

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO SPEAKING ANXIETY
IN AN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
(AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF FEMALE DARUN NA'IM
ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL)

Annisa Amalia¹, Dwi Riyanti², Endang Susilawati³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Tanjungpura, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received: August 5, 2026 Revised: August 18, 2026 Accepted: August 28, 2026 Published: August 31, 2026 Keywords: Contributing Factors, Speaking Anxiety, Islamic Boarding School, Exploratory Study, Female students	Speaking anxiety remains an urgent yet underexplored barrier to English learning in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), where institutional, linguistic, and religious dynamics may intensify students' fear of speaking. This qualitative study investigated factors shaping speaking anxiety among 12 female students aged 16–18 at Darun Naim Islamic Boarding School, Pontianak, West Kalimantan. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and triangulation interviews with a teacher and administrator. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used solely to screen participants with high anxiety. Thematic analysis identified four interconnected factors: social surveillance and fear of negative evaluation; high expectations and teacher reverence (tadzhim); institutional reputation pressure; and personal aspirations. A key novelty is the motivation paradox: students' aspirations for prestigious universities coexist with limited classroom participation due to exhaustion, judgment, and social pressure. The study contributes a context-sensitive framework for understanding language anxiety and informs supportive pesantren English-learning environments. 
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Corresponding Author: Annisa Amalia English Education Department Universitas Tanjungpura Pontianak Jl Prof H Hadari Nawawi, 78124 Email : Lnisaamalia@gmail.com	

INTRODUCTION

English-speaking skills are critically important for students' futures and careers in this globalized era (Lacay, 2025). However, many learners in Indonesia experience significant mental barriers when speaking English, with fear of making mistakes often leading students to remain silent, give very short answers, or avoid spontaneous interaction entirely (Huang and Liu, 2025). While this problem occurs in many public schools, the situation becomes more unique and challenging in the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) environment (Sari, 2025).

An Islamic boarding school represents a distinctive educational system in Indonesia where students (*santri*) live and learn together 24 hours a day under strict religious discipline (Aisah, 2020; Ghazali et al., 2025). In a boarding school environment, learning a language is

not just about getting good grades in class; it is also closely related to the values of politeness and high respect for teachers (*ustadz* or *ustadzah*) (Aisah, 2020; Holandiyah et al., 2022). Because of this great respect, students often feel deeply afraid of making mistakes in front of their teachers, which makes them hesitate to start spontaneous English conversations (August et al., 2025; Maharani, 2025). As a result, practicing English often feels like a stressful rather than a fun tool for daily communication.

The Islamic boarding school environment has specific rules that separate male and female students (Holandiyah et al., 2022). Based on Islamic principles, interaction between men and women is restricted (Supeno, 2021). Therefore, all activities in the female *pesantren* are completely separated from the male section (Putri, 2025). This study intentionally focuses on an all-female boarding school environment, specifically Darun Na'im Islamic boarding school in Pontianak, because such an environment creates a distinct psychological and social atmosphere (Hidayatulloh et al., 2024). Inside an all-female boarding school, anxiety when speaking English can become even stronger (Mardhatilla, 2023). According to psychological studies, teenage girls generally show higher sensitivity to social evaluation, peer judgment, and group harmony compared to boys (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). In this all-female environment, social pressures such as feeling watched or being afraid of being judged poorly by roommates become extremely high, which directly amplifies their fear of negative evaluation when performing in a foreign language (Mardhatilla, 2023).

At Darun Na'im Islamic Boarding School, this creates a unique situation. The female students (*santriwati*) are actually very fluent and confident when reading the Quran, but they can feel incredibly nervous and experience sudden difficulty or hesitation when asked to speak English. They also feel a big responsibility to maintain the good reputation of their Islamic boarding school, which is known for its disciplined language program. Consequently, making a grammatical mistake in public is seen as something very embarrassing that can drop their self-confidence in front of their friends (Naor et al., 2021).

