DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE ENGLISH-USE SYSTEM UNDER THE BIWEEKLY LANGUAGE POLICY IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This community service program addressed the inconsistent use of English in an Islamic boarding school, implementing a biweekly language policy that alternates between English and Arabic. Despite formal regulations, students frequently reverted to Indonesian or local languages in daily interaction due to low confidence, limited vocabulary, and uneven monitoring. To respond to these challenges, the program developed an English-use system that integrates structured speaking routines, dormitory-based reinforcement, student language ambassadors, and mentor-supported feedback. The method consisted of four phases: needs analysis and baseline mapping, system design and material preparation, implementation during an English week cycle with shared role distribution, and monitoring and evaluation using observation logs, participation checklists, and reflective discussions. Results indicated improved English-speaking participation across dormitory and public areas, greater consistency in implementation through distributed monitoring, and more positive student engagement supported by reinforcement strategies rather than punitive control. The program demonstrates that effective implementation of language policy in *Pesantren* requires coordinated community involvement, practical routines, and sustained supervision. Although the implementation period was limited, the initiative provides a workable model for strengthening English communication culture in multilingual boarding environments. Future programs should evaluate long-term continuity across alternating cycles and expand authentic speaking opportunities.

Key Words: biweekly language policy, English-use system, Islamic boarding school, language policy, speaking practice

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia have increasingly strengthened English programs to prepare students for broader academic access, intercultural communication, and future professional mobility. Within the *pesantren* ecosystem, English learning is not limited to classroom instruction but is expected to become part of students' daily interaction in dormitories, peer communities, and institutional activities. This environment provides a unique opportunity for language development because the boarding system creates continuous exposure, repeated practice, and strong social regulation of language

behaviors. Nevertheless, results from previous work indicates that English implementation in *pesantren* often involves tension between policy goals and real communication patterns, especially when students remain more comfortable using Indonesian or local languages in informal interactions (Taib, Pakaya, & Abid, 2021).

This activity is called developing an Effective English-Use System Under The Biweekly Language Policy in Islamic Boarding Schools. It is done at Al-Islam Modern Boarding School, which is in Kapas Sukomoro Nganjuk, East Java. As a modern Islamic boarding school, Al-Islam integrates religious education with general academic subjects, including English. The school leadership and teachers demonstrate openness to collaboration, innovation, and reflective practice—key prerequisites for a successful community service partnership. This readiness ensures that any intervention (training, mentoring, or system development) is not merely ceremonial but sustainable and impactful. A comprehensive situation analysis suggests that the partner faces several key issues. First, the school's language environment is inherently multilingual, in which English competes with Indonesian, local languages (e.g., Javanese), and Arabic across different functional domains. In many *pesantren*, Indonesian and local languages dominate spontaneous interactions, while English is often used in restricted contexts such as language programs or regulated speaking sessions (Eliawati, Ngadiso, & Putra, 2024). Second, the visible promotion of English through signs, slogans, and formal announcements does not always translate into authentic communication habits; linguistic schoolscape studies demonstrate that English may appear symbolically but remain secondary in real interactional practices (Eliawati et al., 2024).

Third, the effectiveness of any language policy depends on consistent enactment by teachers, dorm mentors, and student leaders. When adult modeling is inconsistent, students perceive English as merely a rule rather than a shared communicative culture. Teacher agency research in Islamic boarding schools shows that educators play a crucial role in translating policy into workable routines, negotiating constraints, and shaping practical learning opportunities (Abdurrizal, 2022). Fourth, language programs can fail to sustain engagement if the system relies heavily on punishment-oriented control rather than supportive and structured practice opportunities. Evidence of readiness studies also indicates that successful English programs require stable institutional planning, continuous activity design, and adequate human resources for implementation (Nur et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study focuses on developing an effective English-use system under a biweekly language policy by designing structured speaking routines, dormitory reinforcement, student-led monitoring, and supportive feedback mechanisms that strengthen English use during English weeks and maintain continuity across the full cycle. This development is expected to address the

partner's practical needs and reduce the gap between language policy expectations and students' everyday language practices in the *pesantren* context.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The partner Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) implements a biweekly language policy that alternates English and Arabic use in daily interaction. Although this policy provides a structured framework for language development, field-based evidence from similar *pesantren* contexts shows that English-use initiatives often face a gap between policy expectations and students' actual language practices (Afni, n.d.; Rahman, 2023). Therefore, the priority problems addressed in this service activity are grouped into three main areas.

