasa Indonesia and local languages within the *pesantren* area. Its existence represents a form of social control that fosters discipline and instils a sense of responsibility towards collective regulations.

Structurally, the *Mahkamah Lughah* operates under the supervision of the LDC or the main disciplinary council, which governs all aspects of student conduct. Beneath it are language monitors, including *mudabbir* and *jasus* (student informants), who are responsible for observing students' language behaviour across different areas of the boarding school. Reports of language rule violations are submitted to the *Mahkamah* by these supervisors or *jasus*. This hierarchical and organised system ensures that surveillance is conducted at multiple levels in order to maintain consistent compliance with the institution's language policies.

In practice, the *Mahkamah Lughah* conducts a symbolic form of "trial." Students reported for language violations are summoned before the language council in a semi-formal but authoritative session. The process involves reading out the charges, allowing students to provide explanations or defences, and determining appropriate sanctions. Punishments, often referred to as "language punishments," may include speaking in English or Arabic in front of others or writing essays in the target language. The purpose of these proceedings is not merely punitive but educational, to encourage students to develop consistency, awareness, and a sense of responsibility in using foreign languages.

At *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School, the language court proceedings are conducted informally and usually take place in the mosque after the evening (*Isha*) prayer. Students whose names are called must remain in the mosque, while others may leave. The session begins with the reading of the alleged language violations, followed by an opportunity for each student to clarify or justify their actions. If found not guilty, students are released from the charge; however, if proven guilty, they receive an appropriate punishment according to institutional regulations. In certain cases, students reported by a *jasus* may themselves be assigned to serve temporarily as *jasus*, tasked with monitoring and reporting other violators as a condition for being released from that status (Fieldnotes, 2023).

Image 4.1. Diagram of *Mahkamah Lughah* and its operational procedures



4.5 Participants

Given the qualitative nature of this study, purposive sampling was employed as the most appropriate method for selecting participants, as it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who can provide the most relevant and informative insights into the research focus (Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Following an initial meeting with the Head of the Language Programme, ust. Sunain, and after obtaining his approval to conduct the research, I was introduced to other language teachers responsible for organising and overseeing English language learning activities at the boarding school.

For the purposes of this study, participants were categorised into two groups. The first group consisted of general participants, representing the broader student community living and interacting within *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School. While not all students and teachers were directly involved as focal participants, the wider boarding community was observed at various points, particularly in relation to their behaviours, communication practices, and patterns of interaction. To facilitate analysis later, these observations were organised into several groups, which are referred to as Observation Group (OG). The second group comprised the key participants, who were not only observed but also engaged as informants through interviews, providing more detailed insights into their experiences. A fuller description of these participants and their roles in the study is presented in the following section.

4.5.1 Student participants

As the participants were selected through purposive sampling, pre-defined criteria were determined to ensure that they could provide the type of information needed for this study. The main criteria included being higher class students in their third year or higher, aged between 15 and 19 years, and having lived in the boarding school for at least three years. The emphasis on length of stay rather than grade level was intended to ensure that the participants had sufficient exposure to the school's routines, discipline, and language

programmes. With this background, they were considered “appropriate participants” (Creswell, 2018, p. 185) capable of providing detailed accounts of their experiences and the transformations they had undergone during their time at *As-Tsani* IBS.

A total of ten male students were recruited as key participants and took part in formal interview sessions. Their profiles, including pseudonyms, age, length of stay in the *pesantren*, and relevant background information, are summarised in Table 4.3. The sample included three students (Guna, Abid, and Mufti) who had lived in the boarding school for six years, beginning their studies at the *pesantren* from the first year of junior high school (MTs). Four students (Fayed, Fajri, Zaid, and Ricky) had been enrolled for four to five years, positioning them in the early stages of senior high school (MA). Two others (Safri and Farid) had spent three years in the school, entering the *pesantren* at the senior high level, and one participant (Juan) had lived in the school for five years. By selecting students with different lengths of stay, this study could present a wide range of experiences and perspectives on the English language learning process, offering insights from those at different stages in their educational journeys.

Table. 4.3 Student key participants

No	Pseudonyms	Age	Year	Remarks
1	Juan	16	5	
2	Fayed	15	4	
3	Fajri	15	4	
4	Zaid	15	4	
5	Guna	17	6	
6	Abid	17	6	
7	Mufti	17	6	
8	Safri	18	3	Started at Senior high level
9	Farid	17	3	Started at Senior high level
10	Ricky	16	5	

All participants selected were male students. Female students were not included due to practical considerations, as male researchers were not permitted to observe or access the daily routines within the female dormitory area. This restriction was confirmed during a field visit, where it became clear that access could only be granted if a female research assistant were involved. For this reason, and to ensure the feasibility of data collection, only male students were recruited. Furthermore, Students in their first year or newly enrolled at the school were also excluded. These individuals were considered to have limited experience within the language program and were still in a transitional phase, adjusting to both the social and academic demands of the *pesantren*. Their accounts might not have provided sufficient depth or clarity in describing the language learning process. Therefore, they were not considered suitable as key participants. A detailed discussion of the data gathered from selected participants is presented in analysis chapters (Chapter Five and Six), where their experiences and perspectives are analysed in relation to the research objectives.

4.5.2 The teachers

In the tradition of Islamic boarding schools, teachers are respectfully addressed as Ustaz (abbreviated as Ust.), a term derived from Arabic meaning educator, teacher, or instructor (Lukens-Bull, 2001). Within the *pesantren* context, this title is consistently placed before the teacher's name as a marker of respect and recognition. In this study, three teachers participated as respondents. One currently serves as the Head of the Language Development Centre (LDC), while the other two are English teachers. All three are alumni of *As-Tsani* IBS, though they graduated in different cohorts. Having returned to their alma mater, they now contribute to teaching, managing, and further developing English language education in the school. The teachers' backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and visions play a central role in shaping their responsibilities within the boarding school, as these factors directly influence the design and implementation of the language programme. To

illustrate this, their professional and personal journeys will be presented in the form of vignettes, which offer a brief but meaningful account of how they became teachers and dedicated themselves to nurturing the next generation of students.

Vignettes are a valuable methodological tool for making the research process visible and reflecting on how knowledge is generated (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Although concise, vignettes can capture individuals or situations in ways that situate them within the broader ethnographic context. While Creese and Blackledge pioneered the use of vignettes in linguistic ethnography primarily to represent researchers, they argue that vignettes are not merely descriptive but also constitute “a source of data” (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 69), comparable to other forms of data that can be analysed. In this study, I adapt the vignette approach not to represent myself as the researcher, but rather to portray the teacher participants, thereby highlighting their experiences, roles, and contributions within the *pesantren*. The following section presents three vignettes, each capturing the distinctive trajectories of the participating teachers and their contributions to English language education at *As-Tsani* IBS.

1. *Ustaz Sunain*

Ust. Sunain is the second alumnus of the *As-Tsani* Islamic boarding school after spending six years of study at the school. Upon his graduation in 1997, he spent eight years away from the school. Then, he returned, this time as a teacher. He explained that his return was largely because of a friend who was already working there as a teacher and invited him to join. Once he came back, he started teaching Arabic and was also given the responsibility of managing the Arabic language programme at the school. After about a year of teaching, ust. Sunain was promoted to head of the language programme. He held this position for five years, taking care of the school’s language education and ensuring everything ran smoothly. However, after those five years, he left the school

again, this time to continue his education. He went to Sudan to pursue a master degree.

When ust. Sunain finished his master study he returned to the school once more and dedicated two more years of service as a teacher and leader. After those two years, he decided to continue his education even further by pursuing a doctoral study in Middle east. He spent three years away working on his doctorate. Now, after being gone for those three years, he has returned to the school once again, this time to again take on the role of head of the foreign language programme at the school. His journey has been one of continuous learning and service, always coming back to the school that played such an important role in his life.

My first impression upon meeting him was that he came across as someone very open-minded, progressive, and forward-thinking when it comes to education. His background as a Ph.D. student currently working on his dissertation made our discussion feel even more connected and engaging. On top of that, his research area aligns closely with mine, as we are both exploring the role of language environments in the development of language programmes in the context of Islamic boarding schools. The main difference is that his focus is specifically on Arabic.

From several conversations I had with him, both informal chats and formal interviews, it became clear that he has a strong and positive vision for how language learning should develop. One of the things that stood out the most was how he acknowledged a major issue in the current learning process: there is an imbalance between rewards and punishments. In his view, punishment tends to be more common and more noticeable in day-to-day practice. For example, it is easy to find students being punished for breaking language rules, but much harder to find those who are rewarded or appreciated for their achievements in language learning. He believes this is something that needs to be fixed in the future.

Even though he has good ideas for improving the language programme in the future, he still believes that the learning process should start with some level

of enforcement. He explained that this is necessary to create habits. According to him, when students become used to communicating in a foreign language daily, it will eventually become easier for them to master it. In fact, over time, they may even come to enjoy the process. He mentioned that this approach was actually taught to him by his own teachers when he was a student at the same school about a decade ago.

From this, it is easy to see how his past experiences as a student have shaped his ideas and methods for teaching today. His belief that language learning requires some degree of enforcement comes directly from the way he was taught, and now, as a teacher, he applies the same principles in his classroom. However, he also recognizes the need for more balance, particularly in ensuring that students are not only corrected through punishment but also motivated through rewards and positive reinforcement. This balance, he believes, is key to creating a better language learning environment moving forward.

2. *Ustaz. Masda*

Ustaz Masda is an alumnus of the *pesantren*. He studied at this Islamic boarding school from 1995-2001, completing his education from first-year of junior school level through the third year of high school level, in which he spent three years in each level. During our conversations, he recalled many memories from his time as a student, even though he noted that the environment and teaching methods have changed significantly since then. He described how, when he was a student, the *pesantren* was very disciplined, especially in its language programmes, with strict enforcement of rules around foreign language use.

After graduating from the *pesantren* in 2001, ust. Masda continued his undergraduate studies majoring in English. Over the course of four years, he developed his skills in English and eventually returned to the boarding school as a certified English teacher. He started teaching English at the middle school

level in the very institution where he had once been a student, contributing to the language programme development.

After five years of teaching, in 2015, Ustaz Masda was appointed as the head of the school language programme. He took over this role from ust. Sunain, who had left the country to pursue a Ph.D. abroad. As the new head of the language programme, ust. Masda was determined to bring back the strict and effective language-learning methods that were used when he was a student. According to him, these methods were highly disciplined and focused on pushing students to speak foreign languages, primarily English and Arabic, on a regular basis. He believes that this was a key part of the school's success in building strong language skills among its students during his time there.

Unlike ust. Sunain, who took a more flexible and student-centred approach, ust. Masda's leadership style was stricter and more focused on discipline. He believes that students learn better when they are held to high standards and pushed to use foreign languages as much as possible in their daily interactions. His goal as head of the language programme was to recreate the environment of strict language immersion that he experienced during his own schooling, which he saw as essential for language mastery.

However, an important event occurred during his leading period that shifted the direction of the language programme. The incident involved a language supervisor who physically punished a student for breaking the rules on foreign language use. This punishment escalated into a legal process, drawing attention to the use of physical discipline in enforcing language rules. As a result of this incident, the management of *As-Tsani IBS* decided to adopt a much more flexible approach to language enforcement, particularly in the dormitories. Physical punishment for language violations was banned, and the rules surrounding language use became more adjustable.

According to ust. Masda, this change in discipline had a noticeable effect on the students' language learning progress. He observed that students were less motivated to practice foreign languages in their daily interactions without the strict enforcement that had previously been in place. Many students stopped

pushing themselves to use English or Arabic regularly, and as a result, the overall progress of the language programme declined. Ust. Masda felt that the more lenient approach to enforcing language rules due to the legal issues, ultimately weakened the language immersion environment like what he experienced previously when he was a student.

In reflecting on his time as the head of the language programme, ust. Masda expressed a concern. On the one hand, he understood why the shift in discipline was necessary, but on the other, he felt that it had undermined the effectiveness of the language programme. Despite these challenges, ust. Masda remained committed to finding ways to motivate students to improve their language skills and adapt to the changing environment in the boarding school. He continues to be a dedicated educator, seeking to balance discipline with encouragement as he helps guide students in their language learning journeys.

3. *Ustaz Nusa*

Ust. Nusa is an alumnus of the *As-Tsani* Islamic boarding school from the 4th cohort, starting his education journey in the boarding school in 1994. Reflecting on his time at the school, from 1994 to 1999, he recalled that it was a period marked by the school's "golden era," particularly in terms of its foreign language programmes. He highlighted that many of his classmates went on to pursue further studies abroad, especially in the Middle East because of their strong command of Arabic. Unlike his friends who were great at Arabic, ust. Nusa preferred English. He became fluent and picked up an American accent. In an interview, one of the students mentioned that he was inspired by ust. Nusa, saying they really admire his fluency and the American accent. The student also shared that the teacher's influence made them want to learn English further.

Ust. Nusa is very enthusiastic about teaching English at the boarding school. I observed him engaging with students in informal English conversations, creating opportunities for them to practice the language outside of structured lessons. During the early phase of my fieldwork, ust. Nusa often introduced me to students he considered more proficient in English. He used

these interactions both to motivate the students by acknowledging their language skills in front of an outside observer, and to showcase the progress they had made under his instruction, highlighting the success of his teaching approach.

Despite his passion, however, ust. Nusa faces time constraints due to his responsibility to manage his family's business. As a result, he has limited time to engage with the school's English language programme beyond standard classroom hours or outside the regular academic timeframe. Consequently, he teaches English only during school hours. He confirmed this situation when I asked him why he was not taking part in language programmes (extracurricular) activities. He explained that much of his time was scheduled for family business. Also, ust. Nusa mentioned about feeling upset due to the lack of financial support from the school for students to join English competitions like debates and speech contests, which caused students to lose motivation. Because of this, he is now very careful about raising students' expectation, worried that they might lose interest in learning if they cannot participate in competitions due to financial limitations.

Despite these challenges, ust. Nusa remains committed to teaching English and continues to inspire his students. Although his ability to engage in activities outside the classroom is limited by his business responsibilities, his dedication to students' language development remains consistent. His story reflects the balance between personal obligations and professional dedication, illustrating the difficulties faced by educators who strive to uphold teaching quality. This situation highlights the complex realities of working within educational environments where resources and institutional support are limited, yet the drive to foster student success remains strong.

4.6 Data collection

In this study, there are two primary instruments used in data collection: observation and semi-structured interviews, to gather the necessary information from the study participants. Additionally, archival analysis was conducted to

obtain information related to the institution's profile, offered programmes, and general regulations at *As-Tsani IBS*. Below, I will provide a detailed explanation of the two main techniques I used as instruments for data collection in this research. I will begin with an overview of how I gained access to the site and a description of the consent process.

4.6.1 *Gaining entrée and consenting*

One of the challenges for ethnographic researchers is gaining access to the research site and getting permission from the appropriate decision-makers (Bailey, 2018). Moreover, as a graduate of an Islamic boarding school, I understand of particular difficulties involved in entering such institutions for research purposes. Islamic boarding schools are generally closed institutions for several reasons, such as private ownership, the centralised authority of the *Kyai* in making decisions, and the intensive study schedules of the students. Nevertheless, access can be facilitated by identifying an appropriate entry point through a recognised *gatekeeper*, i.e. someone trusted by the *Kyai* who can authorise or support the researcher's presence.

In seeking initial access to *As-Tsani IBS*, I first contacted a colleague who had previously taught at the school. This contact provided me with the details of Ust. Sunain, the Head of the Language Development Centre (LDC) and a trusted figure within the institution. Following our communication, Ust. Sunain confirmed that formal approval from the *Kyai* was not required, as he held the authority to grant research access on behalf of the institution. At the same time, he emphasised that any research undertaken within the *pesantren* must align with the school's guiding principles and contribute positively to the development of education, particularly within the context of *As-Tsani IBS*.

In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) emphasise that gaining access to a research site should not be seen as a single event, but as an on-going process that may need to be renegotiated with different individuals at various stages at different time and context throughout the study. In this case, Ust. Sunain anticipated such challenges and took the initiative to connect me

with ust. Nusa, an English teacher, who then supported me in navigating the site and carrying out my research.

On my first day in the field, I met Ust. Nusa and was given the opportunity to introduce myself in his English class. This allowed me to formally present my research, explain its purpose, and outline the process of participation to the students, who were potential participants. Ust. Nusa was highly supportive and played an important role in facilitating the research by offering guidance and helping me build connections with the students. He also invited me to take over several of his English classes in the following sessions, which gave me further access to the classroom setting for participant observation. Acting as a substitute teacher, and at times as an assistant, enabled me to observe students' behaviours and interactions in a natural context. This experience was valuable both for understanding the educational dynamics of the classroom and for building rapport with the participants.

4.6.2 Language of data collection

Language plays a crucial role in qualitative research, as it is the primary tool through which researchers explore how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, and constructed (Mason, 2002). In cross-language research settings, the choice of language for data collection is particularly important, as it can affect the quality of the data gathered and the depth of mutual understanding between researcher and participants. Using participants' mother tongue, or involving an interpreter when necessary, helps facilitate communication and overcome potential language barriers (Squires, 2009).

In this study, however, language did not present a barrier, as both the researcher and participants shared Bahasa Indonesia. All written documents for participants, including information sheets, consent forms, fieldwork guidelines, interview schedules, and letters of permission, were prepared in Bahasa Indonesia. Similarly, Bahasa Indonesia was used throughout the fieldwork during observations, note-taking, interviews, and informal communication. Consequently, translation between English and Indonesian became relevant

primarily at the data analysis stage, as most of the data were originally collected in Bahasa Indonesia.

4.6.3 Observations

This study employed both participant and non-participant observation to collect data, focusing on two different settings: inside and outside the classroom. Classroom observation was conducted through participant observation because there was an opportunity to serve as teacher assistant (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011). Bernard (2006) describes participant observation as a “strategic method” in ethnographic research (p. 343) because it enables the researcher to gain deeper insights into participants’ behaviours and authentic practices in their natural environments. In contrast, observation of activities outside the classroom was conducted through non-participant observation. This decision was based on the structure of extracurricular and daily activities at the *pesantren*, where each programme is strictly supervised and organised by designated student committees. As a result, direct involvement was not possible without disrupting established routines, making non-participant observation the most appropriate way to document students’ practices and interactions while preserving the natural flow of events.

During the first week of my fieldwork, I started with an “initial observation” (Eriksson & Kovalainen. 2008, p. 159) which focuses on a general, open-ended collection of materials from the boarding school. This included getting to know the location and surrounding environment including physical buildings like the classroom, dormitories, mosque, canteen and other communal facilities. In addition, I also started informal conversation with teachers and students as the target population. This initiative helped me in gaining rapport or “get close” (Emerson, 1995, para. 2) with potential participants. Copland (2018) emphasises the importance of making participants feel as comfortable as possible with the presence of the researcher by developing a good relationship from the beginning of the observation process because “it is the bedrock on

which the rest of your research will rest” (Agar, 1996, p. 166 as cited in Copland, 2018, p. 253).

Having the opportunity to visit the classroom during my first week at the school was an opportunity to start building relationships with the students. I felt that they welcomed my presence warmly. From my initial observations, the students seemed very open to new people. Most of them were friendly toward me, showing welcoming gestures such as smiling or greeting me with "Sir!". Some even tried speaking in English, knowing that I was there to study the language. This openness could be due to the isolated nature of the school, where the students may feel somewhat secluded. As a result, they were excited to experience something new and different from outside, like my presence. I perceived the situation as a promising beginning, supported by the positive attitude of the students at the *pesantren*, and made me optimistic that I would be able to complete the fieldwork successfully.

Across my eight-week fieldwork, from February 6 to March 31, 2023, I conducted a total of 24 visits for observation purposes. I engaged in participant observation inside the classroom as an English teacher assistant for nine sessions across three different classes. I found classroom observation very useful because I noticed a relaxed interaction among the students and between the teachers and students. From my observation, the classroom appeared to be more flexible for the students compared to the outside environment, where the interactions between *ustaz* (teachers) and students outside the classroom seemed more formal and rule-bound. Yet, interestingly, it was outside the classroom that English use seems more engaging and active, with students using it more freely and naturally in their interactions.

In addition, several aspects were also noted and became the focus of my observation, such as communication patterns among students, their level of engagement in asking questions and providing responses, and their seriousness in paying attention to the teacher's instructions. The observation method seems to be an effective way to gather information about classroom interactions and the organization of learning, including which students contribute to class

discussions, the types of questions the teacher asks, and the languages used by participants during the lesson (Copland, 2018, p. 250). From the teachers, I noted several characteristics, including their communication patterns with students, the provision of corrective feedback, support and encouragement, and their management of the classroom atmosphere.

While I took on the role of participant-observer in the classroom, my observation outside the classroom was conducted as a non-participant one, because there was no opportunity to participate as either an instructor or a student. All activities outside the classroom, which fall under the Language Programmes, were strictly organised according to established procedures. These activities were monitored by senior students, who had specific roles and responsibilities, making it impractical to intervene. Therefore, the observation toward those activities in the boarding complex was carried out in pure observer manner, referred to as a “complete observer” in Gold’s typology of research roles (Pope, 2005, p. 1183).

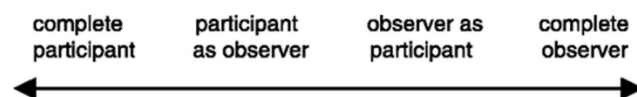


Figure 4.2. Gold's typology of research roles.

Furthermore, observation during informal situations was also conducted, such as when the students were on break or playing sports within the boarding complex. I carried out these observations in public spaces like the canteen, football pitch, and other open areas. The main objective of this observation was to see how the students interacted with each other and what language they used in their conversations. This observation was very useful to understanding how they enjoy or feel discouraged by English conversations, how meaning is negotiated, and how they mediate conversations by mixing the language, or translanguaging (Garcia, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Thus, these informal observations provided valuable information about the more dynamic

and authentic ways students engaged with English beyond the classroom context.

During the fieldwork, I recorded fieldnotes and personal reflections in a research journal immediately after each observation session. I chose not to take notes during observations in order to maintain concentration, minimise disruptions to participants, and maintain the natural flow of interactions. After each observation, I found a quiet place and wrote detailed accounts of events and interactions that occurred during the observation sessions. I wrote the fieldnotes in Bahasa Indonesian to facilitate accurate recall while the experiences were still fresh in my memory. Following my supervisors' advice, I am also aware of the importance of ensuring that both observations and fieldnotes should be closely aligned with the objectives of the research. The following figures present examples of fieldnote entries from my research journal:

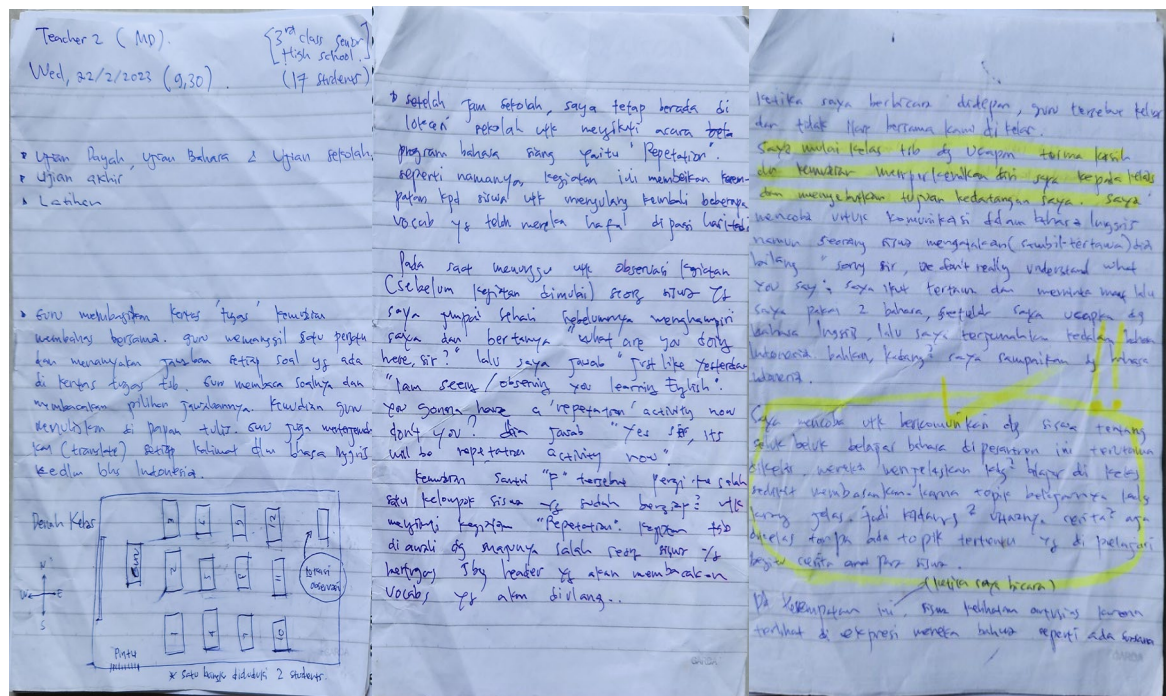


Figure 4.3. Fieldnotes sample

4.6.4 Interviews

In addition to observation, interviews were employed as a complementary method of data collection in this study. Two types of interviews were conducted: unstructured and semi-structured. Unstructured interviews, also referred to as “informal interviewing” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 120), took place in casual settings, such as during informal conversations. On several occasions, I engaged in discussions or question-and-answer exchanges with participants—particularly teachers—while spending time together at a coffee shop. The questions posed during these encounters primarily revolved around the language programme and related activities at the boarding school. This approach was deliberately adopted to encourage more natural and authentic responses from the participants.

Informal interviews were also conducted with students in everyday spaces such as the canteen, mosque, and football pitch. These conversations were particularly useful in capturing students’ genuine feelings and perspectives about their daily routines, especially concerning language use and learning. Such encounters often revealed insights that might not have surfaced in formal interview settings. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) describe unstructured interviews as friendly conversations between acquaintances, where the researcher follows the participants’ lead while introducing occasional focused questions. Importantly, I systematically recorded these interactions as field notes, following Schensul, LeCompte, and Schensul’s (1999) guidance that informal interview data should be documented alongside other ethnographic records. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) note, the critical distinction between informal interviews and casual chats lies in the fact that the former are documented and typically revolve around pre-identified topics.

By contrast, semi-structured interviews required more formal preparation. This included scheduling interview sessions, re-explaining the consent process, and outlining the sequence of questions. Initially, some students expressed hesitation, as they assumed the interviews would be conducted entirely in English. After clarification, however, they willingly agreed to participate. In total,

ten students from different academic years were interviewed, each of whom had resided in the *pesantren* for at least three years. Due to the Ramadan holiday, two student interviews were conducted outside the boarding school, as students were preparing to return home. Similarly, while two teachers were interviewed on-site, Ust. Nusa was interviewed off-site because the school complex was closed for the holiday. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded (Schensul, LeCompte, & Schensul, 1999), which allowed me to revisit the participants' accounts beyond the transcription stage. This proved particularly valuable during data analysis, especially when translating from Bahasa Indonesia into English.

4.7 Data analysis

This study generated three main types of data: fieldnotes, interview recordings, and institutional documents or photos from the field. To analyse these data, I employed Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytic process was organised into two main stages. The first stage focused on preparing the data through systematic organisation and review, while the second stage involved applying Braun and Clarke's six-step framework to identify patterns and themes that addressed the research questions. The following section explains these stages in detail, beginning with the preparation of data for analysis.

