

## Environmental Support in Promoting Students' English Language as Second Language Acquisition: A Case in at-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of environmental support on second language acquisition (SLA) at At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School. It examines the integration of religious education and contemporary language learning in fostering English and Arabic proficiency. A qualitative case study approach was used, with observations and interviews conducted among language officials, teachers, and students. Data were analyzed thematically to explore the role of immersive environments, pedagogical strategies, and student interactions. Key programs, such as language competitions and multimedia-based learning, significantly enhanced SLA. Findings highlight the importance of dormitory environments, structured language programs, and tailored teaching methods in overcoming challenges like resource limitations. This study underscores the potential of integrating cultural values with modern education to promote multilingual proficiency

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Language acquisition and language learning differ fundamentally in their processes. Language acquisition occurs naturally and subconsciously in immersive environments, while language learning involves formal instruction and deliberate effort. This distinction provides the basis for studying second language acquisition (SLA) at At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School, where English and Arabic are integral to both academic and religious education. By emphasizing structured immersion through programs such as thematic conversations, language competitions, and daily practices, the school offers a unique environment for exploring SLA.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, students reside in an immersive environment resembling a home setting, where peers play a critical role in language acquisition (Duncan & Paradis, 2020). This underscores the potential of boarding schools as transformative spaces for multilingual development.

The growing trend of parents preferring Islamic boarding schools over national schools reflects a perception of superior moral, academic, and linguistic education. At-Tawazun exemplifies this holistic approach, integrating religious values with modern pedagogical practices. However, challenges remain, such as resource limitations and the prioritization of Arabic over English due to religious emphasis. Investigating how environmental support and institutional programs influence SLA in this context is vital for understanding its broader implications.

This study aims to evaluate the role of environmental support in SLA at At-Tawazun, focusing on resources, teaching methods, and stakeholder attitudes. It explores how structured programs and immersive environments shape students' English and Arabic proficiency while addressing the challenges inherent in balancing religious and modern education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language Acquisition Vs. Language Learning**

The distinction between language acquisition and language learning is fundamental in linguistics and education, highlighting differing processes and their implications for pedagogy. While both contribute to linguistic competence, they differ significantly in their mechanisms, contexts, and outcomes.

Language acquisition refers to a subconscious, natural process of gaining language proficiency, akin to how children acquire their first language. Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) emphasizes that language acquisition occurs implicitly through exposure to comprehensible input – language slightly above the learner's current level. This process does not require explicit instruction but relies on meaningful and context-rich interactions. For instance, activities such as storytelling, conversations, or engaging with multimedia content help learners absorb language structures intuitively.

### **Key Aspects of Language Acquisition Include:**

**Implicit Learning:** Acquisition happens subconsciously without the learner being consciously aware of the learning process (Krashen, 1982).

**Focus on Communication:** Priority is given to understanding meaning and engaging in real communication rather than learning grammatical rules explicitly (Ellis, 1997).

Contextual Dependence: Acquisition thrives in environments that offer authentic, real-life use of language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Studies consistently show the effectiveness of acquisition in promoting fluency and natural language use. Immersion programs, for example, demonstrate superior results in developing spontaneous and intuitive communication skills compared to traditional methods (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Long, 1996). These findings underscore the importance of exposure and interaction in fostering communicative competence.

In contrast, language learning is a conscious and systematic process, often associated with formal educational settings. Learners deliberately study grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, typically through teacher-led instruction, curricula, and textbooks. This approach emphasizes accuracy and mastery of linguistic forms. While language learning excels at building explicit knowledge of grammar and syntax, it often lacks the immediacy and natural fluency facilitated by acquisition.

Cognitive theories, such as those by DeKeyser (2020), highlight the importance of explicit learning in tasks requiring precision, particularly in writing and formal speech. Structured practice and explicit feedback are key to this approach, making it well-suited for academic or professional contexts that demand accuracy. However, its reliance on conscious effort can make it less effective for developing spontaneous communication skills.

### **Second Language Vs. Foreign Language**

The distinction between second language (L2) and foreign language learning revolves around the contexts in which the language is learned and used. Both involve acquiring a language other than one's native tongue, but the level of exposure and immersion differs significantly.