Earlier research in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools highlights various institutional and social factors influencing EFL speaking anxiety. Munir (2022) identified teacher personality, lack of preparation, and fear of peer judgment as primary triggers, while Malihah and Fauzan (2022) found that strict daily routines and severe peer pressure significantly undermined students' willingness to speak. Similarly, Mardhatilla (2023) observed heightened anxiety among female *santri* driven primarily by the fear of negative academic evaluation. However, most existing studies have primarily examined mixed-gender environments on Java Island through a narrow psychological or pedagogical lens (Damayanti and Listyani, 2020; Yoes et al., 2023). Beyond merely shifting the geographical locus to West Kalimantan, this study addresses a key theoretical gap by exploring how EFL speaking anxiety is dynamically constructed through the intersection of personal aspirations, peer dynamics, institutional structures, and socio-religious norms within an all-female *pesantren* context.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the contributing factors to speaking anxiety in an Islamic boarding school, focusing on Darun Na'im Islamic boarding school in Pontianak.

By investigating these specific factors, the results are expected to help teachers and managers of other female Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia create English learning methods that are more relaxed, comfortable, and suitable for the emotional needs of the *santriwati*. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) What are the contributing factors to speaking anxiety among female students at Darun Na'im Islamic Boarding School? (2) How does the teacher hierarchy affect students' willingness to speak English? and (3) How does pressure to maintain school reputation influence fear of English-speaking mistakes?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts an exploratory qualitative design that is well-suited to uncovering factors contributing to anxiety about speaking English among *santriwati* at Darun Na'im Islamic Boarding School. The exploratory design was chosen because of significant gaps in the existing literature on EFL speaking anxiety in the context of a female Islamic boarding school in West Kalimantan. Exploratory research is crucial for identifying the unique cultural factors within Islamic Boarding Schools that contribute to speaking anxiety. Previous studies mainly relied on generic FLCAS surveys, which did not fully capture *santri* perspectives on aspects such as *tadzhim*, the culture of silence, and institutional honor pressures (Creswell, 2021).

As articulated by Creswell (2021), qualitative exploratory research aims to describe the shared meaning of a concept or phenomenon among several individuals through their lived experiences. The phenomenon investigated is English-speaking anxiety experienced by *santriwati* within the Islamic boarding school cultural ecosystem, with special attention to *tadzhim* norms, collective reputation pressure, and institutional hierarchy (Botes et al., 2022; Creswell, 2021).

The research was conducted at Darun Na'im Islamic Boarding School, Pontianak, West Kalimantan, a female Islamic boarding school that accommodates approximately 89 *santriwati* in grades X-XI at the MTs and SMA levels. Darun Na'im represents the modern hybrid Islamic boarding school education model in Indonesia, integrating a traditional religious curriculum with national academic standards, including formal EFL instruction. *Santriwati* interacts within a multilingual repertoire of local languages (Dayak, Pontianak Malay), Indonesian, liturgical Arabic, and academic English.

The target population comprises 89 *santriwati* in grades X-XI enrolled in formal EFL classes. The primary sample consists of 12 grade X-XI students aged 16-18, selected from 22

screening candidates. The secondary sample includes one *ustadzah* EFL teacher providing triangulation perspectives.

Data collection occurred over four weeks following a structured but flexible timeline that included site immersion, instrument administration, and iterative validation. The schedule was carefully coordinated with the Islamic boarding school administration to reduce disruption to daily routines while allowing enough time for interviews, observations, and teacher feedback. All activities were conducted in Indonesian, with English terms used only when relevant to the instruments. Written consent was obtained from each participant before any data collection began.

During the first week, the researcher participated in a three-day site immersion to familiarize themselves with the daily routines of the Islamic boarding school, including classroom organization and dormitory culture. This phase involved informal observations and brief conversations with *ustadzah* and *santriwati*, which were recorded in field notes to capture contextual details before formal data collection commenced. Subsequently, 22 screening questionnaires were distributed through *ustadzah* to facilitate smooth access, targeting individuals based on criteria such as at least one year of residency, self-reported speaking anxiety levels of Sometimes or Often, and willingness to participate. From these, 12 participants were purposively selected using a maximum variation matrix to ensure diversity in proficiency, tenure, and anxiety context.

