



## English Immersion at Modern Pesantren: Communities of Practice and SLA Perspective

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18592/tarbiyah.v14i2.17950>

### **Key Words:**

English immersion  
pesantren  
communities of practice  
second language acquisition  
Banjarese learners

**Received** : 05 August 2025

**Revised** : 03 January 2026

**Accepted** : 06 January 2026

**Published** : 13 January 2026

### **Abstract:**

This study explores the English immersion practice at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri in South Kalimantan through the lens of Communities of Practice (CoP) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with students and teachers, institutional documents, field observations, and transcribed student conversations, the research uncovers how immersive language practices are organically built and sustained within a unique religious educational community. The findings reveal that English use is maintained not only through formal curriculum and institutional structures but also through peer participation, leadership modeling, and internalized social norms. Students experience language acquisition not merely as academic achievement but as part of their religious identity and social belonging, fostering strong engagement and functional fluency. It portrays how language practice is embraced in the sociolinguistic setting of pesantren as a community of practice. Some limitations, such as fossilized errors, limited authentic input, and affective barriers, are also discussed. In the end, this study offers theoretical and practical implications for the design of immersion in socio-religious educational settings.

**To cite this article:** Rahmah. N.A., Hadi. S., (2025). English Immersion at Modern Pesantren: Communities of Practice and SLA Perspective. *Tarbiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*. 14(2), 367-385.

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### Introduction

Pesantren in Indonesia has undergone several changes, from a traditional curriculum focused on Arabic and Islamic studies to a modern one integrating science and religion. While the salaf, or the traditional ones, are still very much alive, the khalaf, or the modern ones, are developing and expanding (El-Yunusi, 2023; Putri et al., 2023; Noor, 2024). From a Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective (Hasan, 2025; Nurohmah & Roqib, 2024; Azmi & Victorynie, 2025), pesantren can be seen as close-knit learning communities where students and teachers share a common purpose (joint enterprise), regularly interact and support each other (mutual engagement), and use shared ways of doing things, such as practicing religious rituals and mastering necessary life skills, including foreign languages, regulated by pesantren (shared repertoire).

However, despite the growing number of bilingual and immersion-oriented pesantrens, research rarely examines how immersion operates as a social practice within these institutions. Most studies discuss pesantren modernization or language policy at a general level, but they seldom describe the day-to-day mechanisms through which English is practiced, negotiated, and sustained by students themselves. Little is also known about how immersion is shaped by peer dynamics, senior-junior hierarchies, and institutional routines, even though these factors strongly influence language behaviour in boarding-school environments. This gap suggests the need for a more sociolinguistic and practice-based account of how immersion is lived and enacted within pesantren communities.

Over time, many pesantrens have adapted to include modern subjects, including English. Learning English has become important for students because it opens up opportunities in today's connected world. One effective way to teach English is through immersion programs. These programs encourage students to use English as much as possible in their daily lives, helping them learn naturally. Immersion creates a community where students and teachers work together toward the goal of becoming bilingual (joint enterprise), spend time practicing together (mutual engagement), and develop a shared set of English words, phrases, and communication styles (shared repertoire). Immersion programs have been successful worldwide. Current research on immersion shows that this method remains highly relevant for facilitating English as a second language acquisition (Capdevila-Gutiérrez et al., 2023; Porter & Sofia, 2023; Chaparro, 2024; Echiverri et al., 2022; Hayashi, 2024; Noprival, 2024; Sung, 2022). These studies show that learning happens best when students actively participate in social groups with clear goals, as Wenger suggested.

In Indonesia, we can find immersion programs easily at bilingual modern pesantrens. A strong model of this approach is Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in East Java, which developed the KMI (Kulliyatul Muallimin al-Islamiyah) curriculum – a six-year program that blends Arabic and English across both religious and academic subjects (Chotimah et al., 2021; El-Yunusi, 2023; Tahir et al., 2024). Gontor emphasizes immersive experiences: morning conversation drills, language courts led by senior students, and English or Arabic zones throughout campus (Mulyanto et al., 2023; Karimah et al., 2024). This model has been replicated in many bilingual modern

pesantren in Indonesia, including Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri in South Kalimantan.

Language practices in pesantren play a distinctive role because students live together around the clock in a highly structured environment where daily routines, rules, and hierarchies shape interaction. Unlike typical school-based immersion, pesantren immersion extends beyond classrooms into dormitories, dining halls, prayer spaces, and organizational activities. This makes English not only an academic subject but also a social tool that regulates behaviour, facilitates cooperation, and reinforces community identity. In many modern pesantrens, English thus functions as both a communicative resource and a marker of discipline, obedience, and belonging – features that distinguish pesantren immersion from English programs in other boarding schools.