4.7.1 Preparation for data analysis

Before moving into the thematic analysis stage, it was necessary to first prepare and organise the data collected during fieldwork to ensure a systematic and coherent process of interpretation. As mentioned earlier, several types of data were gathered, which are summarised in Table below:

Table 4.4 Outline of data sources

Data sources	Description	Data formats
Participant observation	9 visits of participant observations	Fieldnotes
Regular observation	15 visit of general observations over 8 weeks	Fieldnotes
Interviews	13 semi-structured interviews (10 students, 3 teachers), Each lasting 30-45 minutes.	Audio recordings
Document analysis	Institutional profile book, official documents, and photos	Documents, and photos

The initial stage of data analysis involved organising the data, a process that began during the period of data collection itself. The first task after notetaking was to carefully read, revise, and annotate the fieldnotes in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the texts and to facilitate later organisation. Importantly, this stage was not a separate phase but rather an on-going process, as “the analysis of qualitative data is an on-going process that is best begun early, as soon as the data collection begins” (McQueen & Knussen, 1999, p. 239). In this study, data organisation involved compiling fieldnotes, “scratch notes” (Emerson et al., p. 138), and other materials into a coherent, structured format ready for analysis. Subsequently, all data, including fieldnotes and audio files, were transcribed and transferred into Word documents. At this stage, the data remained in their original language, Bahasa Indonesia.

4.7.2 Data analysis procedures

In this study, the process of data analysis followed the six-phases procedures introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the data. The detailed steps are outlined in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.5 Six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 35)

Steps	Descriptions
Familiarizing yourself with the dataset	After transcribing into electronic files, the data were printed out, re-read and comprehended as a whole story. Getting deeper immersion into the story of the data.
Coding	Interesting part of story, and recurrent patterns (apparently related to the RQ) were identified and highlighted as codes.
Generating initial themes	Codes were categorised under themes based on the patterns or similarities across the dataset. Sentences like <i>“we need to force ourselves to get familiarised with something...”</i> were the common ideas emerged from interviews.
Developing and reviewing themes	Themes candidates were then reviewed if there were any themes that need to be merged or omitted. At this step, the connection between one theme with another was also reviewed.
Defining, defining and naming themes	Themes were labelled with specific names indicating the final themes to be used in the result report.
Writing up	Themes were elaborated in narrative format presented in chapter 4 and 5.

In the analysis, the first step I took was to repeatedly read the data, highlighting specific sentences or patterns that appeared as an effort to familiarise myself with the data to be analysed. Additionally, during this “familiarisation” phase (Braun and Clarke, p. 42) I also began identifying the deeper meaning behind the dataset presented to filter “data” from the collective “information” available (p. 43). Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between data and information, where the former refers to the core contents being sought, which can be used to support answering the research questions, while the latter consists of general narrative explanations provided by the respondents.

Furthermore, during the coding process, I focused on identifying recurring keywords or phrases that emerged from the participants’ responses. At this stage, I discovered that many participants shared similar ideas in responding to

interview questions. For instance, phrases such as “...being forced to get used to it,” “being enforced to create habituation,” and “to force ourselves at first then become a habit” were frequently mentioned when I asked participants about their views on how they think the language should be learnt. These phrases emerged repeatedly, reflecting a common understanding of how language learning takes place. These views seemed very important for students, and I found them compelling; therefore, I considered these phrases as potential themes that could help address my research question (RQ1) on how participants perceive the natural process of learning a foreign language in their specific context.

I organised these recurring phrases under a potential theme with a label “Habit formation at *As-Tsani IBS*” Under this emerging theme, I compiled the codes or phrases that carried similar meanings, supporting the notion that foreign language learning within the boarding school begins with a process of enforcement aimed at helping students creating new habit in the language practice. This is particularly evident in the emphasis on using English during daily interactions. The coding process helped to highlight how this enforced practice gradually led to habituation and familiarity with the language, a finding that could provide a key insight into how foreign language learning habit are formed in this particular setting.

This theme was developed through an inductive approach, where the analysis was guided by the data rather than by pre-existing theories. The codes and themes came directly from the students’ experiences and observations that made the findings more closely tied to what was actually happening in practice. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, inductive thematic analysis avoids forcing the data into ready-made categories and instead allows the patterns to emerge naturally. In this case, the theme of *habit formation* was not imposed by theory but drawn from the students’ own words and behaviours. This shows how English learning at *As-Tsani IBS* is built through a process of enforcement, repetition, and eventually, habituation.

Once the key themes had been identified, I then turned to relevant

literature on language learning, particularly the view that learning is essentially a process of habituation through repetition, which over time develops into habit. Behaviourist theory reflects this perspective, suggesting that learning takes place through the formation of new habits created by repeated actions, often reinforced by external stimuli (Hull, 1943; Skinner, 1938, cited in Carden & Wood, 2018). Some scholars also point out that enforcement can play an important role, as learners may need to be pushed to repeat certain behaviours until they eventually become habitual (Gardner & Lally, 2018). This theoretical framework aligns closely with my data, which show how enforced practice at the boarding school helped students grow more accustomed to using a foreign language, particularly through repeated and structured use of English in their daily interactions. These connections with behaviourist perspectives will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

In contrast to the inductive process described above, the identification of the theme of discipline within the *pesantren* environment, particularly in relation to English language learning, was carried out using a deductive approach. In this case, the themes were guided by Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, which I regard as a highly relevant foundation for analysing my findings, as his work provides an in-depth and influential account of how discipline is exercised and internalised. Foucault is widely recognised for his comprehensive explanation of discipline and its application across various institutional contexts, including schools, hospitals, and prisons, where discipline operates through subtle mechanisms such as surveillance, regulation, and the shaping of individual conduct. This concept is valuable for examining *pesantren*, which, as a relatively exclusive and isolated institution, shares structural similarities with the institutional forms described by Foucault, while at the same time being dedicated to cultivating moral character, discipline, and learning.

The development of themes followed a systematic process of reviewing, filtering, and refining emerging patterns to ensure they were appropriately labelled and analytically meaningful. During the analysis, several key themes surfaced, including the basic concept of EFL learning, students' perceptions of

the EFL program, learning strategies, and the roles of teachers, peers, and the learning environment—all of which pointed toward the broader framework of behaviourist learning concepts. In addition, other themes emerged that reflected Foucault's theoretical lens, particularly disciplinary power, power mechanism, and self-discipline. To maintain focus and avoid an overly broad discussion, a number of additional themes, such as students' motivation, communicative interaction, teaching methods, and extra academic support, were eventually discarded. These were excluded either because they overlapped with broader themes or gave limited contribution to the research objectives (see Table 4.6 for further details)

The selection process therefore involved prioritising themes that directly addressed the research questions and were strongly grounded in participants' narratives. This required careful interpretation, since participants often shared similar points but with varying emphases and meanings depending on their individual perspectives. As Braun and Clarke (2006) remind us, "coding is never completed, because meaning is never final" (p. 71), which made it necessary to constantly revisit and refine both codes and themes. Ultimately, only the most relevant and coherent themes were retained to ensure analytical clarity and focus in the final report.

Table 4.6 Outlines of themes, subthemes and type of dataset

Themes	Subthemes	Dataset
Habit Formation as the Basic A case at <i>As-Tsani</i> IBS Concept in Learning		Interviews, fieldnotes
Students' Voices on Language Activities	–	Observation, interviews, fieldnotes, documents
Learning Strategies	Memorisation Self-Driven Learning Translanguaging in Communication	Observation, interviews, fieldnotes, photos
Roles of Teachers and Peers	–	Observation, interviews, fieldnotes, documents
Roles of the Environment	School-scaping	Observation, documents, photos, fieldnotes
Disciplining Language Practices in IBS	Panoptic Surveillance Panoptic Landscape Agents of Power and Spying (Jasus) Examination	Observation, interviews, fieldnotes, documents
Self-Discipline	The Care of the Self The Four Folds of Subjection	Observation, interviews, fieldnotes

The final step of the data analysis was writing the report. Although this marked the last stage, it still required ongoing adjustments, particularly in naming themes that best represented the codes from the data. I found it necessary to keep analysing, revising, and refining even during the writing process. As Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise, “you will still be producing your analysis as you write it” (p. 118). In line with this, Trainor and Bundon (2020, p. 14), cited in Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 118), note that “themes shifted until the final manuscript was published.” At this stage, feedback and guidance from my supervisor were especially important in ensuring that the analysis remained coherent and appropriately aligned with academic writing standards.

4.8 Ethical consideration

In ethnographic studies, ethics is a central concern because this type of research involves direct engagement with human participants in real-world contexts. Such interactions can raise ethical issues related to potential harm, distress, or anxiety for those involved (Robson, 2011). In practice, ethical considerations can be divided into two levels: *macroethics* and *microethics* (Copland & Creese, 2016, p. 163). According to Kubanyiova (2008), macroethics refers to procedural ethics, such as those outlined in Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols and professional codes of conduct (p. 505), whereas microethics concerns the everyday ethical dilemmas that arise from the specific roles and relationships between researchers and participants in research settings (p. 504). At macro level, this study received ethical approval from the University of Stirling's Ethics Committee, with all required documents prepared in line with institutional protocols, while research access to *As-Tsani* IBS was formally granted by ust. Sunain on behalf of the *Kyai* and the institution.

At a micro level, one of important ethical concerns in this study was the safety and security of student participants who served as respondents. Sharing their learning experiences could involve not only positive reflections but also negative points, which at times might touch on sensitive matters or cause discomfort for others. For example, when students discussed challenges with strict language rules or disciplinary practices, their comments had the potential to be interpreted as criticism of teachers or institutional policies. To minimise such risks, care was taken to protect students' anonymity and ensure that their voices could be represented without exposing them to negative consequences. As Denzin (1989) emphasises that:

"Our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear, and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us" (p. 83).

Participant selection in this study was carried out purposively without intervention from teachers or school authorities, ensuring that the identities of

student participants remained unknown to the school administration. Given the large number of students and their busy routines, interviews blended naturally into daily life and did not appear formal, even though they constituted primary data collection. To protect anonymity, all participants were assigned pseudonyms (see Table 4.3), which were consistently applied in fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and digital files. Data, including voice recordings and transcripts, were stored in password-protected folders on my computer and on UoS SharePoint during analysis, before being securely destroyed after completion. These procedures were explained to participants beforehand to ensure they felt safe and able to express themselves freely, without concern over institutional power dynamics.

In line with ethical protocols, all participants read and signed informed consent forms prior to involvement. Parents of selected students were also contacted for permission, which was first given verbally by phone and later reinforced with written consent forms sent home with students during family visits. Importantly, students were fully informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

4.9 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the methodological framework that guided the study, beginning with insights from the preliminary research that informed the overall design and approach. It then described the interpretivist and constructivist philosophical foundations that shaped the research paradigm, and explained why a qualitative, focused ethnographic approach was adopted to investigate students' experiences of EFL learning in the *pesantren* context. Detailed accounts of the research site, participants, and data collection methods, through observation, interviews, and document analysis were provided, alongside the ethical procedures that ensured participants' safety, confidentiality, and informed consent. The thematic analysis process was explained step by step, showing how inductive and deductive approaches were employed to generate themes, particularly around habit formation and

disciplinary practices, drawing on behaviourist and Foucauldian perspectives. Together, these methodological choices established a coherent and rigorous strategy for exploring how English language learning is experienced, enforced, and understood at *As-Tsani* IBS. This methodological framework provides the foundation for the analysis that follows in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, where the findings are presented and discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 5: THE NATURE OF EFL LEARNING AT AS-TSANI/ ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL (IBS)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss about the nature of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning within the unique educational environment of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The analysis begins with an exploration of habit formation as the foundational concept of learning, followed by an examination of students' perceptions of learning activities, particularly Public Speaking activity. The discussion further addresses the language learning strategies employed within the programme, the roles of teachers and peers, and the ways in which the learning environment shapes EFL practices within the *pesantren* context. These aims are addressed through a sequence of analytical steps that move from institutional context and pedagogical traditions to classroom practices, extracurricular learning, and students' narratives about their learning journeys.

In Islamic Boarding School (IBS), the teaching and learning of English are deeply influenced by the institution's religious and cultural identity. The pedagogical paradigm is rooted in Islamic educational traditions that emphasise teacher-centred instruction under the guidance of *Kyai* or *ustadz*, with a strong focus on moral guidance, character formation, and obedience (Hardaker & Sabki, 2018). Although modern *pesantren* have adopted English language programmes as part of institutional reforms and their engagement with global education trends (Lukens-Bull, 2010; Zarkasyi, 2020; Azra, 2001), the pedagogical practices often remain tied to traditional religious instruction. Established methods such as memorisation, translation, and repetition, long used for studying classical Arabic texts like *nahw* (grammar) and *sharaf* (morphology) (Bruinessen, 1994), are frequently adapted to teach English as well.

This practice creates a pedagogical dynamic within the *pesantren* itself: on the one hand, it aims to modernise their curriculum by offering English programmes, but on the other hand, the implementation of instruction largely

reflects conventional methods rather than fully adopting contemporary student-centred approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The blending of tradition and modernity makes *pesantren*-based EFL education unique, as it occupies a space where religious and cultural values intersect with global educational demands. Understanding this dynamic is essential for appreciating both the strengths and limitations of EFL learning in these contexts.

My analysis draws from extensive fieldwork at *As-Tsani* IBS, where I observed students' daily routines and language learning activities from early morning to late evening, often continuing until 10 p.m. I engaged with students during formal lessons and extracurricular programmes, including vocabulary memorisation, repetition exercises, structured conversations, and evening public-speaking activities. These observations provided insight into how students negotiate the demands of their English programme alongside their religious and academic obligations. The findings reveal not only the intensity of students' efforts but also the interplay between institutional structures, peer influence, and individual motivation in shaping language learning outcomes.

My background as an alumnus of an Islamic boarding school made it easier to build trust and access participants, but it also required me to reflect carefully on my role as a researcher. As Copland and Creese (2016, cited in Copland, 2018) explain, insider research brings both ethical and methodological challenges. Outsiders may face mistrust from participants, while insiders may struggle to keep enough distance for critical analysis. In this study, I moved between both positions: as an insider who understood many aspects of *pesantren* life, and as an outsider who approached *As-Tsani* IBS for the first time with an analytical perspective. This dual role deepened my engagement with the field and encouraged me to remain reflective in interpreting the data.

Understanding the nature of EFL learning in *pesantren* is significant for both academic and practical reasons. From an academic perspective, it contributes to discussions on how traditional religious education can adapt to the demands of modern language education without losing its distinctive cultural

identity. From a practical perspective, it provides insights that can inform curriculum design, teacher training, and language policy in Islamic educational institutions. By foregrounding students' voices and situating their experiences within broader institutional and cultural frameworks, this chapter aims to shed light on how EFL learning can be enhanced in a way that respects and builds upon the unique characteristics of the *pesantren* tradition.

5.2 Habit formation as the basic concept of learning

Learning in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools follows practices that are deeply shaped by Islamic educational traditions. Although *pesantren* pedagogy is often discussed within the framework of moral and spiritual education, its methods also align with certain principles found in Western educational theories, particularly those concerned with behaviour formation and habit development. While Western education tends to emphasise intellectual development through behaviour formation, Islamic education focuses on the cultivation of moral character and disciplined behaviour. Despite these differing orientations, both share the fundamental aim of shaping individuals through continuous guidance and structured practice.

In Islamic thought, Ibn Qayyim describes education as a process of guiding learners with both knowledge and moral discipline so that they gradually improve their behaviour and spiritual awareness, moving toward becoming complete and balanced individuals (as cited in Arif, 2022, p. 6). Similarly, in Western psychology, behaviourism views learning as a process of modifying observable behaviour through reinforcement, repetition, and correction. From this perspective, both Islamic and Western frameworks view education as a transformative practice in which learners internalise desirable patterns of action through structured and consistent engagement. Hence, the current analysis draws on key behaviourist concepts such as habit formation, memorisation, and reinforcement through structured activities and close monitoring.

According to behaviourist theory, language learning involves developing automatic responses to linguistic stimuli through repeated practice and feedback

(Wu, 2019). Habits, in this sense, are not formed by understanding rules in isolation but through frequent exposure, imitation, and reinforcement of correct usage. Within the *pesantren* context, these ideas are reflected in the daily routines of language drills, structured memorisation of vocabulary or dialogues, and systematic correction by teachers or peers. At *As-Tsani* IBS, such behaviourist practices are highly institutionalised through the school's language programmes and disciplinary systems. Students are required to engage in continuous English-speaking activities, recitation sessions, and regular evaluations. Through these repetitive routines, language learning becomes habitual and embedded in students' daily conduct.

As outlined in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4), the findings presented in this section are based on extended participant observation and semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students. The analysis of interview transcripts and field notes provides insight into how behaviourist principles are embedded in the English language programme at *As-Tsani* IBS, not only as pedagogical techniques but also as mechanisms of discipline and moral formation. Through these practices, the *pesantren* environment cultivates disciplined learners whose linguistic habits are closely tied to broader moral and social expectations.

In the case of *As-Tsani* IBS, habit formation serves as the foundation of the institution's approach to English language learning. Rather than relying solely on cognitive understanding of grammar or vocabulary, the school prioritises behavioural conditioning through daily routines, structured speaking rules, and constant monitoring by language committees. This approach transforms language learning from a classroom-based activity into a lived behavioural pattern that governs how students communicate, interact, and even think. The regularity and repetition embedded in these practices foster automaticity in language use and discipline in conduct, demonstrating how *As-Tsani* integrates behaviourist learning principles within a moral and religious framework. Hence, habit formation at *As-Tsani* is not merely a linguistic exercise but a holistic educational strategy that aligns behavioural discipline with moral

and spiritual development that embodies both the pedagogical and ethical aims of *pesantren* education.

5.2.1 Case in As-Tsani Islamic Boarding School

In this study, habit formation is understood as a process of developing behaviours based on stimulus and response relationships acquired through reinforcement-based learning (e.g., Hull, 1943; Holland, 2008), particularly the development of language-related behaviours within the context of Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. In *pesantren* education, cultivating habits constitutes one of the fundamental approaches to the learning process. In practice, the establishment of these habits initially involves a degree of compulsion or external pressure, which, over time, becomes internalised as habitual behaviour. This aligns with the behaviourist perspective that the formation of new behaviours requires external assistance, with reinforcement playing a crucial role in the process (Slavin, 2010).

Data from participant interviews and observations reveal that habit formation is central to English learning at *As-Tsani* IBS. Teachers and students consistently described the process as beginning with external enforcement, followed by gradual internalisation, and eventually becoming an enjoyable routine. As one teacher, Sunain, explained:

“Essentially, we adhere to the principle that they must first be compelled, then become accustomed, and eventually develop genuine interest. In general, this is the process, and indeed, most children who enrol in an integrated pesantren like this aim to acquire the ability to speak either Arabic or English.” (Sunain, Interview, 2023)

In similar voice, another teacher, Masda, supported this idea. He noted that:

“At the beginning, students have to be pushed. It feels difficult but once they are used to it, the process becomes easier.” (Masda, Interview, 2023)

The teachers’ statements indicate that *As-Tsani* IBS approaches the language learning through enforcement-first to ensure students’ engagement

and to create new learning behaviours. According to the teacher, Sunain, using coercive approach at the initial stages of learning is a normal practice as an adaptation process. This idea is supported by another teacher, Masda, who also emphasized that forceful procedure is a common practice during the early years at *As-Tsani* IBS. For many students, he adds, such approach is demanding, however it will take them to the expected goal, forming new learning behaviour. Teachers see coercion or “pushing” as necessary for shaping discipline and guiding students to meet institutional expectations. Teachers explicitly acknowledged that students are often compelled in the early stages to engage in learning routines. This compulsion manifests in the form of strict schedules, mandatory participation in language activities, and institutional language policies (e.g., English only policy).

The enforcement-first approach used at *As-Tsani* IBS reflects both pedagogical strategy and institutional discipline. In behaviourism viewpoint, compulsory routines function as a form of *operant conditioning* (Skinner, 1938) in which repetition under strict supervision helps gradually build new habits (see Smith & Graybiel, 2016). Students may initially comply out of obligation, but over time these behaviours become internalised and self-sustaining. At the same time, this practice aligns with Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power, where structured rules, surveillance, and institutional policies regulate behaviour and shape students’ dispositions. The enforcement of language rules therefore serves not only to ensure short-term compliance but also to produce long-term character building, embedding discipline, and commitment to the school’s educational and moral objectives.

Additionally, the student participants also shared similar perspectives, emphasizing the importance of viewing compulsion as an initial stage of habit formation that should be accepted and understood as a supporting factor, which would later benefit their habit forming process. For example, Farid recalled that:

“When I first joined here, every activity felt pretty tough at the beginning but after doing it every day, I got used to it. So, alhamdulillah, now it feels normal, not difficult anymore. In fact, I’ve become kind of addicted to it. I

even feel like I need extra because what we have doesn't feel enough.” (Farid, Interview, 2023).

Farid's expression shows the common process of adjustment that students go through when they first enter the IBS environment. At the beginning, he found the activities “pretty tough,” which reflects the usual challenges students find when facing new routines that demand both physical and mental effort. Over time, however, he explained that he “got used to it” after doing the activities every day. This highlights how repetition can turn something difficult into manageable habits. In other words, regular practice helps build habits that make routines feel natural rather than burdensome. This change supports the idea that repeated exposure and reinforcement can gradually reduce resistance and shape more stable patterns of behaviour (Lally & Gardner, 2013).

What is more, the word “addicted” in Farid's statement represents intense engagement, where the activity is no longer seen as an obligation but it has become an internal desire to seek more than what is provided. This shows that consistent practice has not only formed a new habit, but also become a source of personal satisfaction. Behaviourist, such as Thorndike's (1898) suggests this change as the outcome of positive reinforcement, where repeated practice leads to intrinsic rewards and makes the behaviour becomes habitual (see Smith & Graybiel, 2016). This finding show that regular and consistent practices helps develop strong internal motivation that continue even beyond institutional requirement.

Another extract from a senior high student, Fajri, supports the notion that early years were seen as difficult time and felt very strict. He shared his experience during his early years at *As-Tsani* IBS. He stated:

“Back in junior high, things were pretty strict. I didn't really like it being that strict. But now that I'm in senior high and it feels more relaxed, I kind of enjoy it now..”

“I think it just needs more practice. For me, the key is practice, so I can improve faster. But here, the practice is not enough. I need kind of extra lesson..” (Fajri, Interview, 2023).

Fajri's experience also illustrates how the early period felt difficult and unpleasant for majority of students. However, after going through a process of habituation, it eventually became more enjoyable. In his account, Fajri compared his junior high school years to a difficult phase, as he had to follow routines with strict discipline under close supervision from teachers or seniors (*Mudabbir*). My field observation also confirms how a close monitoring measure was taken by *Mudabbir* to ensure students participation in a vocabulary repetition activity, which aims to recall previously memorised vocabularies. This situation is illustrated in the following image:



Picture 5.1 Repetition activity at lunch time, right before eating lunch (Observation)

The picture shows students participating in collective vocabulary repetition under the supervision of *Mudabbir* who hold authority and responsibility for enforcing discipline. Their standing positions, with one of them carrying a wooden stick, emphasise hierarchical control and ensure compliance. The use of the stick, later reported in the field notes, was as a tool to punish those who failed recalling the assigned vocabularies although it was rarely used. This system of strict supervision and repeated practice demonstrates the institution's strategy of shaping behaviour through consistent reinforcement, where external regulation is used to guide students until routines become internalised habits that support language learning.

At first observation, such enforcement could appear coercive or even counterproductive because it may cause negative effect on student's "inner" motivation, talents, and enthusiasm, despite other positive impact on their academic achievements (Shuang-Yi, 2018, p. 404). What is more, in contemporary educational theories, autonomy and intrinsic motivation have become an emphasis in learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, in the pedagogical philosophy of *pesantren*, enforcement is understood not as punitive but as a structured way to cultivate discipline, perseverance, and resilience. Habituation or *ta'wid* (Nurjanah & Abdussalam, 2024, p. 544), a well-established concept in Islamic education, requires learners to repeatedly practice desired behaviours under guidance, even if initially reluctant (Rufaedah, 2018). Muslim scholar, like Al-Ghazali has long argued that training the self through routine and discipline eventually produces sincerity and intrinsic commitment (cited in Ismail, et al., 2021, p. 4). In this sense, compulsion at the outset is not only tolerated but valued as an integral part of moral and intellectual development. The data from *As-Tsani* demonstrate how this philosophy is operationalized in the domain of language learning: initial enforcement ensures that all students, regardless of prior motivation, are compliance with the institution's linguistic and educational mission.

In conclusion, the findings from *As-Tsani* IBS show that habit formation is a central part of its teaching approach. At the beginning, students are pushed to follow strict schedules, supervision, and language rules to make sure they participate and stay disciplined. Over time, these enforced routines become natural habits, and many students eventually find enjoyment and motivation in the process. This reflects the idea in behaviourism that habits grow through reinforcement, but it also connects to the *pesantren* tradition of *ta'wid* (habituation), where repeated practice and discipline are seen as ways to build both knowledge and character. What first feels like pressure later develops into lasting commitment, showing how *pesantren* education combines discipline with long-term personal growth.

5.3 Students voice on learning activities: focusing *Public Speaking*

This section presents students' perceptions of the language learning activities (LLA) at *As-Tsani* IBS, with particular attention to the activity they consistently identified as their favourite: *Muhadharah* (public speaking). While the *pesantren* offers a wide range of language tasks, such as vocabulary drills, conversation practice, and competitions, students reported that not all activities were equally engaging. Instead, they highlighted public speaking as the most meaningful and enjoyable practice, as it allowed them to express ideas, exercise creativity, and apply English in real communication. Drawing on interview data and fieldnotes, this section illustrates how students value public speaking not only for its role in language development but also for its capacity to build confidence, motivation, and recognition among peers and teachers. This focus is not intended to disregard other practices, such as memorisation, one of the main learning characteristics across IBS, since it will be discussed in a separated section of this thesis

As discussed in the literature review, a wide variety of learning activities can be found within foreign language programme in Indonesian *pesantren*. Although the overarching goal is the same, i.e. to achieve communicative competence, the approaches employed differ from one boarding school to another. This variation arises from the fact that the educational curriculum in *pesantren* is largely determined independently by each institution (Zarkasyi, 2020; Lukens-Bull, 2010). Moreover, English language programme in IBS is generally put under the category of extracurricular curriculum. As a result, decisions regarding the types of activities, teaching approaches, and intended learning outcomes are entirely shaped by each institution, with no specific guidance provided by the government. In the same case, *As-Tsani* IBS designs its own language curriculum according to its particular vision and priorities. In practice, the planning and implementation of teaching and learning activities are organised directly by the Language Development Committee (LDC) unit.

At *As-Tsani* IBS, English language activities mostly follow the models commonly found in other Indonesian *pesantren*, particularly Gontor. This is

because, when the language programme was first introduced at *As-Tsani*, several teachers from Gontor alumni were directly involved in designing the programme, including its curriculum (Fieldnotes). Here, the programme offered a range of activities, such as vocabulary building, repetition, conversation practice, and public speaking. To further encourage students, the programme also organises competitions like speech contests and debates. From the interview, the data shows that *public speaking* is a preferable activity chosen by participants. The following data shows students' perspective on this particular activity and the rationale for the choice.

Interviewer : *Out of all activities within the language programme, which one do you like the most?*

Juan : *Public speaking, definitely.*

Interviewer : *Ok, Why do you like it?*

Juan : *Because in the public speaking programme, students can share their opinions. They can talk about something in a foreign language whatever they want to express in their speech. That's one of the things that really push us to use the language (Interview, 2023)*

The data suggest that while the English programme at *As-Tsani* IBS provides students with a variety of activities, not all are valued equally. Juan, for instance, preferred public speaking because this task allows students to share their opinions and express their thoughts in a foreign language (i.e. English). For him, the activity is not only about memorising or repeating words but about using English as a medium to share ideas. He explained that public speaking forces students to use the language in meaningful ways, which makes the task both challenging and rewarding. For Juan, public speaking not only gives an opportunity to construct his own messages, which he could communicate with others, but also gains a sense of control over how he wanted to use the language. This stands in contrast to activities such as vocabulary drills, where the outcome is fixed and the process leaves little room for creativity (Széll, 2022; Bergström, 2023). Public speaking therefore becomes a space where language learning is closely tied to personal identity and empowerment, encouraging

students to see English not simply as a school subject but as a tool to express themselves.

