

Teacher Professionalism and the Learning Environment as Predictors of Foreign Language Learning Quality in Islamic Boarding Schools: An Empirical Study

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Abstract:

Improving the quality of foreign language learning in Islamic educational institutions remains a critical yet underexplored challenge, particularly within the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) context. This study examines the extent to which teacher professionalism and the learning environment jointly and independently predict the quality of foreign language learning among students. Adopting a quantitative ex post facto research design, data were collected from 59 students at Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi, through a validated questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, and hypothesis testing were conducted using SPSS 25. The simultaneous F-test yielded $F(2,56) = 6.793$, $p = .002$, indicating a statistically significant joint influence of both predictor variables. Partial t-tests further confirmed independent significant effects: teacher professionalism ($t = 3.035$, $p = .004$) and the learning environment ($t = 3.167$, $p = .002$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .195$) indicated that these two variables account for 19.5% of the variance in foreign language learning quality, while the remaining 80.5% is attributable to other variables outside the scope of this study. These findings underscore the critical importance of cultivating teacher professionalism and optimizing the learning environment as institutional strategies for advancing foreign language education within Islamic boarding schools. Practical implications for pesantren management, policymakers, and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, Learning Environment, Foreign Language Quality, Islamic Boarding School.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language education has increasingly emerged as a strategic priority within national education systems worldwide. Proficiency in international languages, particularly English, is widely recognized as essential for producing graduates who are competitive in both the global marketplace and the rapidly evolving digital economy (Crystal, 2014). Mastery of a foreign language not only facilitates access to scientific knowledge and the latest technological developments but also expands economic opportunities at both individual and societal levels. Accordingly, educational policymakers are urgently called upon to design strategic frameworks that adequately prepare the younger generation of Indonesia

for the demands of international competition.

Despite policy-level commitments, the quality of foreign language education in Indonesia remains a multifaceted and persistent challenge. Evidence from the Education First English Proficiency Index places Indonesia at 81st out of 113 countries in English language proficiency, a ranking that reveals substantial gaps in national foreign language competence (First, 2023). This challenge becomes considerably more complex within the context of traditional Islamic educational institutions, or *pesantren*, where foreign language learning must be integrated with Islamic values and pedagogical traditions. Notwithstanding these complexities, *pesantren* hold considerable potential as centers of national human capital development, provided that their students are equipped with robust foreign language communicative competence (Dhofier, 2019).

Theoretical grounding for institutional quality improvement is provided by the philosophy of Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasizes continuous improvement as a core organizational commitment. In the educational context, TQM directs institutions to consistently align their processes with the evolving needs, expectations, and aspirations of their primary stakeholders, students (Musfah, 2023; Kholis, 2022). Building upon this perspective, Crosby, as cited in Rohmah (2018) and Sholeh et al. (2022), underscored that quality is an institutional imperative requiring strong leadership, adequate infrastructural support, and systemic motivation to ensure that the needs of stakeholders are consistently met.

The Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi, serves as the research site for this study. Preliminary field observations indicate that although this institution has implemented a structured bilingual program incorporating both Arabic and English, the level of students' foreign language proficiency remains uneven and has yet to reach the standards expected by the institution. In this context, the quality of foreign language learning encompasses not only receptive skills, such as listening comprehension and reading, and productive skills, such as oral communication and writing, but also the capacity to master vocabulary and grammatical structures sufficient for effective communication within an Islamic cultural and academic context. As argued by Zamroni (2011) and Asna et al. (2023), quality improvement in education represents the convergence of skills, knowledge, artistry, and entrepreneurial orientation relative to goal attainment, the processes through which those goals are pursued, and the conditions that either facilitate or impede them.

Previous research has examined various determinants of educational quality and foreign language attainment in Islamic educational settings. Studies by Afiah (2020), Nurmaida (2020), and Aminah (2017) tend to isolate individual predictors in their assessments. Similarly, scholars such as Badrussalam (2021), Maksumah (2017), and Ulfah (2024) have investigated teacher professionalism, curriculum management, and the learning environment as discrete variables influencing educational quality. Subhi (2023) explored the role of language department management in enhancing Arabic and English skills at Dayah Darul

Ihsan, Aceh Besar. However, studies that simultaneously investigate the combined influence of teacher professionalism and the learning environment on the quality of foreign language learning, specifically within the *pesantren* context, remain scarce. This study addresses that identified gap by offering an integrative analytical framework that positions both internal factors (teacher professionalism) and external factors (learning environment) as co-predictors of foreign language learning quality in an Islamic boarding school setting.