Students in Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri don't just use English in the classroom; they use it to organize their day, solve problems, and build friendships. Led by their peers in the student council, called OSDA (Organisasi Santriwati Darul Hijrah), they participate in structured English activities across classes and dorms, as well as in daily routines that reinforce language use. Students engage with each other through language, share the goal of improving their English, and build up a collection of phrases, habits, and understandings that help them function in English. That kind of closeness creates opportunities for real, meaningful language use – and a powerful sense of shared responsibility. This is where Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) framework helps us see immersion in a new light. In CoP, learning happens not just through teaching, but through doing things together, through social practices – engaging in shared activities, working toward common goals, and gradually developing a set of shared tools and practices.

That kind of consistent, purpose-driven use gives language learning a sense of meaning and immediacy that can be hard to create in a regular school setting. It also reflects Vygotsky's view that learning occurs through social interaction, and that more experienced peers can help others advance by working together on meaningful tasks (Barrs, 2022). Since students live in dormitories, English immersion becomes part of their everyday routine rather than just a subject they study. This kind of active use reflects Wenger's idea that learning happens best through participation in social practice. Immersion programs like these also align with key ideas from second language acquisition theory. Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests that language learners make progress when they are exposed to input that is just slightly above their current level, or what he calls "i+1" (Bailey, et. al., 2021; Gong, 2023). In an immersive environment, students get this kind of input throughout the day, not just during lessons. Swain's Output Hypothesis (Wanlu, 2021) adds another important piece: learners need chances to speak and write, to try out new language forms and notice their mistakes. These two processes – input and output – come together naturally in an immersion setting, especially one rich in social interaction and routine, such as a boarding school.

This study examines how English immersion is implemented at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri, a modern Islamic boarding school for girls in South Kalimantan. With a well-organized program that includes teacher support, peer

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leadership, and student-run initiatives, the pesantren offers a unique case for exploring how language learning and community life come together. By drawing on both second language acquisition theory and the Communities of Practice framework, this research examines immersion not just as a method but as a shared practice rooted in everyday life.

Given this context, the present study addresses the lack of detailed, practice-oriented research on how immersion is enacted in pesantren settings. By focusing on student interaction, peer-led initiatives, and the institutional routines that sustain English use, this study explains how immersion becomes a lived social practice rather than a mere instructional technique.

This study investigates how immersion is built through participation and peer engagement, focusing on how students interact with one another and learn by modeling peers and seniors. It also explores the tools that sustain English use within the pesantren environment, including curriculum design, institutional structures, and the role of student bodies such as OSDA in promoting and maintaining language practices. In addition, the research examines how students internalize norms to ensure continuous immersion, highlighting the processes through which English becomes part of their daily identity and social behavior. Finally, it identifies the strengths and gaps in this immersion model, offering insights that can inform the design of similar efforts in other educational contexts. The study aims to shed light on how modern pesantrens can offer not only spiritual and moral development but also meaningful opportunities for language growth through immersive, structured, and deeply rooted community programs.

### Research Method

This study employs a mini-ethnographic qualitative case study approach to explore the English immersion practices at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri in Martapura, South Kalimantan. A mini-ethnography case study allows for focused inquiry in the field by analyzing sociocultural systems ethnographically while getting closer to the subject of inquiry within a specific case, focusing on specific aspects of the sociocultural system (Amaechi & Fusch, 2019; Dobbins et al., 2021; Bayeck, 2023). Fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period to provide an in-depth understanding of language practices and community interactions within their authentic sociocultural context.

Data collection included in-depth interviews with one teacher, an alumnus of the pesantren and a member of the language advisory board, three student leaders from the pesantren's internal student organization (OSDA), and ten ordinary students actively involved in immersion activities. Participant observation covered daily routines, dormitory interactions, extracurricular events, and language-related community practices. There are also students' conversation transcripts that help capture the complexity of students' interactions and social relations in the pesantren. Additionally, institutional documents such as language policy manuals and schedules were reviewed to contextualize and enrich the findings. This triangulation of multiple data sources and a multi-method approach provided comprehensive insights into how

English immersion is practiced, sustained, and perceived within the pesantren's unique community of practice.

## Results and Discussion

### *Immersion through Participation and Peer Engagement*

Rooted in the joint enterprise to master English for both academic success and religious purposes, students' daily active peer interactions become the core of the English immersion experience at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri. In this community, all members share the goal of improving English and use the language as a communal practice. New students initially participate at a peripheral level – for example, they might rely on basic phrases or occasional code-switching to Indonesian when unsure – but through legitimate peripheral participation, they gradually become full participants in the English-speaking community. Participation and peer engagement in the English immersion at the pesantren come in several dimensions: modelling from older students, correction and feedback tradition, peer motivation and support, and focused-interaction language development.