The second week focused on conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the 12 participants. Each session lasted about 40 minutes and was scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings to align with quieter times in the Islamic boarding school schedule. Before each interview, the researcher obtained verbal consent, briefly explained the study's purpose and confidentiality measures, and then administered the Self-Assessment Scale to gauge baseline anxiety levels. The interview then continued with open-ended questions about experiences, triggers, and coping strategies related to English-speaking anxiety. Throughout, the researcher took field notes on key nonverbal cues, emotional reactions, and contextual details, which complemented the transcripts of the audio recordings.

In the third week, the researcher conducted 12 structured observation sessions, one for each participant, lasting about 40 minutes, during English-speaking activities in classroom settings. These observations adhered to a predefined checklist from the Structured Observation protocol, focusing on behavioral indicators like volunteering, hesitation, gaze avoidance, and verbal participation. At the same time, detailed field notes were taken to describe the physical and social environment, interactions between participants and *ustadzah*, and any incidents that could illuminate the connection between reported anxiety and observable behaviors. These notes were then expanded and clarified within 24 hours after each session to capture the full context and support later thematic analysis.

The fourth week focused on teacher triangulation, member checking, and data organization. The researcher conducted brief semi-structured interviews with one *ustadzah* who regularly taught English. They were asked to identify students perceived as anxious during speaking activities and to discuss potential influences such as classroom pressure, peer interactions, and religious expectations. Responses were documented in field notes and later compared with interview and observation data to strengthen triangulation. Meanwhile, member checking involved reviewing eight transcripts with some participants. Selected excerpts were sent back to respondents for verification and clarification. All interviews and discussions with teachers were recorded with dual audio backups (primary and secondary devices) to safeguard the data. The recordings were transcribed verbatim into Indonesian, totaling about 34 pages, which served as the main dataset for analysis.

Methodological triangulation combined four core instruments with field notes. Semi-structured interviews (40 minutes each) with 12 participants examined emotional experiences, triggers, participation effects, and coping strategies. All sessions were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English with back-translation verification.

Structured observations (40 minutes each) were conducted during English-speaking classroom activities, supplemented by field notes documenting descriptive observations and reflective interpretations. Teacher triangulation involved semi-structured interviews with one *ustadzah* to gather observer perspectives on student anxiety patterns and institutional constraints.

Data collection occurred over four weeks: Week 1 involved three-day site immersion and questionnaire distribution. Week 2 focused on semi-structured interviews with 12 participants. Week 3 included structured observations during English activities. Week 4 comprised teacher triangulation interviews, member checking with selected participants, and data organization.

Data analysis employed Braun & Clarke (2022) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis. Phase 1 involved data immersion through repeated transcript reading. Phase 2 comprised systematic line-by-line coding using Microsoft Excel to generate initial codes. Phase 3 developed broader themes by clustering related codes. Phase 4 involved recursive theme review to ensure validity and consistency. Phase 5 refined and named themes reflecting the *pesantren* context. Phase 6 produced a coherent narrative addressing the research questions, integrating findings with relevant literature.

RESULT

Contributing Factors to Speaking Anxiety

The results of this study show that speaking anxiety among *santriwati* is not just a personal psychological problem. The language rules at Darun Na'im require *santriwati* to constantly switch between Arabic for religious classes and English for daily communication. The data show that the *santriwati* have a very tight 24-hour routine that runs from early dawn

to late at night, with school and religious activities. This high pressure from the school and the fear of making mistakes often causes direct physical and emotional reactions.

Theme 1: The Interplay of Personal Aspirations and Institutional Pressure

The first major theme shows how the strict daily demands of the Islamic boarding school often conflict with the students' personal ambitions. One of the main problems found in the field is linguistic self-doubt, where students feel that their vocabulary and grammar are never good enough. This lack of confidence often creates a sudden mental block. For example, Bunga (Participant 1) shared how this self-doubt affects her during group work:

Disuruh mendeskripsikan bersama kelompok tentang kucing dan deg degan pas ngomong kadang suka ngeblank juga.....Kadang-kadang merasa grammar atau kosakata kurang dan takut salah juga memilih kosakata. (Interview Transcript, participant 1)

"We were asked to describe a cat with our group. I was nervous when I spoke, and sometimes I forgot what I was going to say. I sometimes feel that my grammar or vocabulary is inadequate, and I am afraid of making mistakes when choosing words."