A second language is learned in immersive settings where it is actively used in daily life. For example, someone learning English while living in the United States experiences constant exposure to natural language input and cultural contexts, which facilitates acquisition. This aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), which stresses that meaningful exposure to comprehensible input is essential for effective language learning.

In addition, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction in language development. In L2 contexts, learners engage with native speakers, negotiate meaning, and participate in culturally relevant activities. These interactions integrate linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic elements, creating a holistic learning experience. For example, participating in community events, watching local media, or attending schools in the target language's country fosters communicative competence in authentic settings.

Braj Kachru's "Three Circles of English" model offers valuable insights into second language contexts. The "Inner Circle" includes countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, where English is the native language. Learners in these environments benefit from exposure to standard varieties of the language and cultural immersion, which shape their acquisition and usage (Kachru, 1992).

In contrast, a foreign language is learned in non-immersive environments, such as classrooms in countries where the target language is not widely spoken. For instance, a Japanese student learning French in Japan relies primarily on structured instruction rather than natural exposure. This setting often prioritizes explicit knowledge of grammar and vocabulary over communicative fluency. Traditional approaches, like the Grammar-Translation Method, emphasize reading, writing, and understanding grammatical rules but provide limited opportunities for speaking and listening (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). While effective for developing literacy and academic skills, this method often falls short in fostering practical communication abilities.

To address these limitations, modern approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) focus on using the language for real-life purposes. Even in non-immersive settings, CLT encourages interaction and meaningful communication, helping learners build practical language skills despite limited exposure to authentic contexts (Savignon, 2002).

Kachru's "Expanding Circle" provides a lens for understanding foreign language learning. In these contexts, the target language, such as English, is used primarily for international communication but is not a part of daily life. Learners here rely on artificial materials and teacher-led instruction, which can limit their ability to develop spontaneous communication skills.

Kachru's "Outer Circle" represents a unique intermediary scenario, as seen in countries like India or Singapore. Here, English functions both as an institutional second language and as a lingua franca, blending immersive and instructional environments. Learners in these contexts navigate a hybrid space that combines elements of L2 and foreign language learning, highlighting the fluid boundaries between the two categories.

### **Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process of learning a language beyond one's native tongue. This complex and systematic process is influenced by various factors, as noted by Alias and Azal (2022) and Winke (2007). These include the learner's mother tongue, intellectual processes, personality traits, emotional state, language aptitude, cognitive styles, motivation, and environmental factors. Alias and Azal (2022) emphasize that language acquisition is often subconscious and can occur naturally when learners are exposed to the target language.

For boarding school students, intellectual processes and the influence of their mother tongue are particularly significant. Among these factors, intellectual processes tend to play a dominant role in shaping their language acquisition journey.

### **Key Theories in SLA**

#### **1. Sociocultural Approach**

The sociocultural approach underscores the importance of social and cultural contexts in human development and learning. As Fazalehaq et al. (2020) explain, this framework views individuals as active participants who build their understanding through social interactions and cultural practices. In SLA, this approach is often applied through Vygotsky's concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding.

The ZPD represents the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance from a more knowledgeable individual, such as a teacher or peer. Effective learning occurs when learners are supported within their ZPD. Research shows that parental involvement and collaboration with more skilled individuals can enhance language proficiency, especially for children and students with learning disabilities.

Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by teachers or peers to help learners achieve their goals. This support can include prompting, questioning, or feedback and is gradually withdrawn as learners become more competent. In language learning, scaffolding can target areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and writing, encouraging learners to become more confident and independent over time (Langdon & Pandor, 2020; Oštarić, 2022; Rivera, 2010).

In settings like Pondok Pesantren, sociocultural principles are especially relevant. The communal nature of these institutions fosters collaborative learning, where older or more proficient students (*santri*) assist their peers, and teachers (*kyai* or *ustadz*) provide structured guidance. For example, discussions in English or Arabic, coupled with targeted feedback, help learners internalize language skills while reflecting the cultural and communal values of the pesantren.