The modelling from older students becomes one of the robust foundational dimensions in reinforcing the English daily practice domain. Many senior students or those with higher proficiency serve as informal mentors, modeling proper usage and encouraging newcomers. Advanced students and student leaders serve as the more “expert” members of the community, demonstrating fluent English and adherence to communication norms. Field notes and interviews indicate that senior students, especially OSDA members, serve as language role models. One student described observing her seniors: “They manage extracurriculars, hold events, and we look up to them in speaking English. One institutional document also notes, “Santriwati dapat melihat bagaimana kakak-kakak kelas enam... berbicara, berpakaian dan bekerja” (They see how older students...talk, dress, and work). This everyday modeling cultivates a form of peer socialization: younger students actively try to emulate their seniors' language use and share a repertoire of English-centered routines. By regularly interacting with these ‘proficient’ peers, novices pick up not only language skills but also the cultural norms of when and how to use English appropriately.

Second, the correction-and-feedback tradition is also a key dimension that supports English immersion. Observations from field notes confirm that older students usually remind others to speak English if they lapse; occasional ‘reminders’ also come from dorm supervisors. Peer engagement thus creates a cycle of learning in which students learn not only from their teachers but also with and through their fellow learners. Correction and feedback are also given occasionally in formal public forums held by OSDA to address common errors in students' English utterances as they immerse themselves in pesantren practices.

Another dimension of immersion through peer engagement is the motivational ambience. The findings suggest that peers often motivate each other, sometimes through friendly competition (e.g., participating in language contests inside or outside the pesantren) and at other times through collaborative support (e.g., weekly directed dialogue practice). Students often celebrate each other's improvements and share strategies (like mnemonic tricks for remembering vocabulary or correcting each other's



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mistakes). Many students reported that speaking English with friends felt less intimidating than speaking in front of teachers, which helped lower their affective filter and encouraged them to take more risks with the language. Daily conversations among peers act as continuous practice sessions that build fluency and confidence over time.

The joint enterprise to become proficient in English speaking introduces another dimension: interaction-focused language development. The constant peer interaction in English provides abundant opportunities for practical language development that purely classroom-based instruction might not achieve. Students are continually negotiating meaning with each other: if one student doesn't understand a certain message, the other will rephrase or use gestures; if a word is missing, they might code-switch briefly (to Indonesian, Banjarese, or Arabic), or find a synonym. One senior student explained: "We always try to make ourselves get used to talking in English (during English weeks) even when we are just joking around. It becomes our habit."

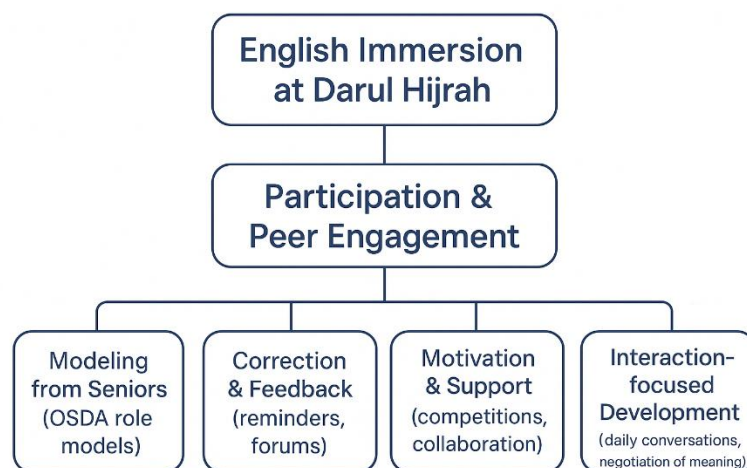


Figure 1. Immersion Process through Participation and Peer Engagement

### *Tools Sustaining English Use: Curriculum, Structures, and Student Bodies*

While peer engagement is the engine of immersion, it is guided and sustained by a set of deliberate tools, structures, and policies implemented by the institution. The findings reveal a comprehensive support system encompassing curriculum design, extracurricular programs, rules, and student-led bodies that uphold English as the medium of communication. These tools ensure that English use is not left to chance but is structurally reinforced throughout the students' daily lives.

