

Strategy for Implementing an Arabic-Speaking Environment from Stephen Krashen's Perspective at the Darul Lughah Waddirosatil Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Pamekasan

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Abstract

The Arabic language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) is widely regarded as a key factor in the success of Arabic learning in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), yet the contributions of its formal and informal dimensions are seldom distinguished analytically, and the relationship between sanction-based rule enforcement and learners' affective conditions remains underexplored. This study aims to describe the strategies used to build an Arabic-speaking environment and to analyse their strengths and weaknesses at Darul Lughah Waddirosatil Islamiyah (DLWI), Palengaan, Pamekasan, using Stephen Krashen's distinction between formal and informal linguistic environments. This qualitative single case study involved 5 teachers and 36 students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, analysed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, and validated through source and technique triangulation and member checking. The findings show that the formal environment is strong, supported by a compulsory Arabic rule, graded sanctions, consistent teachers at the advanced level, and scheduled academic programs. In contrast, the informal environment remains weak: students revert to Indonesian or Madurese in casual conversation, the linguistic landscape is dominated by Indonesian, and supplementary activities are incidental. Arabic use is driven largely by sanctions, which suggests a relatively high affective filter, although this was not measured with a standardised instrument. The study identifies a paradox of discipline: a strong rule-based formal environment does not automatically generate a lively informal environment. Theoretically, Krashen's formal-informal distinction proves useful as a diagnostic framework for language environments in *pesantren*, shifting attention from whether programs exist to how the two dimensions interact. Practically, strengthening efforts should focus on educative sanctions, a bilingual Arabic-Indonesian linguistic landscape, and low-pressure peer interaction spaces.

Keywords: Krashen; Arabic language environment; language acquisition; linguistic landscape; affective filter; Islamic boarding school

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INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in Arabic is a fundamental necessity for Indonesian Muslims, as the language serves as a gateway to understanding the sources of Islamic teachings directly.

Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a crucial role in teaching and preserving the Arabic language (Awwaludin et al., 2022;

Ungu, 2024). However, instruction that relies heavily on **nahwu** (syntax) and **sharaf** (morphology) rules, alongside rote vocabulary memorization, does not always result in active communication skills particularly speaking proficiency (**maharah kalam**) (Abdullah et al., 2020; Astuti et al., 2020).

Consequently, many institutions establish an Arabic-speaking environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) encompassing everything learners hear and see regarding the target language to serve as both a medium and a source of learning (Awwaludin et al., 2022; Shidqi & Mudinillah, 2021). Such environments are considered vital because they provide opportunities to practice skills learned in the classroom and influence the language acquisition process (Hidayat, 2012). Yet, the mere existence of a program does not guarantee its effectiveness. An exploratory study of 12 *pesantren* in Riau revealed a gap between policy and practice: while 58.3% of the institutions had formal regulations, only 33.3% mandated full communication in Arabic, with student embarrassment and a lack of self-confidence emerging as the most prominent psychological barriers (Samin et al., 2025). These findings suggest that the issue of a language environment is not merely a matter of the presence or absence of rules, but also of how those rules are experienced by the students.

Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition offers a relevant framework for evaluating such environments. According to Krashen, language proficiency develops primarily through acquisition a subconscious process occurring when learners understand meaningful input whereas learning functions mainly as a monitor for editing speech. The extent to which input is internalized also depends on the affective filter: high anxiety, low motivation, and low self-confidence raise the filter, thereby blocking input (S. Krashen, 1982; S. D. Krashen, 1985; Setiyadi & Syam, 2013). Krashen also distinguishes between two types of linguistic environments. Formal environments such as classrooms and structured learning situations are artificial, rule-focused, and allow for error correction. Informal environments such as conversations with peers and exposure to target-language media are natural and provide input for acquisition (Dulay et al., 1982; S. D. Krashen, 1976). Thus, a robust language environment ideally integrates both, rather than relying on just one.