## 2. Interactionist Approach

The interactionist approach highlights the role of meaningful social interactions in language learning. According to this perspective, language acquisition is facilitated through input (exposure to language), negotiation of meaning, and output (language production).

### **Key Hypotheses Supporting Interactionism:**

**Input Hypothesis:** Emphasizes the need for comprehensible input slightly above the learner's current proficiency level.

**Interaction Hypothesis:** Suggests that interaction fosters opportunities to clarify meaning, thereby aiding language acquisition.

**Noticing Hypothesis:** Posits that learners must consciously notice language forms in input to incorporate them into their language system.

**Comprehensible Output Hypothesis:** Highlights the importance of learners producing language as a way to refine their skills and identify gaps in their knowledge (Sarem & Shirzadi, 2014; Yusuf, 2015).

The interactionist approach aligns with the sociocultural model in its emphasis on collaboration but focuses more specifically on linguistic development during conversations. In Pondok Pesantren, structured discussions, debates, or role-playing activities in a second language offer learner's opportunities to practice and refine their language skills in authentic and interactive contexts.

## 3. Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach to SLA emphasizes the role of environmental stimuli, imitation, reinforcement, and repetition in language learning. According to behaviorist principles, language acquisition follows the same mechanisms as other learned behaviors.

### **Classical Conditioning:**

This process involves associating specific language elements with experiences or emotions. For example, positive reinforcement for correct vocabulary usage can foster a positive attitude toward language learning (Mohamad et al., 2018).

### **Operant Conditioning:**

Operant conditioning focuses on the consequences of behavior. Positive reinforcement, such as praise or rewards, strengthens desired language behaviors, while negative feedback discourages errors (Blaisdell, 2017).

While the behavioral approach has been criticized for oversimplifying language acquisition, its principles continue to inform pedagogical methods, such as the Audio-Lingual Method. This method emphasizes drills, repetition, and reinforcement to instill linguistic patterns.

The sociocultural approach emphasizes cultural immersion, collaboration, and scaffolded learning, making it particularly effective in communal and culturally rich environments like Pondok Pesantren.

The interactionist approach focuses on the importance of meaningful communication and the negotiation of meaning in developing linguistic competence.

The behavioral approach underscores repetition and reinforcement as tools for habit formation, though it may lack the depth provided by social and cognitive models.

In environments like Pondok Pesantren, integrating these approaches can create a comprehensive SLA program. For example, students can benefit from culturally immersive activities, interactive discussions, and structured drills, ensuring a balance of communicative competence, cultural understanding, and linguistic precision.

### **Environmental Support in Second Language Acquisition**

Environmental support plays a vital role in facilitating second language acquisition (SLA) by combining resources, strategies, and conditions that enhance learning outcomes. Key aspects include structured curricula, teaching aids, modern facilities, interactive strategies, and exposure to the target language. Together, these elements create a conducive environment for learners to acquire language skills effectively.

#### **Structured Curricula and Resources**

A well-designed curriculum aligned with frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides learners with a clear roadmap. Incorporating authentic and culturally relevant content further strengthens real-world language application (Richards, 2013; Council of Europe, 2020). Teaching aids such as visual tools, multimedia, and gamified platforms enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles (Chun et al., 2016).

Facilities like language labs, libraries, and digital resources promote self-directed learning and extensive practice, crucial for vocabulary development and fluency (Krashen, 1982; Godwin-Jones, 2011). Advanced technologies, including virtual reality and gamified platforms, offer immersive experiences, making abstract concepts tangible and accessible.

Pedagogical approaches such as Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritize meaningful interaction and authentic communication. Scaffolding techniques further empower learners by gradually reducing support as they gain independence (Willis, 1996; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These strategies align with Sociocognitive theory, emphasizing learners' alignment with their social and ecological environments for effective SLA (Atkinson et al., 2018).

Exposure to quality and quantity of language input is critical for SLA. Interactions through spoken language, gestures, and written discourse shape learners' linguistic development (Arndt et al., 2023). High-quality input paired with consistent and varied exposure enhances vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills. The Interaction Hypothesis highlights the significance of face-to-face communication and negotiation of meaning in second language development (Long, 2017). Incorporating interactive tools like games and environmental education further enhances engagement and learning outcomes (Jacobs et al., 2001).