Furthermore, Juan's notion that public speaking "pushes" students to use English reflects how challenge can keep learners engaged. Delivering a speech in front of peers requires a good preparation, which Juan described as both difficult and challenging. However, this challenge encourages students to put in greater effort and remain focused. It also provides a space where students must think carefully about how to use English in context. In other words, public speaking forces them to go beyond simply memorising vocabulary and instead apply words appropriately in real situations. More importantly, it requires them to understand the meaning of what they are saying, ensuring that language use is both accurate and meaningful. For this reason, public speaking plays a central role in developing communicative competence of the students at *As-Tsani* IBS.

In the same voice, Fayed mentioned public speaking as his favourite activity among other tasks. For him, public speaking is an activity "*where our creativity is really tested. Plus, the winners sometimes get prizes, so the prizes also become a motivation*" (Fayed, Interview). From Fayed's statement, there are two main points that can be further analysed. First, public speaking provides an arena where students can exercise creativity and have their abilities tested in front of an audience. According to Fayed, the test of creativity reflects how he is able to manage his linguistic resources, particularly his vocabulary repertoire, and use those words to express himself effectively through the delivery of a message to the audience. In other words, creativity here refers to the student's ability to mobilise all of their English language skills in order to deliver their speech as effectively as possible in front of their peers and teachers. In this sense, public speaking also functions as a way to demonstrate their proficiency in English language

Another point highlighted by Fayed is that public speaking activity improves his level of motivation for participation, especially because of the excitement to win the prize. Although rewards are not provided regularly, their presence helps to enthusiasm and encourages students to prepare more

carefully for their speeches. The initiative of the committee (LDC) to provide prizes, when funding is available, makes public speaking an activity that students anticipate and encourages their participation in the programme. In *pasantren* context, where recognition from peers and teachers is very essential, such rewards add to the sense of accomplishment and reinforce commitment to the learning process (Thoyyibah & Alfiasari, 2024).

In addition, Fajri is another student who explicitly mentioned public speaking as his favourite activity within the language programme. He conveyed:

“Yes, the evening activity, which is public speaking. I like public speaking. Even though for speeches I have to memorise the text, I still enjoy it. Especially in English, it feels easier than Arabic. Arabic is more difficult.”
(Fajri, Interview, 2023)

Fajri explicitly stated that he *“likes public speaking”* and *“enjoys it,”* even though the activity requires him to memorise speech texts. This indicates that, similar to his peers, Fajri perceives public speaking as a space for creativity and self-expression in a foreign language. At the same time, his response *“I have to memorise the text”* indicates that memorisation the speech texts was the last option due to some limitation in language mastery. However, in order to gain confidence in delivering the speech, he maintained memorising the entire speech texts. Despite this, he continues to enjoy the activity, as public speaking provides him with a space for expression, compared to other practices such as vocabulary memorisation, where students primarily work with words and practice them in sentences chunks rather than actively applying them in communication.

While many students perceived public speaking as the most valuable activity, it is important to note that not all learners shared the same enthusiasm. My fieldnotes from the evening sessions revealed that some students appeared anxious when asked to perform in front of their peers, often relying heavily on memorised texts rather than natural expressions. This was evident when two speakers repeated the same sentences two or three times after forgetting their lines, which made their speeches sound less natural. In addition, I observed a student being penalised for failing to deliver his speech because he had not

memorised the texts. The student later confirmed that he was unable to memorise the speech because he found it long and complicated, which in turn reduced his interest in the activity. Aware of this limitation, he explained that he already anticipated the consequence that he could be receiving punishment from the supervisors (Fieldnotes).

In addition, another student described that the public speaking activity felt too rigid because of the formal way the *Mudabbir* (language supervisor) supervised the session. The use of a stick by the supervisors created an atmosphere even more strict and inflexible. As a result, the speech room seemed more like a place of discipline and control than a space for expression. The following pictures illustrate this atmosphere.



Picture 5.2 Public speaking activity

The images above are screenshots taken from a video recording of the public speaking session. The first image shows a *Mudabbir* observing the activity while holding a stick as a display of authority. The second image captures the atmosphere of the speech in progress, demonstrating the enthusiasm of the students as they listened to their peer delivering a speech. However, the formal setting of the room made some speakers nervous and caused them to forget parts of their speeches. One student admitted that he often felt anxious when standing at the podium, even though it was not his first experience. To cope with this anxiety, he tended to speak very quickly in an effort to manage his nervousness (Fieldnotes). As a result, the delivery was

unclear and appeared as a memorised performance, carried out more as an obligation than as part of a meaningful learning process.

This finding suggests that the benefits of public speaking may not be equally valued among the students. For some students, the pressure to perform in front of others can bring greater fear of making mistakes, which may hinder their motivation to experiment with the language. In this sense, public speaking, which motivates some students, at the same time, can also discourage others, especially those who are less confident in their English proficiency. This confirms the findings from previous studies on the effect of anxiety and motivation on speaking performance in EFL context (Woodrow, 2006; Masmilah, Nasmilah & Rahman, 2020). Therefore, while public speaking can serve as an effective means of fostering communicative competence among highly motivated learners, it also brings a risk of becoming a barrier to language development for those who are less prepared or who struggling with performance anxiety.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, observations revealed that public speaking was among well-attended activities. In contrast to vocabulary drills or conversation practice, which often experienced fluctuating participation, public speaking consistently drew high levels of student involvement. This finding supports the views expressed by Juan and Fayed, who described the activity as both engaging and rewarding. The collective atmosphere with peer support, applause, and recognition, helped transform what seems difficult task into a meaningful community event. Furthermore, the sessions were usually classified by grade level to ensure that senior and junior students did not mix. This arrangement promoted greater confidence among junior students, who felt supported by their immediate classmates.

The data from *As-Tsani* IBS indicate that public speaking is valued more highly than other activities such as vocabulary drills or memorisation. While all these practices contribute to linguistic competence, public speaking is perceived as more meaningful because it situates English within authentic communicative contexts. This confirms the principles of communicative language teaching

(CLT), which emphasise interaction and real-life application as central to competence development (Richards, 2015; Littlewood, 2014). Beyond linguistic practice, the activity is cognitively demanding, requiring students to generate and organise ideas under the pressure of performance. Such demands encourage learners to stretch their abilities, making the activity both challenging and rewarding in ways that routine drills often cannot provide.

In summary, the practice of public speaking at *As-Tsani* IBS highlights how *pesantren* have been able to blend traditional educational practices with modern approaches to language learning. By combining elements of memorisation, discipline, and structured routines with communicative interaction and peer reinforcement, public speaking becomes more than a linguistic exercise; it is a holistic learning activity that cultivates confidence, creativity, and social recognition. While challenges such as performance anxiety and overreliance on memorisation remain, the activity continues to demonstrate its unique ability to sustain student engagement and promote meaningful use of English in authentic contexts. This suggests that the strength of *pesantren*-based language programme lies in their capacity to adapt inherited traditions to contemporary pedagogical demands, creating an environment where students are equipped not only with linguistic competence but also with the resilience, motivation, and social skills necessary for participation in a globalised world.

5.4 Learning strategies

The literature on language learning strategies highlights memorisation, learner autonomy, and translanguaging as central to how students acquire and consolidate linguistic skills. Memorisation, often associated with rote learning, has long been critiqued in modern pedagogy but remains a recognized means of reinforcing retention through repetition, particularly in behaviorist frameworks of habit formation. Research on learner autonomy emphasizes the role of self-driven study in fostering responsibility and persistence beyond formal instruction, while studies on translanguaging reveal its value in enabling learners to mobilize their full linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning and reduce

barriers to participation. These perspectives provide a useful lens for understanding the practices of students at *As-Tsani* IBS, where both institutional traditions and learner initiative shape the process of language acquisition.

The findings from this study show that students rely heavily on these three strategies, memorisation, self-driven learning, and translanguaging to navigate the demands of English within the *pesantren* context. Memorisation reflects the *pesantren*'s established pedagogical culture and serves as a practical method for vocabulary building, despite being perceived as demanding by some learners. Self-driven learning, meanwhile, highlights the agency of students who take responsibility for their own progress through independent study and persistent practice. Translanguaging emerges as an adaptive strategy, allowing students to sustain communication and comprehension by drawing on Indonesian, Arabic, and English interchangeably, even when such practices may conflict with institutional English-only policies. Taken together, these strategies illustrate how students combine traditional methods with individual initiative and flexible language use. Therefore, this section investigates each in turn: beginning with memorisation, moving to self-driven learning, and concluding with translanguaging in communication.

5.4.1 Memorisation

Memorisation represents one of the most enduring and recognisable learning strategies within the *pesantren* tradition, closely linked to practices of rote learning used in religious study. In the context of English language learning at *As-Tsani* IBS, memorisation continues to serve as a fundamental approach for mastering vocabulary, set phrases, and speech texts. Students frequently rely on repetition, drilling, and recall exercises to consolidate linguistic forms, reflecting both institutional expectations and their own habits shaped by prior educational experiences. While sometimes criticised in modern pedagogical debates for limiting creativity, the findings reveal that many students perceive memorisation as effective in strengthening vocabulary retention and building

initial confidence in communication, even though some also describe it as demanding and frustrating in the early stages.

Memorisation has long been recognised as a central feature of Islamic education. It is understood not merely as a technical skill but as a discipline that shapes both intellectual and spiritual development. To memorise a lesson, students are expected to read and repeat it several times until it becomes firmly embedded in memory. As Imam Hanafi explained:

“a student should keep reading and repeating a lesson until it is fully memorised. Later, they can use it in discussions, where they are able to respond, challenge others, or present new ideas” (Asrohah, 2011, p. 78).

This approach reflects the belief within *pesantren* communities that memorisation is essential for the mastery and internalisation of knowledge, whether in the study of the Qur'an, classical Arabic texts, or in the context of language learning. *As-Tsani IBS* puts learning vocabulary as priority among other language programme activities, especially for new students during the early stages of language learning. This is because a wide range of vocabulary is very important for students to be able to engage in other language learning activities. To support this process, the school provides new students with a six-month “transitional phase.” During this period, they are not yet required to speak in English or Arabic. Instead, they concentrate on memorising vocabulary and practicing it in simple sentences, helping them figure out how the words function in context. This approach shows that memorisation is not viewed as mere rote learning but as an important foundation stage, where students build the basic tools they need for later communication.

At *As-Tsani* boarding school, memorisation is a central strategy in language learning because it is believed as an effective way for students to develop their vocabulary repertoire (Oxford, 1990; Richards and Platt, 1992). The following data illustrates how teachers emphasise memorisation as the foundation for developing students' speaking ability:

“To be able to speak, children must have enough vocabulary in their mind. They can only build their vocabulary by memorising it; there is no

other way. So, from the beginning, they need to be pushed to memorise as many vocabularies as possible” (Sunain, Interview, 2023)

The teacher’s voice indicates that there is a strong belief that vocabulary is the basic foundation for learning to speak a language. Sunain contends that in order for students to be able to engage in English conversation, they have to master sufficient number of vocabularies. What is more, he emphasises the only way to build a vocabulary repertoire is through memorisation. This perspective reflects a highly structured view of language learning, which is also in line with behaviourist principles, where repetition and practice is regarded as essential parts of establishing learning behaviour (Lally, et, al., 2010; IvyPanda, 2021). The claim *“there is no other way”* shows that memorisation has become a strong tradition in IBS and is seen as an effective way for all context of learning. It is used not only to build vocabulary but also continues a long practice in Islamic education, where students memorise the Qur’an and classical Arabic texts. In other words, memorisation is not only a method of learning a language, but also a strong cultural value of Islamic education.

From the students’ perspective, additionally, the practice of memorisation was also regarded as an effective method for developing their vocabulary skills. The majority of participants reported that memorisation had become part of their daily routine during the early years at *As-Tsani* Boarding School. Although they initially found it difficult, as one student said, *“That wasn’t easy, I had never done that before”* (Mufti, Interview), over time the practice became more familiar, and students began to accept memorisation as a useful learning technique. In the same voice, Fayed asserted that during his first time in the boarding school he remembered the learning activities mostly involved memorisation and writing. He noted:

“Memorising vocabulary and composition, that’s what we usually do. That’s how it was in the beginning.” (Fayed, Interview, 2023)

Fayed described his early days at the boarding school as being filled with writing tasks and memorisation activities. For him and most of his friends, the main goal

at this stage was to collect as much vocabulary as possible. Fayed's account demonstrates that memorisation and composition were central to the early stages of language learning in the boarding school. His statement highlights that vocabulary acquisition was prioritised as the foundation for later communicative competence. Vocabulary building is prioritised over grammar, as communication is impossible without sufficient words. (Wilkins, 1972, p. 111 as cited in Benkhenafou, 2015).

In addition to memorising vocabulary, students also used the same method to learn longer and more complex English texts. In this case, Guna, Abid, and Fayed explained that besides memorising words, they also memorised public speaking scripts. This made it easier for them to give presentations and helped them feel more confident when speaking in front of others. This finding confirms a study by Nida (2014), which suggests that memorisation can accelerate the development of conversational skills by encouraging students to internalise English sentences through memorising the dialogue text. Through this practice, students not only learned new words but also practiced sentence patterns that could later be used in real conversations, which in turn allows students to speak more fluently and confidently.

In the same way, Fajri also mentioned that he used to memorise conversation script when he prepared for Tuesday's conversation session. He clearly noted that *"On Tuesdays, there's a conversation activity, we have to write and memorise it"* (Fajri, Interview, 2023). Fajri's experience supports the finding above emphasising that memorisation is a common strategy employed by students at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School, particularly within the foreign language programme. The way he used the pronoun *"we"* pragmatically suggests that he was not only describing his own practice but also representing the collective experience of his peers, which indicates that memorisation is more than just individual effort but it is a method systematically introduced by the boarding school and followed collectively. At the same time, students accept and adopt the memorisation practice as they find it useful and effective for improving language skills.

However, different perspective about the effectiveness of memorisation was expressed by other participants who viewed such practice as less significant. Zaid, a fourth year student, agreed that memorisation is necessary but contended that it often feels mechanical, as students rarely have opportunities to apply the words in actual practice. As a result, he could forget the vocabularies easily. Moreover, Zaid added that pure memorisation can become “monotonous and boring” (Interview), and explained that he found it more meaningful when practiced with engaging activities such as interactive conversations or games. Therefore, this suggests that while memorisation is considered useful, its effectiveness is limited when it is not applied through meaningful, communicative, and contextual practice, confirming Khamees’ (2016) study that meaningful contextual-based memorisation is more preferable rather than rote memorisation.

From the description above, three key points emerge: First, memorisation functions as a standardised system at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School, second, it is reinforced until it becomes a student habit, and lastly its effectiveness depends on factors such as meaningful practical use. As Sunain explained, memorisation has already become an established learning practice at *As-Tsani* IBS and is formally embedded within the language curriculum. In this sense, memorisation is not merely a learning technique adopted by students but a structured activity that reflects the wider pedagogical system of the *pesantren* (Sunain, Fieldnotes). In other words, whether they like it or not, all students are required to engage in this activity and to accept it as part of their learning behaviour. Another finding from my observation shows how new students worked hard to memorise some words written on an announcement board in *As-Tsani* IBS boarding complex. The image below illustrates their effort:



Picture 5.3 Students are writing and recalling memorised vocabularies.

The image above illustrates the students' effort to memorise new vocabulary. It shows several students writing down words and then attempting to commit them into memory. One of the students, who appeared to be lying on a bench, confirmed that he was fully engaged in memorising the words along with sample sentences, as these would be required for a repetition activity later in the afternoon (Fieldnotes). Although his posture might suggest relaxation, his explanation indicates that he was in fact actively concentrating on transferring the words into his memory. This scene highlights how memorisation is treated by students as a deliberate and goal-oriented activity, even when carried out in informal or less structured settings.

Furthermore, the second point lies in how the boarding school instils the habit of memorisation through consistent enforcement until students internalise it, especially once they begin to experience its practical benefits. What first feels like an obligation slowly turns into a routine, as constant practice and reminders from the institution help students make memorisation part of their everyday learning behaviour. This process shows how habits are formed through repetition and structured guidance, where students begin to follow the practice automatically. As a result, students not only fulfil institutional requirements but also view memorisation as useful, particularly when it helps them increase their

vocabulary and communication skills. In this case, however, it is important to note that an excessive reliance on memorisation, even when it becomes a habit, may hinder students' ability to communicate naturally in a foreign language, as they can become overly dependent on memorised phrases and struggle to construct spontaneous expressions (Miller et al., 2002; Garii, 2002).

In addition, the final aspect relates to the effectiveness of memorisation. Although memorisation at *As-Tsani* IBS is considered a standardised practice and has also become a habit among the majority of students, its effectiveness ultimately depends on how far it is applied in meaningful practice. As students such as Zaid reflected above, memorisation can only be truly effective when it goes beyond simply storing words in memory and is actually used in real communication. When students actively practice the words they memorise in conversations or presentations, passive recall is transformed into active language competence. Thus, when memorisation is combined with authentic communicative practices in real contexts, it becomes highly effective and can serve as a foundation for building fluency and confidence in language learning (Khamees, 2016; Nida, 2014).

In conclusion, memorisation at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School is not only a learning method but also part of a long tradition in *pesantren* education. It is practiced every day until it becomes a habit, shaping the way students learn and study. For many students, memorisation is useful because it helps them build a strong vocabulary base and gives them more confidence when speaking. At the same time, some students feel it can be boring or less effective if it is only about repeating words without using them in real situations. This shows that memorisation works best when it is combined with practice in meaningful activities, such as conversations or presentations, where students can apply what they have memorised. In this way, memorisation continues to serve as both a cultural value and a practical tool, but its true benefit comes when it supports students in developing real communication skills.

5.4.2 Translanguaging in communication

This section turns to another strategy observed in the field, the practice of mixing languages in students' daily communication. While earlier discussions emphasised memorisation and self-initiated learning as central strategies in the language learning process, here the focus shifts to the linguistic practices students adopt to negotiate meaning. This practice is translanguaging, a concept described by García (2009) as the dynamic use of learners' full linguistic repertoires to facilitate communication and learning. In this context, students fluidly move between Bahasa Indonesia (L1), English, and Arabic to maximize their communicative resources and learning opportunities. Although each student may also possess a local (ethnic) language, such as Acehese, Gayonese, or Jamee', the use of these languages is prohibited within the boarding environment, except when communicating with visiting family members. In the following discussion, the terms code-switching and translanguaging may be used interchangeably. While they are conceptually different, *code-switching* referring to alternation between separate linguistic systems (Poplack, 1980) and *translanguaging* emphasising the integrated use of linguistic repertoires (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), both terms are relevant to the data encountered in this study.

Observation data showed that translanguaging often took place in students' daily conversations at *As-Tsani* IBS. Although the school policy encourages students to use only English or Arabic as the "official" languages, many students, especially beginners with limited language skills, frequently switched between the target language (TL) and their mother tongue to keep the conversation going. For these students, translanguaging was both a practical way to communicate with friends and a useful bridge between their current abilities and the school's expectations. In some situations, the first language acted as a "life-saver," helping students transfer TL structures into their L1 before producing complete sentences in the TL (Krashen, 1993). During the transitional stage (around 7–24 months), this practice not only supported communication but also helped students adjust to the school's language rules.

The situation above forced students to activate their full “semiotic repertoire” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 250) to maintain the communicative interaction by shifting to Bahasa Indonesia as the alternative linguistic resource. Classroom observation illustrates such practice between students in an English class. Peer interaction was recorded when a student (S1) sitting in the third row of the class asked his friend (S2) while explaining about his family visit:

- S1 : My mother come on Sunday yesterday, she bring chicken
penyet...What? What "chicken *penyet*" in English?
S2 : Fried chicken!?
S1 : No, No..., it's the "*penyet*."
Nusa : Smashed? Smash chicken.
S1 : Yes, smashed chicken, and we eat together" (Fieldnotes)

The extract shows a student trying to talk about a visit from his parent who brought *ayam penyet*, a local dish of smashed fried chicken. In this short conversation, the first student (S1) did not know how to say *ayam penyet* in English, so he mixed the two languages. To correct himself, he asked his friends about the English word for *penyet*, and finally the teacher, Nusa, confirmed the answer. This situation is an example of translanguaging in the classroom, where students combine two languages to a name of a food. From translanguaging or code-switching view, the student used this strategy to keep the conversation going, even though he did not know the right word in the target language. As a result, he eventually learned the word in English. This interaction demonstrates that translanguaging is not only a sign of limited knowledge, but also a way for students to use what they already know to learn more. By switching between languages, they can explain ideas, add new words to their vocabulary, and keep communications flowing. To this extent, translanguaging is seen both as a tool for communication and as a strategy for learning.

In other cases, students also admitted that they used translanguaging strategies to avoid breaking language rules. Fajri and Abid acknowledged that when their conversations took place in areas where teachers or language supervisors could hear them, they preferred to mix the two official languages rather than use Bahasa Indonesia. In the interview, they explained:

"When I am talking to friends, if I don't know how to say the words in English, I mix with Bahasa Indonesia. Sometimes, I use Arabic if I know... especially, if there is Ustaz, or language supervisors around." (Fajri, Interview, 2023)

"... if I don't know a word, I use Bahasa Indonesia... then combine it again with English... if I knew, I would prefer to use English to express myself. Mixing the language is common here, but we have to be careful". (Abid, Interview, 2023)

The interview excerpts illustrate how students navigate language barriers by shifting between English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Arabic depending on context. As Fajri explained, he often mixed Bahasa Indonesia into conversations with friends when he lacked the English vocabulary. However, in the presence of teachers or *Mudabbir* (language supervisors), he deliberately avoided Bahasa Indonesia to reduce the risk of punishment, instead switching to Arabic since it is also recognised as an acceptable language within the institution beside English. Similarly, Abid described using Bahasa Indonesia when he did not know an English word, before returning to English whenever possible. He also noted that translanguaging was common among students, though it need to be careful due to the school's language policies. These reflections highlight how students' language choices are closely tied to the *pesantren*'s rules and expectations.

In practice, English and Arabic are legitimised as the *pesantren*'s formal languages, while Bahasa Indonesia is tolerated only in limited circumstances, such as among newly arrived students. As confirmed by ust. Sunain that *"in this school (As-Tsani IBS), the formal languages are English and Arabic, while Bahasa Indonesia is only for newly-arrived students"* (Fieldnotes). This hierarchy places English and Arabic in a superior position, with fluency in these languages bringing students greater respect and recognition, as they demonstrate the ability to communicate in the school's "official languages" (Martin, 2005, as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2020). Therefore, while mixing English with Bahasa Indonesia helps maintain students' interaction, blending English and Arabic not only signals linguistic competence but also helps them avoid disciplinary consequences.

In the same way, Zaid and Mufti also shared similar views noting that translanguaging was used as strategy to overcome communication difficulties and to punishment, as shown in the interview excerpt below:

Zaid : *If I don't know how to say it in English anymore, then I immediately switch to Bahasa Indonesia. But not too long, just kind of asking question, so it won't be noted or recorded.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean by that?*

Zaid : *For example, if we say "can you take my 'celana' [trousers]?" It still sounds like you are speaking in English, even though, actually, we don't know what 'celana' means in English." (Zaid, Interview, 2023)*

The extracts above illustrate how the code-switching example usually used by students in their conversation. Zaid explained that students sometimes inserted Bahasa Indonesia words into English or Arabic during conversations at the *pesantren*. When students struggled to express something in English, they would briefly switch to their first language, usually for a single word, phrase, or short sentence. However, he admitted that this was also a deliberate strategy to avoid punishment. According to him, if supervisors noticed the use of Bahasa Indonesia, it would be recorded as a violation and could lead to disciplinary action. In the interview excerpt, he gave the example of saying "*can you take my 'celana' [trousers]?*" where he borrowed the Bahasa Indonesia word *celana* because he did not know the English equivalent. Zaid recalled this with a smile, acknowledging that such code-switching was a conscious and somewhat "tricky" practice. He recognised that it was technically against the rules, but also noted that it was a common strategy among students for managing communication.

Furthermore, Zaid explained that students often relied on phrases such as "*what do you say?*", "*what is the meaning of...?*", or "*what is ... in English?*" when they needed to draw on their first language. He argued that in these cases, students were not truly breaking the rules, since they were still framing their sentences in English. This practice was widely accepted among students, who even defended it when questioned in the so-called "language court." From a learning perspective, Zaid also pointed out that such practices were useful, as they allowed students to expand their vocabulary through authentic, contextual

interaction. By asking about unfamiliar words directly within the flow of conversation, students could acquire the vocabulary they needed in real time, which in turn supported the development of speaking fluency.

Similarly, Mufti explained that mixing languages was a common practice despite being prohibited. He admitted that he often did this himself to keep the conversation flowing and to avoid communication breakdown. He narrated:

"These boys (other junior students) frequently mix up their languages, speaking in English then suddenly switching to Bahasa Indonesia. Actually, it's prohibited. In the past, when I was in junior high school, we also did that often because we didn't know English words. It is better than the conversation stops, or being silent...because it happened too. But sometimes it's good when a friend could teach us the word." (Mufti, Interview, 2023)

Mufti's narration describes how translanguaging is commonly practised among students at *As-Tsani* IBS, even though it is formally prohibited within the *pesantren*. Reflecting on his own experiences, he recalled that students often switched to Bahasa Indonesia when they lacked the necessary English vocabulary. As a senior, he also observed that such practices are particularly common among new students during their first and second years at the boarding school. He admitted that when he was in the second grade himself, he frequently alternated between English and Bahasa Indonesia for the same reason, limited vocabulary. This strategy, he explained, was crucial "to avoid silence or communication breakdowns". He also described situations where groups of students would sit or walk together in complete silence, unable to initiate conversation in English. Such moments, he noted, often created "a sense of anxiety among group members" who were expected to communicate in English.

In these situations, the first language plays a vital role in breaking silence and facilitating interaction among peers. Translanguaging, in this sense, provides what Dryden, Tankosić & Dovchin (2021) call an "emotional safe space" (p.3), enabling students to cope with the anxiety and fear often linked to foreign language use. Within group settings, where English-only rules impose a

formal communicative environment, the use of L1 through language mixing can create a more relaxed atmosphere. By easing the pressure of strict formality, translanguaging helps conversations flow more naturally and makes it easier for others to join in. When interactions are bound too tightly by formal language expectations, communication risks becoming stilted or exclusionary, as some students may feel reluctant to contribute due to their limited competence. Translanguaging, therefore, helps to foster inclusivity, build less formal peer relationships, and encourage broader participation (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Furthermore, another point raised by Mufti is the learning opportunity embedded in translanguaging practices. His comment that “...*sometimes it’s good when a friend could teach us the words*” highlights how such moments of language mixing become opportunities for peer scaffolding within a communicative interaction arena. Students with stronger vocabularies can provide the missing words, while others benefit from these interactions by acquiring new lexical knowledge. This dynamic not only supports communication in the moment but also raises students’ awareness of their linguistic gaps. By recognising these weaknesses, learners are able to focus their efforts on improving specific areas of their foreign language competence. In this way, translanguaging functions not only as a communicative strategy but also as a valuable pedagogical tool that promotes collaboration, inclusivity, and on-going language development.

Unlike the wider social environment outside the classroom, interactions inside the classroom showed how translanguaging shaped teacher–student relationships. Here, students often turned to the teacher for clarification on vocabulary and pronunciation. In the junior high class (second grade), for instance, students were more active in asking questions about both the lesson content and specific language items. The teacher also used translanguaging as part of his instruction, frequently repeating his English sentences in Bahasa Indonesia, such as: “OK, everyone! *let’s see our tasks from last week. Please open page 52, Task.1!*” followed by [“OK, semuanya.. *ayo kita lihat tugas minggu lalu, coba buka halaman 52, Task.1*”] (Fieldnotes, 2023). However,

when explaining lesson content, the teacher emphasised English and tried to minimise the use of Bahasa Indonesia. As he later explained, the purpose of classroom teaching was to help students understand correct language forms, especially grammar, whereas outside the classroom, the focus shifted to practical language use for communication in wider social settings.