Krashen's framework has not been without controversy. Gregg (1984) criticized the "monitor" construct and the acquisition–learning dichotomy due to the difficulty of empirically testing them; Swain (1985) emphasized the necessity of comprehensible output; and Lichtman and VanPatten (2021) revisited Krashen's claims after four decades, finding results that neither fully supported nor refuted them. Consequently, this article employs the distinction between formal and informal environments as a diagnostic tool to map language environment conditions—rather than as an indisputable truth—while also considering the role of output and alternative explanations.

Numerous studies have examined the creation of Arabic language environments in **pesantren** (Islamic boarding schools). Zahro (2015) reported that an intensive Arabic language environment enhances students' communication skills, although maintaining consistent daily usage remains a challenge. Awwaludin et al. (2022) demonstrated that structural strategies—such as using Arabic in daily activities, establishing habits of conversation (**muhadatsah**), and integrating **pesantren** culture—are effective but hindered by low student motivation and time constraints. Abdullah et al. (2020) underscored the need for extracurricular activities like debates and drama to maximize students' language output; Astuti et al. (2020) described how speaking habits are fostered through mandatory communication, public speaking sessions (**muhadhoroh**), and mentor encouragement; and Ainin (2021) reported that applying Krashen's input hypothesis improved listening and speaking skills but required teacher resource support. Marpaung and Lubis (2023) mapped strategies for establishing an Arabic language environment at *Pesantren Modern Darussalam*; Rochmat et al. (2023) analyzed its implementation for non-native Arabic speakers in modern **pesantren**; and Setiyadi et al.

(2023) examined the **bi'ah lughawiyah** (language environment) program regarding speaking skills. Regarding the linguistic landscape, Sofyan et al. (2022) demonstrated that the Arabic linguistic landscape within **pesantren** (Islamic boarding schools) such as Quranic verses, **hadith** texts, and scholarly aphorisms supports classroom learning; meanwhile, Maf'udah et al. (2025) found that the prevalence of Arabic signage in a girls' **pesantren** correlates with students' motivation to speak Arabic.

These studies generally describe specific programs or their impact on a single skill, with Krashen's theory applied only at a general, hypothetical level. To the best of the author's knowledge, Krashen's distinction between formal and informal environments has not yet been widely utilized as an operational analytical framework to assess the strength of each environmental dimension within a **pesantren**—particularly when considering the interplay between sanction-based rule enforcement and the "affective filter" of students navigating a multilingual setting comprising Arabic, Indonesian, and local languages. Anxiety has long been recognized as a significant factor in foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986), including among learners of Arabic (Elkhafaifi, 2005). This article addresses this gap by mapping Arabic-language environment strategies onto Krashen's indicators of formal and informal environments, demonstrating that a strong formal environment driven by discipline does not automatically result in a vibrant informal environment.

This study was conducted at the Darul Lughah Waddirosatil Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School (hereinafter DLWI) in Palengaan, Pamekasan an institution that prioritizes Arabic as a core subject and mandates the habitual use of Arabic in students' daily lives. This article addresses two questions: (1) what strategies are employed to implement an Arabic-speaking environment both formal and informal at DLWI; and (2) what are the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies from Krashen's perspective? The study aims to describe these strategies and analyze their strengths and weaknesses through a qualitative case study utilizing data from observations, interviews, and documentation.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach defined as a method for understanding the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) utilizing a descriptive single-case study design. The researcher does not manipulate variables but instead describes the phenomenon within its natural context. The study examines two types of language environments as categorized by Krashen: formal and informal; it does not involve hypothesis testing.

The research was conducted at the DLWI **pesantren** (Islamic boarding school) in Akkor Village, Palengaan District, Pamekasan Regency, East Java. Established in 1994 as the "Arabic Language Center" (**Markaz Bahasa Arab**), the institution was renamed DLWI seven years later in response to growing student enrollment and rising community interest in the Arabic language. Students are grouped into **muftadi** (beginner), **mutawassith** (intermediate), and **mutaqaddim** (advanced) levels, alongside an **i'dad** (preparatory) class for children under 15 that focuses on basic literacy and Arabic skills. The research subjects comprised five instructors (**asatidz**) and 36 students of varying proficiency levels who were directly involved in the language environment program. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants including administrators, instructors, and students—whose identities are represented by initials. The researcher served as the primary instrument and was physically present at the site, though involvement was limited to Arabic language activities.