First, the pesantren's blended curriculum (combining national and Pondok frameworks) integrates English in multiple ways to reinforce immersion. For example, the orientation handbook (Khutbatul Arsy) explicitly specifies that at schools the students receive "dirasah al-lughawiyyah" (linguistic studies), including "Reading and Comprehension, Grammar, Composition, and Diction" taught "in English". In formal classrooms, English is predominantly used as the medium of instruction (EMI). Afterwards, students in the dormitory life continue their English learning outside school through daily vocabulary drills, directed English conversation sessions during

English weeks, and participate in the weekly evening English speech. Such integration of English-focused activities in the curriculum ensures that students encounter the language in various formats, i.e., formal instruction, group tasks, public speaking, and informal practice, which reinforce their skills in a holistic manner.

Second, a strict language policy enforced by the pesantren becomes a striking feature of this immersion model. The new student orientation speech (Khutbatul Arsy) repeatedly urges the students to drop regional and national languages: "Syarat paling minimum adalah tinggalkan bahasa daerah sama sekali. Kalau terpaksa, boleh berbisik-bisik dalam bahasa Indonesia." (The bare minimum—students should comply—is to drop the regional languages totally; during an emergency, only, they can whisper in Indonesian). This directive is not taken lightly; it is framed as a "standard minimum" for educational progress, not just a recommendation. Students learn socially that mixing languages too freely is frowned upon; doing so risks mild reprimand or social disapproval. English and Arabic are essentially the lingua franca in the institution by rule, spoken at designated times (two weeks for English and another two weeks for Arabic). Related to English, the pesantren's code of conduct states that during "English weeks", students must speak English in daily conversation at school and in the dormitory, encompassing places like the dining hall, mosque, sports center, yard, bedrooms, bathroom areas, and canteen. These themed days and all-day policies serve as tools to normalize the use of English across contexts, not just in academic settings. Students reported that speaking Indonesian (or Banjarese) in designated English zones or times could result in consequences such as verbal reminders, demerit points, or penalties (e.g., having to memorize new English vocabulary or write English essays as punishment).

Third, a unique strength of this model is the empowerment of student-led bodies to uphold the English immersion. The school has a Language Board, often called Central Language Improvement (CLI), with a chair, officers, and over a dozen members, all selected from eleventh graders who meet certain qualifications, especially in foreign-language mastery and language discipline. They are part of the students' organization, OSDA (Organisasi Santriwati Darul Hijrah), which is tasked with monitoring and encouraging the use among the student body. This student body works alongside teachers to enforce language rules and often organizes language-related events (vocabulary drills, directed conversation practice, speech practice and competitions, drama performances in English, debate clubs, etc.). CLI, in particular, works under the guidance of the Language Development Subdivision (Kasubbag Pengembangan Bahasa), the teacher board responsible for supporting English and Arabic practice at the institutional level.

The presence of such a language prefect system means that enforcement is built not only from the top down by teachers but also among peers. For example, if a student is caught speaking Indonesian, a peer from CLI might remind, "English, please!" and note a violation. Ordinary students or those designated as "language spies" can also report violations. Repeated violations might require the student go to evening language court and receive punishment for the action. By involving students in enforcement, the school taps into peer influence: rather than seeing the English rule as an external imposition, students begin to view it as their "own community norm." The

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observation and interview confirm CLI at the school is pivotal – participants mentioned that they are role models who “speak English even when teachers aren’t around, inspiring others to follow suit.

Fourth, extracurricular clubs and activities act as additional tools sustaining English use. The school’s English Club is an example: a student-driven club that meets weekly for fun activities entirely in English, such as quiz games, storytelling, or group discussions on popular topics. Other activities include the debating club, drama contest, art talent, speech practice, and language contest– all conducted in English and Arabic. Outside school, some selected students also have the chance to compete against other schools, such as in English debate competitions, speech contests, and English storytelling competitions.

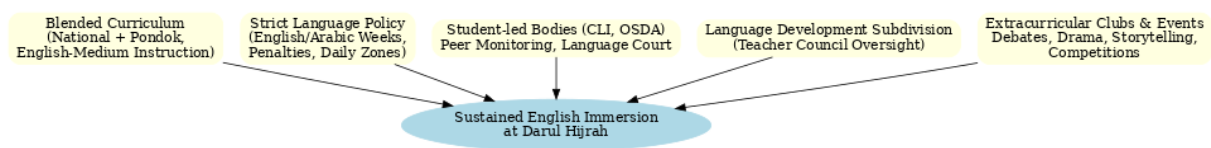


Figure 2. Tools Sustaining English Use at Darul Hijrah Putri

### *Internalizing Norms for Continuous Immersion*

Central to Darul Hijrah’s model is that students internalize English-only norms as part of their identity. From day one, new students are indoctrinated with language discipline. At the beginning, many students participate in the English immersion because they “have to” – the rules and constant monitoring leave them little choice. Interviews and observations confirmed that in the early weeks, new students often slip into their first language (Indonesian) whenever staff or seniors are not within earshot, indicating that English use might initially be somewhat superficial or compliance-driven. This is not unexpected; beginners lack confidence and may revert to familiar language when expressing complex thoughts. However, as weeks turn into months, a notable shift occurs. Students begin to speak English among themselves even in informal settings and when no one is “policing” them. They report that it starts to feel “more natural” to express routine thoughts in English – a strong sign of habit formation.