A similar pattern was observed in another class during a lesson on family trees. In this session, a student asked: “*What is stepmother, ustaz?*” The teacher responded, “*Stepmother itu ibu tiri,*” and then elaborated in Bahasa Indonesia: “*Kalo ada orang ibunya meninggal, trus ayahnya menikah lagi, itulah stepmother*” [if someone’s mother passes away, and the father remarries, the new wife is the stepmother] (Fieldnotes, 2023). By drawing on Bahasa Indonesia, the teacher ensured that the concept was fully understood, while English remained the reference point for learning the target vocabulary. This shows that translanguaging served as a bridge between the new language and students’ existing knowledge, reducing potential confusion and supporting engagement with the lesson.

In conclusion, the findings from both interviews and classroom observations show that translanguaging is an important communicative strategy at *As-Tsani* IBS, used by both students and teachers to deal with language challenges, keep conversations going, and meet school expectations. For students, mixing languages helps them fill gaps in vocabulary, avoid silence, and cope with the pressures of English-only rules. It also works as a subtle way to negotiate rules and avoid punishment, while creating more inclusive spaces where peers can support each other’s learning. For teachers, switching between languages becomes a purposeful teaching tool, allowing them to explain difficult concepts, give clearer examples, and guide students’ understanding without interrupting the lesson. Overall, these practices show that translanguaging is not just a sign of limited language skills, but a flexible and effective strategy that supports both communication and learning. In the *pesantren* context, it highlights how language use is shaped by school rules as well as teaching

goals, making translanguaging a valuable resource for encouraging participation, inclusion, and language development.

5.5 Roles of teachers and peers

This section explores the roles of teachers and peers in English language learning, with particular focus on how these roles intersect within the small, closely connected community of an Islamic boarding school. From a behaviourist perspective, reinforcement, repetition, and external stimuli are key elements in shaping and sustaining learning habits, which makes the presence of both teachers and peers indispensable. Teachers provide structured input, corrective feedback, and motivational reinforcement, while peers create opportunities for repeated practice and social support. Together, these interactions generate a collaborative environment in which formal instruction in the classroom is continuously reinforced by informal exchanges in daily life. By examining these dynamics, the discussion highlights the complementary contributions of teachers and peers, as well as the ways in which their interaction sustains English learning within the *pesantren* context.

Building on this foundation, the following subsection turns to the role of teachers, whose influence emerges as particularly central, the findings of this study. At *As-Tsani* IBS, the importance of teachers is amplified by the nature of the boarding school setting, where students live and learn in a highly structured and immersive environment. Participant observations reveal that learners place strong value on teachers' presence, not only during classroom instruction but also in the wider boarding environment. Teachers are regarded as facilitators who provide linguistic input, feedback, and encouragement outside the scheduled lessons. It is particularly evidence when students saw a teacher to consult about vocabularies for repetition task. Later the teacher confirmed that such interaction is a common experience at *As-Tsani* IBS, where students often approach spontaneously to ask about language matters in open spaces (Fieldnotes).

In addition, the interview data reinforce students' perceptions of the central role of teachers in facilitating the language learning process at *As-Tsani* IBS. The presence of teachers in daily activities out of formal school hours was considered highly beneficial by students. Fajri recalled that during his early year of learning English at *As-Tsani* IBS, teachers supported him by providing vocabulary and sample sentences that could be applied in specific contexts. In addition, the teacher also voluntarily organised extra classes to assist students who motivated to make progress more quickly. In the same way, Abid explained that teachers also support him by giving vocabulary and English lessons, which helped him making progress from a basic level of English to greater confidence. These particular data underline how teachers act as sources of knowledge and direction, by providing the foundation the students need to build their language skills step by step.

Furthermore, Farid highlighted how the teaching styles and approaches of the teachers become an inspiration in his English learning. Although the process was challenging at first, teachers' encouragement motivated him to persist, which eventually lead to a genuine interest and appreciation for studying English. He emphasised that *"the teachers and their teaching style really make a difference, they add an extra push"* (Farid, Interview) showing that students value not only what teachers teach but also how they teach it. A teaching style that is engaging and encouraging can make students feel more confident and motivate them to keep practicing English. Moreover, the perception that teachers are *"more knowledgeable"* also increased his confidence and enthusiasm to keep learning, and made him value their presence in his daily study process. In this sense, Farid's account suggests that teachers not only share knowledge but also create a positive learning atmosphere that motivates and provides emotional support to students.

Another interview data also shed light on the motivational function of teachers, which aligns with behaviourist principles of reinforcement. Juan observed that teachers often provide encouragement by reminding students of the value of learning for their future roles in society. He described that teachers

often delivered short motivational talks, reminders or gave praise that sustains students' engagement and shapes their study habits. However, the data also reveal that this influence is not absolute. Guna explicitly argued that teachers "can't guarantee" students' success, because the real determinant lies in whether learners themselves choose to practice and act upon the guidance provided. In further detail, Guna said:

"The teachers are good, they teach us very well. But they can't guarantee whether we succeed or not. It really depends on us whether we practice or not." (Guna, Interview, 2023)

The statement above reflects students' perceptions of teachers at As-Tsani IBS. While the data indicate that students greatly value the teacher's role in the language learning process, Guna underscored another important point that ultimate success largely depends on the learners themselves. He emphasized that progress is determined by students' personal initiative, particularly their willingness to actively practice the language. This view shifts attention from teacher-centred reinforcement to learner responsibility, showing that progress in language learning relies on students' initiative, consistent practice, and self-regulation. From a behaviourist perspective, Guna's statement suggests that external reinforcement is only effective when students actively respond to it and turn guidance into habitual practice. In the *pesantren* context, this reflects the interaction between structured teacher support and student agency, where lasting success grows out of both working together (Xiao, 2014).

Similarly, Zaid's perspective indicates that teachers cannot continuously provide direct instruction to students. Consequently, the active role of learners in complementing this process becomes indispensable. In other words, effective learning emerges from the combination of teachers' initiative and students' own willingness to engage in the learning process. This is evident in his statement below:

"They're pretty good, I'd say. They give us a lot of motivation, encourage us to keep learning English. Sometimes they teach us directly, but then they also let us study on our own. Actually, we do a lot more self-study. I mean when it comes to learning English." (Zaid, Interview, 2023)

Zaid's account that teachers "give us a lot of motivation" and "encourage us to keep learning English" shows how students perceive teachers as motivators who provide positive reinforcement as the external stimuli in shaping learning behaviours. His note that teachers "sometimes teach us directly" but also allow space for autonomy reflects a combination where teacher guidance is complemented by self-regulated learning. Importantly, his remark that "we do a lot more self-study" highlights the *pesantren*'s reliance on habit formation through repeated individual practice, echoing both behaviourist models of skill consolidation and Islamic educational values such as *mujahadah nafs* (discipline through effort) (Azizah & Subaidi, 2022; Harahap et al., 2024), detail explanation will be presented in chapter 6 about self-discipline. These findings, thus, suggests that learning in the *pesantren* is structured around a dynamic balance between external reinforcement from teachers and the internalisation of responsibility through self-directed practice.

However, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning through self-directed practice can be a significant challenge for some teachers. One main difficulty is ensuring that students stay motivated and are willing to take the initiative in managing their own learning. This becomes even more complex because not all students have the same level of motivation or readiness for independent study. To address this, Sunain explained that he proposed specific strategies to connect with students, with the goal of increasing their interest and encouraging them to take part more actively in learning activities. In the interview, Sunain stated:

"My concept is to encourage these teachers to approach the children, to become close to them... it's about winning the affection of the children so that they have respect for the teachers, enabling what the teachers convey to the children to be carried out with joy or love from the children... the method is to frequently meet, gather, chat, provide problem-solving to the children. So, the more attention we give to them, the better they will be and the more they will be willing to listen to what we say... Now, I'm starting to implement this here, and slowly we'll try it out, it is still on process..." (Sunain, Interview, 2023)

According to Sunain, adopting a friendly and approachable attitude toward students is essential for fostering their sense of responsibility and independence in learning. Building rapport and mutual respect is not simply about maintaining harmony, but rather, it serves as a foundation for encouraging students to take greater ownership of their participation in the language programme. In this regard, Sunain recommends several strategies teachers can employ, such as greeting students regularly, spending informal time with them, engaging in conversations, and listening attentively to their stories or concerns. He explains that school-aged children, particularly those living in a boarding school away from their parents, require greater attention and care. In this regards, teachers help students shift from passive recipients of instruction to active participants who value the learning process and assume responsibility for their own progress.

Such approaches directly contribute to cultivating students' agency in language learning. Close attention and emotional support encourage students to recognise their own role in the process, helping them to create independency in learning. The experiences they gain, such as being supported when facing challenges in language practice and receiving encouragement to persist, play an important role in shaping their motivation and self-regulation. Over time, these experiences reinforce positive attitudes toward language learning and nurture the initiative needed for self-directed practice. Therefore, the data reflects that while discipline and external reinforcement remain important, they are no longer seen as sufficient on their own. Instead, increasing attention is being given to the intrinsic dimension of learning such as students' motivation, willingness, and emotional connection, which is often overlooked within behaviourist framework.

In addition, the shift from a purely behaviourist approach to the concept that recognises the social dimensions of learning has encouraged the school community to value the role of peers. In this case, the data show how peers actively support language learning in the *pesantren*. As students live, study, and socialise together on a daily basis, friends become an inseparable part of their learning environment. Unlike regular schools where students go home after

classes, life in an Islamic boarding school means peers are always present in the dormitory, in the classroom, and during daily activities. This closeness allows peers to become not only companions but also active participants in the learning process. The following student accounts show how peers help create opportunities for practice and support language learning in Islamic school context.

Fayed, for instance, explained that *“Friends are the people we always meet. For four years here, I’ve been with the same peers every day, in the room and outside, it’s always with them.”* His words illustrate how the structure of boarding school life creates a tightly knit peer community where students spend nearly all of their time together. Farid added, *“It’s like having close friends nearby; we talk with them in English every day and sometimes work on things together.”* These experiences show that peers provide not only emotional support but also practical learning opportunities. Within the boarding context, constant interaction among friends means that English practice extends far beyond the classroom, taking place in everyday conversations and shared activities. This makes peers an essential resource in creating a natural and immersive language environment.

Mufti’s account further demonstrates how peers can strengthen personal motivation and agency. He shared, *“I practiced speaking with my friends until I became fluent,”* pointing to the way peer interaction provided both encouragement and practice. His experience shows that peers can act as motivators and role models, pushing each other to improve and persevere in learning. In the IBS setting, where students often face homesickness and the absence of parental support, peers become an especially important source of encouragement and accountability. Mufti’s story also reminds us that while teachers play a guiding role, long-term success depends on how students use their peer relationships to build habits of practice and confidence. In this way, peers help transform external guidance into internal drive, highlighting that language learning in boarding schools thrives not only on discipline and

reinforcement but also on students' willingness to learn together and support each other.

Overall, the discussion illustrates that English language learning in the *pesantren* is the product of a dynamic interaction between teachers, peers, and students' own. Teachers play a central role as guides, motivators, and sources of knowledge. They provide structured input, correction, and encouragement that help students form strong language habits. Their role is not limited to the classroom, since they also support students in daily activities, offering advice and feedback in informal situations. This continuous presence reflects the nature of boarding school life, where learning is not restricted to scheduled lessons but becomes part of everyday routines. At the same time, peers are also important in shaping learning. Because students live, study, and spend nearly all of their time together, peers become active partners in learning. They provide natural opportunities for practice, collaboration, and encouragement, which help students gain confidence and use English more often in daily communication.

These findings suggest that language learning in the *pesantren* cannot be explained only through behaviourist ideas of repetition, habit formation, and reinforcement. While such principles are clearly present, the data also show that learning is strongly supported by social interaction. Teachers' guidance works best when students are willing to respond and practise, and peer support makes it easier for learners to internalise what they have learned in real communication. Students themselves stressed that progress depends largely on their own initiative and responsibility, showing that external reinforcement must be combined with self-motivation. In this way, the Islamic boarding school creates an environment where teacher support, peer influence, and student agency work together to sustain learning. This balance reflects both behaviourist and social perspectives on education, highlighting that successful language learning depends not only on discipline and reinforcement but also on collaboration, relationships, and students' own willingness to take part in the process.

5.6 Roles of environment

This section aims to explore the roles of the environment in shaping students' English language learning experiences at *As-Tsani* IBS. As a residential institution, the *pesantren* provides not only formal classroom instruction but also an immersive social and physical setting that influences how students engage with the target language on a daily basis. The enclosed nature of the boarding school, often described as a "holy prison," creates a self-contained community where students' interactions are largely confined within the boarding complex walls. In language learning context, such an environment offers opportunities for students to optimise the exposure to English through structured routines, communal practices, and intense interaction among all boarding school's members. Building on scholarship that emphasise the importance of learning environments in language acquisition (Archee, 2012; Koko, 2007), the following discussion considers how both social dimension like peers interaction, institutional authority, and communal norms, and physical spaces such as classrooms, dormitories, and linguistic landscape shape the ways English is learnt, practiced, and internalised. The discussion begins with the social dimension, examining how relationships, authority structures, and community expectations influence students' engagement with English.

5.6.1 Establishing social environment

It is undeniable that the role of the social environment is crucial in the language development of foreign language (FL) learners (see Chapter 2, section 2.6). At *As-Tsani* boarding school, the social interactions established among the students serves as important avenues for practicing their communication skills, particularly in English. Within this environment, the role of peers becomes very crucial in shaping students' language learning experiences. Peer interactions contribute to building confidence, fostering motivation, and helping new students integrate into wider groups where English use is more common. At the same time, students also emphasised the importance of teachers and seniors in the wider social environment. Teachers are seen not only as sources of instruction

but also as mentors who guide and encourage consistent language use, while seniors act as role models and provide practical support in navigating daily routines.

Although the formal practices of *As-Tsani* IBS clearly demonstrate a dominant behaviourist orientation, with a strong reliance on structured routines and disciplinary regulation, as discussed in the previous section on habit formation, the social aspects and their underlying dynamics also emerge as an important concern for both students and the institution. As the governing authority, the *pesantren* recognises that language learning is deeply embedded in the social life of its students, which indicates that the institution also values the principles of social construction in shaping language development. Students' daily interactions, friendships, and informal exchanges often serve as meaningful opportunities for practicing English that allow them to negotiate meaning and develop their language skills in more supportive setting. At the institutional level, teachers and senior students are positioned as role models and mentors as the support system that creates a meaningful language environment and provides scaffolding for learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne 2006).

The importance of creating a supportive and conducive social environment for language learning was directly emphasised by the head of LDC, Sunain, in our informal meeting at the coffee shop. During the conversation, he argued that the language environment is one of the key factors in ensuring the effectiveness of the language programme. He clearly described that "...*what also helps the language programme to be successful is the "boarding" environment*" (Sunain, Fieldnotes). The "boarding" here refers to the complex of the boarding school. His perspective reflects that success in language learning is not solely the result of formal instruction, but how it is closely supported by the continuous linguistic exposure provided through the social environment within the boarding school. It was quite impressive when I discovered that his doctoral thesis was about the role of linguistic environments, with a specific focus on learning Arabic. Having this background, he seemed possesses high awareness on the

establishment of effective language environment for foreign language learning (Fieldnotes).

In a separated interview, Sunain further explained how *As-Tsani* IBS has long encouraged the use of English or Arabic in daily communication within the boarding complex. However, sustaining this policy requires continuous commitment and adaptation, particularly in relation to the readiness of teachers and staff, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Sunain : So, the biggest challenges I feel is the readiness and the changes in the language environment. In the past, all teachers, even the kitchen staff and security guards, were required to speak formally with the students. Therefore the language was alive.

Interviewer : You mean in Indonesian, Ustadz?

Sunain : No, it's in Arabic or English. Back then, we wouldn't even accept teachers or staff if they didn't have a background in foreign languages, either Arabic or English. And for teachers who were already accepted but didn't have strong language skills, they were given training. They received language training. And even now, I still do the same. I give opportunities for teachers who are not yet able to speak fluently. I say, "Come on! Let's create a special class, a class just for teachers to practice speaking." Especially for speaking, this is our way of responding to the challenges; it's the solution we have taken. (Interview, 2023)

As I attempt to provide a verbatim translation, I may need to clarify the phrase like *"the language was alive"* to account for differences in understanding across the language. Here, the phrase means the practice or the use of the language was active. In the extract above, Sunain compares the earlier language learning environment at *As-Tsani* IBS with its current state. At the time of the interview, he noted that the environment was no longer as supportive as it had been in the past. He recalled his early years of teaching, when the linguistic atmosphere was very vibrant because every member of the boarding school community, including kitchen staff and security personnel actively participated in using the target languages. This observation highlights that creating a supportive social environment for language learning depends not only on

teachers and students but also on the active participation of all members of the *pesantren*, including non-teaching staff. In the context of language learning, any factor that influences students' attitudes and achievements can be considered part of the language environment (Urzúa, 1980; Archee, 2012).

Furthermore, Sunain also indicated that, at the time, the institution maintained a commitment in establishing this language-rich environment, as reflected in its recruitment practices, which prioritised hiring teachers and staff with a background in foreign languages. Moreover, training was also provided for those required further development in language skills. This description is evident through students' testimonies, recalling that the language environment was highly active in the past, where *"we could see everyone speak English everywhere.. and the monitor is very strict"*. Even, he added, the kitchen staff would ask the students in English, such as *"Is it enough?"* to check whether the food portions were sufficient (Mufti, Interview). Besides the description of an active language environment, his account also indicates the presence of strict supervision by the monitoring team (senior students) in language implementation. This reflects the institution management's commitment to ensuring that the language environment is consistently maintained and brings positive impact on students' language learning process. I will discuss further detail about disciplining and its mechanism in supervision or monitoring in chapter 6.

Another initiative taken by *As-Tsani* IBS' management to create a social environment that supports language learning is the integration method, which involves placing new students together with senior students in the dormitory room. The institution deliberately arranges this system so that newcomers can quickly adapt to the community and also enables them to acquire the language more effectively by interacting with senior students. This practice is particularly intended to accelerate the language learning process of new students. As Sunain explains in the following excerpt:

"The dormitory rooms are shared, accommodating about 8-10 students in one room. There may be 2-4 senior students are placed in the newly

enrolled student's room. They are intentionally combined to ease new students to integrate and learn from their elder peers. Moreover, learning English is easier as the seniors typically have better language proficiency." (Sunain, Interview, 2023)

Mixing the students in the dormitory rooms is one of long-established practices at *As-Tsani* IBS. Sunain claimed that this integration aims to support the adaptation and coping process of new students while also offering practical opportunities for the use of the English language. Through this initiative, newly arrived students have significant opportunities to develop social interaction, which in turns will promote language learning by imitating or acquiring vocabulary from conversations among their senior roommates. This notion is supported by several students indicated from their perspectives from the interview data. Fajri for example, he recalled his experience with senior student, commonly called "*Akhi*" (means *Brother*), when he rehearsed speech text in the room. At that moment, the "*akhi*" helped correcting his mistake in the sentences as well as pronunciation. Similarly, Fayed said "*we can ask our senior if don't know about something*" to demonstrate that he can refer to "brothers" when he need to ask something for clarification. In the same voice, Farid also noted that friends, especially senior one, are beneficial as the person to refer to when teachers are unavailable for example in the dormitories or bed room. "*Akhi*" will "*correct us if we make any mistake*" which makes learning process is fully supported. (See previous section on the roles of peers for more detail).

These finding highlights that the dormitory can be more than just a living space, yet it is also an informal learning environment where peer relationships actively contribute to language development. The integration system ensures that seniors function as support system that provides scaffolding for new enrolled students which in turns, creates an immersive English-speaking community. From a pedagogical perspective, this phenomenon reflects the extension of behaviourist strategies into social contexts, where repetition, imitation, and corrective feedback are naturally embedded in everyday interactions (Skinner, 1957; Bandura, 1977). A study by Solichin (2021) also

supports this interpretation demonstrating how peer interaction in Islamic boarding schools fosters both linguistic competence and social adaptation through imitation and corrective practices.

In addition to the institution's formal commitment, students themselves play a crucial role in creating and sustaining a supportive language environment for their own development. In practice, this means that learners must make deliberate efforts to build such an environment within their social spaces in order to accelerate their progress in English. As Juan suggested, students should “*create a circle*” composed of peers who share a strong enthusiasm for learning and mastering English. This initiative becomes more important in the current context, where, as Juan observed, everyday interactions in English have become relatively rare. This idea is illustrated in the following extract:

"These days, it's kind of rare to hear people speaking English. Only some are really enthusiastic about it. They have to find their own friends, their own circle, to practice with. But if you look at the wider environment, in public, people hardly ever use it, that's probably the obstacle." (Juan, Interview, 2023)

Juan's notion highlights that student agency is crucial for sustaining the practice of English in the *pesantren*. He explained that only a small group of motivated learners take the initiative to form circles of peers to practice the language by creating spaces where English is intentionally used. Yet, these efforts remain limited because English is rarely spoken in broader social settings. The problem, therefore, is less about students' knowledge or institutional resources and more about the lack of everyday opportunities for natural interaction. This account suggests that to create the real progress, students need to build their own supportive social environments.

Furthermore, Abid also described how supportive social environments within the boarding complex play a vital role in shaping students' confidence and motivation to practice English. His initial interest in English was stimulated by praise from peers when he successfully imitated the speaking style of an admired English teacher. This recognition motivated him to continue learning

and practicing English. Similar experiences were described by Juan, Farid, and Zaid, who explained that their motivation to learn English grew after observing senior students (*Mudabbir*) delivering speeches in English fluently. Juan, especially, recalled that this performance appeared “very cool,” inspiring him to become a *Mudabbir* by improving his English skills, while Farid and Zaid were driven by the desire to gain recognition and acceptance within the *pesantren* community.

These accounts demonstrate how the social environment surrounding students strongly shapes their interest and motivation in language learning. The encouragement of close friends, who often regarded by Abid as a “new family” in the dormitory, further enhances their confidence and helps them remain consistent in their efforts. At the same time, the students’ reflections highlight how friendship networks within dormitory rooms function as crucial entry points for language development. These small, supportive circles provide safe, low-pressure spaces for practice, enabling learners to build confidence and accumulate the “social capital” (Bourdieu, 1986) required to engage with wider groups and integrate more fully into the broader social life of the Islamic boarding school.

In conclusion, the case of *As-Tsani* IBS illustrates that the success of its language programme rests not only on structured policies and formal instruction but also on the strength of its social environment. The integration of new and senior students in dormitories, the involvement of teachers and even non-teaching staff, and the formation of peer circles all demonstrate how language learning is embedded in everyday life within the *pesantren*. From a behaviorist perspective, these practices reflect the natural extension of repetition, imitation, and corrective feedback into social settings (Skinner, 1957; Bandura, 1977), where praise, recognition, and reinforcement from peers and seniors act as powerful motivators. At the same time, from a sociocultural standpoint, these dynamics highlight the role of scaffolding and mediation (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), as students build confidence through collaborative learning in small circles before engaging with wider communities. In this sense, social

networks function as sites of both habit formation and meaning negotiation, blending behaviorist and sociocultural mechanisms in a mutually reinforcing way. Taken together, these findings underscore that language development in *pesantren* is not simply a product of classroom teaching but a dynamic outcome of communal living, peer interaction, and the co-construction of supportive linguistic environments, where institutional commitment and student agency intersect to sustain meaningful progress.

5.6.2 Physical environment

Building on the earlier discussion of the social environment, this section turns to the physical dimension of the environmental setting at *As-Tsani* IBS and its role in supporting language learning. The school designs its spaces through whiteboards, posters, and slogans to create a linguistic landscape where English is visibly present in daily life. These displays provide repeated exposure, practical input, and even symbolic messages that connect English learning with institutional pride. Therefore, the physical environment functions not only as a backdrop but also as an active tool that reinforces both language practice and the *pesantren*'s educational vision.

During my first field visit to *As-Tsani* IBS, I observed how the physical environment is deliberately structured to create a sense of separation from the outside world and an exclusive space conducive to learning. The *pesantren* is an enclosed complex surrounded by high walls, containing key facilities such as a mosque, classrooms, teachers' housing, student dormitories, and communal areas like courtyards and sports fields. With access strictly controlled through a guarded gate, the environment appears intentionally restricted (Fieldnotes), a feature commonly referred to by the community as a "holy prison," translated from Indonesian "*penjara suci*" (A'la, 2006, p. viii). This deliberate isolation is designed to immerse students in religious study, and at the same time, it also provides an additional advantage for foreign language learning. The enclosed setting of the complex ensures that students live, study, and interact with one another, creating the conditions for an integrated language environment where

English can be practiced consistently (Aziz, 2020; Hidayatullah, 2023). In this sense, the physical landscape is not just a backdrop to learning but an integral component of the institution pedagogical design.

The role of the physical environment becomes clearer when framed through the concepts of linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and schoolscape (Brown, 2012). Although linguistic landscape traditionally refers to public signage in broader social spaces, its principles can be applied at the micro-level of the *pesantren*, where written texts, posters, and public announcements form a visible and accessible source of language input. At As-Tsani IBS, the language programme strategically employs this schoolscape approach by transforming natural and communal spaces into sites of learning. For instance, whiteboards placed in central locations such as pathways to the mosque or dormitory courtyards that display English sentences. As shown by the following pictures:



Image 5.4 Signboard written with English

The image shows an example of a writing board put on tree in the communal area within the school complex to allow its accessibility for public. Fieldnotes confirmed that the content was regularly updated every week, with responsibility for the task assigned to senior students from the Language Development Centre (LDC). This practice demonstrates how the *pesantren* not

only integrate language input into the physical environment but also mobilises students as agents in sustaining it. The content itself reflects a dual function: the use of functional language drawn from students' daily experiences supports communicative practice, while the inclusion of motivational slogans adds an ideological aspect that reinforces values and attitudes towards English. In that way, the board operates simultaneously as a tool for language learning and as a symbolic reminder of the institution's educational and cultural aspirations.

The visibility and repetition of these displays, as Van Mensel et al. (2016) suggest, make language input both accessible and memorable, which enable students to internalise the intended messages, whether they are academic in nature or carry moral values. It also serves as campaign media that shapes students' perceptions, values, and identities. Interview data further emphasises this interpretation. For instance, Farid described English as "*the crown of the school*," a metaphor that positions the language programme to more than just an academic component, but as a symbol of prestige and institutional pride. In his view, the presence of English enhances the *pesantren*'s status, while its absence would undermine the school's dignity. His notion of the "crown" is evident that the dissemination of the messages on the board is highly effective, functioning not only as a reminder for Farid but also as proof that the message of identity has already been internalised within him. Such perspectives reveal that the schoolscape functions not only as a pedagogical environment but also as a symbolic arena where values, identities, and aspirations are negotiated.

Similar to Image 5.3, this picture (Image 5.4) was taken during observation in week 3, showing another example of functional language displayed on the physical environment, as shown below:



Image 5.5 English sentences on a signboard

This picture illustrates the physical environment utilised as learning medium to teach functional sentences applicable for daily conversation. The board displayed five sentences, as follow:

1. *Sssttt... hey brother! Speak English please!*
2. *Could I borrow your pen? Mine is lost*
3. *Hey brother! Watch your mouth!*
4. *I am out of money, will you treat me?*
5. *Oh God, hey mate! We are called by LDC*

These five sentences can be seen as examples of functional language that show the everyday interactions of students in the boarding school. They reflect real situations students often face, which make them relevant but sometimes difficult, especially for first-year students who are still learning how to express themselves in English. The strength of these sentences is that they are easy to understand, remember, and use because they come directly from students' own experiences. They also focus more on practical communication than on grammar or language rules (Gillam et al., 2010). Since these sentences are used repeatedly in daily life, students can quickly remember them and add them to their active English use. Even though this practice has weaknesses

such as fail to give enough attention to pronunciation, intonation, and stress, which can affect speaking skills, the presence of teachers and language supervisors can provide corrections, helping students not only use these functional phrases but also improve the accuracy of their spoken English over time.

Nevertheless, not all displayed texts serve functional purposes; some take the form of slogans or idiomatic expressions that combine language practice with moral guidance. For example, the phrase “*watch your language!*” in Image 5.5 functions not only as an introduction to an idiomatic expression but also as a reminder of social norms, reinforcing the values of politeness and respectful communication.