Data were collected using three techniques. Direct observation focused on Arabic language usage in classrooms, dormitories, the canteen, and public areas; the linguistic landscape (bulletin boards, signage, and public facilities); and the implementation of supplementary activities. In-depth interviews explored policies, strategies, habits, and

experiences regarding Arabic language use. Documentation included activity schedules, language-use regulations, records of sanctions, and bulletin board notices.

Data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles et al. (2014) namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis categories were derived from Krashen's framework: formal environments (artificial nature, emphasis on rules, and integration into academic activities) and informal environments (natural interaction, access to learning resources, and language-use cultural practices). Data validity was verified through source triangulation (students, teachers, and *pesantren* documents) and technique triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation), as well as member checks with informants. This study did not measure Arabic language proficiency or the students' affective filters using standardized instruments; consequently, the conclusions are limited to environmental conditions and language-use habits.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research findings reveal a consistent pattern across observations, interviews, and documentation: the formal environment at DLWI is robust, whereas the informal environment remains weak, and the strength of the former has not yet extended to the latter. This pattern is discussed sequentially moving from the formal to the informal dimension and subsequently summarized in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and directions for reinforcement based on Krashen's framework.

DLWI's core activities take place between 05:00 and 21:00 WIB, comprising *ta'lim subuh* (Arabic grammar and morphology), *ta'lim dhuha* (listening, reading, and speaking skills), and midday and evening study sessions. Supplementary activities include *al-barnamij al-usbu'i* (speeches, poetry, and drama; Tuesday evenings), *al-munaqasyah al-'arabiyah* (debates; Sunday mornings), *al-jaulah al-'arabiyah* (leisurely walks conducted in Arabic; Friday mornings), *musyahadah al-aflam* (film screenings; Thursday evenings), and *qira'ah al-mufradat* (vocabulary reading), alongside intensive Arabic courses held three times a year programs that, according to interview data, attract over 250 male and 130 female participants.

Regarding the formal dimension, DLWI mandates that students speak Arabic both inside and outside the classroom; violations incur specific penalties (*'uqubah al-bi'ah al-lughawiyah*). An administrator noted that penalties for language violations are more severe than those for missing lessons, and the *pesantren* appoints students to act as "secret monitors" who report infractions (interview with ZF). Penalties are tiered according to severity, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Sanctions for Violations of Arabic Language Rules by Level

Level	Form of Sanction
Mubtadi' (Beginner)	Memorizing mufradat (Arabic vocabulary) and reciting them to the instructor.
Mutawassith (Intermediate)	Performing five squats, then writing an insya' (Arabic composition) consisting of three paragraphs.
Mutaqaddim (Advanced)	Writing a khitabah (Arabic speech) and Arabic poetry, then performing them in front of all santri (Islamic boarding school students) after congregational prayer.

This design aligns with the characteristics of a formal environment as described by Krashen (1976) namely, one that is artificial and structured and its impact is evident in the habit of using Arabic within supervised spaces. However, Table 1 lists two types of sanctions. Tasks such as memorizing vocabulary, writing essays (*insya'*), and preparing speeches (*khitabah*) or poetry for performance are pedagogical in nature, as they continue to practice vocabulary, writing, and speaking skills. In contrast, the penalty of squatting five times bears no relation to the Arabic language and risks associating the

language with unpleasant experiences. While performing before the entire student body can foster confidence, for anxious students, it may also trigger "foreign language anxiety" (Horwitz et al., 1986). One student remarked, "Sometimes we use Arabic not out of habit, but out of fear of punishment. So, it still feels forced" (interview with AH). Within Krashen's (1982) framework, language use driven by fear can be interpreted as an indication of a high "affective filter": while input may be plentiful, it is not automatically internalized as language acquisition. This interpretation requires caution, however, as the affective filter was not directly measured. A similar trend was observed in a study in Riau, where feelings of shame and a lack of self-confidence emerged as primary psychological barriers for students (Samin et al., 2025). Unlike the findings of Astuti et al. (2020) which highlight the role of mentors and a positive atmosphere as supporting factors supervision at DLWI relies on "secret monitors," creating a tendency toward a repressive approach.