Accordingly, this study pursues three specific objectives: (1) to analyze the influence of teacher professionalism on the quality of foreign language learning among *pesantren* students; (2) to analyze the influence of the learning environment on the quality of foreign language learning; and (3) to analyze the simultaneous influence of both variables on the quality of foreign language learning at the Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a quantitative research design with an ex post facto approach, which is appropriate for examining events that have already taken place and identifying the factors associated with those events (Sugiyono, 2018). The research was conducted at the Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi during the period of January to March 2024.

Participants

The study population comprised 59 students enrolled in the institutional language tutoring program (tutor period). Given the limited population size, a saturated sampling technique was employed, meaning that all members of the population were included as research participants. No exclusion criteria were applied, and full census sampling was deemed methodologically appropriate for this study context.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising three sections: (1) Teacher Professionalism (10 items), operationalized across four dimensions—pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence, and personality competence; (2) Learning Environment (10 items), measured across five indicators—interpersonal relationships among students, physical conditions of the learning space, adequacy of learning tools, teaching methods employed, and institutional regulations; and (3) Foreign Language Learning Quality (10 items), assessed through communicative competence, written composition ability, vocabulary and grammar mastery, student motivation, and cognitive capacity.

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Content validity was assessed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation, with items retained where $r > .361$. Instrument

reliability was confirmed via Cronbach’s Alpha, with the following reliability coefficients for each subscale: Teacher Professionalism (X_1 : α = [insert value]), Learning Environment (X_2 : α = [insert value]), and Foreign Language Learning Quality (Y : α = [insert value]). All three subscales exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of .60, indicating adequate internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedures

In addition to the questionnaire, supplementary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with Islamic boarding school administrators and language teachers, as well as through direct observation of foreign language learning sessions (Sugiyono, 2022). Interview and observation data were analyzed descriptively to contextualize and support the interpretation of quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis proceeded through several sequential stages: (1) descriptive statistics to characterize the distribution of each research variable; (2) classical assumption tests including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov), linearity, multicollinearity (VIF/tolerance), and heteroscedasticity (scatterplot); (3) multiple linear regression analysis to examine the predictive relationships among variables; and (4) hypothesis testing via partial t-tests and simultaneous F-tests. All analyses were performed using SPSS Version 25.

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Indicators / Dimensions
Teacher Professionalism (X_1)	1. Pedagogical competence: student understanding, instructional design and implementation, learning evaluation, student development 2. Professional competence: subject matter mastery, disciplinary knowledge and methods 3. Social competence: polite communication, collegial spirit and cooperation 4. Personality competence: piety, moral integrity, wisdom, and role modeling
Learning Environment (X_2)	Student-student relationships; Physical condition of classroom; Completeness of learning tools; Teaching methods; Institutional regulations
Foreign Language Learning Quality (Y)	Communicative competence; Written composition; Vocabulary and grammar mastery; Student motivation; Cognitive capacity

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for each research variable based on data collected from 59 student respondents.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max	Category
Teacher Professionalism (X_1)	42.58	4.069	34	50	High
Learning Environment (X_2)	36.36	4.452	26	45	Good
Foreign Language Learning Quality (Y)	37.51	4.268	27	47	Good

As shown in Table 2, students perceived the level of teacher professionalism at a *high* level ($M = 42.58$, $SD = 4.069$, range: 34–50). The learning environment was rated as *good* ($M = 36.36$, $SD = 4.452$, range: 26–45), as was the overall quality of foreign language learning ($M = 37.51$, $SD = 4.268$, range: 27–47). These descriptive data establish a favorable baseline profile for the subsequent inferential analyses.

Classical Assumption Tests

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test yielded an asymptotic significance value of .200 ($> .05$), confirming that the unstandardized residuals were normally distributed. The linearity test revealed that the deviation from linearity for $X_1 \rightarrow Y$ was non-significant ($p = .609 > .05$), and for $X_2 \rightarrow Y$ was likewise non-significant ($p = .602 > .05$), confirming a linear relationship between each predictor variable and the criterion variable. The multicollinearity test indicated a Tolerance value of .770 ($> .10$) and a VIF value of 1.299 (< 10.00), ruling out multicollinearity between the two predictor variables. Inspection of the scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values revealed no discernible pattern, with data points distributed randomly above and below zero on the Y-axis, confirming the absence of heteroscedasticity in the regression model.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The multiple linear regression equation derived from SPSS analysis is presented as follows:

$$\hat{Y} = 17.223 + 0.255X_1 + 0.259X_2$$

The constant value of 17.223 represents the predicted level of foreign language learning quality when both predictor variables equal zero. The unstandardized regression coefficient for teacher professionalism ($B = 0.255$)

indicates that a one-unit increase in teacher professionalism is associated with a 0.255-unit increase in foreign language learning quality, holding the learning environment constant. Similarly, the coefficient for the learning environment ($B = 0.259$) indicates that a one-unit improvement in the learning environment corresponds to a 0.259-unit gain in foreign language learning quality, *ceteris paribus*. Both positive coefficients confirm a unidirectional, positive relationship between each predictor and the criterion variable.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 summarizes the outcomes of the partial t-tests and the simultaneous F-test.

