

Oracy Pedagogy in EFL Learning: An Islamic Boarding School Perspective

St. Naftari Naftari^[0009-0007-5557-4860] and Sukirman Sukirman^[0000-0002-5729-8237]

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar – Indonesia

naftaricity@gmail.com, sukirman@uin-alauddin.ac.id

Abstract. Oracy pedagogy has received increasing attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because of its role in promoting students' oral communication and classroom interaction. However, little is known about how oracy pedagogy is implemented in Islamic boarding school (pesantren) contexts. This study explored the implementation of oracy pedagogy, students' oral participation, and the challenges encountered in developing oracy in an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. Guided by Sociocultural Theory, the study employed a qualitative case study design involving one English teacher and six students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings show that oracy pedagogy was implemented through interactive and scaffolded speaking activities, and that collaborative interaction supported students' oral participation. Students nevertheless faced persistent challenges related to confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and inconsistent opportunities to use English in daily communication, while the pesantren environment functioned simultaneously as a support and a constraint for oracy development. Building on these findings, the discussion critically situates the case within recent international scholarship on oracy, dialogic teaching, and foreign language speaking anxiety, and identifies gaps between programmatic provision and everyday language practice. The study contributes empirical evidence on oracy pedagogy from an underexamined religious-education setting and offers theoretical and practical implications for EFL teaching in similarly structured institutions.

Keywords: Oracy Pedagogy; EFL Learning; Oral Participation; Sociocultural Theory; Islamic Boarding School.

1. Introduction

Oracy improves students' ability to express ideas, take part in classroom interaction, and engage in meaningful speaking and listening activities, and it has therefore become a growing concern in language instruction (Maxwell et al., 2015; Mercer & Mannion, 2018). Oracy is associated not only with a person's ability to speak but also with dialogue, interaction, reasoning, confidence, and collaborative communication in learning contexts, as pointed out in recent educational

discussions (Maxwell et al., 2015; Mercer & Mannion, 2018; Pinto, 2025). Educators have increasingly emphasized oracy pedagogy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching because of the growing demand for communicative capacity, classroom participation, and interactive learning approaches (Pinto, 2025). Recent work on oracy skills frameworks in higher education further suggests that the specific sub-skills learners need to speak confidently vary across modes of interaction and should be made explicit in instruction rather than assumed (Atkins & Heron, 2024). In addition, classroom discourse and interaction are gaining recognition as valuable instructional strategies for developing students' language proficiency, reasoning abilities, and active participation in the learning process (Mercer & Mannion, 2018).

The importance of oracy has been highlighted across a range of educational contexts as central to collaborative learning, dialogic interaction, and students' academic communication (Kaldahl et al., 2019; Mercer & Mannion, 2018; Pinto, 2025). For example, research in Australian higher education highlights the importance of oral engagement in helping students build knowledge and actively participate in classroom learning (Pinto, 2025). Other studies demonstrate that positive classroom talk and collaborative dialogue can promote students' participation, communication skills, and reasoning during learning activities (Kaldahl et al., 2019; Mercer & Mannion, 2018). At the same time, students in EFL programs commonly experience problems in oral communication, including lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, fear of speaking, and low involvement in classroom interaction (Sreelakshmi et al., 2026).

This pattern is not confined to any single context: large-scale survey evidence from Chinese and Saudi EFL settings similarly links speaking anxiety to self-perceived proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, and limited opportunities for authentic practice (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2023; Chen, 2024). These findings show that language learning is not only a matter of linguistic knowledge but also of real opportunities for involvement and practice of communication in classroom and social contexts (Mercer & Mannion, 2018).

The learning of English at Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia has developed rapidly alongside increasing awareness of the need to master foreign languages for education and global communication (Fitria, 2023). Islamic boarding schools (known as *pesantren*), are religious educational institutions and sociocultural environments where students learn, interact, and engage through formal and informal activities (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Saepullah, 2021).