Classroom instruction exhibits a tiered pattern. Observations indicate that instruction at the **mutaqaddim** (advanced) level is conducted almost entirely in Arabic; at the **mutawassith** (intermediate) and **mubtadi** (beginner) levels, instructors mix Arabic and Indonesian; and in **i'dad** (preparatory) classes, explanations are still delivered in Indonesian. Instructors emphasize **nahwu** (syntax) and **sharaf** (morphology) in communication, and the **pesantren** organizes weekly conversation sessions (**muhadatsah**) as well as study sessions based on Arabic texts. This pattern aligns with the principle of comprehensible input whereby teacher speech serves as input only if understood by the learner making the shift to Indonesian at the beginner level pedagogically sound (S. D. Krashen, 1985). However, a paradox emerges: the level where the foundation for acquisition is being built is precisely the one receiving the least exposure to Arabic from instructors. While the emphasis on grammatical rules reinforces "learning" which Krashen (1982) posits functions as a "monitor" the use of Arabic that is gradually simplified and supported by visuals or gestures could help bridge this paradox.

Arabic is also integrated into scheduled academic activities, such as **muhadatsah yaumiyyah** (daily conversation), weekly exercises involving short plays, debates, and thematic conversations, Arabic text studies, and intensive courses. One student remarked, "If we only studied **nahwu** and **sharaf**, it might feel overwhelming. But because there are conversation exercises, it feels easier and more enjoyable" (interview with AH). These activities combine input (listening and reading) with output (speaking and writing), consistent with the notion that meaningful output is also essential (Swain, 1985) and with findings by Abdullah et al. (2020) and Setiyadi et al. (2023) regarding the role of speaking activities in language immersion programs. However, this strength is currently observed only at the level of habitual practice within formal settings. This study does not measure the students' proficiency; therefore, its impact on competence cannot yet be determined.

In the informal realm, the picture changes. In dormitories, canteens, and common areas, students tend to revert to Indonesian or Madurese, even though the rules mandate the use of Arabic (interview with AM). A beginning-level student stated, "When chatting with close friends, it feels more natural to use Madurese or Indonesian. Using Arabic feels stiff" (interview with AS). According to Krashen, peer conversation is a potent source of informal input for language acquisition (Dulay et al., 1982; S. D. Krashen, 1976); thus, the absence of Arabic in these spaces represents a lost opportunity. The reasons cited by students comfort and a sense of stiffness suggest a higher "affective filter" regarding Arabic compared to their first language or regional language (S. Krashen, 1982). However, alternative explanations remain possible: Madurese and Indonesian are linguistic repertoires deeply tied to identity and the intimacy of friendship, meaning students' language choices are not necessarily driven solely by affective factors; furthermore, claims regarding the strength of informal input remain a subject of debate (Gregg, 1984; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). Consequently, while formal rules successfully ensure compliance in supervised areas, they have not altered students' language choices in casual conversation.

The linguistic landscape referring to the visibility of languages on public signs and notices (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) also fails to reinforce the target language. Observations and documentation reveal that notice boards, directional signs, and public facilities predominantly use Indonesian, with Arabic text appearing primarily in information regarding academic programs. An administrator acknowledged this, noting, "There are indeed still many signs and announcements in Indonesian. If everything were in Arabic, it could serve as a great stimulus for expanding the students' vocabulary" (interview with NH). Cenoz and Gorter (2008) demonstrate that the linguistic landscape can serve as an additional source of input for second language acquisition. In contrast to the findings of Ma'udah et al. (2025) who linked the prevalence of Arabic signage to **santri** (Islamic boarding school students) motivation to speak Arabic and Sofyan et al. (2022) who showed that the Arabic landscape in **pesantren** can feature Quranic verses, **hadith**, and scholarly aphorisms the absence of Arabic text in the daily spaces of DLWI represents a loss of repetitive, low-cost passive input. Unlike peer interactions that require shifts in social habits, the linguistic landscape can be improved relatively quickly through the use of bilingual signage.