The daily repetition and reinforcement (saying the same classroom commands, everyday greetings, and common English phrases) eventually make English the default language in their minds for school-related contexts and dormitory routines. As one senior student reflected, “In my first year, I spoke English because I was afraid of the rules, but now I speak English because it feels weird not to”. One student reflected in an interview, “When I hear classmates speaking Banjarese or Indonesian in the dormitory, I feel out of place –like I’m breaking the rules.” This self-awareness shows a deep normative shift: for many, continuous immersion has become an accepted part of being a Darul Hijrah student.

Immersion in this community of practice also influenced students' identity, leading them to see themselves as legitimate English users with a distinct local variety. As the pesantren enforced strict use of English and Arabic, which helped the students improve their language skills, they see second languages such as English as “a tool to



spread Islamic values globally without adopting Western culture.” In other words, Darul Hijrah female students were socialized to view English not as a threat to their faith but as an empowering means to achieve their religious goals. As one student revealed in the interview, representing her peers who have the same opinion, “I want to master English because English is an international language and through English I can spread the word about Islam.” Since identity is tied to the community’s enterprise, the students began to identify themselves as bilingual Muslim learners. As they negotiate their L2 roles, they learn to inhabit a “hybrid identity” as global English users and devout santri.

The following table illustrates how English is internalized through the Pesantren’s norms and practices.

Table 1. Internalization process in Darul Hijrah’s English Immersion

Main Concept	Sub-concept/ Process	Outcome/ Impact
Darul Hijrah Model	English-only norms internalized as identity	Identity shift
Language Discipline	Indoctrination from day one	Compliance
Initial Compliance	Driven by rules & monitoring	Students obey but slip into Indonesian
Early Slip	Use Indonesian when unsupervised	Superficial use
Habit Formation	Gradual shift → English feels natural	Sustainable habit
Daily Repetition	Commands, greetings, routines	Reinforcement
Normative Shift	English becomes accepted norm	Internalization
Community of Practice	Shared immersion practices	Socialization
Identity Formation	See themselves as legitimate English users	Self-recognition
Hybrid Identity	Global English users + devout santri	Dual positioning
Empowerment	English as tool to spread Islamic values globally	Religious mission

This internalization process can also be seen in students’ everyday interactions, where English use reflects not random errors but patterned, socially shared ways of speaking. The following brief exchange illustrates how students draw on both English and locally meaningful particles to negotiate meaning and coordinate daily activities:

- Ica : You eat or not?  
 Aca : Why?  
 Ica : Eat or not?  
 Aca : Want send *kah!*  
 Ica : Yes dong  
 Aca : Put *ja* plate-*nya* in over there  
 Ica : You want *kah?*  
 Aca : Yes. by the way, why me?  
 Ica : Because you period *lah*  
 Aca : So *pang?*  
 Ica : Up to you only *lah*

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While a full linguistic analysis is reserved for a separate article, this illustration shows how immersion within a tight-knit Community of Practice produces a recognizable shared repertoire. English becomes blended with Banjarese–Indonesian particles such as *lah*, *kah*, *ja*, and *pang*, forming socially patterned speech that emerges from peer modelling, routine participation, and community norms.

### *Gaps and Strengths in the Immersion Model*

The Darul Hijrah model has several clear strengths but also inherent limitations. On the strength side, students essentially “live” English, after Arabic: eating, praying, and organizing in a target-language environment. Yet gaps remain. Most notably, the quality of English varied. Analysis of the student transcripts reveals persistent interlanguage features: inconsistent grammar (e.g., “Who this is?”, “What the side dish?”), direct Banjarese Malay calques (“This, take only” for “Just take it”, “You want go to where?” for “Where do you want to go?”), interference of Banjarese Malay pragmatic particles (“Don’t forget lah”, “I don’t now nah”, “Help me pang”, and an overreliance on limited vocabularies (as the orientation speech stated the recommendation on mastering a 500-word “basic language” each for English or Arabic practice). While students are confident in daily conversation, they often lack accuracy. This reflects a gap: abundant practice has not entirely eliminated fossilized errors or the influence of Banjarese. An OSDA member candidly admitted, “When we don’t know how to express something in English, we unconsciously borrow some words from Banjarese or Indonesian”. There have been efforts from the language advisory board and Central Language Improvement (CLI) to correct these errors, but they are not easy since the nature of communication and peer engagement at pesantren cannot be separated totally from the local culture and students’ mother tongue identity, and the language style has been inherited from the old-timers through cohorts.