Many contemporary *pesantren* support English learning not only through classroom teaching but also through language programs, conversation exercises, speeches, and vocabulary memorization in dormitory life (Dariyanto et al., 2022; Fitria, 2023), and some *pesantren* promote the use of English and Arabic in daily communication as part of their educational culture and linguistic discipline

(Saepullah, 2021; Utami et al., 2020). Recent scholarship suggests, however, that EFL integration in the pesantren is shaped by an often-competing set of global, national, religious, institutional, and societal pressures, so that English learning must be continually harmonized with the preservation of religious identity rather than treated as a purely linguistic undertaking (Sofi & Jenks, 2025).

Previous studies on English learning in Islamic boarding schools have mostly focused on language programs, teaching methodologies, students' language attitudes, and general barriers to English teaching (Dariyanto et al., 2022; Fitria, 2023). Other studies have examined the communication culture and sociocultural interaction within the pesantren environment, including communication practices, discipline, and social participation (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Saepullah, 2021), while sociocultural learning theory more broadly views learning as heavily shaped by social interaction, communication, and collaborative involvement in cultural settings (Putra et al., 2025).

Elsewhere in EFL research, case studies of speaking instruction grounded in Communicative Language Teaching have documented how teachers scaffold learners from controlled to freer speaking practice (Adem & Berkessa, 2022), yet comparable classroom-level accounts of oracy pedagogy specifically are still rare. Little attention has been paid to how oracy pedagogy is implemented in EFL learning within Islamic boarding schools, particularly regarding classroom interaction, oral participation, and communication practices in the pesantren setting. Most previous research still discusses English learning in general terms and rarely examines the development of speaking and listening abilities through pedagogical interaction and everyday communication practice (Dariyanto et al., 2022; Fitria, 2023).

This study therefore explores the implementation of oracy pedagogy in EFL learning in an Islamic boarding school setting. The study concentrates on classroom processes, students' oral participation, and the challenges they encounter in developing oracy in learning English. Theoretically, the study aims to enrich the debate on oracy pedagogy in EFL contexts; practically, it offers insights for English teachers and Islamic boarding schools seeking to build more interactive and communicative language learning environments.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon Sociocultural Theory (SCT) as the main analytical framework for understanding the implementation of oracy pedagogy in EFL learning within Islamic boarding school contexts. Sociocultural Theory explains that learning and cognitive development are strongly influenced by social interaction, communication, cultural participation, and collaborative activities within social environments (Rahmatirad, 2020; Scott & Palincsar, 2013). The theory originates from the work of Lev Vygotsky, who argued that higher mental functioning develops first through social interaction before becoming internalized individually

(Scott & Palincsar, 2013). From this perspective, learning is not an isolated cognitive activity but a social process that develops through interaction with others and participation in culturally organized activities (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). In language learning contexts, SCT highlights that communication and interaction play central roles in supporting learners' cognitive and linguistic development (Rahmatirad, 2020).

One of the important concepts in Sociocultural Theory is mediation, which refers to the role of language, interaction, and cultural tools in supporting learning processes (Scott & Palincsar, 2013). In this perspective, language is viewed as a mediational tool that enables learners to construct meaning, regulate thinking, and participate in social communication (Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Rahmatirad, 2020).

Another important concept is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which describes the distance between learners' current ability and their potential development achieved through guidance, collaboration, and interaction with more capable individuals (Nhan, 2020). Through scaffolding and collaborative participation, learners gradually develop understanding, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities within social learning environments (Nhan, 2020). These perspectives indicate that interaction and participation are essential components of learning because learners develop knowledge through communication and collaborative engagement with others (Fahim & Haghani, 2012).

The sociocultural perspective is closely related to oracy pedagogy because oracy develops through interaction, classroom talk, dialogue, and collaborative communication activities. Dialogic teaching, for example, emphasizes that classroom talk should function as a pedagogical tool that supports reasoning, participation, discussion, and collaborative learning (Alexander, 2020). In dialogic learning environments, students are encouraged to exchange ideas, justify opinions, negotiate meaning, and participate actively in social interaction (Yıldırım & Uzun, 2021).