This self-doubt is made worse by the fear of making pronunciation mistakes, especially during mandatory school programs like the three-language speech contest (*Muhadharah*). Inai (Participant 6) explained her experience regarding this dynamic:

Kalau buat praktik langsung, biasanya kami ada Pidato 3 Bahasa atau Muhadahroh, jadi nanti setiap minggunya bakal diacak. Tapi kalau saya pribadi, memang untuk bahasa Inggris belum terlalu bisa, tapi saya tertarik. Nggak pede, iya. Kosakata juga masih minim, sering tanya ke teman-teman. (Interview Transcript, participant 6)

"As for practical sessions, we usually have a Three-Language Speech or Muhadahroh, so the order will be randomised each week. Personally, I'm not very good at English yet, but I'm interested. I'm not very confident, that's true. My vocabulary is still limited, so I often ask my friends..."

The chosen students often spoke in a very low volume, their voices shook, and they made frequent, long pauses. Febri (Participant 7) admitted that her anxiety increases because of this audience pressure:

Kalau ngomong di depan teman-teman atau ustadzah itu rasanya malu karena dilihatin banyak orang. Terus ngeblank.....diam dan langsung ditutup dengan salam. (Interview Transcript, participant 7)

"Speaking in front of my friends or the teacher makes me feel embarrassed because so many people are watching. Then my mind goes blank... I fall silent and just end it with a greeting."

Observations in the classroom also showed that students used defensive behaviors to avoid being mocked. When trying to speak English around their peers, several students were

seen covering their mouths with their hands or whispering to their closest friends first. They did this because they feared negative comments from other students that could hurt their feelings, as Putri (Participant 4) stated:

....itu juga sih takut kalau misalkan kita salah di komentar lebih atau mungkin dikatakan tapi sakit hati aja. (Interview Transcript, participant 4)

"...I'm also a bit worried that if we say too much in the comments, or if we get told off, it'll just hurt my feelings..."

Institutional exhaustion is getting worse due to the double pressure of mastering two foreign languages simultaneously (Arabic and English). The constant shifting between these two languages, alongside religious obligations, creates a state of cognitive overload. As noted in the observation and interview with Inai, the pressure to be constantly active in language can lead to a sense of helplessness:

....Kalau buat harinya tidak ditentukan sih, tapi kamu punya peraturan di sini di mana kalau ngomong itu, kalau sudah dikasih kosa katanya wajib digunakan. Jadi kalau tidak nanti ada hukumannya gitu.... (Interview Transcript, participant 6)

"...Well, there isn't a specific day set aside for it, but we have a rule here that once you've been given the vocabulary, you're required to use it. So if you don't, there's a penalty....."

Based on the interview records, particularly with Bunga as Participant 1, it was discovered that students experience a high level of self-consciousness that hinders their speaking fluency. When asked about her feelings regarding speaking English, Bunga responded:

....Kadang malu... takut salah dan takut diketawain teman. (Interview Transcript, participant 1)

"Sometimes shy... afraid of making mistakes, and afraid of being laughed at by friends."

Furthermore, the data reveal that this anxiety is heavily influenced by the students' initial motivation. Students who entered the Islamic boarding school because of parental pressure tend to have a harder time dealing with strict language rules. For instance, during the interview, Bunga (Participant 1) looked down and spoke quietly when admitting that going to the Islamic boarding school was not her personal choice:

Disuruh... [informasinya] dari Ibu. (Interview Transcript, participant 1)

"Ordered... [the information was] from Mother."