Another concern is the comprehensibility of input. The curriculum provides English reading and listening materials, but these are often graded (simplified texts) and lack authentic complexity. Most input came from non-native peers and local teachers. There is little evidence of exposure to native speakers or media, except for occasional movie sessions. Furthermore, as L2 beginners struggle to practice English minute to minute, limited authentic English input cannot support proper communication or native-like morphosyntactic structure. In this context, mother tongue structure comes as a ‘rescue’ during a communication emergency.

Socially, the affective filter still plays a role. Although students are encouraged to “throw away embarrassment, many still feel anxiety about making mistakes. Therefore, not all students fully comply to the rule; a few continue to speak Banjarese or Indonesian in private, reducing their practice time. In many other conditions, the student interview suggest that affective filter could also hinder the English proficiency in a way that when interlanguage or local features are so strong it eventually becomes the community’s repertoire; thus, when some idealist students try to meet the standard native-like English structure, they might feel alienated among the peers either because the native-like structure is hard to comprehend or felt peculiar to most of their ears. In this case, the idealist students tend go back to the interlanguage mode. In addition,

native-like English is perceived as somehow distant from their true identity as “Banjarese santri students speaking English with a distinct local variety”.

The table below details strengths and corresponding gaps in every aspect of the English immersion.

Table 2. Strengths and Corresponding Gaps in Darul Hijrah’s English Immersion

Aspect	Strength	Gap / Limitation
<b>Communal identity</b>	Strong, shared identity as “Darul Hijrah students who speak English” – motivates use and pride.	Identity-linked pressure can exclude anxious beginners; risk of dropouts.
<b>Volume of exposure</b>	Continuous, daily English in dorms, meals, assemblies → high input/output hours.	Much input is peer-generated; limited exposure to native-speaker registers and authentic media.
<b>Peer leadership (OSDA)</b>	Student-run Language Division sustains activities, models use, and enforces norms.	Enforcement uneven; when peer leadership wanes, norms loosen.
<b>Curriculum integration (CLIL/EMI)</b>	English used across subjects (TMI + national curriculum) creating meaningful i+1 input.	Risk of content–language mismatch; complex subject matter may need L1 clarification.
<b>Rituals &amp; Events (reification)</b>	Regular rituals (Khutbatul Arsy, English Weeks, debates, drama) reify English practice and motivate learners.	Events concentrate practice episodically; everyday accuracy may not improve without ongoing form-focused work.
<b>Internalized norms &amp; motivation</b>	Students internalize norms (self-monitor, self-correct) and link English to future opportunities → high investment.	Persistent code-mixing and L1 particles (e.g., “lah”) indicate incomplete internalization of forms.
<b>Affective environment</b>	Religious framing (discipline + courage) reduces shame; peer support lowers anxiety for many.	For some, the intensity raises affective strain; a minority revert or avoid participation.

To conclude, immersion is authentic and continuous; communities of practice support constant use; curriculum and organizations are aligned; student identity is tied to English use; large volumes of peer-to-peer interaction yield high engagement. The gaps, however, are that English proficiency is somehow incomplete (error-prone output); Banjarese influence persists in the lexicon and syntax; input may lack richness (few native models); and an affective filter from peers may hinder target-like acquisition.

### Darul Hijrah’s English immersion from the viewpoint of CoP and SLA

Compared to previous studies on English use in Indonesian pesantrens – which commonly focus on pedagogical implementation, language policy, or student motivation (Tyas et al., 2020; Purnamasari & Sholichah, 2022) – the present study highlights the sociolinguistic system that emerges from Darul Hijrah’s community structure. What distinguishes this pesantren is not the immersion model itself, which is similar to other modern pesantrens adopting the Gontor framework, but the way its CoP dynamics interact with Banjarese and Indonesian linguistic resources to produce a shared repertoire of English use. The interplay of hierarchical discipline, peer-led

surveillance, all-female cohort identity, and local language influence generates sociolinguistic outcomes that have not been elaborated in earlier work. While similar patterns may appear in pesantrens with comparable characteristics, Darul Hijrah provides a particularly visible example of how institutional norms and local repertoires shape English use as a community practice.