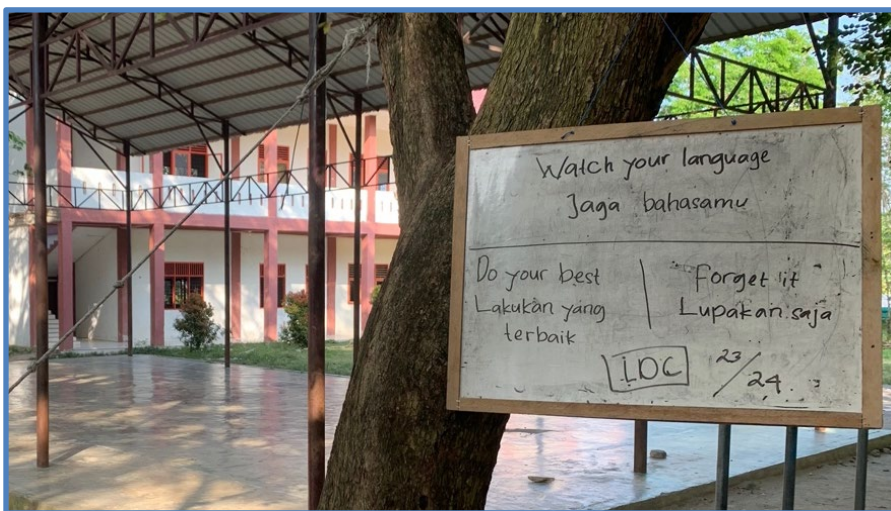


Image 5.6 Messages written in English on the board

The phrase “*watch your language!*” in Image 5.5 teaches more than just English idiomatic expression. While, linguistically, it introduces students to an idiom that commonly used in everyday English, socially, it conveys a reminder to exercise politeness and maintain respectful interaction. In this way, the schoolscape functions not only as a site for language acquisition but also as a medium through which values and norms are communicated and reinforced. The example above highlights that learning English in IBS context not only about communication but also about shaping respectful and responsible behaviour.

In addition, observational findings also reveal some other examples of how various spaces within the *pesantren* are utilised as learning media and as platforms for communicating disciplinary messages to students. For instance, the walls of school buildings are used to display announcements or to disseminate regulations. Also, the naming of institutional facilities, such as the Supervisor's Office, Kitchen, and Mosque is displayed in English, thereby embedding the language into the physical environment of the *pesantren*. In a same manner, the walls of student dormitories are displayed with disciplinary inscriptions such as "No Bullying," "No Littering," and "Keep Clean," which simultaneously function as behavioural reminders along with language exposure. This evidence demonstrates that, on the one hand, the school introduces students to English terminology in authentic contexts, and on the other hand, they instil moral values and disciplinary norms. The use of physical environment to exercise disciplinary power will be discussed further in detail in the following chapter.

Meanwhile, several students acknowledged that they greatly benefited from the idea of providing noticeboards in a public area where language-learning content is displayed. This is because, as they explained, "we can always return to check the content anytime we want," as long as it has not been erased (Junior student, Fieldnotes), as shown in the picture below:



Image 5.7 Students prepare themselves for *Repetition*

Fieldnotes from my informal conversation with a group of students engaged in writing and recalling memorised vocabularies show that they regarded these practices as highly effective in supporting their learning. The students explained that having such accessible resources allowed them to revisit for the language contents as often as needed. This not only facilitated the reinforcement of their memory but also enabled them to review and consolidate knowledge independently, at a pace that suited their individual learning needs.

In summary, the physical environment of *As-Tsani* IBS emerges as more than a mere backdrop to learning; it constitutes an intentional pedagogical and symbolic landscape that integrates language practice, institutional identity, and moral formation. Through its enclosed design, strategic displays, and use of everyday spaces as sites for English input, the *pesantren* creates an immersive setting where exposure to the target language is constant, meaningful, and connected to students' lived experiences. At the same time, these practices operate ideologically, embedding English within broader narratives of discipline, prestige, and institutional pride. The schoolscape therefore functions as both a medium for acquiring communicative competence and a channel for transmitting values, shaping how students not only learn English but also internalise the cultural and social expectations of their community.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the nature of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School by analysing key factors that shape students' engagement and development within a unique educational environment. The findings reveal that language learning in this context is not only an academic process but also a moral and behavioural formation deeply influenced by the *pesantren's* disciplinary and communal culture. Learning at *As-Tsani* IBS is embedded in structured routines that emphasise self-control, repetition, and responsibility—principles that closely align with both Islamic educational philosophy and behaviourist learning theory. The discussion on habit formation highlights that learning at *As-Tsani* IBS is primarily behaviour-

oriented. Students acquire language skills through continuous exposure, repeated practice, and reinforcement that gradually lead to automatic and consistent use of English. These processes mirror the behaviourist notion that learning occurs when repeated actions become habits, supported by both external discipline and internal motivation. Over time, students no longer perceive English use as a forced rule but as a natural part of their daily interactions, showing that the *pesantren*'s structured environment effectively fosters self-regulated learning behaviours.

Students' perceptions of learning activities indicate that they view the school's language programme as both challenging and beneficial. While many recognise the demanding nature of constant practice, they also appreciate the structured environment that encourages persistence and cooperation. The role of teachers emerges as crucial in sustaining motivation and providing reinforcement. Teachers act as facilitators, role models, and moral guides who integrate language instruction with values of discipline and respect. Meanwhile, peer groups play an equally significant role by creating a social learning atmosphere where cooperation, mutual correction, and shared accountability strengthen both language use and moral growth. The learning environment at *As-Tsani* boarding school functions as an ecosystem that supports continuous engagement with the target language. Organised routines, scheduled language activities, and institutional expectations contribute to the internalisation of language use. This environment operates as both a pedagogical and social framework, where discipline and community coexist to reinforce consistent language practice. Through this structured system, students learn that mastering English is not merely a cognitive task but a disciplined process involving moral commitment, collective responsibility, and perseverance.

In summary, EFL learning at *As-Tsani* school reflects an integrated model that combines behavioural conditioning, moral education, and communal engagement. Habit formation serves as the foundation of learning, reinforced by the interplay of teacher guidance, peer influence, and institutional structure. The process transforms language learning from a classroom activity into a lived

experience that shapes both linguistic competence and personal discipline. Ultimately, this approach illustrates how *pesantren* education harmonises spiritual values with modern pedagogical principles, producing learners who are not only proficient in language but also disciplined, responsible, and morally grounded.

CHAPTER 6: DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES AT AS-TSANI/ IBS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates how discipline operates within the English language programme at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS) and how it shapes students' learning practices. As a modern *pesantren* that implements intensive English language instruction, *As-Tsani* provides a context in which discipline is deeply embedded in daily routines and closely connected to students' academic development. The analysis explores how disciplinary mechanisms are enacted, how students experience and respond to these systems of control, and how such practices influence their language learning. Drawing on Foucault's concepts, this chapter argues that discipline in this setting functions not only as a mechanism of control but also as a productive force that shapes students' linguistic ability, learning habits, and wider social and moral identities, with the ultimate goal of fostering self-discipline.

As outlined in the literature review, *pesantren* provide a particularly rich site for examining disciplinary processes as they are strongly associated with discipline due to their centralised structures, systems of surveillance, and emphasis on collective life (Azra, 2003; Lukens-Bull, 2010; Nurkholifah, 2018). In Indonesia, modern *pesantren* like *As-Tsani* IBS are also widely known for requiring students to master foreign languages, particularly English and Arabic, within a highly controlled environment. It is therefore unsurprising that *pesantren* are often described in terms of strict regulation, even commonly referred to as a "holy prison" (*penjara suci*). Such perceptions reflect the intensity of training that shapes both the academic and moral formation of students.

This discussion is framed by Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, one of the most influential theoretical perspectives on the function of discipline. Foucault's ideas about surveillance, examination, and the internalisation of control have been widely applied to institutional contexts such as prisons, hospitals, military camps, and schools. In education, his framework

highlights that discipline is not simply imposed from above but operates through everyday practices, routines, and examinations that shape how individuals think, act, and relate to authority (Bodo, 2020; Kusumastuti & Kriswanto, 2022). In this sense, discipline is not a background condition for learning but a central process that forms the identity of the learner.

The findings suggest that discipline at *As-Tsani* IBS is enacted through a range of interconnected mechanisms. Institutional authority is exercised through panoptic surveillance, in which students are constantly aware that their behaviour and language use may be observed by teachers or supervisors at any time. This formal oversight is reinforced by peer monitoring, where students keep each other in check through collective responsibility. In some cases, students even engage in spying or reporting, ensuring that rules are upheld not only by authority figures but also within peer groups. These mechanisms of control create a system in which external regulation is gradually internalised. Over time, students begin to discipline themselves, recognising the benefits of obedience and order for their learning. The ultimate expectation of the *pesantren* is therefore achieved when discipline is no longer imposed from the outside but is transformed into self-discipline, guiding students in their academic, social, and moral development.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first revisits Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and how it is exercised within the *pesantren* contexts. The second analyses the disciplinary mechanisms applied in the English language programme at *As-Tsani* IBS, focusing on surveillance, routines, examinations, and institutional regulations. The third examines students' experiences of discipline, showing how they internalise, negotiate, or resist these structures and how discipline ultimately influences their language learning practices. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive account of the ways in which discipline functions as both an instrument of control and a formative force in shaping students' identities as English language learners.

6.2 Power exercise at *As-Tsani* IBS

Drawing on Foucault's concepts, this section examines the exercise of power at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS) through two main areas of analysis. The first focuses on the forms of power present within the *pesantren* environment. Here, attention is given to identifying which models of power are adopted by the institution's management, with reference to Foucault's typology. Equally important is an exploration of how students perceive and experience these forms of power in their everyday lives. The second area of analysis considers the mechanisms through which power is enacted in daily practice and how these directly shape both students' discipline and their English language learning. Such mechanisms include surveillance by teachers, peer monitoring, and other disciplinary techniques that regulate students' behaviour and language use. By tracing how these practices operate, the discussion highlights the ways institutional control becomes embedded in routines, gradually fostering the internalisation of discipline and influencing students' learning experiences.

Fieldwork findings suggest that the exercise of power at *As-Tsani* IBS reflects two key dimensions of Foucault's framework. On the one hand, there are authoritative elements that correspond to what Foucault terms *sovereign power*, functioning through direct authority and the imposition of rules. On the other hand, the institution also exhibits forms of *disciplinary power*, or *normalising power*, which work through surveillance, routines, and the internalisation of norms. These two forms of power not only enforce order but also guide students toward self-regulation, enabling discipline to be transformed from external control into internal practice. The following discussion examines these two models of power in detail, supported by empirical data, to show how they coexist and shape the lived experiences of students in the *pesantren* environment. The subsequent section then shifts the focus to the mechanisms of power, analysing how disciplinary practices are implemented within the school. This includes techniques described by Foucault such as panoptic surveillance, peer monitoring, the empowerment of agents of power, and other relevant strategies that are enforced in the *pesantren* context.

6.2.1 Sovereign power

Sovereign power, often described as repressive power, is one of the most visible and traditional ways authority is exercised. As Foucault argues, this form of power is concentrated in specific figures or institutions, such as kings, judges, political authorities, or, in the educational setting, teachers, or school leaders. Its effectiveness relies on visibility: power must be displayed in order to be recognised and respected (Taylor, 2011). In the context of *As-Tsani* IBS, sovereign power can be clearly observed in the structure of leadership. At the highest level of authority stands the *Kyai*, who is also the founder and owner of the *pesantren*. This position is not merely symbolic or administrative but has strong implications for the governance of the entire institution. My observations and document study confirm that the *Kyai* occupies the top tier of decision-making, with authority extending across all aspects of *pesantren* life. During several discussions about institutional policy, the head of the Language Development Centre (LDC), Ust. Sunain, frequently emphasised that “*all decisions are in the hands of the Kyai, it depends on what he says*” (Sunain, Fieldnotes). Such statements highlight the extent to which power is centralised in the leader, especially regarding decisions that affect the school’s financial management or strategic direction.

This centralised model of authority also shapes the English language programme. One example was shared by an English teacher who explained that he once proposed an initiative to participate in an English competition but was unable to proceed because the initiative did not receive the *kyai*’s approval (Ust. Nusa, Fieldnotes). The cancellation of such relatively minor activity illustrates how even small-scale initiatives are dependent on the *kyai*’s authorisation. These patterns reflect a leadership style that remains highly centralised and authoritative, where approval must be secured from the highest authority before actions can be taken. As Foucault noted in his book, “For a law to be in force in this kingdom, it must necessarily have emanated directly from the sovereign, or at least been confirmed by the seal of his authority” (Foucault, 1995, p. 47). At *As-Tsani* IBS, this can be seen in how the *kyai*’s authority influences both

important institutional decisions and small-scale issues within the English programme, showing the presence of sovereign power in the *pesantren* system.

In addition, the operation of sovereign power at *As-Tsani* IBS is deeply influenced by the institution's religious and cultural traditions. Historically, *pesantren* have clear hierarchies where the kyai holds the highest and most respected position. He is not only a teacher but also a spiritual and moral guide for students. The kyai's influence reaches beyond the *pesantren*, as he is respected in the wider community as a religious scholar and a person people turn to for advice on faith and social matters. In some cases, he also takes on important roles in local religious institutions, such as serving as an imam or community leader. My fieldnotes revealed that the Kyai of *As-Tsani* IBS also holds a prominent position outside the *pesantren*, serving as the head of the local council of Islamic scholars within the district government structure. His broader recognition as a religious leader reinforces the legitimacy of his decisions and contributes to the centralisation of power within the institution. As Foucault (1995) suggests, power is most effective when it is recognised and accepted as legitimate by those who are subject to it; in this case, the Kyai's spiritual and social standing sustains the acceptance of his authority across both educational and community contexts.

Another key feature of sovereign power in the *pesantren* can be observed in the punishment mechanisms applied to students who violate the rules. Foucault (1995) explains that sovereign power has historically been exercised through punishments directed at the body, making authority both visible and feared. In this sense, punishment is not only about correcting wrongdoing but also about demonstrating who holds power. At *As-Tsani* IBS, this dynamic is evident in disciplinary practices where teachers or supervisors sanction students in front of their peers. These actions not only correct behaviour but also make power visible, reinforcing the authority of the institution. The interview data illustrate how this works in practice. As Juan described:

Interviewer : *“So, during the public speaking at night, I noticed some students had their faces painted and powder put on them. Was that also considered a punishment?”*

Juan : *“Yes, that’s one form of punishment. Usually, it happens when the student is the designated speaker or orator but fails to memorise the speech. In that case, the supervisor gives them a punishment.”*

When further asked how much preparation time is given, Juan replied “One week.” This means that if the student is still unprepared after this period, a punishment is imposed. Juan noted, having the face painted is regarded as one of the lighter sanctions, and harsher punishments also exist for students violating certain rules or repeated the offences for several times. He added:

“There are more serious ones. For example, they can be bathed in the school’s roundabout. They’re also made to wear a board hung across their chest to shame them.” (Juan, Interview, 2023)

The description above shows that students may face more severe punishments if they commit serious violations. In such cases, they might be made to stand in public areas, such as the school roundabout, or wear boards hung on their chests as a form of public shame. These boards often carry phrases like “I didn’t perform the public speaking” or “I didn’t pray,” and the student is paraded in front of their peers (Juan, Interview). Such practices clearly illustrate how punishment in this context targets both the body and the public image, turning discipline into a visible display that humiliates the offender while reinforcing the authority of the supervisors.

Punishments at *As-Tsani* IBS are closely linked to many aspects of life, including the language policy. Students are required to use English or Arabic, and speaking Bahasa Indonesia in the programme is considered a violation. Supervisors often view strict enforcement as part of their responsibility to build discipline and protect the *pesantren*’s language identity. For example, a supervisor might stop a conversation and immediately give a punishment to show that the language rule is serious. This action is not just about correcting one student, but also to remind everyone else that the rule and its enforcers

must be respected. These punishments are often done in public areas where many students can directly observe, which makes the punishment more powerful because it turns one person's mistake into a lesson for everyone. The visibility of the punishment warns others not to repeat the same behaviour and helps strengthen the authority of the *pesantren* leaders. It also encourages students to monitor their own actions, since the fear of public embarrassment pushes them to follow the rules more carefully.

However, sovereign power is also paradoxical because it reveals both control and weakness. Punishment usually happens only after a rule has been broken, showing that earlier efforts to prevent violations were not effective. As Foucault (1977) noted, "The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power" (p. 49). In other words, punishment is not necessarily about preventing future offences, but is more about reasserting authority that has been challenged. In similar way, in the context of *As-Tsani* IBS, teachers often impose sanctions only after repeated violations of the English-only rule. This shows that softer approaches, such as guidance, supervision, and emotional support, were not enough to maintain discipline. As one teacher explained, punishment is used "as a last option," acknowledging that control through authority alone cannot ensure genuine commitment to the rules. In this regard, ust. Sunain stated:

"Discipline can be achieved through care and affection—it doesn't always have to come from harsh punishment. Punishment is still necessary, but it shouldn't be the main focus." (Sunain, Interview)

This reflects Foucault's idea that sovereign power enforces obedience through visible displays of authority but does not necessarily lead to true internal change in behaviour or belief. Thus, while the *pesantren* continues to employ elements of sovereign power through sanctions and rules, its teachers are increasingly aware of the importance of emotional connection as a means of internalising discipline. The emphasis on building discipline through care rather than fear indicates a shift from external enforcement toward the process of

internalising discipline, where respect and affection become the true foundations of students' commitment to the institution's values and language policies.

Another challenge of sovereign power is the potential for resistance. Because this form of authority is centralised and highly visible, students may seem obedient in front of teachers or authority but behave differently in private. In the *pesantren*, for instance, students might speak English when supervisors are nearby but switch to Bahasa Indonesia when under no supervision. This reflects Foucault's idea that strict or repressive power often drives people to find subtle ways to escape control while still appearing to follow the rules (Hoffman, 2011). As discussed in the previous chapter on *translanguaging*, students often put their efforts to speak or mix within official languages when teachers or supervisors are present. This shows how they negotiate authority rather than fully internalise it. Therefore, although sovereign power can be effective in maintaining order for a short time, it may also create resentment or avoidance behaviours that reduce its long-term influence on discipline.

Moreover, the excessive use of sovereign power can bring negative effects the process of discipline development. When students are frequently punished in public, the authority of teachers or supervisors may begin to feel unfair or arbitrary. As a result, students may develop resistance toward the management by deliberately ignore instructions, even when they are aware of the possible consequences. This was evident at *As-Tsani* IBS, where several students refused to join English learning activities because they felt they were treated unfairly, despite knowing that their refusal would lead to another punishment (Fieldnotes). In another case, additionally, a student reported that senior students often acted unjustly by reducing or disregarding the punishment for their friends or those they were close to (Farid, Interview). Such experiences reveal how perceptions of unfair treatment can weaken the legitimacy of authority and create emotional distance between students and school leaders. Foucault reminds us that when power becomes too coercive, it tends to produce resistance. In the *pesantren* context, this resistance often emerges subtly

through peer groups or informal gatherings, where students form reactions that challenge the institution's formal rules.

These examples illustrate that when authority is perceived as unfair or excessively strict, students may display obedience while quietly resisting in private. They may appear disciplined under supervision but disregard the rules once they are unsupervised. This highlights a key limitation of sovereign power as it can regulate behaviour, but not necessarily shape genuine commitment and discipline. Although punishment can quickly enforce compliance, it does not always foster true self-discipline. Many students follow the rules merely to avoid sanctions rather than because they have internalised the underlying values. At *As-Tsani* IBS, sovereign power thus serves to maintain order, yet its dependence on visible control and coercion reveals it as only one layer within a broader system of discipline. For students to develop sustained engagement and responsibility in English learning, this form of power needs to be complemented by more subtle mechanisms of disciplinary power, which operate through continuous observation, peer influence, and the gradual formation of habits. These mechanisms, as Foucault suggests, work more effectively in producing self-regulating and autonomous individuals.

6.2.2 *Disciplinary power*

In the previous discussion, I have highlighted *sovereign power*, a form of authority characterised by its visible display of dominance, explicit commands, and the use of punishment to maintain obedience. In this section, the focus shifts to what Foucault describes as a more modern and subtle model of power called *disciplinary power* (Foucault, 1995). Within this framework, Foucault explains that power functions in a less visible and more internalised manner. Rather than relying on external coercion, *disciplinary power* works by training individuals to regulate themselves through processes of habituation and normalisation. In educational institutions, this form of power does not merely seek to control students' actions; rather, it aims to produce self-disciplined subjects who willingly conform to institutional norms. As Foucault (1995) notes,

disciplinary power produces what he calls organic individuality by regulating bodily activities. This form of individuality is considered “organic” because it becomes self-sustaining, allowing individuals to engage in disciplinary practices almost naturally and voluntarily (Foucault, as cited in Hoffman, 2011, p. 29). In other words, over time, institutions no longer need to strictly enforce compliance, as students begin to internalise these routines and recognise them as necessary for achieving academic success.

At *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS), this mechanism is evident in the transformation of students’ behaviour gradually from obedience motivated by fear of punishment to voluntary discipline practiced as part of their moral identity. In the early stages of schooling, many students followed the rules primarily because of the sanctions associated with disobedience. However, as time passed and students advanced to higher levels of education, their perception of discipline evolved. They began to view it not merely as an institutional demand but as a valuable principle necessary for personal growth and moral integrity. One example of this internalisation process can be seen in Juan, a senior student who also serves as a *Mudabbir* (language supervisor) responsible for monitoring junior students’ use of language. Juan expressed that as a senior, he felt *“responsible for maintaining discipline because the younger students look up to me”* (Interview, 2023). This awareness reflects a significant shift: in order to discipline others, Juan first recognises the need to discipline himself. He added that when it comes to *“using the foreign language, especially”* he must always try to *“set a good example in practising language use in the pesantren environment”* (Interview, 2023). Here, Juan’s statement illustrates how the exercise of power transforms into a form of ethical self-regulation by which discipline is no longer imposed from above but emerges from within as a conscious moral practice.

Senior students in particular tend to display this self-awareness and independence in maintaining discipline. Having lived under the *pesantren*’s structured system for several years, they perceive discipline as a natural and familiar element of daily routines. One student remarked, *“We have to be*

disciplined if we want to be successful in the future" (Mufti, Fieldnotes, 2023), reflecting how discipline has become internalised as a personal value associated with success and self-improvement. This transformation exemplifies the core feature of *disciplinary power*, which reflects its capacity to internalise obedience. Discipline no longer relies on continuous external surveillance but operates through individual awareness and voluntary conformity to institutional values. What begins as an external obligation gradually becomes an internal motivation. Thus, in the context of *As-Tsani* IBS, disciplinary power functions less through visible authority and more through the subtle production of self-regulating individuals who embody the school's moral and educational ideals.

In disciplinary power, individuals become more visible because they are regarded both "as objects and as instruments of exercising power" (Foucault, 1995, p. 170). This means that disciplinary power transforms individuals from mere objects of control into active subjects who unwittingly manage and regulate their own behaviour. Within this framework, each person is expected to exercise self-control and conform to the social norms of their environment. For example, students learn to behave politely, respectfully, and with discipline not merely because they are compelled to do so, but because they have come to understand that such behaviour is expected of them as members of the school community. This was particularly evident during my fieldwork, where the majority of students consistently demonstrated politeness and respect in various contexts, including informal conversations and casual interactions (Fieldnotes, 2023).

Another characteristic of disciplinary power is its capacity to normalise behaviour through continuous surveillance. Foucault (1995) argues that modern institutions exercise control not through physical force but by establishing systems in which individuals feel they are constantly being watched, thereby regulating their own behaviour. To this extent, at *As-Tsani* school, surveillance is implemented in various forms, such as supervision by teachers, dormitory caretakers, and room monitors. Even peers play an active role in observing and advising one another regarding a proper conduct. As Fayed described,

“In this pesantren, friends are very important... for this 4 year, wherever we go, we meet the same friends again and again. But they are very helpful with studying. They like to remind us” (Interview, 2023).

This reflection illustrates Foucault’s idea that disciplinary power functions most effectively when control becomes internalised. The continuous presence of surveillance, whether from authority figures or peers, creates a form of self-awareness in which students learn to conform to the norms of the institution even without direct supervision. This process exemplifies what Foucault calls *normalisation*, the transformation of discipline from external enforcement into internalised conformity, where regulated behaviour becomes part of everyday routine.

The process of normalisation at *As-Tsani* IBS can be observed in the way students voluntarily engage in daily language learning and religious routines. It was evident during fieldwork observations, when several students were seen heading to the mosque approximately thirty minutes before the designated time of 6:00 p.m. This time marks a fixed schedule when all students are expected to gather for evening prayers and following night study sessions. In contrast, some students were observed spending time chatting with friends or relaxing, with a few still dressed casually in T-shirts and joggers (Fieldnotes, 2023). This contrast between students who arrived early at the mosque and those who remained leisurely engaged in informal activities reflects varying levels of discipline internalisation. Those who arrived early at the mosque demonstrated stronger motivation and readiness to participate in scheduled activities, suggesting that for this group, these routines have become an integral part of daily lives, no longer require external enforcement.

The data from observation above was supported by Ust. Masda, who explained that this level of awareness and self-discipline is generally more evident among senior students who have already been familiar with the *pesantren*’s routines. He noted that *“students who are already aware are usually the senior ones because they are accustomed to the established study routines.”* In contrast, he described students *“between the second and third*

years” as being in a “*transitional phase*,” during which “*their obedience tends to be less consistent*” (Masda, Fieldnotes, 2023). His notions indicate that senior students demonstrate higher levels of compliance because they perceive institutional routines as normal and self-regulated rather than obligatory. In this sense, normalisation at *As-Tsani* IBS reflects Foucault’s notion of discipline being internalised through repetition, where control no longer depends on external authority but is sustained by the individual’s own sense of order and belonging within the institutional environment.

In a same voice, a senior student named Abid described that he could feel a significant difference between his early days at *As-Tsani* IBS and his current experience. He recalled his initial period as particularly challenging, marked by strict rules, numerous activities, and an intense adjustment process. However, over time, everything has begun to feel normal. He mentioned that “*by now, I already know what activities I will be doing tomorrow*” (Interview, 2023), indicating that the school’s daily routines have become an integral part of his life. In other words, participation in these activities has become habitual, and he no longer depends on external enforcement, such as bells, announcements, or reminders from the *mudabbir*, to follow the activity schedules. Abid’s experience particularly reflects Foucault’s belief that a subtle disciplinary approach, exercised through consistent supervision, is more effective in fostering self-discipline than relying on physical punishment (Foucault, 1995).

Moreover, in his concept of discipline, Foucault (1995) explains that while sovereign power focuses mainly on controlling the physical body, disciplinary power works on both the body and the “soul.” It shapes individuals through processes such as observation, normalisation, and control (p. 295). This means that discipline is not only enforced through visible rules or punishments but also through subtle ways that influence how people think and behave from within. This kind of approach can also be seen at *As-Tsani* IBS, where student behaviour is guided not only through physical enforcement but also through continuous moral advice and motivation. Observations showed that, for example, after prayer times, students regularly received short talks or reminders

from teachers. The talks usually lasted about five to ten minutes before other activities began (Fieldnotes). These sessions serve as regular encouragements, helping students stay motivated and consistent in their studies.

In some occasions, the school also invites special speakers, such as successful alumni or respected figures, to deliver motivational talks. These sessions are designed to inspire students and strengthen their emotional and spiritual commitment to learning. In interviews, participants such as Juan and Mufti admitted that they were inspired to learn English through these sessions. Juan mentioned that, during his first year, he began to love learning English after listening to one of the *akhi* (senior students) who spoke fluently and confidently in English during a session after the prayer time that made him looked “*cool and smart.*” Similarly, Mufti explained that the teachers’ advice often motivated him because “*their words were deeply touching and meaningful*” as reminders to stay committed to his studies. Such practices show a subtle form of discipline that influences students’ thoughts and feelings. Thus, in this regards, *As-Tsani* IBS reflects Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power through a gentle touch on the soul, which has a more effective impact on fostering self-discipline.