According to Self-Determination Theory (Alamer et al., 2025), students who learn due to external reasons without internalizing the value of the activity tend to be more vulnerable to anxiety and frustration when facing. These symptoms are triggered by an internal fear of linguistic failure, particularly regarding pronunciation. This is illustrated by Ani as participant 8:

....Kayak ngerasa cemas gitu ngomong Bahasa Inggris, ngebleng ataupun deg-degan. Kayak berusaha cari kosakata yang bisa nyambung dengan kata-kata yang sebelumnya. Biasanya juga keringatan, keringat dingin. Yang paling parah itu deg-degan kayak gitu..... (Interview Transcript, participant 8)

"...It's like feeling anxious when speaking English, stumbling over my words, or feeling nervous. It's like trying to find the right words to link onto what I've just said. I usually break out in a cold sweat, too. The worst part is that nervous feeling....."

This analysis indicates that high levels of anxiety consume the students' working memory resources. As a result, previously learned material vanishes instantly when pressure arises, leaving the student unable to retrieve vocabulary or grammar structures.

The data indicate that a lack of intrinsic motivation significantly contributes to keeping a high affective filter among students. When a student like Bunga joins a language-learning setting solely because they were instructed to do so by their parents, the psychological readiness to embrace the challenges of a foreign language is significantly diminished. A lack of confidence in language skills also stood out as a key internal barrier. Ida as participant 12, expressed this by saying:

...masalahnya, Kak, kita ngerasa kalau misalnya English language-nya masih kurang gitu, jadi pengen belajar lagi....pengen masuk UGM, cuman susahlah kak, jurusan-nya Hukum, HI, dan psikolog... (Interview Transcript, participant 12)

"...the thing is, sis, we feel that our English isn't quite up to scratch, so we want to study it some more... we want to get into UGM, but it's difficult, sis; the courses are Law, International Relations, and Psychology..."

In conclusion, Theme 1 shows that speaking anxiety at Darun Na'im is created by a complex combination of high future goals, low self-confidence, and fear of social judgment. When students are physically tired and psychologically pressured by their environment, choosing to stay silent becomes a safer and more energy-efficient choice than trying to speak English.

Theme 2: Social Surveillance and the Fear of Negative Evaluation

The second major theme focuses on the social side of speaking anxiety, showing how the boarding school's shared living environment creates a feeling of constant social pressure. The primary source of this social anxiety is the fear of being laughed at by peers. For instance, Febri (Participant 7) clearly described this fear:

....mmmm itu Cuma sekiranya malu dilihatin , takut ditertawakan oleh teman-teman, takut dilihatinnya karena banyak orang.... (Interview Transcript, participant 7)

"...mmmm, it's just that I'm a bit self-conscious about being looked at, afraid of being laughed at by my friends, afraid of being stared at because there are so many people around..."

This interview data strongly matches and synchronizes with the researcher's structured observations and field notes collected on Thursday, April 10, 2026. During the English class session (14.00 - 14.50), a clear pattern of defensive behavior and social surveillance was highly visible. At the very beginning of the class (14.00 - 14.15), when Participant 1 (P1, sitting near the door) attempted to interact by asking or complaining about how to spell the word "*Capcut*", it immediately triggered peer laughter (Behavior Code: laughter, whisper, and eyeroll).

The field notes also show that students frequently look at their friends for approval before trying to answer the teacher in English. This behavioral pattern was documented in the field notes:

"Students feel shy when the teacher asks them. Students also bring the dictionary. When the teacher give explain and example about the fairytale, almost all students laugh." (Field Notes, April 10, 2026).

The data also reveals that this anxiety changes depending on the situation and the dialogue partner, Putri (Participant 4) highlighted this contrast during her interview:

....mungkin kalau di luar ruang kelas malu, kecuali ngomong sama teman-teman dekat enggak malu...kalau belajar juga kadang sama teman-teman dekat, karena ada menyenangkan..... (Interview Transcript, participant 4)

"...maybe I feel shy outside the classroom, but I don't feel shy when talking to close friends... and I sometimes study with close friends too, because it's fun....."

This indicates that a lack of English knowledge does not cause anxiety, but rather a perceived lack of psychological safety when interacting with the broader, more judgmental peer group.

In conclusion, Theme 2 shows that living and studying together in a 24-hour boarding school creates a challenging social environment for language learning. While having peers around all the time provides opportunities to practice, it also makes the *santriwati* highly afraid of negative social reactions. The field data indicate that for many students, protecting their social standing and avoiding peer ridicule is more important than the academic benefit of practicing English.