Supplementary programs such as drama, debates, speeches, **jaulah** (excursions/outings), and film screenings provide opportunities for relaxed, communicative language use. Administrators noted, "If they only study in the classroom, **santri** can get bored quickly. Through drama, debates, or **jaulah**, they feel more confident using Arabic in a relaxed atmosphere" (interview with NH). However, activities like film screenings and **jaulah** remain weekly or occasional events rather than daily habits. Some **santri** use Arabic to avoid punishment rather than out of communicative necessity. According to self-determination theory, motivation driven by external control is less conducive to sustainability than motivation arising from personal awareness and needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This distinction overlaps with, yet is not identical to, the concepts of instrumental and integrative motivation in language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). For Krashen (1982), the type of motivation that lowers the affective filter is one that fosters self-confidence and comfort, rather than one that induces pressure.

Table 2 summarizes the findings across both dimensions, along with their interpretation based on Krashen's framework and the direction for strengthening them.

Table 2. Summary of Findings, Krashen's Interpretation, and Directions for Strengthening

Dimension	Findings at DLWI	Krashen's Interpretation	Direction for Improvement
Rules and sanctions	Arabic is mandatory; sanctions are tiered; secret monitors are employed.	An artificial environment increases the frequency of language use but risks raising the affective filter.	Apply educational sanctions and provide positive reinforcement.
Teachers' language of instruction	Full Arabic at the <i>mutaqaddim</i> (advanced) level; mixed-language instruction at the <i>mutawassith</i> (intermediate) and <i>mubtadi'</i> (beginner) levels; Indonesian in <i>i'dad</i> (preparatory classes).	Comprehensible input is maintained, but beginners receive limited exposure to Arabic.	Introduce Arabic gradually, supported by visual aids.

Academic programs	Muhadatsah (conversational practice), weekly exercises, classical Islamic text study, and intensive courses.	Meaningful input and output are provided, while learning functions as a monitor.	Integrate language practice into everyday situations.
Informal interaction	Indonesian or Madurese predominates in dormitories and canteens.	The affective filter is high, and learners tend to feel more comfortable using their first or regional language.	Create low-pressure peer interaction spaces and introduce peer mentoring.
Linguistic landscape	Signs and directions are predominantly written in Indonesian.	Passive language input is minimal.	Install bilingual Arabic–Indonesian signs.
Extracurricular activities	Drama, debates, speeches, jaulah (educational outings), and films are conducted occasionally.	Authentic input and opportunities for output are available, but they are not continuous.	Establish regular daily and weekly activity schedules.

The strengths of the DLWI strategy lie in four areas. First, formal rules backed by strict sanctions accustom students to using Arabic in supervised settings. Second, a variety of communicative activities prevents learning from becoming monotonous and fosters student confidence. Third, instruction extends beyond **nahwu** (syntax) and **sharaf** (morphology) to practice real-life conversation. Fourth, Arabic is integrated into both the curriculum and non-formal activities. There are also four weaknesses: Arabic usage outside the classroom remains low, the linguistic landscape is unsupportive, motivation tends to be extrinsic, and supplementary activities are sporadic, failing to establish a culture of daily language use. This pattern reveals a sort of disciplinary paradox, as illustrated in Figure 1: the strength of the formal environment driven by rules and sanctions—does not carry over to the informal environment, even though Krashen (1976) identifies the informal environment as the primary source of input for language acquisition. Strength in one dimension cannot substitute for the other, and efforts to bolster the weaker dimension require an approach distinct from rule enforcement. These findings align with the policy-practice gap reported by Samin et al. (2025), further suggesting that such a gap can emerge precisely when policies are rigorously enforced.