The main objective of the disciplinary process is to produce what Foucault (1995) refers to as “docile bodies” (p. 138). As discussed in Chapter 3, this concept explains how disciplinary power shapes individuals to become obedient, efficient, and productive within systems of authority. It describes people who are capable of regulating their own behaviour and maintaining discipline without the need for constant external supervision. At *As-Tsani* School, this form of discipline does not signify weakness or blind conformity. Rather, it illustrates how discipline has become a natural and internalised aspect of students’ daily lives, developed through repeated practice, routine engagement, and intrinsic motivation. As discussed earlier, the school encourages self-control not merely through formal regulations or observation, but through on-going moral guidance and the influence of peers that gradually shape students’ awareness and behaviour. This condition aligns with the views

expressed by ust. Sunain who emphasised that the *pesantren* has two main objectives: “the first is learning, and the second is disciplining.” His statement indicates that both learning and discipline are equally essential elements of the school’s educational philosophy. In other words, discipline at *As-Tsani* is not merely an external force imposed upon students, but a parallel and complementary process to learning that supports moral development, responsibility, and consistent engagement in the *pesantren*’s educational life.

In summary, the case of *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS) illustrates how Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power operates as a subtle yet transformative force in education. Unlike sovereign power, which relies on visible authority and punishment, disciplinary power at *As-Tsani* works through repetition, observation, and moral guidance, gradually shaping students into self-regulating and responsible individuals. Discipline in this context is not imposed but internalised through daily routines, peer influence, and continuous moral reinforcement. Over time, students move from obedience driven by external control to voluntary self-discipline rooted in personal awareness and moral conviction. This process reflects Foucault’s idea of *docile bodies*, individuals who embody discipline as part of their identity, aligns with the school’s aims of learning and moral formation. Thus, discipline at *As-Tsani* is not merely a tool for control but a means of cultivating autonomy, consistency, and ethical self-governance among students.

6.3 Disciplining language practices in IBS (Power mechanism)

This section illustrates several techniques and mechanisms employed by the authorities in exercising disciplinary power within the *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School. The description is drawn from data obtained through observations and interviews conducted with participants. At *As-Tsani* IBS, discipline is implemented through a combination of coercive (sovereign) and normalising (disciplinary) approaches. However, as previously discussed, sovereign power is more evident in the way punishments are administered, which still reflects the practice of public punishment. In contrast, the

internalisation of discipline within the institution relies more on subtle mechanisms characteristic of disciplinary power. As noted by Ust. Sunain, “there are two methods of discipline in *As-Tsani*: the first is coercion, and the second is habituation” (Sunain, Interview, 2023). Particularly in the process of habituating discipline, *As-Tsani* IBS applies fundamental principles that align with Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power, including surveillance, normalisation, and examination. The following discussion will therefore elaborate on how these measures are implemented at *As-Tsani* IBS to discipline students, particularly in relation to learning practices and the use of English within the *pesantren* environment.

6.3.1 Panoptic Surveillance

Panoptic surveillance is one of the main features of Michel Foucault’s idea of disciplinary power, which is valued for its ability to shape people into self-regulating and disciplined individuals. The concept comes from Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon (1791), a prison design where one guard can observe all prisoners without being seen. Because the prisoners never know when they are being watched, they begin to behave as if they are always under observation. Foucault (1995) used this model to explain how modern institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and factories, maintain discipline not through visible force, but through constant and subtle observation. In these systems, individuals internalise surveillance and learn to monitor themselves, which in turns reinforcing the disciplinary order.

In the context of *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS), the mechanism of panoptic surveillance is observable evident in the school’s disciplinary practices. Observation and control are implemented in both overt and covert forms. Teachers, supervisors, and student monitors operate as agents of observation, ensuring that institutional rules are consistently followed. The structure reflects Bentham’s original panoptic model, where surveillance creates a sense of constant visibility, even when authority figures are not physically present. During fieldwork, for example, it was observed that teachers and

mudabbir (student supervisors) frequently circulated around the school grounds, monitoring students' behaviours, including dress codes, punctuality, and language use during daily interactions (Fieldnotes, 2023). Their presence, even when casual, functions as a reminder that discipline is always being observed and expected.

Overt surveillance, such as the appointment of monitoring teams or supervisors selected from senior students, which will be discussed in detail in the following section, functions to maintain constant supervision as a means of instilling discipline among students. This disciplinary mechanism is applied continuously through monitoring students' physical presence, language use, attendance records, examinations, and even routine checks of personal belongings. Within all learning activities, particularly English programmes at *As-Tsani* IBS, student attendance and participation are strictly mandatory. Consequently, attendance control becomes one of the key indicators used to measure students' discipline. In many activities, students are required to sign or mark their names to confirm their presence and participation. For example, during a public speaking event, I observed that students were called one by one while their names were checked on the attendance sheet. Interestingly, this procedure also applied to the *Mudabbir* (student supervisors), who were likewise required to record their attendance to demonstrate their active involvement in the event (Fieldnotes, 2023). The photo below illustrates a group of *Mudabbir* queuing to sign the attendance list after the activity finished (Image 6.1).



Image 6.1. Mudabbir is signing attendance list of public speaking activity

This embedded form of control reflects a strict yet subtle mode of surveillance that compels students to continuously participate in the institution's structured activities. Although participation in these activities may not be enforced through direct coercion, the implementation of attendance records effectively leaves students with little choice but to comply. The requirement to sign attendance lists functions as an indirect disciplinary mechanism, ensuring that students remain present and engaged while normalising participation as part of their daily routine. Over time, this system cultivates a sense of obligation that operates not through overt punishment, but through the internalisation of discipline, where students learn to associate presence and participation with responsibility and belonging within the institutional order.

In addition, surveillance is also applied to students' personal belongings within the *pesantren* environment. At *As-Tsani* IBS, students' dormitory rooms and lockers are inspected regularly every two to three months, although the checks are conducted on a random schedule. This system is intended to ensure that students do not possess or store prohibited items within the school compound. According to ust. Masda, these inspections are carried out

periodically, during which students' wardrobes and lockers are examined to confirm that no restricted items such as mobile phones, cigarettes, or sharp objects are being kept (Fieldnotes, 2023). This practice reflects another layer of disciplinary control that extends beyond regulating behaviour to governing students' personal spaces and possessions. The unpredictability of the inspection schedule reinforces a sense of continuous surveillance, encouraging students to self-regulate and comply even in the absence of direct monitoring. In Foucault's terms, such mechanisms exemplify how disciplinary institutions sustain order through subtle and internalised forms of control, where the awareness of being potentially observed becomes sufficient to ensure conformity.

In this regard, the school environment can be described, as Barker et al. (2010) suggests, as "a prison in disguise" (p. 381). Students gradually accept surveillance as a normal and routine aspect of their daily lives, becoming accustomed to both being observed and observing others (Taylor, 2012). The strength of this disciplinary system lies in its subtle operation—it functions through uncertainty and acceptance, where students comply because they have internalised the belief that observation is a natural part of the learning process (Lyon, 1994). At *As-Tsani* IBS, this panoptic model does not depend on punishment or fear, but rather on the normalisation of discipline, where students willingly take responsibility for their own behaviour, follow institutional rules, and regulate themselves.

However, the function of this surveillance system relies heavily on the agents of authority who act as intermediaries of control within the institution. Teachers, supervisors, and senior students play crucial roles in maintaining discipline, serving as visible extensions of the school's regulatory power. Alongside these official figures, another unique component strengthens the system's reach, the *Jasus* or student spies. Their covert role complements overt supervision by providing a hidden layer of observation that ensures discipline remains constant and uninterrupted. The following sections will discuss these

two categories in detail, examining how they contribute to sustaining the panoptic surveillance network within the *pesantren* environment.

Agents of authority

One of the main mechanisms of surveillance in the *pesantren* system operates through a structured hierarchy of authority, in which both teachers and senior students act as “*vehicles of power*” (Foucault, 1995, p. 164). These individuals serve as the extensions of institutional power, ensuring that discipline and order are maintained at every level of the school community. Within this framework, Foucault argues that power circulates through a network of relations rather than being concentrated in a single source. In *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS), this circulation of power is manifested through the roles of teachers and senior students who function as the “agents” that mediate between institutional authority and everyday student life. Their presence ensures that the school’s expectations are not only enforced but also internalised by students, creating a system in which discipline is both observed and lived.

Teachers occupy the central position in this disciplinary structure. Their authority is not merely pedagogical but also moral, emotional, and behavioural. As Foucault (1995, pp. 170–177) notes, in disciplinary institutions, teachers serve as both *observers* and *transmitters* of power whose authority not only to monitor students’ behaviour but also to reproduce institutional norms through teaching, correction, and moral guidance. At *As-Tsani* IBS, teachers play a vital role both inside and outside the classroom, guiding students in their behaviour, communication, and interactions across all aspects of daily life. One student expressed this awareness, stating, “*Some of our teachers lives here with their families. They are always present in the complex and they can watch us anytime, so we must always behave properly*” (Safri, Fieldnotes, 2023). As noted by Safri, several teachers at *As-Tsani* IBS are provided with housing within the *pesantren* complex, enabling them to work closely with students, offer daily guidance, and supervise learning activities. This arrangement also facilitates the cultivation of discipline among students. Safri’s reflection, thus,

suggests that the constant observation by the teachers helps students develop a sense of self-discipline.

In addition, Foucault (1995) also uses term “*machinery of power*” to describe the nature of an organised and systematic operation of disciplinary mechanism, which aims to regulate behaviour and produce obedient, or “docile” individuals. In *As-Tsani* IBS, such a *machinery of power* can be seen in the hierarchical relations where teachers act as operators to deliver institutional discipline and norms to the boarding community through evaluation and observations. Teachers maintain attendance records, assess academic performance, and monitor religious and social conduct. Data from classroom observations indicate that at *As-Tsani* IBS, teachers typically begin their lessons by checking student attendance using a register. Interestingly, students who are absent, especially those without prior notice, are not simply overlooked, instead teachers instruct others to locate them in their dormitories.

For example, when an English class led by ust. Nusa was about to begin, he noticed that a few students were missing and immediately instructed one of the students to look for them in their dormitory rooms. He said “*where are they? Please go and find them in the dormitory rooms*”, and after couple of minutes, the students came to the class (Fieldnotes, 2023). The spatially concentrated and closely monitored environment of the *pesantren* enables teachers to easily locate and confirm the whereabouts of students who fail to attend class, except for those who have been officially excused for valid reasons like illness or returning home. The searching process often proves effective, as students who initially intended to skip class, change their minds and return to the classroom after being called by their teacher. Such an event illustrates how teachers exercise their authority to enforce discipline among students. The teacher’s active intervention demonstrates the operation of disciplinary power within the institution, compelling even those who initially resist attendance to reconsider their decision and conform to the school’s expectations.

This kind of teacher intervention not only influences students’ immediate decisions but also makes them reconsider before repeating the same behaviour

in the future. This process leads students to internalise discipline, learning to regulate their own conducts and adhere to the school's structured learning schedules until such discipline becomes part of their habits. Many students acknowledged that there is no point in breaking the rules because any violation will eventually be discovered and punished. As Mufti explained, *"sometimes I remind my friends that it is useless to go against the rules here, because you will surely get caught, and worse, you will be punished"* (Interview, 2023). Such statements and concerns, as expressed by Mufti, illustrate how students at As-Tsani IBS are aware that any form of disobedience will inevitably bring consequences. In other words, even those who choose to break the rules are already aware of the sanctions they will face. Fayed further described:

"if you commit a serious violation, your head will be shaved, for example, if you go out without permission or are caught smoking. Actually, they already know the consequences of what they do, but they still do it and are ready to accept the punishment" (Fayed, Interview, 2023).

Fayed's remark highlights that students are fully aware of the consequences of their actions; for instance, serious infractions such as leaving the boarding complex without permission or smoking result in head-shaving as a disciplinary measure. Image below show this kind of consequences:



Picture 6.2. Students with heads shaved in punishment.

The pictures 6.2 show students with heads shaved as a consequences of committing serious violation. While the first picture was taken during my observation, the second image was requested from teacher's documentation.

From the teachers' perspective, these recurring experiences provide valuable insights that shape their disciplinary practices. Foucault (1995) illustrated how prison guards acquired detailed knowledge of prisoners' personalities through close and continuous surveillance, which enabled them to categorise and manage the inmates effectively according to their individual needs. In this regard, ust. Sunain noted that:

"These students are naturally different, some are easy to handle, but others can be quite difficult or even a bit rebellious. So, we have to adjust our approach based on each student's character." (Fieldnotes, 2023).

Sunain's statement suggests that through on-going observation and interaction, teachers gradually develop a better understanding of their students' individual characteristics. As Foucault explains, at this stage the teachers, or disciplinary authority, becomes capable of assessing and "deciding what steps will have to be taken to destroy their old habits" (p. 126), thereby reinforcing the process of behavioural transformation within the institutional framework.

Through these continuous forms of evaluation, teachers make students visible in what Foucault describes as a "disciplinary gaze." This visibility functions as a subtle but powerful form of control: students modify their behaviour not because of direct coercion, but because they are aware of being constantly observed and assessed. Over time, this process contributes to the normalisation of disciplined conduct, where students learn to regulate themselves even in the absence of direct supervision.

In addition to teachers, senior students also serve as another layer of disciplinary control within the institutional hierarchy. They are assigned roles that allow them to act as supervisors, organisers, and role models for their juniors. These positions are not only functional but also pedagogical, as they provide opportunities for leadership management development and moral training. The involvement of senior students in disciplinary activities reflects a decentralised

model of power, where control is distributed horizontally among peers rather than imposed vertically from above. Foucault (1995) emphasises that modern disciplinary systems rely on this kind of distributed surveillance, where individuals themselves become agents of control within a network of observation.

This peer-based authority system is particularly visible in language programmes and dormitory life at *As-Tsani* IBS. Senior students, known as *mudabbir*, are tasked with overseeing daily routines and ensuring compliance with institutional norms. They check attendance, monitor language use, and remind their peers about prayer times or study schedules. In interviews, several students acknowledged that while the *mudabbir*'s presence could sometimes feel restrictive, it also encouraged them to stay organised and responsible. One student noted, "*The seniors remind us not because they want to punish us, but because they used to experience the same rules*" (Interview, 2023). This statement shows how authority becomes normalised and accepted when exercised through peer relationships, rather than top-down coercion.

The establishment of student organisations such as *Pesantren* Students Organisation (OPDT) and Language Development Centre (LDC) further institutionalises this surveillance system. These groups, managed largely by senior students, operate as semi-autonomous bodies that replicate the school's disciplinary structure at a smaller scale. They organise language activities, enforce English-only rules, and monitor compliance among their peers. This layered governance model aligns with Foucault's concept of *capillary power* (Foucault, 1980, p. 39), where control extends into the smallest and most localised aspects of social life. Through such mechanisms, discipline at *As-Tsani* IBS becomes not merely a system of enforcement but one of participation, where contribute to maintaining and reproducing the structures that regulate their conduct. Ustaz Sunain explained that members of these student organisations are recruited based on merit, although their eligibility for nomination also depends on their cohort year. He added that the members

receive training in disciplinary management and leadership skills (Fieldnotes, 2023).

As agents of power, senior students play a position between the subjects and objects of power. This means that, as enforcers, they also face a significant risk of being evaluated by higher administrators if the implementation of the disciplinary system is deemed unsuccessful. As the example given before, how *Mudabbir* who monitor public speaking activity was also monitored of their participation through attendance records. This control indicates that *Mudabbir* may also face consequences for not involving in activities assigned to them. In this regard, Foucault explains that within a disciplinary network, no single individual holds absolute power; rather, power is evenly distributed among all actors, creating a system in which everyone supervises one another. This dynamic is also evident in the context of *As-Tsani* IBS, where even the *Mudabbir* subject to supervision and accountability. Ust. Sunain further explained that *Mudabbir* who violate the rules or misuse their authority are also sanctioned, with the most severe punishment being the removal of their status as *Mudabbir* (Fieldnotes, 2023). This fact shows that power in the *pesantren* circulates through mutual supervision, ensuring that even those in authority remain accountable within the system they enforce.

These agents hold multiple responsibilities. In addition to carrying out monitoring and surveillance duties, they also serve as teaching assistants, helping teachers prepare learning activities, assisting with memorisation sessions, and writing vocabulary on the board. Juan's experience illustrates this dual role. As a supervisor, he observed a junior student who fell asleep during a morning vocabulary session. Juan explained that he asked the student to stand as a form of mild punishment. The student resisted, claiming he was only resting his eyes, but Juan insisted that sleeping during learning activities was unacceptable. Consequently, the student was required to remain standing until the session ended (Juan, interview, 2023). What Juan did can be seen as a multi-layered mechanism, essentially like "killing two birds with one stone." As a supervisor, he not only assists the language teacher with learning activities such

as listening to students recite vocabulary, correcting their spelling or grammar, and helping manage the class, but he also monitors students who are considered, in Foucault's term, "troublemakers." During lessons, he records both compliant and non-compliant behaviour among students.

From Foucault's (1995) perspective, he describes the above surveillance approach as an "integrated system" where multiple missions are carried out simultaneously: "teaching proper, ensuring knowledge acquisition and hierarchized observation" (p. 176). In this sense, surveillance becomes an inseparable part of the teaching and learning process itself. Foucault further notes that such an approach is often adopted by institutions because it allows the exercise of disciplinary power to be both efficient and self-sustaining. Through this system, power operates automatically and anonymously, distributed across individuals such as teachers and supervisors who act as its functional agents (Foucault, 1995).

Although the establishment of *Mudabbir* has proven effective in maintaining discipline at the *pesantren*, some students expressed disagreement with giving them authority. Many felt that the senior students were not always professional in carrying out their duties. When asked who should give punishments, most students preferred the *ustaz*, saying that teachers were fairer and calmer, while *Mudabbir* sometimes punished out of anger or gave overly harsh penalties. One student also mentioned that some senior students tended to show bias by being lenient with their friends but strict with those they disliked (Fieldnotes, 2023). Moreover, Farid shared similar opinion, stating that:

"The brothers (*Mudabbir*) sometimes choose selectively as well; if they share a room with him, or if they get along well with him... sometimes violations are not reported." (Interview, 2023)

Farid's comment highlights one of the weaknesses of the *pesantren*'s disciplinary practice. Such selective treatment or personal bias is often unnoticed by higher-level administrators, meaning that those in authority may not know what really happens in daily supervision. As a result, the *Kyai*, who

holds the highest position, may remain unaware that some disciplinary practices need to be reviewed. These inconsistencies can weaken the sense of fairness in the system and may lead some students to resist or question the rules they are expected to follow.

In contrast, interview data also revealed that some students viewed the delegation of authority to senior positively, considering them helpful both in learning and in maintaining discipline. These students believed that the senior members “*better understood our circumstances*” and therefore often adjusted the level of punishment according to the situation (Fieldnotes, 2023). Moreover, the presence of *Mudabbir* was seen as beneficial in helping students adhere to daily schedules and maintain punctuality. Students also noted that “*They (Mudabbir) are available 24 hours within the pesantren complex, so, it makes easy for us to seek assistance at any time*” (Juan, Interview, 2023), whether for academic or non-academic matters. As *Mudabbir* live and interact with students closely, they are often seen as more approachable. Their peer-based guidance creates a more cooperative environment where discipline is maintained not only through control but also through mutual understanding and support. Therefore, disciplinary power at *As-Tsani* IBS is not only about enforcing rules but also about guiding and motivating students to develop positive behaviour.

In conclusion, the collaboration between teachers and senior students as agents of authority demonstrates how disciplinary power in the *pesantren* operates across multiple levels. Teachers represent formal authority, ensuring that institutional rules are maintained, while senior students extend this power through peer relationships and daily interactions. Together, they create a self-regulating system in which discipline is sustained through observation, participation, and mutual accountability rather than coercion. The case of *As-Tsani* IBS thus reflects Foucault’s idea of panoptic discipline, where power functions not only to control but also to cultivate self-awareness, responsibility, and moral integrity among students.

Spying or “Jasus”

In addition to the visible and structured systems of supervision, a more hidden form of surveillance operates within *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS), shaping students' behaviour and reinforcing discipline in subtle but powerful ways. This covert mechanism functions through informal and often secret monitoring practices that take place alongside the visible authority of teachers and language supervisors. While overt surveillance relies on the direct observation of supervisors walking around the school to check students' language use, covert surveillance works through uncertainty and secrecy, ensuring that students never fully know when or by whom they are being watched. As explained in Chapter 3, the *Jasus* system represents one of the most intense forms of surveillance because the observers are hidden and unknown, as Foucault (1995) calls them “secret agents” (p. 281). Students know that they may be watched at any time and in any place, but they do not know who is observing them. This situation closely reflects Foucault's concept of the *panoptic effect*, where the possibility of being constantly watched makes individuals internalise discipline and control their own behaviour.

In practice, certain students are appointed as *Jasus* (spies) to observe their peers and report any breaches of language rules. This system is distinctive because it employs students, who have previously violated the rules themselves, to identify and report other offenders to the disciplinary authority. Students who commit language violations are brought before the *Mahkamah Lughah* (Language Court) (see Chapter 3, Section 4.4.3), where their cases are reviewed and punishments are assigned according to the seriousness of the offense. *Jasus* are given a specific period to find and record other rule-breakers and submit their reports to the disciplinary board. Functionally, the *Jasus* act as justice collaborators who cooperate with institutional authorities to enforce disciplinary norms.

The practice of spying at *As-Tsani* IBS is not formally stated within the school's policy, but it functions as an invisible yet highly effective mechanism of control. Students are aware that any of their peers may report violations of the

English-only rule to the *Mudabbir*, which may lead to punishment. Interviews and informal conversations data reveal that some several students admitted that they had either been reported by friends or had reported others for using Bahasa Indonesia. Juan recounted his experience “Yes, *I was caught few times for violating the language rules*” (Interview, 2023). Juan further elaborated the mechanism how this *Jasus* works. He explained:

“It was because of a language violation. I was speaking my regional language with a friend. Maybe someone from another group saw or overheard us, and they reported it right away. The “Jasus” are usually students who have been to the “Mahkamah”. To be released from their punishment, they have to act as “Jasus”. If they fail to catch someone, they can be called back again—what we call a “special calling.” So basically, when someone is punished, they’re also given the task of finding others who break the rules. It’s kind of like a duty or an additional punishment to identify new offenders.
Oh, there are some limits. Each “Jasus” has to report at least one person. But every report must include some details: the witness, time, place, and a kind of code identifying who made the report. Then the “Mahkamah” checks it. The code shows who made the report, and the witnesses are called for clarification. If there’s no witness, then it’s not complete, the report isn’t valid”

Juan’s elaboration provides valuable insight into how this mechanism operates as a covert form of control within *As-Tsani* IBS. The *Jasus* system represents an intricate disciplinary network in which surveillance is both decentralised and internalised among students. By assigning the task of monitoring others to previously punished students, the institution transforms discipline into a self-perpetuating cycle, where control reproduces itself through the very individuals it once constrained. In other words, authority converts those who were once the objects of power into its active agents. This aligns with Foucault’s notion that, within disciplinary systems, the individual is seen both as the object and the subject of power, who simultaneously being watched and watching others, which in turns, fostering a culture of self-regulation and collective surveillance among the *pesantren* community.

Due to the close social interactions within the dormitory environment, students can easily notice and report rule violations committed by their peers.

The *Jasus* network operates widely and deeply within the community, creating a constant sense of alertness that discourages students from breaking the rules. According to Ust. Masda, these spies worked carefully and discreetly, moving among groups of students and observing conversations to catch anyone speaking in a language other than English or Arabic. They often targeted individuals they already knew or those they believed were more likely to break the rules, sometimes they called them some kind of “trouble makers” students (Fieldnotes, 2023). Ust. Masda’s reflections suggest that the spying often rely on familiarity and social closeness to identify potential offenders, making it easier for them to anticipate and monitor those most likely to violate the language policy.

However, the practice of spying is not without problems. In its implementation, many *Jasus* face conflicts of interest while carrying out their duties. Zaid explained in the interview that “*some Jasus deliberately provoke other students to speak in Bahasa Indonesia so they can be reported as rule violators*” (Interview, 2023). This often happens because of personal tensions or negative feelings between the *Jasus* and their targets. As a result, students who have no real intention of breaking the rules may end up being punished. Even more risky, personal relationship issues between students sometimes lead them to seek out each other’s mistakes and use them as opportunities for revenge.

“Sometimes people are also slandered. Sometimes, for example, ‘I don’t like seeing him’ so they write it down... they look for friends to bait, we don’t speak Acehnese, but they bait until the language slips out, and compromise with other friends” (Fayed, Interview, 2023).

The situation described above is not entirely unexpected, as the *Jasus* are students who hold an “imprisoned” status and are eager to remove this label by completing their assigned punishment. It is therefore understandable that they might employ any means necessary to free themselves from that position. Upon closer analysis, it becomes evident that the actions of these *Jasus* are largely driven by self-interest. Their primary motivation is not to prevent language violations but to secure their own release from disciplinary sanctions.

In some cases, they may even hope for rule-breaking incidents to occur, as these provide an opportunity to fulfil their reporting duties and end their punishment. This practice is problematic because it risks reducing important social values within the student community, such as empathy, solidarity, and mutual trust. Moreover, it can create interpersonal tensions and conflicts between students, especially between the *Jasus* and their targets (Anto & Rahman, 2018).

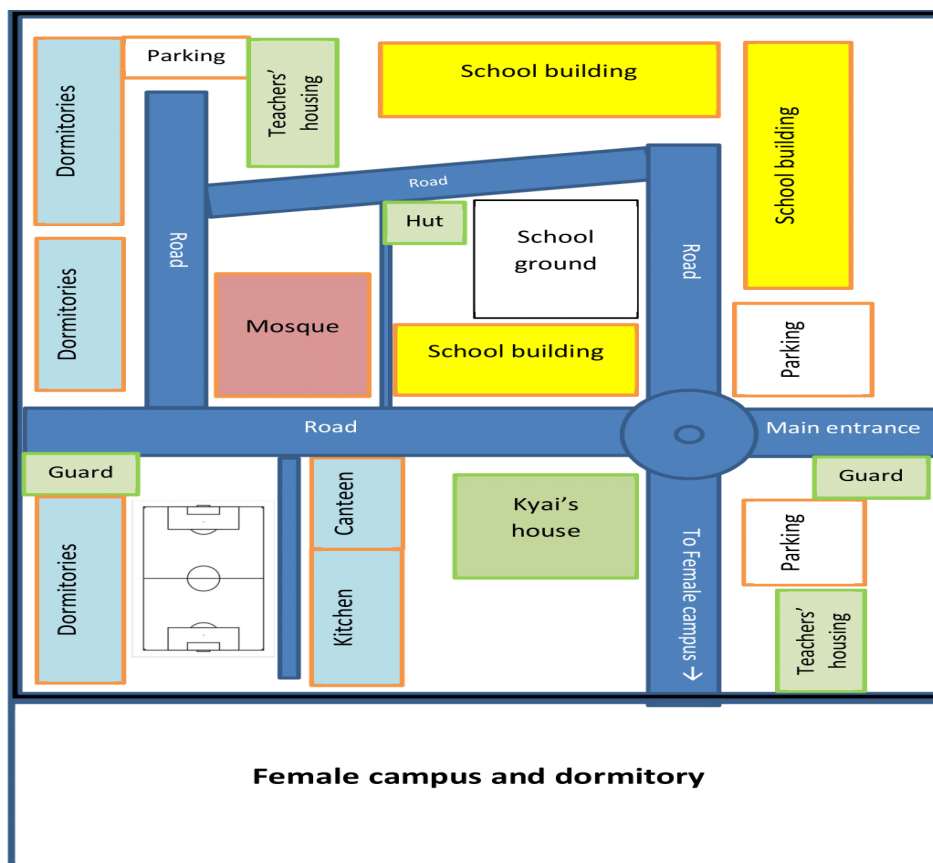
Despite the problems and moral dilemmas within the *Jasus* system, most students at *As-Tsani* IBS accept covert surveillance as a normal and common practice within the *pesantren* life. From a Foucauldian perspective, this system reflects the internalisation of disciplinary power, where control operates not through visible coercion but through constant observation and self-regulation. The *Jasus* mechanism turns surveillance into a collective and decentralised practice, diffusing power across students rather than concentrating it solely in the hands of authority figures. As students become aware that they might be observed at any time, by peers or by unknown observers, they begin to regulate their own behaviour voluntarily. This reflects Foucault's notion of the panoptic system, in which the visibility of subjects ensures their obedience without the need for direct intervention. Therefore, the spying system at *As-Tsani* IBS shows how power works automatically in shaping behaviour, encouraging self-control, and maintaining discipline even in the absence of direct supervision.