Socioeconomic factors significantly influence access to resources and support for SLA. Children from affluent backgrounds often benefit from rich linguistic environments with abundant educational materials, whereas those from disadvantaged backgrounds face barriers to access (Devaki, 2022). Addressing these disparities requires systemic efforts, including investments in early education, community resources, and support for low-income families (Abbasian et al., 2020).

Environmental support, encompassing resources, strategies, and contextual opportunities, is pivotal in shaping SLA outcomes. By integrating structured curricula, interactive methodologies, and adequate exposure within supportive socioeconomic frameworks, educators can create environments that empower learners to achieve fluency and linguistic competence.

### **Islamic Education and English Language Learning**

In many Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia, English language learning is closely intertwined with religious studies. These institutions aim to offer a holistic curriculum that balances Islamic teachings with secular subjects, including English. This integration enriches students' academic and spiritual development while preparing them for global engagement (Fauzan & Nadia, 2019; Susanto, 2022).

The incorporation of technology into English language learning has gained prominence, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions and boarding schools (Al Hamdany, 2022). Technology enables interactive and globally connected learning experiences, allowing students to engage with native English speakers and access vast resources. Supporters highlight its potential to improve language skills at an individualized pace. However, concerns about cultural sensitivity, the digital divide, and neglecting traditional teaching methods necessitate a balanced approach. Integrating technology alongside traditional methodologies, supported by teacher training and continuous assessment, ensures culturally appropriate and effective learning.

Integrating English language learning into Islamic boarding school curricula offers numerous advantages. These include enhancing communication skills across listening, speaking, reading, and writing while enriching Islamic and general knowledge through English-language materials. This dual focus facilitates access to global knowledge and equips students for success in the international job market (Habiburrahim et al., 2022; Suardi et al., 2017).

Incorporating Islamic content in English materials fosters cultural understanding and appreciation of diverse values, promoting cultural democracy (Efrizal, 2022). Extracurricular activities, such as arts and sports, further create immersive language environments, enabling students to practice English in real-world contexts, enhancing their overall proficiency (Ratnadewi et al., 2020). Additionally, English language skills are crucial for adapting to the demands of the digital era and Industrial Revolution, empowering students to thrive in a globalized world (Lundeto et al., 2021).

Modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in regions like West Java represent a significant evolution from traditional *pesantren salaf*. Institutions such as At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School have adopted progressive approaches, integrating diverse academic subjects with Islamic teachings to cultivate well-rounded individuals (Hamid, 2012). This transformation has influenced parental decisions, making modern *pesantren* a preferred choice for comprehensive education.

Modern *pesantren* incorporate cultural elements such as *Hadra* music into education and Islamic missionary work (*da'wah*). This practice nurtures students' appreciation for Islamic arts, fosters their talents, and instills religious values (Sauri et al., 2021). Furthermore, these schools emphasize privacy, particularly in dormitory arrangements, promoting student well-being through sex-segregated accommodations and improved facilities like storage and study spaces (Firmansyah et al., 2021).

Key distinctions between modern and traditional *pesantren* include their approach to education, infrastructure, and inclusivity. While traditional *pesantren* emphasize religious studies, modern institutions adopt a broader curriculum encompassing science, technology, and languages. They also embrace networking, teamwork, and pluralism, fostering tolerance and respect for diverse perspectives (Hamid, 2012). Improved infrastructure, including access to technology and other learning resources, further distinguishes modern *pesantren* as environments conducive to holistic development.

The integration of English language learning within modern Islamic education institutions in Indonesia reflects their commitment to preparing students for the global era while preserving Islamic values. By embracing technological advances, enriching curricula, and fostering inclusivity, these institutions provide students with the tools to succeed academically, spiritually, and professionally.

## METODOLOGI

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the context of At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School. A qualitative design allows for an in-depth examination of learners' experiences, behaviors, and interactions in their natural environment. Data collection methods include classroom observations, structured observation checklists, and open-ended interviews, enabling the triangulation of findings to enhance credibility.