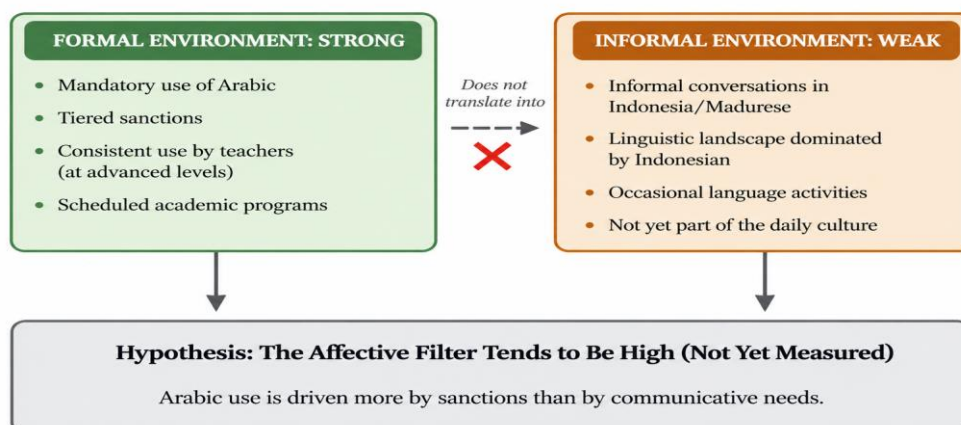


Figure 1. Findings Framework: Strong Formal Environment, Weak Informal Environment, and Hypothesized Affective Filter.

These findings point to four measures for strengthening the situation. First, sanctions could be made more educational for instance, by replacing physical punishments with meaningful language-related tasks and complemented by recognition for students who consistently use Arabic, thereby shifting the motivation for language use from fear to conscious awareness. Second, the linguistic landscape could be gradually improved through the use of bilingual (Arabic-Indonesian) notice boards, signage, and posters. Third, informal interactions need to be intentionally designed rather than merely mandated; this includes creating low-pressure environments for Arabic use, utilizing peer support from senior students, organizing regular supplementary activities, and employing varied classroom teaching strategies. Fourth, teachers, dormitory staff, and senior students need to coordinate to ensure consistent language use across all settings.

This study has limitations. The data were drawn from a single *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), interview excerpts were limited to a subset of informants, and neither Arabic proficiency nor the students' affective filters were measured; consequently, conclusions regarding the environment's strength pertain to language habits rather than competence levels. Future research is encouraged to employ a mixed-methods design that measures speaking proficiency, compares multiple *pesantren*, and assesses students' affective filters using standardized instruments such as an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The findings of this study demonstrate that Arabic language development at DLWI is characterized by an imbalance between a strong formal environment and a weak informal environment. Although mandatory language policies, tiered sanctions, scheduled academic programs, and classroom instruction create structured opportunities for Arabic use, these mechanisms have not consistently extended into students' everyday interactions. This finding can be interpreted through Krashen's (1976, 1982, 1985) framework, particularly the distinction between formal language learning and acquisition through meaningful exposure. While DLWI provides substantial opportunities for structured learning, the limited use of Arabic in dormitories, canteens, and other informal spaces restricts opportunities for spontaneous communication. Therefore, the presence of a well-organized language program should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of a fully developed language acquisition environment.

The findings also extend Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) by illustrating a potential tension between disciplinary control and psychological readiness to communicate. One student explained that Arabic was sometimes used out of fear of punishment rather than habit. This suggests that strict language policies may encourage observable compliance without necessarily fostering communicative confidence or intrinsic motivation. This interpretation resonates with Horwitz et al. (1986), who identified anxiety as an important factor in foreign language learning, and with Samin et al. (2025), whose findings highlight shame and low self-confidence as psychological barriers to language use. However, the present study does not establish that students' affective filters are objectively high because this construct was not directly measured. Instead, the interview evidence suggests that fear of sanctions and discomfort during informal communication may represent conditions associated with a potentially elevated affective filter. This distinction is important because it avoids treating behavioral observations as direct measurements of psychological processes.

The findings further contribute to the discussion of language supervision by contrasting disciplinary monitoring with supportive language mentoring. Astuti et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of mentors and a positive learning atmosphere, whereas the use of secret student monitors at DLWI indicates a stronger reliance on surveillance and punishment. The difference is not simply between strict and permissive

language policies; rather, it concerns the mechanism through which language practices are sustained. Disciplinary control may increase the frequency of Arabic use in supervised settings, but supportive mentoring may be more conducive to confidence, voluntary participation, and continued communication beyond those settings. This interpretation is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which distinguishes externally controlled behavior from more autonomous forms of motivation. Nevertheless, the qualitative findings do not demonstrate that external regulation always fails. Rather, they indicate that external regulation alone may be insufficient to establish Arabic as a habitual medium of everyday interaction.

