

ADAPTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE REGULATION IN AN INDONESIAN TAHFIDZ PESANTREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF BI'AH LUGHAWIYAH

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ABSTRAK

Regulasi bahasa asing telah menjadi instrumen berulang di pesantren Indonesia yang berusaha membangun lingkungan linguistik yang imersif, namun implementasi tingkat lapangan sering menyimpang dari desain kebijakan. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana aturan bahasa asing diberlakukan, diperebutkan, dan diadaptasi di Pondok Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhusna di Kabupaten Bungo, di mana bahasa Arab dan Inggris bergantian setiap minggu di semua interaksi sehari-hari. Desain kualitatif deskriptif digunakan; Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif selama 18 jam di dua siklus rotasi, tiga wawancara semi terstruktur (koordinator bahasa, pengawas asrama, Santri senior) masing-masing berlangsung selama 45-60 menit, dan analisis dokumen jadwal bahasa, buku catatan Mufradat, dan catatan pengawasan. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña dan ditriangulasi berdasarkan sumber, metode, dan keterlibatan yang berkepanjangan. Tiga temuan muncul. Pertama, implementasi bertumpu pada empat pilar operasional—rotasi mingguan, pembinaan intensif (mufradat, muhadatsah, muhadharah), pengawasan berlapis, dan sistem sanksi-imbalan. Kedua, lima kendala berulang berpotongan: kesenjangan leksikal, penghambatan psikologis, kepadatan jadwal (≈16 jam aktif/hari), media pendukung terbatas, dan kemahiran dasar yang heterogen. Ketiga, empat strategi adaptif menstabilkan regulasi: pendampingan pribadi humanistik, penyediaan sumber daya linguistik secara bertahap, target yang dibedakan di tiga tingkat kemahiran, dan integrasi kepatuhan bahasa ke dalam kelas akhlaq. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketahanan bi'ah lughawiyah kurang bergantung pada ketegasan regulasi daripada pada kemampuan beradaptasi manajerial, dukungan ekosistem, dan pendampingan humanistik yang mengkalibrasi ulang aturan ke heterogenitas peserta didik.

Kata Kunci: Bi'ah Lughawiyah; Kebijakan Bahasa Asing; Pesantren; Implementasi Kebijakan; Studi Kasus Kualitatif

ABSTRACT

Foreign-language regulation has become a recurring instrument in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) seeking to construct an immersive linguistic environment, yet field-level implementation often diverges from policy design. This study examines how a foreign-language rule is enacted, contested, and adapted at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhusna in Bungo Regency, where Arabic and English alternate weekly across all daily interaction. A descriptive qualitative design was employed; data were obtained through 18 hours of participatory observation across two rotation cycles, three semi-structured interviews (language coordinator, dormitory supervisor, senior santri) lasting 45–60 minutes each, and document analysis of language schedules, mufradat logbooks, and supervision records. Data were analysed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model and triangulated by source, method, and prolonged engagement. Three findings emerged. First, implementation rests on four operational pillars—weekly rotation, intensive coaching (mufradat, muhadatsah, muhadharah), layered supervision, and a sanction–reward system. Second, five recurring constraints intersect: lexical gaps, psychological inhibition, schedule density (≈16 active hours/day), limited supporting media, and heterogeneous baseline proficiency. Third, four adaptive strategies stabilise the regulation: humanistic personal mentoring, gradual provisioning of linguistic resources, differentiated targets across three proficiency tiers, and integration of language compliance into the akhlaq grade. The results indicate that the durability of bi'ah lughawiyah depends less on regulatory strictness than on managerial adaptability, ecosystem support, and humanistic mentoring that recalibrates rules to learner heterogeneity.

Keyword: Bi'ah Lughawiyah; Foreign-Language Policy; Pesantren; Policy Implementation; Qualitative Case Study

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1. PENDAHULUAN

The mastery of Arabic and English has become a strategic competence in contemporary Islamic education. Arabic remains the gateway to primary Islamic sources the Qur'an, Hadith, and the classical turats corpus while English functions as the principal medium of global academic exchange. In the Indonesian pesantren tradition, the cultivation of these languages extends beyond classroom instruction to the deliberate construction of bi'ah lughawiyah, an immersive linguistic environment that fuses formal regulation with continuous habituation. Second-language acquisition research consistently identifies sustained exposure,

communicative interaction, and a low-anxiety setting as critical conditions for the internalisation of linguistic competence (Brown, 2020; Hakim, 2021). Against this backdrop, many pesantren have adopted compulsory foreign-language rules as habituation instruments intended to accelerate acquisition and to cultivate a cosmopolitan scholarly identity.