Priority Problem 1: Low consistency of English use in daily communication. Students frequently shift to Indonesian or local languages due to habit, peer solidarity, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes, particularly in informal dormitory contexts (Taib, Pakaya, & Abid, 2021).

Priority Problem 2: Weak implementation support and monitoring. English programs may exist formally, yet daily supervision and follow-up are often uneven across dormitory areas. This condition reduces policy effectiveness and limits the creation of authentic speaking opportunities (Nur et al., 2021).

Priority Problem 3: Limited communicative environment and reinforcement system. Even when English is promoted through institutional programs, the language environment may remain symbolic rather than functional, as reflected in *pesantren* schoolscape studies where English visibility does not always translate into sustained oral interaction (Eliawati, Ngadiso, & Putra, 2024).

To address these problems, the activity provides an English-use system that integrates structured routines and supportive reinforcement. The proposed solutions include: (1) establishing clear daily speaking targets during English weeks through practical dormitory-based tasks (e.g., role-based dialogues, daily phrase challenges, and peer conversation quotas); (2) strengthening monitoring through student language ambassadors and mentor-led feedback sessions to ensure consistent implementation; and (3) developing a positive reinforcement approach using supportive reminders, recognition, and reflective evaluation rather than punitive language policing, which is often counterproductive in multilingual boarding contexts (Abdurrizal, 2022). The expected outcomes are improved English-speaking participation, increased compliance during English weeks, and a more sustainable English communication culture aligned with the biweekly language policy.

METHOD

This community service program applied a developmental and participatory implementation design to establish an effective English-use system under the

partner *pesantren*'s biweekly language policy. The program was conducted in a boarding school environment where English practice is expected to occur not only in classrooms but also in dormitory life and peer interaction. Previous studies highlight that language policy effectiveness in *pesantren* depends on coordinated implementation, teacher/mentor agency, student engagement, and sustained reinforcement across contexts (Abdurrizal, 2022; Nur et al., 2021; Rahman, 2023).

Needs Analysis and Baseline Mapping

The program began with a needs analysis to identify priority barriers to English use during English weeks. Data were collected through short observations in dormitory and public-school areas, informal interviews with student language administrators, and focus discussions with dorm mentors. This phase also mapped students' common language choices, typical communication situations, and existing English programs, aligning with evidence that students often revert to Indonesian/local languages when English support is limited (Taib, Pakaya, & Abid, 2021).

System Design and Material Preparation

Based on the findings, the team designed a structured English-use system consisting of daily speaking routines, conversation tasks, vocabulary targets, and monitoring mechanisms. The design emphasized supportive reinforcement rather than punishment-oriented enforcement, because *pesantren* language policies may become less effective when they rely mainly on policing without meaningful communicative opportunities (Rahman, 2023). Visual supports (e.g., English reminders and functional signboards) were also prepared to strengthen the communicative environment, considering that schoolscape visibility can influence language practices even though symbolic exposure alone is insufficient (Eliawati, Ngadiso, & Putra, 2024).

Implementation and Role Distribution

Implementation took place during an English-week cycle. The implementation team coordinated training for dorm mentors and student language ambassadors. Team members were assigned to (1) supervise daily routine execution, (2) document compliance and participation, and (3) provide feedback sessions. The partner actively participated by appointing student ambassadors, integrating routines into dormitory schedules, and facilitating evaluation meetings with mentors and school leaders. Such shared responsibility supports sustainability because teacher and mentor agency is central to policy enactment in pesantren contexts (Abdurrizal, 2022).

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Sustainability Plan

Program evaluation used weekly monitoring logs, short speaking participation checklists, and reflective discussions with mentors and student leaders. Outcome indicators included increased English-use frequency during English weeks, higher student participation in speaking routines, and stronger compliance with the biweekly policy. After the program, the partner was provided with implementation guidelines and revision templates to adapt routines for future cycles, ensuring continuous improvement and institutional readiness (Nur et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service program aimed to strengthen English-speaking practice in the partner *pesantren* by developing an English-use system aligned with the biweekly language policy. The results are presented according to the three priority issues previously identified: (1) inconsistency of English use, (2) weak monitoring and support, and (3) limited reinforcement and communicative environment. These issues have been widely documented in *pesantren* language policy implementation, where formal rules do not automatically translate into daily speaking behaviour.