The research focuses on three key groups: Language Officials (LO), Language Supervisors (LS), and Stakeholders (students, teachers, and administrators). Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with relevant experience and knowledge about language acquisition programs in At-Tawazun. This intentional selection ensures that data is comprehensive and directly addresses the research objectives. To protect participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms will be assigned.

Thematic analysis, as described by Clarke and Braun (2017), was utilized to analyze the collected data. This method involves six systematic steps: data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the final report. Triangulation was achieved through the integration of data from multiple sources, such as interviews and observation checklists, ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings.

## RESULT

### 1. Resources and Facilities

The study reveals that resources and facilities play a critical role in promoting second language acquisition (SLA) at At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School. A variety of tools and materials are employed to support language learning, ensuring students have access to resources that cater to diverse learning styles.

- **Multimedia Tools:** The use of modern technology, including language learning software, interactive applications, and audio-visual aids, has proven to be highly effective. These tools enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills by providing engaging and interactive lessons. For instance, LO1 mentioned, "Over the years, we've found that multimedia resources are particularly effective, especially for today's students who are so used to technology. We use language learning apps that incorporate games and quizzes, which make learning more engaging."
- **Visual Aids:** Posters, charts, flashcards, and other visual aids provide contextual reinforcement by helping students associate vocabulary with real-world applications. LS1 noted, "We also use picture books and comics that are rich in visuals to aid students, especially those who are younger or just starting out, in associating words with images."
- **Textbooks:** Despite the rise of digital tools, traditional textbooks remain a vital component of language learning. Teachers at At-Tawazun emphasize selecting textbooks that are relatable to students' everyday

experiences. LS1 highlighted, “Textbooks give structure, but we mix in real-life contexts, so the language feels more practical and relevant.”

Table 1. Overview of Resources and Tools for SLA

Resource Type	Description	Example Usage
Multimedia Tools	Software, apps, videos, and games	Real-time feedback to track progress
Visual Aids	Posters, flashcards, and story-based visuals	Associating words with pictures
Textbooks	Contextual and relatable content	Reflecting real-life scenarios for relevance

## 2. Dormitory Immersion Programs

One of the most distinctive features of SLA at At-Tawazun is the dormitory immersion program. This environment creates a natural setting where students can practice their target languages continuously, fostering both fluency and confidence.

- **Immersive Practices:** Structured times are designated throughout the day when students are required to communicate exclusively in English or Arabic. This immersion extends to casual interactions, group discussions, and even religious activities. As LO1 explained, “The dorms play a huge role. In fact, it’s one of the most important aspects of our language program. We’ve set up specific times when students are required to communicate in either English or Arabic. It creates an immersive environment that pushes them to practice constantly, but in a relaxed, non-judgmental space.”
- **Peer Support:** Collaborative learning is a cornerstone of the dormitory program. Informal study groups and friendships provide a safe space for students to practice grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. LS1 remarked, “Interacting with friends in a more relaxed setting makes them feel more comfortable trying to communicate in English or Arabic. Moreover, the informal setting allows them to speak without the fear of making mistakes, which is crucial in the language learning process.”

## 3. Environmental Support and Holistic Learning

The environment at At-Tawazun is designed to provide comprehensive support for language learning by combining physical resources with social and academic guidance.

- **Language Labs and Libraries:** These facilities offer students access to multimedia tools, language-specific books, and quiet spaces for focused study. Language labs, in particular, provide opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening in a controlled setting.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Teachers and peers work together to provide regular feedback. Language Officials (LO) and Supervisors (LS) conduct assessments and mentoring sessions to ensure that students’ progress is consistently monitored and guided. This system allows students to address specific challenges and set personalized learning goals.

#### 4. Attitudes Toward Second Language Learning

Both students and teachers at At-Tawazun view second language acquisition as a critical skill that bridges religious, academic, and global opportunities.