However, language policy implementation at the institutional level rarely behaves as designers anticipate. Edwards III's (2019) implementation framework specifies four interdependent variables communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure whose imbalance generates predictable gaps between policy and practice. Within pesantren, such gaps surface as adolescent psychological resistance, scarce instructional media, uneven baseline proficiency, and inconsistent supervision outside formal sessions. Absent adaptive mechanisms and ecosystem support, foreign-language regulation risks degenerating into administrative ritual rather than functioning as a vehicle for linguistic transformation.

Existing scholarship on bi'ah lughawiyah in Indonesian pesantren has illuminated several facets of the phenomenon, yet leaves a clear opening for the present study. Basith and Setiawan (2019) documented dormitory-level practices for improving maharah kalam but treated regulation as a static input. Muzammil and Jannah (2023) reported the role of bi'ah lughawiyah as a supportive condition in a madrasah aliyah, while Ulya (2024) examined a single salafiyah pesantren in Aceh Besar. These studies typically catalogue program components or measure motivational gains, but they rarely trace, in a single case, the recursive interaction among (i) the operational architecture of the regulation, (ii) the layered constraints that emerge during enactment, and (iii) the field-level strategies through which mentors and students recalibrate the rule. Tahfidz-oriented pesantren where Qur'anic memorisation competes with foreign-language practice for the same daily time budget represent a particularly under-examined setting in which this interaction is most visible.

This study addresses that gap by analysing how a foreign-language regulation is operationalised, constrained, and adapted at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an Alhusna, Sungai Lilin, Bungo. Three objectives organise the inquiry: (1) to describe the operational architecture of the regulation; (2) to identify the constraints that arise during its enactment; and (3) to analyse the adaptive strategies through which constraints are mitigated. To pursue these aims, a descriptive qualitative design is employed, drawing on participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, with findings synthesised through Edwards III's implementation framework.

2. METODE

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to capture the meanings, processes, and contextual dynamics of foreign-language regulation as experienced by participants (Moleong, 2017). The design is appropriate because the research questions concern how a rule is enacted and adapted within its naturalistic setting rather than the measurement of language gains.

Setting and Participants

The site was Pondok Pesantren Tahfidzul Qur'an (PPTQ) Alhusna, located in Sungai Lilin, Tanah Sepenggal Lintas Subdistrict, Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. Fieldwork was conducted across eight weeks in mid-2025, spanning two complete weekly rotation cycles. Three informants were selected through purposive sampling on three criteria: (i) direct involvement in the regulation, (ii) minimum tenure of one year at PPTQ Alhusna, and (iii) willingness to participate. The final sample comprised the language coordinator (P1), the dormitory supervisor or musyrifah (P2), and one senior santri (P3) actively engaged in the language program. Although the small sample limits breadth, it was sufficient for the explanatory aims of the study and was supplemented by extensive observational and documentary data.

Data Collection

Three techniques were combined. First, participatory observation was conducted across approximately 18 hours, distributed over mufradat sessions after Subuh, muhadatsah in dormitory and garden spaces, scheduled muhadharah, and informal interaction during meal and rest periods. A structured field-note protocol with eight indicators recorded language use, supervisory presence, and learner participation. Second, three semi-structured interviews of 45–60 minutes were conducted using an interview guide covering implementation, constraints, and strategies; interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Third, document analysis covered the weekly language schedule, mufradat logbooks for two consecutive weeks, the supervision logbook, and visual media displayed in dormitories. Time accuracy of activity counts was recorded at ± 5 minutes, consistent with the precision of dormitory clocks.

Analysis and Trustworthiness

Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014): condensation, display, and verification. Transcripts and field notes were coded inductively in three rounds. The first round generated 47 open codes; the second collapsed them into 12 categories along the axes of implementation, constraint, and strategy; the third produced four implementation pillars, five constraints, and four adaptive strategies, which are reported in the same order in the Results. Trustworthiness was established through source triangulation across the three informants, method triangulation across observation, interview, and document data, and prolonged engagement across the eight-week fieldwork period. A reflexive memo was maintained to monitor the first author's positionality as a researcher familiar with the pesantren tradition.

3. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Operational Architecture of the Regulation

Implementation at PPTQ Alhusna rests on four interlocking pillars summarised in Table 1. The weekly rotation alternates between Arabic and English, with Sunday continuing the language of the prior week to consolidate habituation. Intensive coaching is delivered through three recurring activities: mufradat (vocabulary drills) for approximately 20 minutes after the

Subuh prayer, muhadatsah (thematic conversation) in dormitory and garden spaces, and muhadharah (rotating speeches) on a biweekly basis. Layered supervision combines daily logs maintained by the musyrifah, weekly oral checks, and live observation during muhadatsah. The sanction–reward system applies an educational logic: more than three lapses into Indonesian or local language within a session triggers a constructive sanction memorising ten new vocabulary items and producing thematic sentences while consistent compliance is rewarded with public recognition and symbolic prizes.

Pillar	Operational form	Frequency	Edwards III variable
Weekly rotation	Arabic week ⇄ English week; Sunday continues that week's language	Continuous, 7 days	Communication; structure
Intensive coaching	Mufradat after Subuh (≈20 min); muhadatsah; muhadharah	Daily; weekly; biweekly	Resources
Layered supervision	Daily logs by musyrifah; weekly oral test; live observation	Daily and weekly	Disposition; structure
Sanction & reward	> 3 L1 lapses → 10 new vocabulary items + thematic sentences; verbal praise and symbolic rewards for compliance	Per incident	Disposition

Table 1. Operational pillars of the foreign-language regulation at PPTQ Alhusna.

Recurring Constraints

Five constraints surfaced consistently across the three data sources, summarised in Table 2. Lexical gaps were the most immediate barrier; observation showed that learners who could not retrieve a needed word within roughly 30 seconds typically reverted to Indonesian. Psychological inhibition—shyness and fear of error—was reported by all three informants and was visibly stronger in mixed-tier conversation groups, where lower-proficiency santri produced fewer turns. Schedule density emerged as the principal external constraint: the daily routine of memorisation, formal classes, diniyah sessions, and extracurricular activities filled approximately 16 active hours, leaving narrow windows for voluntary language practice, with a marked decline after the 21:00 prayer block. Supporting media were unevenly distributed: pocket dictionaries and audio devices were available in some dormitory wings but absent in others. Finally, heterogeneous baseline proficiency, traceable to differences in prior schooling, produced approximately three identifiable tiers within the cohort, complicating uniform pacing.

Constraint	Source mentions (n)	Domain	Illustrative indicator
Lexical gaps (limited active vocabulary)	3 / 3	Internal	Code-switching to L1 within \leq 30 s of conversation onset
Psychological inhibition (shyness, fear of error)	3 / 3	Internal	Reluctance during muhadharah; silence in mixed-tier groups
Schedule density (\approx 16 active hours/day)	2 / 3	External	Drop in voluntary practice after 21:00 prayer block
Limited supporting media (dictionaries, audio)	2 / 3	External	Uneven distribution of pocket dictionaries across dorm wings
Heterogeneous baseline proficiency	3 / 3	Internal	Mixed-school intake produces \approx 3 proficiency tiers

Table 2. Recurring constraints in implementing the foreign-language regulation, by source frequency

Adaptive Strategies

Four adaptive strategies were enacted by mentors and santri in response to these constraints. First, humanistic personal mentoring replaced punitive enforcement with individual conversations that linked language compliance to spiritual purpose, particularly for learners with strong inhibition. Second, linguistic resources were provisioned gradually: language corners were established in two dormitory wings, compulsory mufradat logbooks were standardised, and murottal audio with bilingual dialogues was used to support passive listening. Third, differentiated targets were applied across three proficiency tiers, scaffolded as simple sentences \rightarrow guided dialogue \rightarrow public muhadharah, with senior peers serving as buffer mentors. Fourth, language compliance was integrated into the akhlaq (religious-attitude) grade, providing a moral incentive that operated alongside the sanction system. The overall configuration linking pillars, constraints, and strategies is summarised in Figure 1