Experimental evidence from ESL primary classrooms shows that sustained dialogic teaching can produce measurable gains in vocabulary and phonological awareness, although the size of these gains differs across learners with different starting levels of proficiency (Chow et al., 2023), a reminder that dialogic approaches are not uniformly effective for all students.

Practitioner-based accounts of dialogic instruction further show that teachers' own beliefs about what counts as legitimate classroom talk strongly shape how dialogic principles are actually enacted, sometimes in ways that diverge from the ideal described in the literature (Cui, 2024). Similarly, the concept of "talk to learn" explains that students develop understanding and higher-order thinking through discussion and collaborative communication processes (Tsai, 2025). Communication and interaction therefore become important pedagogical processes because learners

construct knowledge socially through classroom participation and oral interaction (Barnes & Todd, 1995). These perspectives suggest that oracy pedagogy should not be understood merely as speaking practice but as a sociocultural learning process that develops through communication, participation, and interaction within learning environments, while also depending, as the discussion below will show, on how faithfully these principles are translated into everyday classroom and dormitory practice.

Sociocultural Theory is also relevant to EFL learning because language learning is strongly influenced by interaction and participation in communicative activities. In EFL classrooms, learners develop communicative competence not only through memorization or individual learning but also through interaction with teachers and peers in meaningful communication activities (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). Previous studies explain that collaborative discussion, dialogic interaction, and classroom communication activities can improve students' oral participation, communication skills, and critical thinking (Tsai, 2025; Yıldırım & Uzun, 2021).

In addition, communication-based learning environments allow learners to negotiate meaning, exchange perspectives, and internalize knowledge through social interaction (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). From this perspective, oracy pedagogy in EFL learning can be viewed as a process through which students develop language competence and participation through classroom communication and collaborative interaction.

The sociocultural perspective is particularly relevant to Islamic boarding school, or pesantren, contexts because learning activities in pesantren are strongly shaped by communal participation, communication culture, social interaction, and language discipline among students (Auladi & Bakhtiar, 2024). In many pesantren, English learning is implemented not only through classroom instruction but also through conversation activities, speeches, vocabulary memorization, and language programs in dormitory life (Zuhairati et al., 2022). Some Islamic boarding schools also encourage students to use English and Arabic in daily communication as part of their educational culture and communication discipline (Zuhairati et al., 2022).

These communication practices provide opportunities for students to develop oral participation and communicative competence in both formal and informal learning environments. However, previous studies mainly discuss English programs and language policies in general terms, while limited attention has been given to how oracy pedagogy is implemented through classroom interaction and sociocultural communication practices within pesantren contexts (Auladi & Bakhtiar, 2024; Zuhairati et al., 2022), and to how the religious character of the pesantren interacts with its role as a site of English learning (Sofi & Jenks, 2025).

Based on the theoretical perspectives discussed above, this study conceptualizes oracy pedagogy as a sociocultural and interactional learning process that develops

through classroom talk, collaborative communication, oral participation, and social interaction within Islamic boarding school environments. Sociocultural Theory is used as the main analytical lens for understanding how communication, participation, interaction, and sociocultural practices influence the implementation of oracy pedagogy in EFL learning within pesantren contexts.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between Sociocultural Theory, classroom interaction, communication practices, and oracy pedagogy in EFL learning within Islamic boarding school environments. The framework shows that oracy develops through interaction, mediation, collaborative participation, scaffolding, and classroom communication activities. This study views sociocultural communication practices within pesantren environments as important factors influencing students' oral participation and communicative development in EFL learning.

