

ABSTRACT

Ukhrowi, Najwa Hayatul. (2026). Exploring Students' Challenges in Learning English as A Foreign Language at *Pesantren*-Based School For 11th-Grade Students: A Case Study in *Madrasah Aliyah Pangalengan*, Indonesia.

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) poses significant barriers for secondary school students in Indonesia, particularly concerning limited authentic language exposure. This condition becomes increasingly complex within the *Madrasah Aliyah* environment. These schools implement a demanding dual curriculum system. Heavy religious study loads severely limit students' English exposure. This research explores this issue at *Madrasah Aliyah Pesantren Persatuan Islam 259 Firdaus Pangalengan*. The primary purpose is to identify students' specific English Foreign Language learning challenges. The study also analyzes the internal and external factors contributing to these difficulties. This research applies a qualitative case study design to explore authentic student experiences. The investigator collected primary data through in-depth interviews and direct classroom observations. The participants included three purposively selected eleventh-grade students. The researcher analyzed the data thematically using a systematic framework. This structured approach successfully captured the students' linguistic and psychological barriers directly within their unique Islamic boarding school context. The results reveal specific linguistic challenges, as students experience vocabulary limitations, grammatical confusion, and a heavy reliance on mental translation. Internal factors, including speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low motivation, actively restrict their willingness to communicate. External factors also create complex educational barriers. Physical fatigue from boarding school routines, unsupportive peers, grammar-centered teaching methods, and noisy classrooms disrupt students' language practice. These findings demonstrate how institutional culture directly shapes and complicates the language learning experiences of the students. English learning in *pesantren*-based schools requires comprehensive structural support. Teachers must utilize communicative approaches and avoid immediate public corrections. School administrators need to improve classroom facilities and establish language practice zones inside the dormitory. Future research should focus on designing specific pedagogical interventions to directly address these structural barriers within Islamic boarding school environments.

Keywords: *EFL Learning Challenges, Linguistic Barriers, Foreign Language Anxiety, Pesantren-Based School, Contributing Factors*