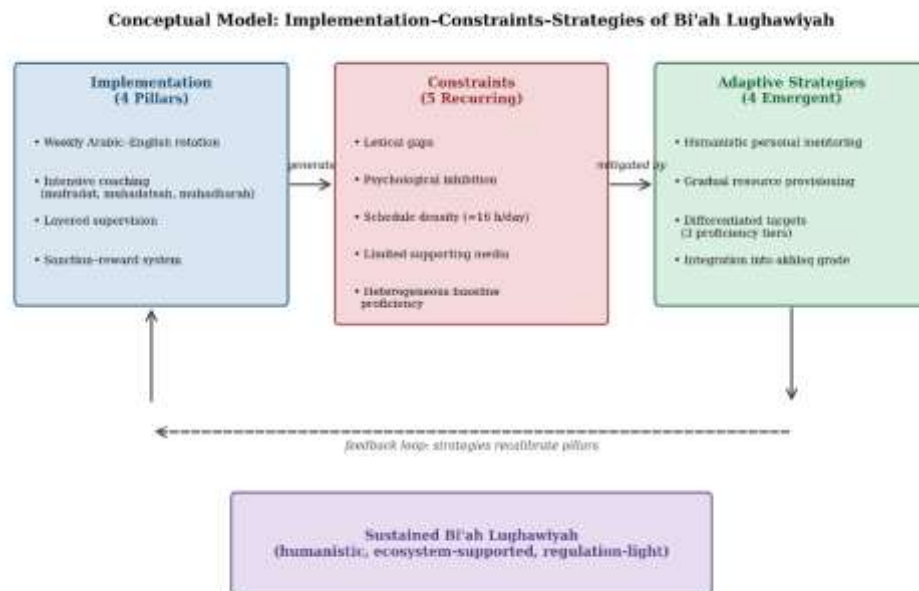


Figure 1. Conceptual model linking the four implementation pillars, five recurring constraints, and four adaptive strategies of bi'ah lughawiyah at PPTQ Alhusna.

PEMBAHASAN

The four pillars identified at PPTQ Alhusna can be read directly through Edwards III's (2019) implementation framework. The weekly rotation and posted schedules satisfy the communication variable; intensive coaching and the gradual provisioning of pocket dictionaries and audio resources operationalise the resources variable; daily logs and integration into the akhlaq grade engage the structure variable; and the educational sanction-reward design reflects the disposition of mentors. The case therefore offers a coherent illustration of the framework in a tahfidz setting, while also showing that none of the four variables is self-sustaining in isolation: the rotation continues to function only because mentors recalibrate it daily through the adaptive strategies described above.

The five recurring constraints converge with, and extend, prior findings. Lexical gaps and psychological inhibition echo the obstacles documented by Basith and Setiawan (2019) in dormitory maharah kalam programs, suggesting that these are structural features of bi'ah lughawiyah rather than site-specific anomalies. Schedule density, however, appears more acute in the present case than in the madrasah aliyah examined by Muzammil and Jannah (2023): the addition of a tahfidz curriculum, occupying several morning and evening hours, compresses the time available for voluntary language practice and shifts the practical bottleneck from motivation to time budget. This contrast indicates that constraint profiles cannot be transferred uncritically across pesantren typologies and that tahfidz-oriented institutions warrant constraint analyses calibrated to their specific time architecture.

The adaptive strategies observed here also speak back to the literature. Ulya's (2024) study of a salafiyah pesantren in Aceh Besar emphasised regulatory consistency as the principal driver of program survival. The present case complicates that emphasis: at PPTQ Alhusna, the regulation persists because it is continually softened by humanistic mentoring and tier-based differentiation, not because it is enforced rigidly. This pattern is consistent with

Lickona's (1991) account of character formation through habituation, modelling, and a supportive environment, and suggests that what stabilises bi'ah lughawiyah in tahfidz pesantren is the elasticity of the rule rather than its strictness.

Two boundary conditions of these claims should be stated explicitly. The findings rest on three informants and an eight-week observation window at a single institution; while saturation was reached on the three target dimensions, generalisations to other pesantren types remain provisional. In addition, this study did not measure language proficiency outcomes, so claims are limited to implementation dynamics rather than to learning effectiveness.

4. KESIMPULAN

The study set out to describe how a foreign-language regulation is implemented at a tahfidz pesantren, to identify its constraints, and to analyse the adaptive strategies that emerge during enactment. The regulation at PPTQ Alhusna is sustained by four pillars, encounters five recurring constraints, and is stabilised by four adaptive strategies that together render the rule elastic rather than rigid. The case suggests that the durability of bi'ah lughawiyah in tahfidz settings depends on managerial adaptability and humanistic mentoring more than on regulatory strictness. Two avenues for further work follow directly. A mixed-methods study tracking proficiency gains across one or more rotation cycles would test whether the elastic configuration documented here yields measurable acquisition outcomes. A multi-site comparison between salafiyah, modern, and tahfidz pesantren would clarify which constraint profiles are structural and which are typology-specific.

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