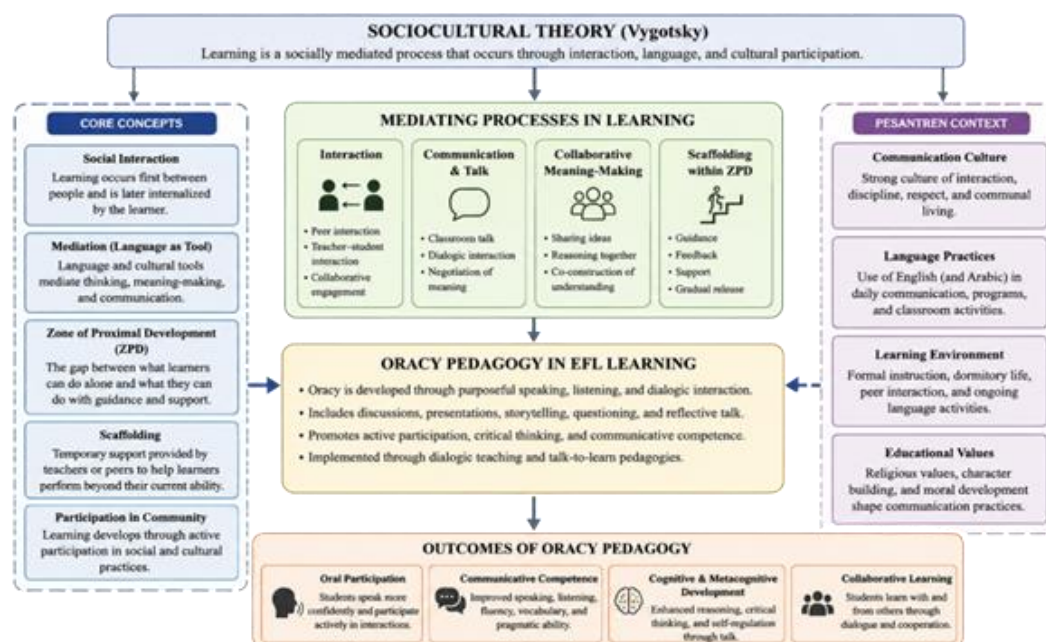


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Oracy Pedagogy in EFL Learning within Islamic Boarding School Contexts (developed from Sociocultural Theory, dialogic teaching, and talk-to-learn perspectives).

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of oracy pedagogy in EFL learning within an Islamic boarding school context. Case study research is commonly used to investigate contemporary phenomena within real-life settings, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). Because this study focused on classroom interaction, oral participation, communication practices, and sociocultural learning processes in pesantren environments, a qualitative case study was considered appropriate for obtaining an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon. Qualitative research also enables researchers to explore participants' experiences, interaction, perceptions, and social practices within natural settings (Akbar, 2026).

The study was conducted at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia that implements English language programs in both classroom learning and dormitory activities. Participants consisted of one English teacher and six students who were actively involved in English learning and communication activities within the pesantren environment. Participants were selected purposefully based on their involvement and experience with oracy practices in EFL learning. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research because it enables researchers to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018).

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Classroom observations examined classroom interaction, students' oral participation, communication practices, and oracy-related learning activities during EFL lessons. Observation is considered an important source of evidence in qualitative case study research because it enables researchers to understand participants' behavior and interaction within natural settings (Yin, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and selected students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to oracy pedagogy and communication practices in the pesantren environment; this method allows researchers to obtain flexible and in-depth information from participants during data collection (Akbar, 2026). In addition, documentation such as learning materials, language program schedules, classroom activities, and communication regulations related to English use in the pesantren environment was collected to support the data obtained from observations and interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative analytical method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data (Christou, 2023). This method was selected because it provides flexibility in interpreting participants' experiences, interaction, and communication practices within specific social contexts (Christou, 2023). The analysis followed several stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final interpretation of the findings (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). During analysis, the researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation to identify meaningful patterns related to classroom interaction, oral participation, communication practices, and sociocultural learning processes within the Islamic boarding school context.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several validation strategies were applied, including triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research because it helps ensure the credibility, consistency, and rigor of research findings (Kakar et al., 2023). Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by confirming several interview results and interpretations with participants to reduce misunderstanding and improve credibility. In addition, prolonged engagement in the research setting enabled the researcher to understand participants' communication practices and sociocultural learning environment more comprehensively. These strategies were applied to maintain the quality and rigor of this qualitative case study.