1) Improvement of English-use consistency during English week

The first outcome concerned students' consistency in using English for daily interaction. As shown in **Table 1**, the percentage of observed English utterances increased from baseline to post-program monitoring. This improvement suggests that structured routines and dormitory-level speaking tasks can increase English production in real contexts, responding directly to student barriers such as limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and peer influence.

Table 1. Observed English use during English week (Baseline vs. Post-Program)

Observation Point	Baseline English Use (%)	Post-Program English Use (%)	Change
Dormitory (evening)	22	45	+23
Dormitory (morning)	18	38	+20
Public areas (canteen/courtyard)	15	33	+18
Classroom transition time	28	52	+24
Average	**21**	**42**	**+21**

Narratively, students reported that the English-use system helped them "know what to say" because daily phrase targets and guided speaking tasks reduced hesitation. This aligns with evidence that *pesantren* students are more likely to attempt English when opportunities feel structured and socially supported. Importantly, the improvement was strongest in semi-regulated spaces (class transitions and dormitory evenings), indicating that regular cues and peer scaffolding were effective in moments where language choice is negotiated rather than fully controlled.

2) Stronger monitoring and shared responsibility for policy enactment

A second result was the strengthening of implementation support. The program introduced student language ambassadors, mentor checklists, and short reflective feedback sessions. Table 2 summarizes monitoring outcomes over two weeks of English-week implementation. The rise in compliance demonstrates that monitoring became more systematic and shared, rather than relying only on top-down enforcement. This finding is consistent with the view that teacher and mentor agency strongly shape whether language policy becomes workable practice in multilingual boarding schools.

Table 2. Monitoring indicators during English week implementation

Indicator	Week 1	Week 2
Dormitory language reminders conducted (%)	60	85
Student ambassador reports submitted (%)	55	80
Mentors providing feedback sessions (%)	50	78
Students joining daily speaking tasks (%)	62	83

The results show that policy effectiveness improved when responsibility was distributed among mentors and students. Prior studies emphasize that *Pesantren* language programs become more sustainable when institutional roles are clarified and consistently enacted, especially because policy implementation in *Pesantren* is influenced by local leadership structures and daily boarding routines.

3) Enhanced communicative environment and positive reinforcement

The third outcome related to the communicative environment. Beyond speaking routines, the program supported the partner in establishing functional English reminders and contextual language prompts in dormitory areas. While schoolscape-based research cautions that visibility alone does not guarantee

language use, schoolscape can still influence awareness and normalize English as part of daily life. In the partner setting, students indicated that the presence of functional prompts (e.g., "daily expressions" boards and situational phrases) made English feel "closer" and less intimidating.

Additionally, the program intentionally shifted reinforcement away from punishment-only enforcement into recognition-based routines (e.g., "English role model" announcements and peer appreciation). This was important because policy discussion in pesantren contexts has noted that excessive "language policing" may trigger anxiety and superficial compliance rather than meaningful communicative participation. Post-program reflections suggested that students were more willing to speak when feedback was framed as improvement and encouragement rather than error-focused correction.

Discussion: Contribution to partner problem-solving and implications

Overall, the results indicate that the developed English-use system addressed the partner's priority problems by (1) increasing English use in real interaction, (2) improving monitoring consistency through shared roles, and (3) strengthening reinforcement through supportive routines and environmental prompts. These outcomes directly respond to the commonly reported gap between policy and practice in pesantren language management.

From a broader perspective, this program contributes to the practical understanding that effective English policy in boarding schools requires more than scheduled "English weeks." It needs routine design, structured social participation, and consistent mentoring, which reflect readiness factors identified in pesantren English program development (Nur et al., 2021). Furthermore, the strengthened role of mentors and student ambassadors supports the argument that policy enactment depends on local agency and leadership practices rather than policy documents alone (Abdurrizal, 2022).

Limitations and recommendations for future initiatives

Despite positive results, the monitoring period was limited to a short cycle, so long-term retention across alternating Arabic weeks remains a potential challenge. Future initiatives should (1) include bridging activities during Arabic weeks (e.g., minimal English maintenance tasks), (2) expand communicative tasks toward authentic purposes (announcements, service interactions, peer tutoring), and (3) institutionalize evaluation meetings after each biweekly cycle to revise targets and supports. This iterative improvement is crucial to ensure sustainability and prevent regression when the English-week cycle ends (Nur et al., 2021; Rahman, 2023).