Table 3. Results of Partial and Simultaneous Hypothesis Tests

Predictor	B	t / F	Sig.	Decision
Teacher Professionalism (X_1)	.391	$t = 3.035$	.004	H_1 accepted
Learning Environment (X_2)	.371	$t = 3.167$	.002	H_2 accepted
$X_1 + X_2$ Simultaneous (F-test)	—	$F = 6.793$	.002	H_3 accepted

Note. $R^2 = .195$; Adjusted $R^2 = .167$; $F(2,56) = 6.793$, $p = .002$.

The partial t-test for teacher professionalism ($t = 3.035$, $p = .004$) confirmed a statistically significant positive effect on foreign language learning quality, leading to the acceptance of H_1 . Similarly, the partial t-test for the learning environment ($t = 3.167$, $p = .002$) confirmed a statistically significant positive effect, supporting H_2 . The simultaneous F-test yielded $F(2,56) = 6.793$, $p = .002$, which is statistically significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level, confirming that teacher professionalism and the learning environment jointly and significantly predict foreign language learning quality (H_3 accepted). The coefficient of determination $R^2 = .195$ indicates that 19.5% of the variance in foreign language learning quality is explained by the two predictor variables in combination, while the remaining 80.5% is attributable to other factors beyond the scope of this investigation. The Adjusted $R^2 = .167$ corroborates these findings after accounting for the number of predictors in the model.

Discussion

The Influence of Teacher Professionalism on Foreign Language Learning Quality

The findings of this study substantiate that teacher professionalism is a statistically significant positive predictor of foreign language learning quality among students at the Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi ($t = 3.035$, $p = .004$). This outcome is consistent with and extends a substantial body of international scholarship. Professionalism in foreign language teaching transcends mere linguistic expertise to encompass an integrated constellation of pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies that collectively

shape the quality of instructional practice (Lestari & Purwanti, 2022).

These findings align with the landmark study by Kunter et al. (2013), which, drawing on a nationally representative sample of 194 secondary school mathematics classrooms in Germany, demonstrated that teacher professional competence – encompassing pedagogical content knowledge, professional beliefs, motivational orientation, and self-regulatory capacity – exerts a measurable and direct positive effect on instructional quality and student academic development. Applied to the foreign language learning context, this evidence affirms that teachers who demonstrate strong competence across professional dimensions are better positioned to create rich, differentiated, and communicatively stimulating learning experiences.

In the specific context of *pesantren* education, the professionalism of language teachers carries distinctive significance. As noted by Reonaldi (2023), foreign language instructors in Islamic boarding schools fulfil a dual role: they function simultaneously as language educators and as moral exemplars responsible for cultivating students' Islamic character. This dual mandate requires a level of professional versatility that extends beyond the pedagogical and academic demands placed upon teachers in formal public education institutions. Moreover, Widyaningrum et al. (2019) have emphasized that continuously updated professional competence, particularly in innovative instructional methods and effective classroom management, is indispensable for improving learning quality in the twenty-first century educational landscape.

The practical implication of these findings is that institutional stakeholders in Islamic boarding schools must prioritize structured, ongoing professional development programs for their language teaching staff, including foreign language competence certification and pedagogically oriented training, as strategic mechanisms for improving student outcomes.

The Influence of the Learning Environment on Foreign Language Learning Quality

The learning environment was found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of foreign language learning quality ($t = 3.167$, $p = .002$). This result is theoretically grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that the contextual and social dimensions of a learning setting play a constitutive role in shaping cognitive development and skill acquisition (Wang, 2009). A positive coefficient value confirms that improvements in the quality of the learning environment correspond directionally and meaningfully to improvements in students' foreign language proficiency.

These findings resonate with an emerging body of empirical literature on classroom social dynamics and language learning outcomes. Hosseini et al. (2022) demonstrated that classroom social climate (CSC) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) are significant predictors of student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Relatedly, Revutska et al. (2023) reported that a supportive classroom climate enhances the development of communicative competence even within virtual foreign language learning environments.

Yazlovytska (2024) further argued that dynamic learning environments—characterized by collaborative group activities, authentic communicative tasks, and culturally rich materials—are instrumental in fostering students' foreign language communicative competence.

The immersive, community-oriented environment inherent to the *pesantren* system provides a structurally advantageous setting for foreign language acquisition. As Wang (2009) observed, learning environments rich in authentic linguistic input and opportunities for real communicative practice yield significantly superior outcomes in terms of language skill development. The residential nature of Islamic boarding schools, with its embedded daily exposure to multilingual peer interaction and structured language practice, positions the *pesantren* as a potentially optimal immersive language learning environment. Furthermore, Aydın's (2023) systematic scoping review on positive psychology and language learning provided theoretical validation for the premise that environments supportive of learners' emotional well-being and motivational states correlate positively with foreign language achievement.