A second important finding concerns the relationship between comprehensible input and communicative participation. At DLWI, advanced classes use Arabic extensively, while beginner and preparatory classes rely more heavily on Indonesian or mixed-language instruction. This pattern is consistent with Krashen's (1985) emphasis on comprehensible input because learners need to understand the language they encounter. However, the findings reveal a pedagogical tension: beginners require accessible input, yet they also need sufficient exposure to Arabic to gradually develop familiarity and confidence. The implication is not that Indonesian should be eliminated from beginner instruction, but that it should be used strategically alongside simplified Arabic, visual materials, gestures, and familiar communicative situations. Furthermore, the inclusion of *muhadatsah*, debates, drama, and thematic conversations provides opportunities to connect input with language production. This observation is compatible with Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis and with previous studies by Abdullah et al. (2020) and Setiyadi et al. (2023), which emphasize the contribution of speaking activities to language immersion. Nevertheless, because this study did not directly assess students' Arabic proficiency, the contribution of these activities to measurable language development remains to be established.

The weak informal environment also highlights the importance of the linguistic landscape and everyday social interaction. Landry and Bourhis (1997) conceptualized the linguistic landscape as the visibility and prominence of languages in public spaces, while Cenoz and Gorter (2008) discussed its relevance to additional language learning. At DLWI, the dominance of Indonesian on signs and announcements limits opportunities for repeated visual exposure to Arabic. This finding contrasts with Maf'udah et al. (2025), who associated Arabic signage with students' motivation to speak Arabic, and with Sofyan et al. (2022), who examined Arabic linguistic landscapes in pesantren settings. Bilingual Arabic-Indonesian signage could therefore provide accessible supplementary input without immediately requiring students to change their established conversational habits. More importantly, the persistence of Indonesian and Madurese in informal interactions suggests that language choice is also embedded in friendship, familiarity, and social identity. Consequently, the limited use of Arabic outside formal activities should not be attributed exclusively to anxiety or weak motivation. It may also reflect the social functions served by students' first and regional languages.

Taken together, these findings suggest a distinctive contribution to understanding language environments in Islamic boarding schools. Previous studies cited in this research have addressed psychological barriers, supportive mentoring, communicative activities, and linguistic landscapes as separate factors influencing language learning. The present study brings these dimensions together to explain the gap between institutional language regulation and everyday communicative practice. Its central conceptual contribution is the disciplinary paradox: stronger formal enforcement does not necessarily produce stronger informal language use. The formal environment may successfully regulate where and when Arabic is used, while the informal environment remains shaped by social comfort,

language identity, limited passive exposure, and the availability of low-pressure communicative opportunities.

This study therefore proposes that the effectiveness of an Arabic language environment should be examined not only through the existence of rules and scheduled activities but also through the extent to which Arabic becomes a meaningful and voluntarily used medium of everyday interaction. The proposed interpretation extends the application of Krashen's framework by connecting formal supervision, potential affective barriers, and the sustainability of informal communication within a single analytical framework. Nevertheless, the disciplinary paradox should be understood as a qualitative proposition derived from a single pesantren rather than a universally established causal relationship. Future research involving multiple institutions, direct measurements of speaking proficiency, and validated instruments for language anxiety could test whether this pattern also occurs in other Arabic immersion environments.

CONCLUSION

The formal environment at DLWI is notably strong in fostering Arabic language habits, whereas the informal environment is relatively weak; this is because natural interactions among students are dominated by Indonesian and Madurese, the linguistic landscape lacks adequate Arabic representation, and the use of Arabic is driven more by sanctions than by communicative necessity. In other words, strict formal discipline does not automatically generate a vibrant informal environment.

Theoretically, these findings demonstrate that Krashen's distinction between formal and informal environments can serve as a diagnostic framework for mapping the strengths and weaknesses of language environments in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Practically, *pesantren* administrators can refine sanction policies, implement bilingual signage, and create low-pressure spaces for peer interaction, thereby balancing the strength of the formal environment with that of the informal one.

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