Theme 3: High Expectations and the Weight of Reverence

This theme explores the relationship between teacher influence and student anxiety. It shows how the teachers' practical efforts to support language learning are met with the students' traditional habits of respect, which can create an unintended barrier to communication. The teacher added:

.....mengingat pertemuan pembelajaran, khususnya bahasa Inggris, itu sangat sedikit waktunya, hanya dari pukul 2 siang sampai jam 5 sore, sedangkan praktik di lapangan juga kurang, jadi itu sangat mempersulit juga..... (Interview Transcript, Ustadzah)

".....given that the English lessons are very short, lasting only from 2 pm to 5 pm, and there is also a lack of practical experience in the field, which makes things very difficult....."

Difficulties arise because high-level syllabi don't match students' basic skills. During observations from 14.30 to 14.35, all students remained passive and waited for the teacher (all students wait for the *ustadzah*/silent). This collective retreat shows students use passivity as a safe zone. Due to rules of *Tadzhim* and *Adab*, making verbal mistakes before a teacher is felt as lack of respect, not just academic fault. Erika (Participant 9) stated:

....karena ditonton banyak orang dan ditonton oleh ustadzah lebih takut terbelit belit dan takut salah ... (Interview Transcript, participant 9)

"...because so many people are watching, and with the teacher watching, I'm even more afraid of getting tangled up and afraid of making a mistake..."

Several other students also stated that their fear of making mistakes increases significantly when the *Ustadzah* watches them speaking in front of the class, as Putri (Participant 4) mentioned:

.....Ustadzah yang paling bikin cemas kalau saya salah saya takut.... (Interview Transcript, participant 4)

"...The teacher who worries me the most. I'm afraid I might get it wrong..."

In conclusion, Theme 3 shows that speaking anxiety at Darun Na'im is strongly influenced by the clash between high school expectations and the tradition of respect. While teachers try to provide active training, the cultural weight of the teacher's authority makes students very careful.

Theme 4: School Reputation and Pressure of Excellence

The final theme examines how the school's overall reputation as a language-specialized boarding school affects student anxiety. An English teacher explained this difficult gap during her interview:

.....beberapa anak yang memang dari SD-nya daerah itu tidak mendapat pelajaran bahasa Inggris, jadi mereka sangat susah di vocabulary-nya. Jadi, ketika sudah naik ke tingkat madrasah, seharusnya sudah bisa belajar speaking, sehingga kami sebagai guru juga kesulitan karena vocabulary mereka sangat minim..... (Interview Transcript, Ustadzah)

".....Some students come from regional areas where English wasn't taught in elementary school. When they enter the Madrasah, the level is already higher, but their vocabulary is still very minimal. This makes it extremely difficult for us to conduct speaking activities in class...."

The school administrator highlighted how these regional backgrounds often creep into the students' daily lives:

.....*Karena kebanyakan dari daerah ya, pasti untuk bahasa Inggris itu agak kurang ya, karena kan banyak bahasa daerah terutama campur-campur dari daerah Ketapang, Sanggau, Putussibau, macam-macam, kadang itu terbawa bahasa daerah kan.....* (Interview Transcript, Administrator)

".....Because in most rural areas, people's English is a bit limited, as there are many regional dialects, especially a mix of those from Ketapang, Sanggau, Putussibau, and so on, and sometimes those regional dialects creep into their speech..."

The school attempts to support the students through the Three-Language Speech (*Muhadharah*) program, which provides a formal platform for language practice. As explained by the school administrator:

.....*Kalau itu ada khusus malam sih yaa, Namanya Muhadharoh. Muhadharoh itu memang mempelajari tiga Bahasa: Bahasa Arab, Inggris dan Indonesia. Biasanya itu nanti kalau ada maulid atau milad di situ tampil tuh anak-anak yang mengikuti Muhadharoh.....* (Interview Transcript, administrator)

"...Actually, there is a special evening session called Muhadharoh. Muhadharoh involves studying three languages: Arabic, English, and Indonesian. Usually, when there's a maulid or milad celebration, the children who attend *Muhadharoh* perform..."