The aggregated evidence from this study and converging international research underscores the necessity of purposeful environmental design within *pesantren* institutions: ensuring the adequacy of physical learning facilities, cultivating positive interpersonal norms, and institutionalizing regulations that promote active and sustained foreign language use.

The Combined Influence of Teacher Professionalism and the Learning Environment on Foreign Language Learning Quality

The simultaneous analysis confirms that teacher professionalism and the learning environment together constitute a statistically significant and practically meaningful predictor of foreign language learning quality, $F(2,56) = 6.793$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .195$. The moderate but theoretically coherent R^2 value of 19.5% acknowledges the inherently complex and multifactorial nature of foreign language learning outcomes, while affirming the relevance of both predictor variables for institutional practice. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the model's explanatory power, while statistically significant, is modest ($R^2 = .195$). This relatively small effect size warrants caution in translating these findings into strong institutional recommendations, as the majority of variance in foreign language learning quality (80.5%) remains attributable to factors not captured in this study. Variables such as instructional methodology, student intrinsic motivation, digital technology integration, family support, and individual learner characteristics may exert comparably or even greater influence on learning outcomes. Practical recommendations derived from this model should therefore be regarded as directional and preliminary, pending more comprehensive investigations.

The synergistic effect of high teacher professionalism and a well-structured learning environment manifests across multiple developmental dimensions. From a cognitive standpoint, students demonstrate improved mastery of vocabulary,

grammar, and discourse structure. From an affective standpoint, the combination of professional pedagogical guidance and a stimulating, supportive environment generates heightened motivation, reduced foreign language anxiety, and more positive attitudes toward language learning. From a psychomotor standpoint, students develop more fluent speaking and listening skills through increased opportunities for authentic communicative practice, opportunities that professional teachers are equipped to exploit effectively (Wang et al., 2024; Ye, 2024; Mubarok et al., 2023).

The fact that 80.5% of variance remains unexplained signals a productive agenda for future inquiry. Potential moderating and mediating variables that warrant investigation include student intrinsic motivation, learning style preferences, digital technology integration, family and social support systems, instructional method diversity, and individual psychological characteristics (Sumarna et al., 2024). Longitudinal research designs would further elucidate the temporal dynamics and directional causal relationships among teacher professionalism, environmental quality, and student language development over extended educational periods.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that both teacher professionalism and the learning environment significantly predict foreign language learning quality, both individually and in combination, among students at the Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi. These findings advance the theoretical understanding of the integrative roles of internal (teacher) and external (environmental) factors in shaping language learning outcomes within the distinctive context of Indonesian *pesantren* education.

The practical implications of these findings are substantial. Islamic boarding school management is strongly encouraged to: (1) institute systematic and sustained teacher professional development programs, including foreign language competence certification, pedagogical training, and reflective practice mechanisms; (2) optimize the physical and social dimensions of the learning environment through adequate resource provisioning, constructive interpersonal climate cultivation, and the institutionalization of active foreign language use in daily *pesantren* life; and (3) develop periodic evaluation frameworks to systematically monitor and assess the effectiveness of both dimensions in promoting foreign language learning quality.

Future research is encouraged to incorporate additional predictor variables, including student intrinsic motivation, learning technology utilization, active learning strategies, and individual psychological characteristics – to enhance the explanatory power of models predicting foreign language learning quality within Islamic educational environments. Mixed-methods and longitudinal designs are particularly recommended to deepen understanding of the dynamic mechanisms through which teacher quality and environmental conditions shape students' foreign language competence over time.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several important limitations that should inform the interpretation of its findings. First and foremost, the sample was restricted to 59 students enrolled at a single institution – Al Kautsar Modern Islamic Boarding School, Banyuwangi – which substantially constrains the generalizability of the findings to other pesantren settings or Islamic boarding school contexts across Indonesia and the broader Muslim world. While saturated sampling was methodologically appropriate given the bounded population, it precludes probabilistic generalization to wider populations. Second, the cross-sectional ex post facto research design does not permit the establishment of directional causal relationships between the predictor and criterion variables; observed associations reflect predictive, not causal, linkages. Third, the reliance on self-report questionnaire data introduces the possibility of response bias and social desirability effects. Future research is therefore strongly encouraged to replicate this study across multiple and institutionally diverse pesantren, employing larger and more representative samples, and to explore longitudinal and mixed-methods designs that can more rigorously illuminate the mechanisms through which teacher professionalism and environmental quality shape students' foreign language outcomes over time.

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