The English immersion program at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri can be fruitfully analyzed through Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) framework and established SLA/ELT theories. Wenger defines a CoP as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wang, 2023; Huang & Zhang, 2025). Darul Hijrah's immersion context clearly constituted such a CoP: its joint enterprise was the shared goal of high English proficiency within an Islamic educational setting; its community comprised the santri (junior and senior students) and teachers who interact regularly to achieve the goal through shared repertoire or practice consisted of the daily routines, lessons, and social activities conducted in English (and Arabic). Within this CoP, novices (new santri) engaged in legitimate peripheral participation (Wang, 2023; Sarid, 2020), gradually moving from observing "old-timers" (senior students and teachers) toward fuller participation as they took on more communicative tasks. SLA research describes this as developing automaticity and fluency through repeated practice –the language moves from conscious effort to subconscious skill.

Wenger's concept of CoP emphasizes that learning is an inherently social, participatory process. The modeling by old-timers, along with corrections and feedback, reflects Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, in which learning occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development through social mediation. More capable peers and teachers served as "More Knowledgeable Others" (MKO), providing scaffolding – for example, by reformulating a student's utterance or by signaling comprehension (e.g., nodding or recasting) – to help learners produce language just beyond their independent level (Krashen's  $i+1$ ). Language socialization theory similarly predicts that novices acquire not only linguistic forms but also language-use norms through repeated interaction with experienced members (Carstensen, 2025; Abourehab, 2025). This finding resonates with SLA interactionist perspectives: by interacting with more capable English speakers (even if they are non-native peers), learners receive modified input and feedback, and engage in negotiation of meaning, which helps make the language comprehensible and highlights areas for improvement. Such feedback and interaction are crucial elements identified in SLA research for advancing interlanguage development. In other words, conversation becomes both the medium and the message for language acquisition in this environment.

Motivational ambience coming from intrapersonal relationships among interlocutors can also influence the willingness to communicate in English among the immersion students (Huang & Zhang, 2025; Suvongse & Chanyoo, 2022). This observation aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis: an informal peer setting can reduce anxiety, making input more readily absorbed. Furthermore, knowing that all their friends are "in the same boat" – all required to speak English and facing similar challenges – creates a sense of mutual trust, friendship, and collective effort. This peer-driven encouragement builds a positive attitude toward using English, which is critical

in sustaining immersion. It reflects what SLA theories recognize as the importance of integrative motivation – the desire to belong to a community associated with the target language. Here, the target community is not a distant native-speaker group, but an immediate peer group that has embraced an English-speaking identity within the school.

By consistently performing the role of an English speaker, students begin to see themselves as such. It appeals to students' sense of identity as disciplined Muslims pursuing knowledge, aligning language practice with core values. This relates to what CoP theory calls identity formation through participation: as learners engage more deeply, they not only learn skills but also “become a certain type of person” in relation to the community (in this case, a person who is confident using English). As they negotiate their L2 roles, they learn to inhabit a “hybrid identity” as global English users and devout santri. Spiritual vision, the spirit of *da'wah*, embedded in this identity also helps motivate students to learn English, which is likely to occur in other pesantren as well (Farid & Lamb, 2020; Alfisuma et al., 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025).

Driven by the identity as an English-speaking entity where the language development is focused upon peer interaction, the students are essentially learning by doing in a communicative sense: each conversation in English, for example, in the canteen, dining hall, dormitory yard, bedrooms, and even in the bathroom area constitutes a micro-language lesson in itself. Over time, a newcomer becomes a practitioner as they internalize the community's linguistic and cultural practices. This social aspect of learning is crucial: it underscores that immersion is not simply a teaching technique but a socialization process. Essentially, what begins as other-regulation (teacher- or peer-enforced) gradually becomes self-regulation, echoing Vygotsky's concept of internalization in sociocultural theory. This indicates the student has internalized the norm to the point that adhering to it is self-driven. This internalization process is both cognitive and social: students adopt the English-speaking habit into their own identity and self-regulation, which is crucial for maintaining continuous immersion even when direct supervision is absent.

The immersion model is sustained by a multilayered support system: a curriculum that incorporates extensive English exposure, institutional policies that mandate and normalize English communication, student-led structures that enforce and model language use, and a range of programs that make English use an everyday habit. These tools ensure that immersion is not a sporadic occurrence but a stable, continuous condition of student life. The shared goal or joint enterprise of improving English and using the language as a communal practice is supported by the peer engagement among the students and their participation through shared repertoire, mandated day-to-day practice, and rituals. In this case, curriculum design, dedicated roles, and co-curricular bodies form a scaffolding that continually provides input, sets expectations, and offers opportunities – all aimed at making English use both consistent and self-sustaining within the community. By extending the language rule to every corner of school life, the institution creates a contextual envelope of English – everywhere the student turns, English is expected, making continuous use the path of least resistance. In addition, the existence of structured, enjoyable forums such as extra-curricular activities also gives students additional purposeful contexts to

practice English, ensuring that using the language is associated not just with rules and penalties but also with creativity, expression, and pride in achievement.