6.3.2 Panoptic Landscape

As previously discussed regarding the significant role of the environment in the learning process within Islamic boarding schools, including *As-Tsani* IBS, it is also evident that the environment plays an equally important role in supporting the enforcement of discipline. Moreover, the closed and concentrated nature of the *pesantren* setting directly contributes to the formation of discipline within this religious educational institution. In this section, I aim to describe how the physical environment of *As-Tsani* IBS influences students' disciplinary development, both directly and indirectly. The architectural arrangement of

buildings is designed in such a way that it creates a panoptic-like structure, where students feel that they are constantly being observed. This sense of continuous surveillance encourages them to adjust their behaviour and internalize discipline voluntarily. Based on field observation data, I argue that the *pesantren* environment generates a *panoptic effect* that effectively supports students in regulating their own conduct.

Data from observation reveals that the environmental design of *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School reflects a landscape that enables continuous surveillance of students' daily interactions. This is evident in the strategic and central position of the *Kyai's* house, which is located directly along the main road that everyone passes through, including visitors. The following diagram illustrates the spatial layout of the *As-Tsani* IBS complex.



Picture 6.3. Map of *As-Tsani* IBS

The spatial arrangement of the school complex reflects a *panoptic landscape*, where the physical design supports discipline, visibility, and continuous supervision. Following the traditional pattern of Islamic boarding schools, the layout places the mosque at the centre, surrounded by other facilities such as school buildings, dormitories, and teachers' housing, all connected by roads that facilitate both movement and observation. The entire complex is enclosed by fences, which not only mark the boundary of the institution but also function as tools of regulation and control. These fences create a sense of enclosure that limits students' mobility and strengthens institutional order. A separate fence divides the male and female campuses, ensuring restricted interaction between the two groups and reinforcing gender-based spatial discipline within the *pesantren* environment.

At the intersection of these spatial boundaries stands the *Kyai's* house, strategically positioned between the male and female areas and near the main entrance. This placement symbolises the *Kyai's* moral and disciplinary authority while allowing him to easily monitor both sides of the campus. From this position, the *Kyai's* visibility reflects the function of a panoptic tower, ensuring that all movements within the complex remain under potential observation. The teachers' housing, located close to the dormitories, further extends supervision beyond formal school hours, while open spaces such as the school ground and canteen are arranged for maximum visibility. Overall, this spatial design illustrates Foucault's concept of the panopticon, in which the built environment itself acts as a mechanism of power that produces constant visibility and encourages students to internalise discipline and regulate their behaviours.

Furthermore, the hut or *Balee*, a place where a teacher is almost always present, is strategically located between the school building and the dormitory (see the diagram for its location). This hut functions as a sub-panoptic tower, which facilitates a constant monitoring the movements and behaviours of students within the boarding school environment, particularly around the school buildings area.



Picture 6.4. The situation at the hut or *Balee* during school break time.

The hut functions effectively during school hours, as during this time, some teachers use the hut as gathering spot, sitting and chatting, while waiting for the next classes they have. Although the hut does not have a formal surveillance function, its presence can be perceived similarly to a micro-Panopticon Tower, because it is occupied by individuals who represent the authority, the teachers. This function was evident during my observation, when teachers were able to easily instruct students to return to their classrooms as soon as the bell rang. The teachers could also monitor students playing in the school ground and remind them to go back to class simply by standing near the hut (Fieldnotes, 2023).

Another important aspect of the utilisation of the school landscape lies in the institution's strategic use of the environment as both a medium of learning and an instrument of power. While previous discussion highlighted how linguistic signs were employed to support language learning, this section shows how these signs also function as a mechanism for the distribution and normalisation of authority. Observation of the school environment showed that several areas were used as signboards to attach important information such as rules, moral reminders and announcement (Fieldnotes, 2023). These spaces serve as

symbolic sites of power, where written messages and visual displays reinforce institutional control and discipline. Walls, noticeboards, and standing signs are filled with information such as announcements, behavioural codes, prohibitions, and moral reminders, all of which convey the presence of authority even in the absence of direct supervision.



Picture 6.5. Acceptable uniform for formal study

For instance, Picture 6.00 illustrates a visual reminder about the proper wearing of uniforms during formal learning sessions. Although no teacher or supervisor is physically present in these areas, the messages embedded in the school's physical environment operate as silent extensions of surveillance, constantly reminding students of the behavioural expectations that govern their conduct. Through these visible yet non-verbal signs, the school successfully cultivates a form of internalised obedience, where compliance is maintained not through coercion, but through the persistent awareness of being watched and evaluated.

Another picture depicts a dormitory space used as a medium for disseminating behavioural and moral messages, emphasizing the importance of maintaining good conduct and mutual respect among students. As shown in the following picture:

Image 6.6 illustrates a panoptic landscape within the *pesantren* environment, where the built space and linguistic elements jointly function as instruments of surveillance and control. The “STOP BULLYING” banner, prominently displayed above the guardian office, operates as a visual reminder of disciplinary expectations, shaping students’ behaviour through constant moral visibility. The strategic placement of such signage within everyday spaces



Picture 6.6. Moral message on the board

transforms the school environment into a field of observation, where discipline is not only enforced through authority figures but also internalised through the persistent presence of institutional messages embedded in the landscape. In addition, the Arabic sentence under the word “Stop Bullying” can be translated as “*The more you share kindness, the more you have friends*”. This statement conveys a subtle and implicit moral message, encouraging students to continue practising kindness and mutual respect in order to be loved and appreciated by their peers.

In summary, the physical and linguistic landscape of *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School reflects a carefully constructed system of spatial and symbolic discipline that aligns closely with Foucault's notion of the panopticon. The spatial organisation of buildings, the positioning of the *Kyai*'s house, teachers' housing, and communal facilities, as well as the pervasive presence of visual and linguistic signs, collectively produce an environment of continuous visibility and moral regulation. Within this setting, authority operates not solely through direct supervision but through the internalisation of control, as students are constantly reminded, both physically and symbolically, of the institutional expectations governing their conduct. The integration of moral messages, disciplinary signs, and surveillance-oriented architecture transforms the *pesantren* into a pedagogical landscape where learning and discipline are inseparable. Overall, the *As-Tsani* IBS environment operates as a panoptic space that encourages students to monitor their own behaviour, develop moral awareness, and practise discipline, thus supporting the institution's overall educational and moral goals.

6.3.3 Examination

The last and most influential form of disciplinary power is the examination, where individuals are qualified, classified, and judged (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). Examinations do not only measure students' knowledge but also function as tools of control and observation. This system exists in almost all schools, beginning even before formal study through placement or diagnostic tests. Through these processes, schools can easily identify, group, and measure students' abilities and behaviours. Examinations make individuals visible, allowing continuous evaluation and comparison. Regular testing works as a form of ongoing monitoring, reinforcing order and hierarchy within the school. Students are not only assessed but also labelled according to their ability levels, which makes differences between "high achievers" and "low achievers" appear normal and acceptable. In this way, examinations serve as a subtle yet powerful means of discipline that shape how students see themselves and how the institution controls them.

In the context of *As-Tsani* Boarding School, I observed how a teacher's behaviour reflected a clear distinction between students with strong English skills and those who lacked such proficiency. When introducing me to a group of students, the teacher directed his attention and responses exclusively toward the student who spoke English fluently, while largely ignoring another student standing beside him who was less proficient. After the interaction, the teacher confirmed this distinction, praising the fluent student and noting that he regularly participated in English debate competitions (Fieldnotes, 2023). This incident illustrates how the teacher was able to easily recognise and evaluate students' abilities based on their linguistic performance, reinforcing the visibility of academic competence as a marker of intelligence and status within the school environment. It also shows that judgemental classification clearly exists even in informal interactions, reflecting how the mechanisms of power and evaluation extend beyond formal examinations into everyday social encounters.

Another example occurred when I asked a group of students whom I should interview for this study. Some of them immediately suggested the names of peers they believed would be suitable interviewees, assuming that the interview would be conducted in English (Fieldnotes, 2023). This response reveals how the presence of highly proficient students is widely recognised within the boarding school community, as their abilities have been validated through the examination process. Examinations and tests are considered as standard institutional mechanisms, administered by the school or the state, that classify, measure, and judge individuals based on their performance on a particular day. However, such assessments often overlook the consistent effort and dedication students have invested throughout their studies, unfairly disadvantaging those who may struggle during the test itself and consequently receive poor marks.

Furthermore, Ust. Masda explained that at *As-Tsani* IBS, the language examination is held twice a year, at the end of each semester. The assessment consists of both oral and written components. In the oral exam, students are interviewed in either English or Arabic to assess their speaking ability,

pronunciation, and confidence in using the target language. The written component, meanwhile, evaluates their vocabulary knowledge and grammatical accuracy through recall-based exercises. Participation in this examination is compulsory for all students, and those who fail to meet the required standards face specific consequences, such as not receiving a certificate of language proficiency. Students are allowed two chances to retake the exam to reach a passing score; however, if they still fail, they must return to their previous language group for further study. This structured evaluation process highlights the school's strong emphasis on language mastery as a key indicator of student progress. It also reflects how the institution uses the examination as both a pedagogical and disciplinary mechanism, encouraging continuous improvement while reinforcing obedience to institutional rules and expectations. Ust. Masda elaborated on this by stating:

“...If the programme works well, it shows from how our students speak smoothly and correctly, with clear conversations and good vocabulary. As a result, more students will pass their exams like before. In the past, maybe only 5 out of 100 students had to retake the exam, which is pretty good... With the new rules, physical punishments are greatly reduced, the number of students passing the language exam also declines...” (Ust Masda, Interview, 2023).

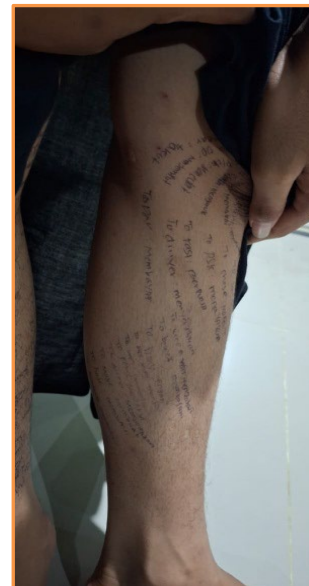
The statement above indicates that passing the examination serves as a decisive factor in determining whether a student can progress or must repeat a stage. More importantly, it highlights the strong connection between examinations and disciplinary enforcement, particularly in the form of punishments. Ust. Masda explained that before the abolition of physical punishments, students at *As-Tsani* IBS demonstrated notably strong language proficiency, with only about 5 out of 100 students (5%) failing to pass the language exam and consequently being required returning to their previous study group. However, he also observed a decline in students' performance following the removal of such punishments. This suggests that the strict disciplinary measures previously in place may have contributed to higher levels of compliance, motivation, and academic achievement. In Foucauldian terms,

this relationship reveals how examinations and punishment work together as intertwined mechanisms of disciplinary power, where fear of penalty reinforces self-regulation and conformity to institutional norms.

Examinations play a central role in judging and categorising students within the school community. However, this strong emphasis on assessment often leads students to value exam results more than the genuine process of learning itself. As a result, some students may turn to unethical practices such as cheating in order to secure high marks or gain access to more prestigious academic groups. In doing so, the pursuit of external rewards, such as recognition, praise, or status, might overshadow the intrinsic purpose of education. This tendency ultimately weakens students' genuine understanding and appreciation of knowledge, reducing learning to a competition for grades rather than a process of intellectual and moral growth. Thus, the culture of examinations can shift educational priorities from meaningful engagement with knowledge to the pursuit of measurable, yet superficial, achievements. The pictures below illustrate these dynamics during the examination process at As-Tsani IBS.



Picture 6.7. Situation of Examination



Picture 6.8. Cheating by a student

Picture 6.7 shows situation during English speaking test, with a student being examined by a teacher in a formal and controlled setting. The spatial arrangement of the room itself symbolises hierarchy and authority: the teacher sits opposite the student, occupying the position of power, judgement, and surveillance. The student's posture, by sitting formally and attentively reflects the internalisation of discipline and the awareness of being evaluated. This moment of examination is not simply an assessment of knowledge, but a ritual of power where the teacher observes, classifies, and judges the student's performance. The visibility of the student, as Foucault suggests, becomes the central element of disciplinary power, the act of being seen and assessed enforces self-regulation, compelling the student to conform to institutional expectations of linguistic competence and moral behaviour. The examination, therefore, functions as both a pedagogical and disciplinary practice, producing compliant and measurable subjects who embody the institution's standards.

In addition, picture 6.8 depicts another dimension of the disciplinary mechanism, the resistance to and subversion of power. The student's act of writing notes on his leg reveals the pressure and anxiety generated by the disciplinary nature of exams. While the institution intends examinations to encourage diligence, honesty, and self-discipline, the image exposes the unintended consequences of such an evaluative regime. The student's behaviour illustrates how excessive emphasis on measurable outcomes can lead to unethical practices, as students seek alternative ways to meet institutional expectations. In Foucauldian terms, this image captures a moment of tension between power and resistance, where the subject, though disciplined, attempts to manipulate the system that confines him. These images, therefore, reflect the dual nature of examinations as disciplinary tools. On one hand, they function as instruments of surveillance, normalisation, and classification, shaping students into obedient subjects who perform according to institutional norms. On the other hand, they reveal the limits of disciplinary power, as individuals may respond with subtle acts of defiance or strategic compliance.

During “*the moments of truth*” the evaluation of achievement is not merely based on students’ ability to answer the tested questions, which is typically reflected in their grades. Rather, the evaluation also considers a series of disciplinary forces invested during the initial phases of learning, long before the examination day. This is what Foucault (1995) refers to as the examination being a ‘ceremonial moment’ where authorities also measure the effectiveness of power deployment. This moment is used to assess the approaches taken and to make revisions where necessary, as this ritual will continue to repeat in the future. According to Foucault (1995, p. 186), “Examination did not simply mark the end of an apprenticeship; it was one of its permanent factors; it was woven into it through constantly repeated ritual of power.”

This statement describes Michel Foucault’s ideas about exams as more than just tests of what students know or how well they answer questions. Foucault sees the exam as an important moment where power dynamics in education come into play. It is not just about testing students’ ability, but it involves the use of discipline and authority throughout the learning process. Thus, how the exam evaluates students shows how effectively this authority is exercised during education. In Foucault’s view, the exam is not merely a final test; it is a continuous mechanism that sustains and reproduces power within educational institutions.

To sum up, examinations at *As-Tsani* IBS represent more than a means of assessing students’ knowledge or linguistic proficiency but they operate as a key instrument of disciplinary power that shapes behaviour, reinforces hierarchy, and maintains institutional order. As Foucault (1995) suggests, the examination functions as a ritual of power where observation, judgement, and classification become tools for producing compliant subjects. Within this process, students learn to regulate themselves under the constant awareness of being evaluated. However, the same system that promotes discipline and academic excellence can also generate pressure, competition, and even resistance, as seen in acts of cheating or anxiety-driven behaviour. This reveals the dual nature of examinations: they are both constructive and coercive, motivating improvement

while simultaneously constraining individual freedom. Ultimately, the examination practices at *As-Tsani* IBS reveal how assessment functions as a mechanism of power that not only measures learning but also disciplines and shapes students' identities beyond the classroom.

6.4 Self-Discipline and subject formation

As discussed at the end of Chapter 3 (Section 3.3), self-discipline represents the final destination of disciplinary processes and character formation in educational settings. This is particularly relevant in the context of *As-tsani IBS*, where discipline functions as a deliberate strategy to shape students' behaviour and habits in accordance with the rules and norms of the *pesantren*. It seems that the institutional expectation that discipline should eventually be internalised by all students further strengthens the school's broader aim of cultivating self-discipline. In practice, perhaps self-discipline emerges gradually as students begin to understand that following the school's rules benefits them personally. At this stage, students might shift from obeying because they are compelled to do so toward compliance that is driven by internal motivation and the ability to regulate their own behaviour (Gorbunovs et al., 2016). This is the point at which a student might be regarded as genuinely disciplined from the school's perspective.

In *As-tsani IBS*, this disciplined state is most visible among students who have successfully adapted to *pesantren* life. Their reflective accounts highlight how much they have changed over time, describing their early experiences as challenging and chaotic compared to their current, more settled state. These narratives seemed to indicate that students have adjusted to the disciplinary system and internalised the routines of the institution, making them part of their everyday lives. In other words, disciplinary practices that once felt burdensome have gradually become habitual and self-sustaining.

Field data further shows that this transition begins with a shift in how students perceive rules and routines. Many participants expressed a growing awareness that their motivation to engage in learning now came from within

rather than external pressure. A student participant, Juan, provides a clear example of such self-awareness, emphasising the importance of personal initiative, especially in learning English. He explained that “institutional schedules” alone are “not sufficient” for language improvement; therefore, students must seek “alternative strategies” through independent study and voluntary participation in extra classes. This openness of mindset reflects the emergence of genuine self-discipline.

Similar patterns appear in students’ increased compliance with daily regulations, such as avoiding smoking, not leaving the dormitory without permission, banning prohibited items, and following the structured schedule. A student, Fayed, shared that during his transition period, towards the end of his first year and throughout his second year, he learned that breaking rules only harmed him, especially when punishments such as head shaving were involved. As a result, he later committed himself to following the rules and studying harder for his own success rather than out of fear of consequences. Likewise, another student, Fajri expressed strong motivation to improve himself, inspired by his older sibling who succeeded academically and studied abroad.

From other data, there is indication that many students may have transformed into individuals capable of recognising that personal success requires the ability to manage themselves rather than relying heavily on the institution. This transformation can be interpreted from participants’ statements such as “our success depends on ourselves” and “discipline is for our own good.” Participants also frequently linked discipline to their future goals, explaining that developing disciplined habits now would help them achieve success later in life.

While *As-tsani IBS* provides structure, direction, and moral framing, perhaps it is ultimately the students who must regulate their own behaviour, set their own intentions, and sustain the effort needed for improvement. In this sense, the *pesantren* could be serving as a catalyst that guides students towards the path of discipline, where the real work of transformation might be carried out by the students themselves. A sixth year student, Mufti, for example,

stated, “*When we talk about practicing the language, I think, actually it depends on us; it is not necessarily because of the regulation*” (Mufti, Interview). His comment perhaps reflects a mature understanding that institutional rules contribute only to a certain extent, while genuine success and achievement ultimately depend on each individual student.

The data above show that the students have internalised disciplinary attitudes and turned them into moral values that they believe must be maintained. From a Foucauldian perspective, this reflects the outcome of ethical self-formation, in which students actively work on themselves to become better, more independent, and more self-regulating individuals. To reach this stage, Foucault argues that individuals pass through four elements of ethical formation: ethical substance, mode of subjection, ethical work, and telos (see Section 3.3.1). Together, these elements shape a person who behaves ethically and is able to position themselves within a diverse social environment in accordance with shared norms. The discussion below examines each of these elements in detail and analyses how the students’ transformation aligns with these stages, drawing on both the data presented above and additional field evidence.

6.4.1 The Four Folds of Subjection

1. Ethical Substance

The first dimension of Foucault’s concept of subjection is *ethical substance*. This refers to the aspect of the self that individuals recognise as the focus of moral transformation, or the part that must be shaped, disciplined, or purified (Foucault, 1985)). *Ethical substance* represents the inner element of the self where desires, habits, and emotions are managed in the pursuit of moral ideals. In the context of As-Tsani Islamic Boarding School, ethical substance is closely linked to the development of intention, commitment and sincerity. For students, discipline is not only about following rules or external order, but also about learning to manage themselves according to the moral and religious values of the *pesantren* community. Through structured routines, moral

guidance, and spiritual reflection, students might gradually learn to recognise personal weaknesses, such as laziness, distraction, or disobedience as aspects of the self that must be improved.

Identifying ethical substance begins with recognising the self as an object of discipline by learning to perceive personal impulses, emotions, and habits as moral materials that can be refined through conscious effort. Students at *As-tsani IBS* are taught that the real arena of moral struggle lies not in external behaviour but within the self. This orientation is consistently reinforced through religious discourse, where teachers often connect discipline with Islamic principles like *taqwa* (piety) or *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle). During a regular motivational session after mid-day prayer (*Dhuhur*), for instance, a guardian teacher reminded students that *“true discipline starts from the heart; if the heart is clean, the actions will follow”* (Fieldnotes, 2023). Such messages encourage students to interpret the strict rules of the *pesantren* not as kind of restrictions but as instruments of moral purification. This understanding transforms compliance into an act of faith, aligning Foucault’s idea of ethical substance with the Islamic notion of *nafs* (the self) that must be disciplined and guided toward righteousness.

In so doing, recognising one’s own strengths and limitations is essential for developing self-improvement and self-discipline. The interview data show that students are generally aware of their personal challenges, especially in relation to learning motivation. In this case, one student explained that he struggles with learning motivation, describing frequent feelings of lazy and reluctance to study. He stated:

“Sometimes I feel too lazy to study, including studying languages. But when I meet friends whose English is good, and I see them speaking confidently, I become motivated again. I put my effort to memorise vocabulary and try to practice again more regularly” (Safri, Interview)

Similarly, in a more general context, another student, Guna, highlighted the challenge of waking up very early, especially for the Morning Prayer (*Shubuh*). When I asked about his experience with punishment, he admitted that he often

receives punishment from *Mudabbir* because he fails to wake up early on time. He explained:

“I usually get punishment because I wake up late in the morning, which is my problem. Very often, I try to sleep earlier, but it does not really work” (Guna, Interview).

To some extent, these accounts show that students actually recognise the problem in them, and actively respond to personal challenges by adjusting their habits and drawing motivation from institutional expectations. In this sense, the ability to recognise the issues that exist within oneself, along with the effort to address and transform them, constitutes, according to Foucault (2019), a fundamental foundation for the subsequent steps in the process of transforming oneself into an ethical subject.

In addition, other interview data show that students at *As-tsani IBS* are able to recognise their personal weaknesses through interaction with their peers and the surrounding social environment. Several students admitted that they felt embarrassed and became more self-aware when they saw their friends being diligent or actively participating in all learning activities, including optional extracurricular classes. They realised that they had wasted time by not joining activities such as extra classes. For example, Zaid explained: *“When I see my friends being so diligent, sometimes I feel embarrassed. Inside, I ask myself why I often feel lazy”* (Zaid, Interview). Zaid’s statement illustrates that, in a close social environment like *As-tsani IBS*, students have significant opportunities to recognise their shortcomings by comparing themselves with their peers. Through this comparison, they can identify their weaknesses in relation to the strengths of others, which often reflect broader expectations or alignment with the institution’s norms.

The scenario above is important in a process of self-transformation, because moments of self-understanding do not always come from within, but they are often triggered by external factors. In Zaid’s case, his feeling of being “embarrassed” became a catalyst that allowed him to engage in deep self-reflection, which led him to realise that certain aspects of himself required

improvement in order to meet the moral standards he believes in. This reflects Foucault's (2000a) point that, "in our society," it is our feeling that is "the part of ourselves which is the most relevant to our morality" (p. 111). Moments like this not only initiate moral self-awareness but also become the entry point for students to set good intentions to change, which is the central stage of the process of ethical self-formation.

Apart from recognising their weaknesses, developing good intention is crucial as it serves as the inner drive that directs students toward moral and personal improvement. In this respect, intention becomes the bridge between recognising ethical substance and acting upon it. When students become aware of their laziness, lack of motivation, or difficulty maintaining discipline, the next step is not merely behavioural adjustment but cultivating a sincere desire and commitment reform the self. For many students, feelings of embarrassment, guilt, or moral discomfort, such as when they compare themselves with more disciplined peers, function as emotional triggers that encourage them to renew their intention to improve. Rather than viewing the system as externally imposed pressure, they begin to interpret these struggles as opportunities to strengthen their intentions, which then shape their efforts to wake up earlier, study more consistently, or regulate their impulses. In this process, intention operates as an ethical technology: it organises the self, motivates practice, and aligns personal struggle with both institutional expectations and spiritual values. This perspective aligns with Foucault's idea that ethical transformation requires an internal commitment to work on oneself (see Section 3.1.1)

In *As-tsani IBS*, there is evidence that the development of ethical substance is a continuous process in which students learn to view their desires, habits, and emotions as the main focus of moral improvement. The school provides a disciplined environment through routines, moral guidance, and spiritual reminders that teaches students that true moral struggle happens within the self. Yet this process relies heavily on the students' willingness to reflect, recognise their weaknesses, and commit to change. This reflects Foucault's

idea that ethical subjectivity does not come from external control alone, but from deliberate self-work (see Section 3.3.1.3).

Through daily practices, peer influence, and emotional moments such as embarrassment or guilt, students gradually learn to see their character as something they can shape. These experiences help them form sincere intentions to improve, guiding them to adjust their behaviour and align their actions with the school's moral and religious values. In this way, discipline becomes not only about following rules but also about personal growth and spiritual refinement. Overall, ethical substance in *As-tsani IBS* could refer to the moral core that students cultivate through awareness, intention, and self-control as a process that reflects both Foucauldian ethical formation and Islamic principles to build a coherent moral identity.

2. *Mode of Subjection*

The second element in Foucault's framework of ethical formation is the mode of subjection (See Section 3.3.1.2), which refers to the way individuals recognise their moral obligations and the kind of authority to which they submit in order to be ethical. It concerns the source of moral authority that justifies one's conduct, such as divine law, social norms, or institutional rules. In other words, the mode of subjection answers the question: *why must I behave in this way?* In the context of As-Tsani Islamic Boarding School (IBS), the mode of subjection is deeply intertwined with both religious devotion and institutional discipline, reflecting a unique blend of divine obedience, submission to God, and institutional loyalty, compliance to the *pesantren* rules. This double subjection forms the moral foundation of student behaviour, shaping how they understand authority, responsibility, and ethical duty.

In *As-tsani IBS*, Islamic values are the main foundation of education and play a central role in shaping students' character and moral behaviour. The Qur'an and the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serve as the key spiritual sources that guide moral development in the *pesantren*. Teachers interviewed also emphasised that religious subjects such as *fiqh*, *aqidah* and

tauhid, and *akhlaq* are “the main pillars of the curriculum in this pesantren” (Ust. Sunain, Interview), and all are taught based on the Qur’an and the Prophet’s teachings. In relation to Foucault’s idea of the mode of subjection, this religious foundation becomes the basic reference students use to justify their spiritual efforts in developing ethical formation.

Interview data from students further indicated that perhaps the desire to become a good Muslim, who follows Qur’anic teachings and the Prophet’s guidance, motivates many of them to improve themselves voluntarily, without external pressure. Safri expressed this commitment when he stated:

“...in the Prophet’s teachings, we understand that “tomorrow should be better than today”. So I try to always improve myself, especially in my worship to God (Allah SWT)..... Other subjects are important, but worship is related to the hereafter... and the hereafter is more important.” (Safri, Interview).

Safri’s view is strongly influenced by his earlier life experiences, especially the time he lived with his grandfather. He explained that his grandfather, who was a religious leader in their community, often advised him about the importance of preparing for the afterlife. This background has shaped his belief that religious values must always be maintained in all situations. Therefore, he consistently strives to maintain a commitment to self-improvement and to prepare himself for the hereafter.