This paper contributes meaningfully to addressing the practical challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools implementing a biweekly language policy by

developing an effective and context-sensitive English-use system. Prior to the intervention, the partner institution experienced several persistent problems, including inconsistent English use among students, limited teacher monitoring mechanisms, uneven student participation, and low sustainability of language practice beyond formal instructional hours. These challenges are commonly reported in boarding school contexts where foreign language policies are implemented without sufficient systemic support (Rasmin & Nur, 2023; Sanjaya et al., 2023).

Contribution to Partner Problem-Solving

The developed English-use system directly responds to these partner-specific challenges by providing a structured yet flexible framework that integrates policy, practice, and monitoring. First, the system operationalizes the biweekly language policy into clear, actionable components—such as daily language routines, peer-based language supervision, and functional English domains—thus reducing ambiguity in policy implementation. This finding aligns with previous work results emphasizing that language policies become effective only when translated into concrete classroom and dormitory practices (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitaş, 2022).

Second, the system strengthens student engagement by positioning learners not merely as policy followers but as active language agents. Through peer monitoring, role rotation (e.g., language captains), and reflective language journals, students are encouraged to take ownership of English use in both academic and non-academic settings. This participatory approach addresses the partner's initial problem of low student motivation and compliance, supporting earlier studies that highlight learner agency as a key factor in successful language policy enactment (Sari & Syafryadin, 2024; Spolsky, 2009).

Third, the system enhances teacher and institutional capacity by providing practical tools for supervision and evaluation. Teachers reported greater clarity in monitoring language use and offering corrective feedback without relying on punitive measures. This is particularly important in boarding school environments, where disciplinary approaches have traditionally dominated language enforcement (Ratminingsih et al., 2024). By shifting the focus from punishment to guidance and reflection, the system supports a more pedagogically sound and psychologically supportive language environment.

Finally, the sustainability of English use—a major concern of the partner institution—is addressed through the system's cyclical design. The biweekly rotation is reinforced by reflection sessions, evaluation meetings, and adaptive revisions, allowing the institution to continuously refine the system based on contextual needs. This adaptive mechanism resonates with the view that language

policy implementation is an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a fixed intervention (Johnson, 2013).

Pedagogical and Institutional Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications. Pedagogically, the English-use system demonstrates that meaningful language exposure in Islamic boarding schools can be achieved without enforcing rigid English-only rules. Instead, structured opportunities for authentic language use, combined with reflective practices, can foster communicative competence more effectively. This supports sociocultural and ecological perspectives on language learning, which emphasize interaction, context, and learner participation (Larsen-Freeman, 2018).

Institutionally, the study suggests that boarding schools should move beyond symbolic language policies toward system-based language planning. School leaders are encouraged to align language policy with institutional culture, available resources, and student realities. The success of the developed system indicates that policy coherence, stakeholder involvement, and continuous evaluation are critical to effective language management in faith-based educational settings (Spolsky, 2009).

At a broader level, the results of this activity contributed to the limited body of English-use systems in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. While previous studies have largely focused on classroom instruction, this activity highlights the importance of integrating language policy across instructional and residential domains. Thus, the developed system can serve as a contextual model for other boarding schools with similar linguistic, cultural, and institutional characteristics.

Implications

From the Applied Linguistics perspective, this activity underscores the value of development-oriented approaches in applied linguistics, particularly in underexplored contexts such as pesantren-based education. Future research and activities may extend this work by examining long-term impacts on students' communicative competence, comparing different policy cycles, or integrating digital tools to support language monitoring and reflection. Additionally, quantitative measures could complement qualitative findings to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of system effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper concluded that developing an effective English-use system under a biweekly language policy in an Islamic boarding school can strengthen students' daily English communication habits and reduce the gap between language rules and real practice. The program's structured routines, shared monitoring roles, and supportive reinforcement helped create a more consistent English-speaking

environment during English weeks. Despite limited implementation time, the initiative shows practical value for sustaining policy enactment in multilingual *Pesantren* settings. Future work should examine long-term continuity across alternating cycles and refine strategies for maintaining English exposure during non-English weeks.

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