- **Student Perspectives:** Students recognize the dual importance of English and Arabic for their futures. SS shared, "In my opinion, it's very important, Sir. English and Arabic are part of the main curriculum here, and mastering these two languages can open many opportunities, whether in religious studies or for our future."
- **Teacher Views:** Teachers emphasize the transformative potential of language learning. LS commented, "By mastering these two languages, students can access a wide range of knowledge in both religious and general sciences, as well as communicate globally."

Table 2. Importance of Second Language Learning

Stakeholder Group Perceived Benefits	
Students	Access to global knowledge
Teachers	Enhanced teaching and mentoring skills

#### 5. Challenges in SLA

While At-Tawazun provides a supportive environment for SLA, several challenges remain.

- **Confidence Issues:** Many students hesitate to speak in their target languages due to fear of making mistakes. SS reflected, "Sometimes, we feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English or Arabic." This lack of confidence often limits participation in conversations and reduces practice opportunities.
- **Resource Limitations:** Despite the school's efforts, some facilities, such as language labs and updated textbooks, need improvement. LS noted, "Although we already have good language programs, sometimes supporting facilities like language labs or the latest books need to be improved."

Table 3. Key Challenges in SLA

Challenge	Description	Example
Confidence Issues	Fear of judgment when speaking	Reduced participation in conversations
Resource Limitations	Outdated facilities and materials	Limited access to multimedia resources

## 6. Practical Applications and Motivation

The importance of real-life communication and student motivation is consistently emphasized throughout the findings.

- **Interactive Learning:** Activities such as role-playing, debates, and simulations of real-world scenarios provide students with practical applications for their language skills. US stated, "I hope second language learning can focus more on real-life practice and communication. Maybe we could have more activities involving spontaneous conversations or simulations of real-life situations."
- **Career Aspirations:** Many students view language mastery as a stepping stone to future opportunities. SS highlighted, "English and Arabic are part of the main curriculum here, and mastering these two languages can open many opportunities."

## DISCUSSION

The exploration of second language acquisition (SLA) at Pondok Modern At-Tawazun highlights the intricate dynamics of a dual-focused educational environment. Situated at the intersection of traditional Islamic education and modern pedagogical approaches, At-Tawazun demonstrates a unique blend of methodologies in teaching English and Arabic. The findings emphasize the interplay of resources, environmental support, and cultural context, offering insights into how students and educators navigate language acquisition while balancing religious and global aspirations.

The integration of diverse instructional materials forms the cornerstone of At-Tawazun's approach to SLA. Consistent with sociocultural learning theories, which emphasize the importance of culturally relevant tools and interactive methods, the school employs a mix of traditional textbooks, multimedia tools, and visual aids. Findings indicate that multimedia tools, such as language apps and gamified quizzes, play a pivotal role in engaging students. These tools cater to modern learners' preferences for interactive and immediate feedback, as highlighted by LO1: "We use apps that incorporate games and quizzes, making learning more engaging." This aligns with research suggesting that positive reinforcement through technology can foster motivation and improve retention (Devaki, 2021).

Visual aids and traditional textbooks complement these digital tools, providing structured learning with cultural and contextual relevance. LS1 noted, "Textbooks give structure, but we mix in real-life contexts, so the language feels more practical and relevant." This blended approach addresses various learning styles, creating a comprehensive framework for language development.

One of At-Tawazun's most distinctive features is its dormitory immersion program, which facilitates continuous exposure to English and Arabic outside the classroom. This living language lab environment aligns with interactionist theories, emphasizing the role of social interaction and real-life application in language learning (Loewen & Sato, 2018). Structured times during which students are required to communicate exclusively in their target languages create immersive experiences. LO1 remarked, "The dorms are one of the most important

aspects of our language program, providing a relaxed, non-judgmental space for practice." This immersive setting mirrors Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students practice skills just beyond their independent abilities with peer and mentor support. Informal study groups within the dormitories further reinforce learning by offering low-stakes opportunities to experiment with language use.

The findings underscore the importance of environmental support in fostering SLA. Facilities such as language labs and libraries provide students with access to multimedia tools and language-specific materials, enhancing their capacity for independent study. Additionally, mentorship programs bridge academic and social guidance, as language officials and supervisors provide regular feedback and help students set personalized learning goals. At-Tawazun's approach reflects constructivist principles, where students construct knowledge through meaningful interactions. Peer-led study groups and extracurricular activities, such as debates and drama performances, encourage active engagement and contextualize language learning in real-world scenarios.