However, because these performances are formal and happen in front of the entire school congregation, they often increase the students' fear of public failure rather than reducing their daily anxiety. In conclusion, Theme 4 shows that speaking anxiety at Darun Na'im is closely tied to the institution's high reputation. The contrast between the school's high language standards and the reality of a tiring, Arabic-dominant daily schedule creates heavy pressure for the students.

The results show that a combination of linguistic, psychological, and institutional factors influences speaking anxiety in female *santriwati* at Darun Na'im. Based on Horwitz's (1986) theory, the anxiety manifests as communication anxiety, which is greatly exacerbated by the special 24-hour boarding school environment. In line with Munir's (2022) identification of vocabulary shortage as a major anxiety trigger in Islamic boarding school situations, limited vocabulary emerged as the main cause of mental blocks.

DISCUSSION

Based on the thematic analysis and empirical findings presented in the previous sections, this discussion systematically addresses the three core research questions guiding this study. By triangulating data from semi-structured interviews, teacher accounts, classroom observations, and field notes, this section illuminates how individual psychological traits,

social peer dynamics, and strict institutional structures interact to shape English-speaking anxiety (ESA) among *santriwati* at Darun Na'im Islamic Boarding School.

In contrast to Malihah and Fauzan (2022) this study shows a paradox: *Santriwati* maintain high learning motivation and aspirational future aspirations despite classroom silence. Rather than academic detachment, their silence is a practical survival tactic to preserve dignity in the face of draining daily structures. In terms of teacher hierarchy, *Tadzhim* and *Adab's* cultural norms lead students to perceive linguistic mistakes as disdain for professors rather than just academic shortcomings. Silence and passivity serve as moral barriers to uphold appropriate manners.

The results show that classic anxiety components are amplified by institutional factors including Arabic dominance, *Tadzhim* ideals, and school reputation pressures, extending Horwitz's (1986) theory. In terms of pedagogy, educators must acknowledge that societal influences, rather than disinterest, are frequently the cause of student quiet. Reviving useful programs like English Day could lessen cognitive weariness, while establishing safe spaces where errors are accepted could lessen worry.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the contributing factors to English-speaking anxiety among female *santri* at Darun Naim Islamic Boarding School. The findings lead to three main conclusions.

First, speaking anxiety emerges at the intersection of individual linguistic limitations and institutional demands. A significant vocabulary deficit requires students to exert substantial cognitive effort when attempting to speak. This cognitive burden is severely exacerbated by the physical and mental fatigue resulting from the demanding 24-hour *pesantren* routine, which substantially diminishes students' capacity to process and produce English spontaneously. Consequently, when questioned in class, students exhibit physical signs of hesitation such as looking around nervously and whispering, and choose silence over direct communication to conserve remaining energy.

Second, anxiety is heavily mediated by the socio-religious hierarchy between teachers and students. Although teachers offer support, the cultural and spiritual values of *Adab* (manners) and *Tadzhim* (deep reverence) create significant psychological barriers. Students

view their *Ustadzah* as spiritual authorities and perceive linguistic errors not merely as academic mistakes, but as signs of disrespect. To avoid appearing incompetent or disrespectful, students systematically opt for silence or wait for questions to be repeated.

Third, institutional identity and structural arrangements intensify performative pressure. Arabic remains the dominant language in daily interactions, leaving minimal space for informal English practice. Formal public speaking demands, such as *Muhadharah*, heighten the fear of public failure. Moreover, placing English classes in the late afternoon following an exhaustive daily schedule further degrades performance capacity. Under these conditions, silence becomes a strategic coping mechanism to avoid public embarrassment and manage cognitive overload.

Collectively, these conclusions demonstrate that speaking anxiety in Islamic boarding schools is not merely an isolated psychological issue, but a systemic outcome driven by institutional frameworks. By demonstrating how *Tadzhim* values, language dominance, and institutional routines intersect with cognitive-linguistic constraints, this study extends Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety framework into institutional-religious contexts.

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