



**ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY AT ULIL ALBAB ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA ISLAM ULIL ALBAAB**

**Author**

**Hizbul Wathoni<sup>1</sup>, Sahabudin<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Master of Education, Indonesia, Institut Agama Islam AL-Manan NU Lombok Timur

Email: [hizbulwathoni96@gmail.com](mailto:hizbulwathoni96@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Master of Economic Finance, Indonesia, Institut Agama Islam AL-Manan NU Lombok Timur

Email: [mathsolution322@gmail.com](mailto:mathsolution322@gmail.com)

Published: 17 Mei 2026, Approved: 21 Mei 2026, Accepted: 27 Mei 2026

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the English language ability of third-grade students at SMA Islam Ulil Albaab Islamic Boarding School. English proficiency is an important aspect in supporting students' academic competence and global communication skills. This research used a qualitative case study approach involving observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings revealed that students' English abilities were categorized into moderate levels, especially in reading and speaking skills. Several factors influenced students' language abilities, including learning environment, motivation, teaching methods, and the availability of language practice activities in the boarding school. The study concludes that intensive language programs and communicative teaching strategies are needed to improve students' English proficiency effectively.

**Keywords:** English ability, Islamic boarding school, case study, students, language learning

## INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important international languages used in education, communication, technology, and global interaction. The mastery of English is considered essential for students in facing the challenges of globalization and academic competition. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language in schools, including Islamic boarding schools or pesantren (Crystal, 2012). Islamic boarding schools have traditionally focused on Islamic studies and Arabic language learning. However, many modern pesantren have started integrating English into their curriculum to enhance students' competencies in international communication and academic development (Dhofier, 2011). One of these institutions is SMA Islam Ulil Albaab, which provides English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom.

Several studies have shown that students in Islamic boarding schools often face difficulties in mastering English skills, particularly speaking and listening. Limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and insufficient practice opportunities become common obstacles in language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Nevertheless, the boarding school environment also offers potential advantages because students live together and can practice language intensively through daily communication programs. Previous studies mainly discussed English teaching strategies in pesantren environments, while limited research specifically analyzed students' English language abilities comprehensively in the context of SMA Islam Ulil Albaab. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the English language ability of third-grade students at SMA Islam Ulil Albaab Islamic Boarding School and identify factors influencing their language development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **English Language Ability**

Language ability refers to an individual's competence in using language effectively in communication, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Brown, 2007). In English learning, these four skills are interconnected and become indicators of students' language proficiency.

### **English Learning in Islamic Boarding Schools**

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have experienced educational transformation by integrating general education subjects, including English. According to Madkur (2018), pesantren-based language learning can create a unique environment that supports language acquisition through discipline and daily practice.

## **Factors Affecting English Language Learning**

Students' English proficiency is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include motivation, confidence, and learning interest, while external factors involve teaching methods, environment, and learning facilities (Harmer, 2001). A supportive environment significantly contributes to students' language development.

## **METHODS**

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The study was conducted at SMA Islam Ulil Albaab involving third-grade students as research participants. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand students' English abilities deeply within their natural learning context (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted during English learning activities and language practice sessions in the boarding school environment. Interviews were carried out with students and English teachers to identify challenges and supporting factors in language learning. Documentation included students' scores, learning schedules, and language program activities. The collected data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014). The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Students' English Language Ability**

The findings showed that students' English proficiency was generally at a moderate level. Students demonstrated better abilities in reading comprehension compared to speaking and listening skills. Most students were able to understand simple English texts and answer comprehension questions correctly. However, they still faced difficulties in pronunciation and spontaneous communication.

The results also indicated that students who actively participated in language programs had better speaking abilities than those who rarely practiced English. This finding supports the theory that continuous practice and language exposure significantly improve language acquisition (Krashen, 1985).

## **Factors Influencing Students' English Ability**

Several factors influenced students' English learning outcomes. First, motivation played a significant role in improving students' language abilities. Students with strong personal motivation tended to practice English more actively. Second, the boarding school environment supported language learning through vocabulary memorization programs and conversation activities. However, some challenges were identified, such as limited confidence among students and lack of varied learning media. Some students were afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. This condition aligns with Harmer's theory that psychological factors can affect language performance (Harmer, 2001).

## **The Role of Teachers and Learning Environment**

Teachers played an important role in motivating students and creating communicative learning activities. Interactive teaching methods such as discussions, presentations, and group conversations helped students become more active during lessons. Additionally, the pesantren environment encouraged discipline and habitual language practice, which positively influenced students' language development. The integration of formal classroom instruction and informal language practice in dormitory life became one of the strengths of English learning at SMA Islam Ulil Albaab. This environment supports the concept of language immersion, where students continuously interact using the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the English language ability of third-grade students at SMA Islam Ulil Albaab Islamic Boarding School is categorized as moderate. Students showed stronger performance in reading skills than in speaking and listening abilities. Motivation, learning environment, teaching strategies, and language practice activities significantly influenced students' English proficiency. The boarding school environment provides valuable opportunities for intensive language practice; however, improvements are still needed in communicative activities, learning media, and students' self-confidence. Therefore, teachers and school administrators are encouraged to develop more interactive and practice-oriented English programs to enhance students' language competence.

## REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crystal, D. (2012). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dhofier, Z. (2011). *Tradisi Pesantren*. LP3ES.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Longman.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman.
- Madkur, A. (2018). English Learning in Islamic Boarding School. *Journal of English Education Studies*, 1(1), 45-56.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.