The dual role of Arabic and English in At-Tawazun's curriculum exemplifies the institution's holistic educational philosophy. Arabic connects students with Islamic scholarship and religious texts, while English equips them with global communication skills and access to international knowledge. SS highlighted this dual purpose: "Mastering these two languages opens many opportunities, whether in religious studies or for our future." This dual focus aligns with sociocultural theories of language acquisition, emphasizing the interplay of cultural, social, and linguistic factors (Alias & Azal, 2022). By integrating Arabic and English into all aspects of school life, At-Tawazun ensures that students are prepared for both spiritual and worldly success.

Despite its strengths, At-Tawazun faces challenges that can hinder progress in SLA. A significant barrier is students' lack of confidence, often stemming from fear of making mistakes. As SS noted, "Sometimes, we feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English or Arabic." This highlights the importance of fostering a supportive, judgment-free environment where errors are embraced as part of the learning process. Structured initiatives, such as "English Days" and "Arabic Days," provide regular practice opportunities and help students build confidence over time. However, findings indicate that resource limitations, such as outdated language labs and textbooks, remain an issue. Addressing these gaps would enhance the effectiveness of the school's language programs and better meet the needs of its students.

The findings reveal that real-life communication and student motivation are central to SLA at At-Tawazun. Interactive methods, including role-playing, debates, and simulations, allow students to practice language skills in meaningful contexts. US emphasized, "We need more activities involving spontaneous conversations or simulations of real-life situations." Students' aspirations for future careers and global engagement drive their motivation to learn English and Arabic. By aligning instructional strategies with students' goals, At-Tawazun fosters a sense of purpose and relevance, encouraging sustained engagement in language learning.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study conducted at At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School demonstrates the critical role of environmental support in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The findings highlight that structured immersion programs, a supportive learning environment, and tailored pedagogical strategies significantly enhance students' English and Arabic proficiency. Key elements contributing to SLA success include:

1. **Comprehensive Resources:** Multimedia tools, visual aids, and relatable textbooks cater to diverse learning styles and improve engagement.
2. **Dormitory Immersion Programs:** Continuous language exposure in non-judgmental, peer-supported settings fosters fluency and confidence.
3. **Environmental and Social Support:** Facilities like language labs and libraries, along with mentorship from teachers and peers, promote consistent progress.
4. **Holistic Curriculum:** Integrating Arabic and English within religious and academic contexts provides students with skills for both spiritual and global aspirations.

However, challenges such as resource limitations and students' lack of confidence in using the target languages hinder optimal outcomes.

To enhance second language acquisition (SLA) at At-Tawazun, the school should upgrade language labs, update learning materials, and leverage technology like language apps and virtual reality for engaging, personalized learning. Confidence-building initiatives, such as "English/Arabic Speaking Days" and peer-led practice groups, should be prioritized. Enhanced teacher training on modern SLA strategies and stronger feedback mechanisms can better address individual student needs. Finally, incorporating real-world applications through debates, role-playing, and cultural exchanges will provide practical language exposure, equipping students for academic and global success.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

This study is limited by its focus on a single institution, At-Tawazun Modern Islamic Boarding School, which may not fully represent other educational contexts. Additionally, the qualitative approach, while providing in-depth insights, may lack generalizability to broader populations. Resource constraints, such as outdated facilities and limited teaching aids, might also have influenced the findings. Finally, the study primarily relies on self-reported data from interviews and observations, which could introduce bias.

Future studies should expand to include multiple institutions to provide a comparative analysis and broader applicability of findings. Mixed-method approaches that incorporate quantitative data, such as standardized language proficiency tests, can enhance reliability. Researchers could also explore the long-term impacts of immersive programs on students' language retention and use beyond the educational setting. Additionally, examining the role of digital tools and emerging technologies in SLA across various age groups and cultural contexts could offer valuable insights for modern language education.

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