4. Findings

4.1. The Implementation of Oracy Pedagogy Through Interactive and Scaffolded Learning Activities

The results indicate that oracy pedagogy in the Islamic boarding school was implemented through several interactive speaking and listening exercises designed to improve students' oral communication. Regarding English learning activities, T1 noted that there was one-to-one speaking practice, pair work, group discussion, storytelling, speech activities, English meetings, English debates, and screenings of native-speaker films. The purpose of these activities was to enhance students' linguistic skills by providing opportunities for meaningful communication and active engagement in English learning.

"I often use activities like one-to-one speaking, pair work, group discussion, storytelling, speech, debate, and English meetings." (T1)

T1 further explained that students who still felt uncomfortable speaking in public were encouraged to participate in pair work and small-group interaction before being invited to speak in front of larger audiences. This progressive approach was designed to increase students' confidence and comfort in speaking English. Observation data supported the existence of these activities. The teacher conducted exercises such as self-introductions, practicing brief dialogues, and question-and-answer sessions in the classroom, and offered pronunciation correction and support when students struggled to articulate their opinions.

These findings can be interpreted in terms of Sociocultural Theory, which views learning as a social process mediated by the environment. According to Vygotsky, knowledge and skills are acquired through participation in meaningful social interaction. In this study, speaking activities functioned as mediational means for promoting communicative practice and steady development of students' oral language competence. The teacher's approach of moving students from pair work to

more public speaking activities also exemplifies scaffolding, in that learners were given support suited to their developmental needs.

Students' Oral Participation Was Facilitated through Collaborative Interaction

The results suggest that collaborative engagement was a significant factor in improving students' speaking participation. Both teacher and student data showed that students felt more confident speaking English when engaged in peer-to-peer speaking in pairs or small groups rather than speaking individually in front of the whole class.

"Usually, I start with pairs first, then small groups of shy students, before performing in front of the class." (T1)

"If it's a group discussion, I can ask a friend who understands better." (IS4)

"The group discussion is more exciting, and I dare to speak more." (IS5)

Observations corroborated these statements: students participated more actively during pair work and group discussion than during whole-class engagement. Senior students often assisted less experienced peers with language and classroom tasks, and students who had previously participated in English Camp often helped their friends with communication tasks.

From a sociocultural perspective, collaboration is a form of social mediation through which learning takes place. Learners interact with peers, and through shared engagement they receive help, negotiate meaning, and construct new understanding. The support offered by more experienced students in this study can be understood as peer scaffolding within learners' zones of proximal development. Therefore, beyond improving engagement, collaborative interaction also created opportunities for social learning and communication development within the Islamic boarding school.

4.2. Challenges in Developing Oracy Within the Islamic Boarding School Context

Although a range of speaking exercises was implemented, the data highlighted several problems that influenced students' involvement in oral communication. These obstacles can be grouped into psychological, linguistic, and environmental factors.

The most common barrier was psychological. T1 explained that many students knew the correct answer but lacked the confidence to say it aloud.

"Many students actually know the answer, but they are not confident enough to reveal it." (T1)

The students' comments reflected these concerns:

"I am afraid to speak English because I will make mistakes." (IS3)

"I get nervous a lot when I speak English in front of my friends." (IS4)
"I am afraid that if I say something wrong, they will laugh at me." (IS5)

Observation data confirmed these statements: many students were quiet or hesitated before answering, although around seven students answered the teacher's questions readily. Some students frequently asked for confirmation that their answers were correct before speaking aloud.