In the same voice, Farid expressed the same motivation, or desire to become a *shaleh* (good) son who fulfils his duties to his parents. This goal functions as a strong driving force that encourages him to keep improving himself. He also emphasised that being good to parents is a clear religious command based on the Qur’an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). As he stated, “*I want to make my parents proud of me and make them happy, so I will do my best to study here*” (Farid, Interview). Farid’s reflection shows that students base their motivation on both religious teachings and their responsibilities to their families. His experience suggests that moral self-improvement at *As-tsani IBS* is also shaped by personal feelings of duty toward parents, which in the same time strengthen the way students commit

themselves to religious values. This foundational belief serves as a source of strength for both Safri and Farid, and provides a basis for their personal development, what Foucault refers to as a mode of subjection.

In the context of EFL learning, however, most students linked their motivation to institutional rules and the influence of peers who inspire them. The regulations set by *As-tsani IBS* function as the guideline that students must follow when developing their English skills. As Ust. Sunain explained:

“One of the reasons the LDC was established and senior students were involved as language monitors is because students’ awareness needs to be shaped and sometimes enforced. For example, in practising daily English, they must be supervised closely and even warned with punishments. Otherwise, they will not do it. This is very different from religious practices, where many show self-awareness. Perhaps, because religion is a matter of faith” (Sunain, fieldnotes)

Sunain’s explanation highlights that students’ motivation to learn English largely comes from institutional regulation. As a result, their compliance must be shaped, monitored, and reinforced continuously until it becomes an internalised habit in their daily routines. This is why rule enforcement is organised systematically, including the involvement of senior students as assistants in supervising and supporting the English learning programme at *As-tsani IBS*.

From the students’ perspective, it is also evident that in the context of EFL learning, the language rules function as the primary reason they discipline themselves to practise English, especially during their early period at *As-tsani IBS*. Many students reported that complying with the language regulations was essentially the only viable option to avoid the consequences of punishment. Abid, for example, explained:

“If the punishment were stricter, people would be forced to speak the target language... from being forced they would gradually become accustomed to speaking it. But if the punishment were light, people would think, ‘It’s nothing, we can just skip the rules and talk here instead.’ They would underestimate the rules and the punishment, and then they would have no intention to speak the language. In that case, they would not improve. When I was in Grade 2, many of my friends still spoke foreign languages outside; among close friends we spoke English or Arabic.” (Abid, Interview)

Abid's statement illustrates that the institutional rules serve as an initial justification, or *mode of subjection*, for many students in managing their motivation to learn English. Fear of punishment operates as an additional external factor that encourages students to practise the language in their everyday social interactions. Although the disciplinary system is implemented strictly, students generally attempt to comply with it as best as they can. This compliance becomes a constructive contribution to the development of student discipline. While the practice may begin as coercive, over time, as recalled by Abid, students seemed to come to recognise the purpose and benefits of these rules, and gradually attempt to internalise them as part of their learning behaviour.

In this regard, the findings indicated that perhaps students at *As-tsani IBS* engaged with different sources of moral authority that shape their ethical formation. In religious matters, students seemed to rely on internal motivations grounded in Qur'anic teachings, personal piety, and duties to their families. In contrast, their motivation to learn English is shaped more strongly by institutional rules, disciplinary enforcement, and peer supervision. This contrast indicates that students' modes of subjection differ across domains: religious practice is guided by voluntary commitment, while EFL learning depends more on structured regulation. These overlapping forms of authority work together to form students' sense of responsibility and discipline, setting the stage for the concluding analysis on how these experiences contribute to their broader moral development.

3. *Ethical Work (Ascetic Practices)*

In Foucault's ethical formation concept, the third element of the formation stages is *ethical work*. It refers to the concrete practices, habits, and disciplines through which individuals seek to transform themselves into moral subjects. This dimension is about the technologies of the self, the voluntary actions a person performs upon their body, mind, and soul to attain a certain ethical state. Ethical

work is thus not a matter of abstract belief but of continuous practice: the small, repetitive acts that cultivate discipline, awareness, and virtue. In the context of *As-tsani IBS*, ethical work can be clearly seen in the students' daily routines, study rituals, language practices, and interpersonal interactions. These acts form the moral and spiritual scaffolding through which students gradually construct themselves as disciplined, responsible, and morally conscious individuals.

In the daily life of the *pesantren*, almost all student activities and routines can be understood as forms of ethical work, since each activity is intentionally designed by the institution with specific goals and is believed to contribute to the development of students' character. In *As-tsani IBS* context, for instance, Ust. Masda explained:

"In this pesantren, the basic curriculum is the traditional curriculum, which focuses on Islamic education, moral education, and noble character. Students are taught how to behave properly toward their teachers and peers, and especially how to show devotion to their parents. The modern curriculum consists of regular school subjects such as mathematics and physics. English is also included in the modern curriculum, which is why it is called 'modern'." (Masda, Interview)

Ust. Masda's explanation aligns with Ust. Sunain's earlier statement regarding the traditional curriculum and character education at *As-tsani IBS*. His notions indicate that the *pesantren* maintains a strong moral foundation embedded within its core curriculum. This foundation is also reflected in daily practices that emphasise respect for teachers, harmonious relationships with peers, and dedication to one's parents. These practices directly correspond to what Foucault describes as ethical work, where individuals engage in continual efforts to shape their conduct according to moral ideals.

The Islamic concept of *mujahadah al-nafs* (the struggle against sinful desires), or the spiritual effort toward self-improvement taught by al-Ghazali, plays a central role in shaping students' understanding of ethical work. Teachers frequently remind students that resisting one's desires is part of worship and brings great benefit to anyone who consistently practises it. During a

motivational session, one ustaz explained that *“desire is our greatest enemy, and the hardest battle in life is the battle against our own desires”* (Fieldnote, 2023). This religious foundation strengthens students’ motivation to discipline themselves, both in learning religious subjects and in extracurricular activities such as English language learning. Safri described how the teachers’ advice at *As-tsani IBS* becomes a source of encouragement for students in their studies, including language learning. He shared:

“...the ustaz often speaks about resisting our desires, ignoring temporary wants in order to achieve success in the future. That becomes our encouragement and motivation when we feel down or sad, especially when we miss home” (Safri, Interview).

Safri’s account shows that students’ understanding of *mujahadah al-nafs*, gained through the teachers’ advices, supports them during moments of low motivation. They are often reminded that achieving future success requires sacrificing many immediate desires and comforts, and this perspective helps them remain committed to self-discipline in both religious learning and other school activities.

Ethical work at *As-tsani IBS* can also be seen in how students actively support each other’s moral and personal development. The strong sense of brotherhood encourages students to view their progress not as an individual effort but as something shared within their peer group. Success is understood as collective, and when someone faces difficulties, others step in to assist. Ricky explained this clearly:

“Almost everyone here has close friends, and we help each other. In language learning, for example, my friends often help me; if we do not know something, we can ask them. Basically, we live like one big family in this pesantren. When one person becomes a champion, everyone knows, and he becomes well-known in the school. We all feel proud because his achievement also represents the pesantren” (Ricky, Interview)

This peer-based support becomes visible in many small daily routines, such as reminding friends to behave well, greeting others politely, or encouraging consistent prayer. These everyday interactions show that ethical work is

embedded in ordinary social practices at the *pesantren*. Another example in language learning was noted by Fayed, who mentioned: “*We created our own group from the same dormitory and committed to always speak in English*” (Fayed, Interview). This story illustrates how students take initiative to build supportive environments that reinforce discipline and shared responsibility.

In addition, evidence of the students’ effort is also visible in how students approach English learning. Using English every day requires effort, discipline, and support from others. Many students rely on their friends to stay motivated, showing that language learning is not only an individual task but also a shared commitment. As Juan noted, “*The best way to improve English is to find our circle, the circle who love English*” (Juan, Interview). His comment shows that choosing the right peer group helps students stay consistent in practising English and encourages them to support each other. It also shows that language use becomes a form of ethical labour, where maintaining commitment, choosing the right peer environment, and exercising self-control mirror the moral effort found in traditional religious practices.

In summary, ethical work at *As-tsani IBS* develops through academic routines, religious teachings, and peer support that help students become more disciplined and morally aware. Following Foucault’s idea of ethical work, the students’ daily activities like studying, practising good behaviour, and using English, are small but continuous efforts to shape themselves into better individuals. Islamic teachings such as *mujahadah al-nafs* strengthen this process by reminding students that self-discipline is part of worship and personal growth. At the same time, a strong sense of brotherhood means that students do not work on themselves alone; they help, motivate, and guide one another. Simple acts like reminding friends to pray, forming English-speaking groups, or celebrating a friend’s success show how ethical work becomes a shared responsibility in the IBS environment.

4. *Telos*

The final dimension in Foucault's ethical formation is *telos*, or the teleology of the self, which refers to the moral goal individuals strive toward, a kind of person they aim to become. At *As-tsani IBS*, this goal is not only personal but also collective and spiritual. Students are encouraged to cultivate noble character, disciplined language use, and strong religious commitment. The institution's purpose is to shape the *santri* who are morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and able to represent Islamic values in wider society, rather than merely producing students who speak English fluently. This moral orientation is reinforced through daily activities. Teachers frequently remind students that learning English is part of self-discipline and heart purification. Thus, English learning is framed not only as "*the ability to speak fluently*" but also as "*the ability to speak respectfully and politely*" (Fieldnote, 2023). Moreover, slogans posted on the school's environment such as "*Hey brother! Watch your mouth!*" and "*Watch your language!*" (see Images 5.4 and 5.5 in Chapter 5) further underscores this message. These reminders perhaps help students internalise discipline as a personal responsibility, rather than viewing it simply as institutional enforcement.

When I asked about their future dreams, most of participants expressed clear goals they hoped to achieve through their educational experience at *As-tsani IBS*, including specific aspirations they wish from learning English. Almost all of them stated that they want to become successful in the future and make their parents proud. Evidence comes from Farid, as he remarked, "*I want to be a successful person and make my parents proud of me.*" (Farid, Interview). His statement reflects a moral drive to show devotion to his family by improving himself and developing a better character. This response also shows that his ambitions are closely shaped by family expectations and the *pesantren's* moral guidance. Thus, for him learning in IBS becomes part of his effort to improve himself and honour his parents.

In addition, in the context of language learning, students' goals also follow this moral direction. Fayed explained, "I do love English because I believe that

by mastering English, I can get more advanced knowledge and open my mind.” For Fayed, learning English is a way to become a more knowledgeable person, as it allows him to access a wider range of global literature and information. Therefore, he set this target as his main goal in learning English. In different way, Juan link English proficiency with responsibility and leadership, as he shared, *“I want my English better than my friend’s, so I can be a Mudabbir.”* These reflections demonstrate the aspirations that participants seek to fulfil as outcomes of their disciplined learning process at *As-tsani IBS*, illustrating how teleological aims are embedded in their educational and moral development.

At the institutional level, *As-tsani IBS* aims to produce students who are both intellectually capable and spiritually strong. English is linked to future roles in *da’wah*, or spreading the messages of Islam, leadership, and global engagement. Students themselves express long-term aspirations: *“I want to become a champion in this school,”* said Farid; while Fajri shared, *“I really want to go abroad like my sister... her English is good.”* Daily English practice therefore becomes part of a moral journey. In this way, *As-tsani IBS* shapes students not only through rules but through a larger vision of who they should become. Learning English becomes a path of moral discipline, self-reflection, and spiritual intention. The final goal is clear: to become a disciplined, God-conscious individual who contributes positively to the community. Through this process, language learning becomes part of ethical self-making, reflecting the *pesantren*’s broader educational philosophy.

In conclusion, the discussion shows how the concept of telos in Foucault’s ethical formation is reflected in the practices and aspirations of students at *As-tsani IBS*. The *pesantren* promotes a moral and spiritual vision of who students should become—individuals with noble character, disciplined language use, and strong religious commitment. English learning is framed not only as a linguistic skill but as part of self-discipline, heart purification, and respectful behaviour. Students’ personal goals, such as making their parents proud, becoming knowledgeable, or taking on leadership roles, align with this broader moral direction. Institutional aims also connect English proficiency with

future roles in da'wah, leadership, and global engagement. Overall, English learning functions as a pathway for ethical self-making, where academic progress, spiritual intention, and moral discipline are closely intertwined within the *pesantren*'s educational philosophy.

6.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 examines how disciplinary practices shape students' learning and moral development at *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School (IBS), with particular focus on the English language programme. Drawing on Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, the chapter shows that discipline is embedded in routines, surveillance, institutional structures, and peer interactions. Rather than operating solely as coercive control, discipline becomes a productive force that shapes academic habits, regulates behaviour, and contributes to students' identities as English learners. Through both formal authority and peer-based mechanisms, the school environment fosters a culture in which order, responsibility, and self-regulation become gradually internalised.

A major theme is the operation of panoptic surveillance, enacted through teachers' supervision as well as the *pesantren*'s architecture and moral signage. The central positioning of key buildings, such as the mosque, Kyai's house, dormitories, and communal spaces, creates continuous visibility that enables both formal and informal monitoring. Senior students (*mudabbir*) and student organisations reinforce this system through the regulation of routines, language use, and moral behaviour. Hidden mechanisms like the *Jasus* (student spies) further decentralise power by turning students into agents of surveillance, though these practices also generate tensions, including bias, provocation, and interpersonal conflict.

Examinations emerge as another key mechanism of disciplinary power. Written and oral language tests classify students, determine academic progression, and serve as on-going rituals of evaluation that encourage self-monitoring and align achievement with obedience to institutional norms. The chapter also highlights the pressures and tensions produced by this evaluative

culture, such as anxiety, cheating, and competition, revealing the dual nature of examinations as both constructive and coercive. At the same time, the chapter shows how students gradually move from externally enforced obedience to internalised discipline. Over time, routines become natural and self-sustaining, and older students describe stronger intrinsic motivation, greater awareness of their responsibilities, and a growing commitment to managing their own learning. Peer influence plays a central role in this process, with brotherhood, shared study practices, and mutual reminders supporting the development of disciplined learning habits.

The chapter also explores ethical formation by linking Foucault's fourfold model to students' everyday experiences. Ethical substance emerges as students learn to recognise desires, habits, and emotions as objects of moral improvement. Modes of subjection are shaped by Islamic teachings and *pasantren* authority, encouraging compliance, humility, and moral awareness. Ethical work is reflected in daily study routines, peer support, religious reminders, and efforts to maintain English-speaking commitments. Telos appears in students' aspirations to become morally responsible, spiritually grounded, knowledgeable, and disciplined individuals capable of serving their families, communities, and wider society.

Overall, this chapter shows that discipline at As-Tsani IBS is multidimensional, combining surveillance, examinations, peer oversight, and internal moral cultivation, to produce students who develop responsibility, self-awareness, and moral discipline. While disciplinary practices may create pressure, resistance, and uneven experiences, they also foster strong study habits, moral refinement, and personal growth, demonstrating how power, discipline, and ethical formation shape students' academic, social, and spiritual development.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

7.1 Overview of the study

This thesis investigated how English language learning is shaped by the moral, social, and institutional life of *As-Tsani* Islamic Boarding School in Aceh. In this context, language education is inseparable from the broader aims of *pesantren* schooling, which emphasise moral discipline, religious devotion, and personal responsibility. Accordingly, the study explored how English learning unfolds within an environment where academic instruction, spiritual formation, and social regulation intersect. It examined how teachers, peers, rules, routines, and institutional values collectively shape students' learning habits, motivation, and moral consciousness both inside and beyond the classroom.

A central interest of this research was the way everyday practices, such as memorisation routines, disciplinary systems, surveillance, teacher–student relationships, and peer dynamics, support the formation of disciplined yet reflective learners. In *As-Tsani* IBS, English learning is not limited to vocabulary mastery or grammatical accuracy; it also cultivates virtues such as perseverance, sincerity, patience, and self-control. This study therefore sought to capture how students experience discipline and encouragement within a moral framework rooted in Islamic educational traditions, and how these experiences influence their engagement and persistence in learning English.

To address these goals, a qualitative case study methodology was employed, enabling a holistic understanding of social, pedagogical, and moral processes within the school. Data were gathered through interviews with teachers and students, classroom and out-of-class observations, and document analysis. These approaches provided insights into both formal English instruction and the informal practices that structure language use in daily life. The interpretive framework combined behaviourist learning theory, which illuminated processes of habit formation through repetition and reinforcement, with Foucault's concept of disciplinary power that helped analyse institutional routines, surveillance, and the internalisation of self-regulation. Together, these

perspectives provided a foundation for examining how linguistic, moral, and disciplinary processes converge in the *pesantren* environment.

7.2 Summary of findings

The first major finding concerns the strong influence of behaviourist learning principles on students' development. English learning at *As-Tsani* IBS is grounded in memorisation, repetitive practice, reinforcement, and daily exposure, forming a consistent system of habit formation. Activities such as vocabulary memorisation, daily English conversation, structured speaking tasks, and public performance gradually shifted from externally imposed requirements to internalised personal commitments. Over time, students came to view these routines not only as academic duties but also as spiritual perseverance. In this way, behaviourism aligned naturally with Islamic pedagogical traditions that emphasise repetition, discipline, and moral endurance.

The second key finding relates to institutional discipline and the gradual emergence of self-regulation. Guided by Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, the study found that structured routines, surveillance systems, and language policies, such as English-only rules, initially functioned as external mechanisms of control. Students recognised that their behaviour was constantly monitored by teachers, supervisors, and peers, including student monitors (*jasus*). Over time, however, this external gaze evolved into internal awareness. Students began to regulate their own actions, speech, and moral conduct even in the absence of direct supervision. This shift from externally enforced obedience to self-discipline illustrates Foucault's idea of ethical self-formation, where individuals become active agents in shaping their moral and academic development.

Teachers played a pivotal mediating role in this process. Serving simultaneously as instructors, motivators, and moral exemplars, they employed repetition, correction, praise, and encouragement, while also grounding learning in Islamic values. Peer groups further strengthened this disciplinary and motivational culture by reminding, correcting, and supporting one another. The

physical environment of the *pesantren*, including English signs, structured living routines, and dedicated speaking areas, embedded English learning into the fabric of everyday life.

The findings also highlight the spiritual dimension of discipline. Students frequently interpreted diligence, self-control, and perseverance in English learning as forms of religious commitment or acts of worship. Teachers reinforced this view by connecting effort in language learning to concepts such as religious devotion and ethical struggle. Thus, discipline became not only a behavioural standard but also a moral and spiritual journey, aligned with the *pesantren*'s vision of shaping pious, responsible, and self-governing individuals.

Despite these strengths, several tensions emerged. English-only rules sometimes produced anxiety or superficial compliance, with students obeying out of fear rather than genuine motivation. Surveillance also risked limiting creativity or spontaneous expression. Yet students did not passively accept restrictions; instead, they engaged in small acts of negotiation, such as strategic translanguaging, collaborative problem-solving, and playful adaptations, to maintain enjoyment and relevance in their learning. These practices demonstrate that power in the *pesantren* is not purely restrictive but also productive, enabling confidence, autonomy, and ethical reflection.

Overall, English learning in *As-Tsani* IBS represents a dynamic balance between authority and autonomy, structure and creativity, and discipline and freedom. Behaviourist principles, institutional routines, and Islamic moral values work together to cultivate both linguistic competence and moral integrity, illustrating how Western theories of learning and power can meaningfully coexist with Islamic educational worldviews.

7.3 Comparison with previous studies

This study supports, extends, and in some areas challenges previous research on English learning in Islamic boarding schools. While earlier works examined English programmes in *pesantren* settings (Nur et al., 2021; Rohim, 2020; Zalisman, 2020), they rarely identified that the instructional model reflects

behaviourist learning principles. Most studies have focused on Arabic language tradition, *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and memorisation, without analysing English learning through behaviourist theory. This thesis contributes a new perspective by showing how daily routines, repetition, and reinforcement at *As-Tsani* IBS systematically develop students' linguistic habits.

Likewise, a considerable body of literature highlights discipline, supervision, and self-control as central to moral and character education in *pesantren* (Aziz, 2020; Maraty, 2020; Harahap et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to frame discipline through Islamic concepts such as *mujahadah nafs*, *tazkiyatunnafs*, and character building, derived from Qur'anic and prophetic values. In contrast, this study applied Foucault's disciplinary framework to analyse how institutional power, surveillance, and self-regulation function alongside Islamic moral formation. This cross-theoretical approach demonstrates meaningful intersections between Western critical theory and *pesantren* traditions, offering a richer analytical foundation for understanding discipline in Islamic education. Thus, the thesis contributes theoretically and empirically by integrating behaviourism, Foucauldian power analysis, and Islamic moral education into a single interpretive lens. It shows that language learning and moral discipline in *pesantren* are interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and deeply embedded in the everyday culture of the institution.

7.4 Implications of the findings

The findings of this study contribute new insights to the existing literature on English learning in Islamic boarding schools by highlighting how behaviourist learning principles and Foucauldian disciplinary processes intersect with Islamic moral formation. While previous IBS studies have documented language programmes, daily routines, and discipline, they often treat these elements as separate or attribute them solely to Islamic pedagogy. This thesis shows that the learning environment at *As-Tsani* IBS is shaped by a convergence of Western theories of habit formation and power, reinterpreted through Islamic values of sincerity, piety, and moral self-control.

This integrated perspective matters because it reveals the complexity of contemporary *pesantren* education, demonstrating that these institutions do not rely only on tradition but actively blend pedagogical, spiritual, and disciplinary tools to shape learners. By identifying behaviourism and ethical self-formation as implicit foundations of the English programme, the study also offers a more nuanced understanding of how students develop linguistic competence and moral awareness simultaneously, an aspect not clearly addressed in previous IBS research.

Although this study provides insights that could be useful for teachers and practitioners, any suggestions related to policy change are made tentatively and with a modest approach, recognising the unique nature of each *pesantren* context. Although certain findings such as the importance of intrinsic motivation, flexible language policies, or reflective discipline may be useful for schools, the study did not aim to prescribe reforms, nor did it collect data for evaluating policy outcomes. The unique culture of each *pesantren* means that recommendations must be interpreted contextually rather than universally. Thus, any implications suggested in the thesis should be understood as invitations for reflection rather than directives for institutional change.

7.5 Limitations of the study

7.5.1 Scope and context

This study focused on a single Islamic boarding school, *As-Tsani* IBS, and therefore presents a detailed, context-specific portrayal rather than a general overview of all *pesantren*. The findings are most applicable to institutions with similar traditions and language programs. Each *pesantren* has its own cultural practices, disciplinary systems, and student composition; hence, the results cannot be generalised to all Islamic schools. However, the insights gained still offer valuable reference points for future comparative research across diverse *pesantren* settings. The study also captures a particular moment in time, as educational institutions continually evolve in response to leadership, policy, and social influences. Thus, the findings represent a temporal snapshot

that may not fully reflect future developments at *As-Tsani* IBS or elsewhere.

7.5.2 *Data and thematic development*

The research involved a relatively small number of teachers and students over a limited period of fieldwork. A longer study with a broader participant base could have provided wider perspectives and revealed more gradual changes in students' motivation, self-discipline, and learning habits. Another significant limitation concerns the emergence of *self-discipline* and *ethical self-formation* as central themes only after the fieldwork had been completed. Initially, the research design centred on classroom practices, language policy, and general discipline practices, while the moral and spiritual dimensions of discipline became clearer later through supervisory discussions and deeper data reflection. Because this theme was identified after data collection, the study did not include specific questions or observations targeting this area. Consequently, some potentially rich insights into how discipline is internalised as moral practice were not explored in full. Earlier recognition of this theme might have allowed for more focused data collection and a deeper understanding of discipline as part of moral education in the *pesantren* context.

7.5.3 *Researcher background*

The researcher's close familiarity with the *pesantren* environment offered several advantages, such as easier access, trust-building, and cultural sensitivity. However, this insider perspective may also have shaped how certain interactions and meanings were interpreted.

As a former student of Islamic boarding school, I was familiar with many aspects of school life and sometimes assumed that I knew what would happen during teaching and learning activities. However, in my role as a researcher, I had to avoid making these assumptions and remain open to what participants were actually doing and saying. This required continuous reflection throughout the study to ensure that my interpretations were grounded in the participants' experiences rather than my own prior knowledge.

To minimise potential bias, therefore, reflexive strategies were used, including maintaining detailed field notes, triangulating data sources, and reflecting critically throughout the analysis. Despite these measures, it remains important to acknowledge that the researcher's background and positionality may have subtly influenced the interpretation of some findings.

In sum, while these limitations set certain boundaries for the study's generalisability and depth, they also highlight valuable directions for future research. A broader, longer-term, and thematically focused exploration could build on this work to further illuminate the dynamic intersections of discipline, morality, and language learning in Islamic boarding schools.

7.6 Reflections of the project

Reflecting on the fieldwork, I realised there were questions that would have been asked explicitly to strengthen the analysis. Asking the staff about their understanding of ethical self-formation, or their interpretations of discipline within an Islamic framework could have offered deeper insight into the moral thinking behind institutional practices. It would also have been useful to ask teachers how they balance strict enforcement with compassion, and whether they recognise students' shift from external obedience to internal self-discipline. These reflections are not shortcomings but opportunities, highlighting areas where future research can explore teacher reasoning and institutional philosophy more closely, and deepen the application of Foucault's ideas on power and self-regulation within *pesantren* contexts.

This study also shows both the usefulness and the limits of applying Foucauldian concepts to Islamic boarding schools. Foucault's ideas about surveillance, routine, and ethical self-formation helped explain how discipline becomes internalised, yet they do not fully capture the spiritual and emotional dimensions of discipline in *pesantren* life, where effort is rooted in faith, humility, and devotion, particularly in relation to EFL learning. Behaviourism likewise explains habit formation but does not account for the moral meaning students attach to discipline. Islamic concepts such as *mujahadah nafs* or *tazkiyatunnafs*

were therefore essential for interpreting students' motivations. By bringing Foucauldian theory and behaviourism into dialogue with Islamic values, the study shows how Western frameworks can be extended and enriched when applied in non-Western moral contexts.

7.7 Suggestions

Based on the findings of this thesis, several suggestions might be proposed for practical consideration. These recommendations may help teachers, school leaders, and researchers improve English language learning in Islamic boarding schools while keeping it aligned with *pesantren* values and traditions. The following points highlight key areas for further development and application. First, in the context of language learning, enhancing healthy competition among students within the *pesantren* environment may significantly encourage self-motivation and personal effort. When students are driven by an internal desire to achieve rather than by external pressure or fear of punishment, they are more likely to develop genuine enthusiasm for learning. Competitive initiatives that emphasise *rewards* instead of *punishments*, for instance “Best English Speaker of the Month” or “English Star of the Week” can shift the disciplinary focus from identifying and penalising mistakes to recognising and celebrating achievement. Such a reward-oriented system can foster autonomy, reduce dependence on external control, and help students cultivate intrinsic motivation and responsibility for their own learning progress.

Another important area related to discipline concerns the need to reconsider the traditional habit-formation process, which often begins with coercive or forced compliance. Instead, character and behavioural development may be better supported through a more reflective and structured approach. Introducing Foucauldian principles of ethical subjectivation, alongside the existing religious framework grounded in Islamic educational philosophy, could guide students toward becoming virtuous and self-regulating individuals. Integrating these principles into *pesantren* character-development programmes

may offer a clearer, more concrete framework for the stages involved in cultivating the moral and ethical qualities expected by the boarding school. In this way, discipline can emerge internally, grounded in self-awareness, reflection, and moral commitment, rather than being imposed solely through external authority.

7.8 Directions for future research

Future studies could examine how disciplinary practices evolve when Islamic moral values are combined with structured, reflective, and modern pedagogical approaches. Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable in tracing how students' self-discipline, ethical awareness, and intrinsic motivation develop over time. Further research could also explore how Foucault's framework of power, surveillance, and self-formation can be adapted in Islamic educational contexts alongside Qur'anic and prophetic teachings. Comparative studies across different *pesantren* or between *pesantren* and other faith-based schools may reveal how varying philosophies shape students' moral, linguistic, and behavioural development.

Finally, experimental or action research could assess the practical outcomes of alternative disciplinary models, such as reward-based systems, reflective habit-formation, or Foucault's ethical fourfold on students' independence, moral reasoning, and language proficiency. Such research would offer valuable insights into harmonising traditional *pesantren* values with contemporary educational innovation.

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