From a CoP perspective, Darul Hijrah stands out at all three elements: joint enterprise (English learning as a shared goal), mutual engagement (a tight-knit all-female cohort shares ways of doing things together in English or Arabic), and common repertoire or practice of language and activities. Its model could inspire similar programs elsewhere: any school that can create a similar collective 'enterprise' around English could replicate this success. For example, forming a dedicated language organization and embedding English into daily rituals (morning prayers, casual chatting among friends, etc.) leverages community reinforcement. The Darul Hijrah experience suggests that when learners have a clear domain identity ("we are Darul Hijrah women who speak English"), participation in the CoP drives continued use. This level of "salient input" is well above what Krashen would consider an ideal learning situation. The strong communal norms mean language learning is intertwined with identity and discipline. The integration of English with religious study and extracurricular activities also boosts motivation: speaking English is seen as virtuous and modern within this religious setting.

The internalization of speaking English as part of identity and self-regulation, however, contains certain limitations and challenges. First, because English is taught at school by non-native teachers, most of the input students receive actually comes from non-native peers and local teachers; therefore, not all of the input students receive is perfectly accurate or native-like. Without naturalistic input (films, books, conversation with fluent speakers), students may plateau at mid-level proficiency. In Krashen's terms, they get plenty of input (i), but the "+1" input beyond their level might be limited by the texts and talks they encounter. Eventually, as peers pick up each other's mistakes, local accents or direct translations from Indonesian can creep into the English spoken on the pesantren.

Next, Indonesian and Banjarese particles such as "lah", "nah", and "pang", also still pepper speech. This code-mixing suggests that while the rule is internalized at a conscious level, speakers frequently slip in familiar discourse markers when negotiating meaning. Code-mixing and code-switching between the target language(s) and the mother tongue(s) are frequently observed in Indonesian bilingual pesantrens (Tyas et al., 2020; Purnamasari & Sholichah, 2022; Alalloh, 2023; Mahiroh & Ahmadi, 2024). For example, English-Javanese chunks like "Now ta?", "Join po'o" and "Wait for just moment rek" are found in a pesantren in Pasuruan; a similar phenomenon is also found in a female boarding school, Al-Mukmin Ngruki, where students code-switch from Arabic to their mother tongue along with the particles, such as "Woy...woy ada qism bulughoh...islah buruan" (Susylowati, 2021; Alalloh, 2023). This is a common phenomenon for L2 beginners: as they cope with limitations in L2 communication, they might copy a previously acquired body of knowledge (McManus, 2022; Gedik & Uslu, 2023) – usually the first language – to create another body of language acquired in adulthood.

As a result of the study, some localized English patterns were identified. Without explicit metalinguistic feedback or corrective scaffolding, the students might continue using ungrammatical forms and indigenous features indefinitely. When the



persistent errors are not resolved completely, it may lead to fossilization and eventually, certain loanwords or incorrect structures become community norms. The likelihood is tangible, especially because legitimizing of a local English variety ("Pesantren English") to a certain degree seemed to lower students' anxiety in speaking. Linguists might view the result as a communal English dialect rather than target-like proficiency. Thus, while the CoP model excels at fluency and communicative ability, it may inadequately address accuracy over time unless supplemented by targeted teaching.

To sum up, the communal and structured immersion approach at Darul Hijrah demonstrates notable strengths, particularly in promoting continuous language use, fostering a supportive learning community, and deeply embedding language practice within students' daily lives. However, the model also reveals areas for improvement, including linguistic accuracy, the provision of authentic language resources, and affective considerations to motivate students in achieving proficiency.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the implementation and effectiveness of English immersion practices at Pondok Pesantren Darul Hijrah Putri, offering significant insights for language education in communal, culturally rich settings. Through the lens of the Communities of Practice framework, the findings underscore how mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire significantly contribute to the success of second language acquisition in an immersive pesantren environment.

Addressing these identified gaps through targeted interventions, such as enhanced linguistic correction, increased authentic English exposure, and scaffolded immersion strategies, can further enhance the program's efficacy and inclusivity. By doing so, pesantren can replicate Darul Hijrah's strengths and mitigate its limitations in nurturing globally competent yet locally grounded English users. Ultimately, Darul Hijrah's experience provides valuable lessons for educators and administrators aiming to implement or improve language immersion programs in similar institutional and sociocultural contexts.

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