In addition to psychological factors, students faced linguistic difficulties. Interviews and classroom observation repeatedly surfaced limited vocabulary, pronunciation challenges, and difficulty with sentence construction; students commonly switched to Bahasa Indonesia when they struggled to communicate in English.

Within Sociocultural Theory, these problems are directly linked to learners' participation in communicative activities. Repeated social engagement and meaningful opportunities for language use build confidence, language growth, and readiness to speak; when learners lack opportunities to participate successfully in communication, fear and hesitation can develop instead. These findings indicate that enhancing students' oracy requires more than linguistic instruction: it also requires supportive learning environments that foster risk-taking and active participation, a point developed further in the Discussion.

4.3. The Role of the Pesantren Environment in Supporting Oracy Development

The data also show that the pesantren setting functioned as both a supportive and a constraining factor for students' oracy development. On one hand, the boarding school offered several programs that provided opportunities to practice English, including vocabulary programs, English speeches, English meetings, English Camp activities, and preparation for English contests.

"English Camp has helped me a lot in improving my speaking skills." (IS2)
"English debate makes me more confident to speak." (IS5)
"The language environment must be supported by all parties, not just students but also teachers and administrators." (T1)

However, evidence from both the teacher and students showed that the use of English in day-to-day communication was inconsistent. Several students explained that although language rules existed, Bahasa Indonesia still dominated daily conversation.

"There are rules, but in practice, English is still seldom used." (IS5)

Observations confirmed this pattern: English was used mainly for classroom activities, while students tended to switch to Bahasa Indonesia when they encountered communication difficulties.

These results are consistent with Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that language learning develops through engagement in social and cultural practices. The effectiveness of oracy pedagogy therefore depends not only on classroom teaching but also on the extent to which learners are embedded in situations that offer authentic opportunities for communication. Although the Islamic boarding school has implemented several initiatives to encourage English communication, greater consistency in language implementation and wider participation of the school community appear necessary to optimize students' oracy development, an issue examined critically in the Discussion below.

5. Discussion

The findings above describe what oracy pedagogy looked like in this pesantren and how students experienced it. This section moves beyond description to interpret those findings critically against recent international scholarship, to identify tensions and gaps that the Findings section leaves unresolved, and to consider the theoretical and methodological limits of the study.

5.1. Interactive Activities Without An Explicit Oracy Framework

The teacher's repertoire of one-to-one speaking, pair work, group discussion, storytelling, and debate maps closely onto activity types recommended in the broader oracy literature (Maxwell et al., 2015; Mercer & Mannion, 2018). Yet the range of activities alone does not establish that oracy, understood as a distinct set of sub-skills including turn-taking, listener support, and reasoned argument, was systematically developed.

Atkins and Heron's (2024) adapted Oracy Skills Framework distinguishes several discrete competencies that foreign language learners need for successful spoken interaction, and argues that these competencies should be made explicit rather than assumed to emerge automatically from any speaking activity. Judged against that framework, the present study's activities were plentiful but undifferentiated: there is no evidence that the teacher targeted particular sub-skills (for example, active listening or negotiating meaning) beyond a general progression from controlled to freer speaking. This raises a critical question the data cannot answer: whether students' oral gains, to the extent they occurred, reflect genuine oracy development or simply increased comfort with a familiar routine of speaking tasks.

5.2. Collaborative Interaction: A Plausible Mechanism, But an Unverified One

The finding that peer collaboration increased students' willingness to speak is consistent with a wide body of dialogic-teaching research. Experimental work with first-grade ESL learners has shown that a structured, sustained dialogic-teaching intervention can produce measurable gains in vocabulary and phonological awareness, although these gains vary depending on learners' starting vocabulary level (Chow et al., 2023).

That study's controlled design allows a causal claim that the present case study cannot make: here, the connection between peer scaffolding and language development rests on students' self-reports of feeling "more daring" to speak and on the researcher's observation of more active participation in small groups, not on any measure of linguistic gain. It remains possible that increased participation in pairs reflects reduced social risk rather than deeper cognitive engagement with the language, a distinction that matters because comfort and competence do not necessarily move together.

Cui's (2024) practitioner-based account of dialogic instruction is a useful caution here: it shows that teachers' own beliefs about what constitutes legitimate classroom talk shape how much genuine negotiation of meaning actually occurs beneath the surface of an apparently interactive lesson. The extent to which T1's collaborative activities involved substantive negotiation of meaning, as opposed to turn-taking around a fixed script, is not something the current data can settle, and future observation using a more fine-grained interactional coding scheme would be needed to distinguish the two.

5.3. Speaking Anxiety as A Persistent, Not Context-Specific, Phenomenon

The psychological barriers reported by students in this study, fear of mistakes, nervousness in front of peers, and fear of ridicule, echo findings from EFL contexts with very different cultural and institutional profiles. Large-sample survey research with Chinese undergraduates has linked English-speaking anxiety to expectancy-value beliefs about language learning rather than to proficiency alone (Chen, 2024), while a study of Saudi undergraduates found that speaking anxiety did not differ significantly by gender but was strongly associated with fear of negative evaluation and insufficient speaking practice (Alamri & Qasem, 2024).

Read together with the present findings, this convergence suggests that the anxiety experienced by pesantren students may be less a distinctive feature of the religious boarding-school environment than a broadly generic feature of EFL speaking pedagogy that happens to surface here as well. This is a more modest claim than the Findings section implies when it frames confidence and fear of mistakes as challenges specific to "developing oracy within the Islamic boarding school context:" the same barriers appear in secular, non-boarding contexts with no comparable religious or communal structure. A genuinely context-specific claim would require comparing pesantren students' anxiety levels with those of EFL learners in non-pesantren Indonesian schools, which this single-site case study cannot do.

It is also notable that recent research has begun testing technology-mediated interventions specifically aimed at lowering speaking anxiety, including AI-mediated conversation practice that improved EFL learners' speaking skills and willingness to communicate relative to face-to-face-only instruction (Fathi et al., 2024), and Intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Assessment approaches that

reduced test-related anxiety and shyness in oral examinations (Elov et al., 2025). Such approaches were entirely absent from the pesantren studied here, where speaking practice occurred exclusively through face-to-face activities. This absence is not necessarily a shortcoming, low-stakes, teacher-mediated peer practice has value that automated tools do not fully replicate, but it does suggest an underexplored avenue: whether low-stakes, private rehearsal opportunities (whether technology-mediated or not) could reduce the fear of public embarrassment that several students in this study associated with speaking in front of peers, without displacing the collaborative, communally embedded practice that the pesantren environment already provides.

5.4. The Pesantren as a Double-Edged Sociocultural Environment: An Implementation Gap, not a Design Flaw

The finding that the pesantren simultaneously supports and constrains oracy development is consistent with recent scholarship showing that EFL integration in Indonesian pesantren is shaped by competing global, religious, and institutional pressures, and that programs must continually be harmonized with the preservation of religious identity rather than pursued as an unconstrained linguistic goal (Sofi & Jenks, 2025). Framed this way, the gap this study documents between formal English programming (English Camp, debate, speeches) and informal daily use (where Bahasa Indonesia still dominates) is not simply a resourcing problem to be solved with more programs. It reflects a structural tension in which English exists alongside, and sometimes in competition with, Arabic and the pesantren's core religious curriculum for students' attention and institutional priority (Sofi & Jenks, 2025).

Sociocultural Theory, as applied in this study, explains why a consistent communicative environment would support oracy, but it offers comparatively little account of why an institution that explicitly values communal participation and language discipline (Auladi & Bakhtiar, 2024; Zuhairati et al., 2022) nonetheless produces inconsistent everyday English use. Answering that question would require examining institutional incentives, curricular time allocation, and the relative status of English versus Arabic within the pesantren's own value system, a set of factors this case study's interview and observation data were not designed to capture, and which mark a clear boundary of what a Vygotskian sociocultural lens alone can explain.

5.5. Theoretical and Methodological Limitations

Sociocultural Theory was used here primarily as an interpretive lens applied after data collection, rather than as a framework whose specific claims (for example, about the ZPD or mediation) were operationalized and tested. This is a common and defensible choice in qualitative case study research, but it means the study demonstrates that the findings are compatible with SCT rather than that SCT uniquely explains them. Alternative explanations, for instance, that increased participation in small groups reflects general social comfort rather than the specific

mechanisms of mediation and scaffolding that SCT proposes, cannot be ruled out with the present data.

The study's scope is also limited by design: a single pesantren, one teacher, and six students constrain the transferability of the findings to other institutions with different management styles, resource levels, or approaches to balancing religious and academic priorities. Data relied substantially on interview self-report and short-term classroom observation, both of which are susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly given that member checking involved confirming interpretations with the same participants who provided the original accounts rather than with an independent source of evidence. Finally, the study did not examine potential moderating variables, such as gender, prior English proficiency, or length of enrollment at the pesantren, that other EFL anxiety research has found to matter (Alamri & Qasem, 2024; Almusharraf & Bailey, 2023); their absence here limits the precision with which the challenges identified in the Findings can be attributed to the pesantren context specifically.

5.6. Implications for Practice and Future Research

Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings point toward several practical directions. First, formalizing the teacher's existing progression from pair work to public speaking around an explicit oracy skills framework (Atkins & Heron, 2024) could help ensure that specific sub-skills, rather than general speaking confidence alone, are being deliberately taught and assessed.

Second, given the gap between programmatic and everyday English use, interventions aimed at oracy development in pesantren settings may need to address institutional language policy and the relative priority given to English at the whole-school level, rather than relying on classroom activities and extracurricular programs alone (Sofi & Jenks, 2025).

Third, low-stakes rehearsal opportunities, whether peer-based or, cautiously, technology-supported (Elov et al., 2025; Fathi et al., 2024), merit exploration as a complement to, not a replacement for, the collaborative, teacher-mediated practice already valued in this setting.

Future research would benefit from comparative, multi-site designs that include pesantren with differing institutional priorities, from mixed-methods approaches that pair interview and observational data with independent measures of oral proficiency, and from explicit attention to gender and proficiency-level differences among students, in order to test rather than assume the sociocultural mechanisms proposed here.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of oracy pedagogy in EFL learning in an Islamic boarding school through the lens of Sociocultural Theory. The findings

show that oracy pedagogy was implemented through a range of interactive and scaffolded speaking activities that encouraged students to engage in meaningful communication, and that collaborative engagement was central to promoting students' oral participation by offering opportunities for peer assistance, discussion, and shared learning experiences. Students nevertheless continued to face challenges in developing their oracy, including low confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and inconsistent opportunities to use English in daily interaction.

The discussion showed that these findings are broadly consistent with, and help extend, recent international scholarship on oracy skills, dialogic teaching, and foreign language speaking anxiety, while also revealing an implementation gap between the pesantren's formal English programming and the inconsistency of everyday English use, a gap that Sociocultural Theory helps describe but cannot fully explain on its own. The results indicate that the learning environment, understood in terms of social contact, involvement, and communication opportunity, meaningfully influences the development of oracy: students' speaking participation evolved through interaction with teachers and peers, collaborative learning activities, and engagement in communicative practices both inside and outside the classroom. At the same time, the study's single-site design, reliance on self-report, and absence of independent proficiency measures mean these conclusions should be read as context-bound findings that invite further testing rather than as generalizable claims.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on oracy pedagogy in EFL contexts by offering empirical evidence from an Islamic boarding school, a setting that has received comparatively little attention in prior research. The results offer practical guidance for English teachers and Islamic boarding schools seeking to build learning environments that foster connection, involvement, and meaningful communication, while underscoring that classroom-level pedagogical innovation alone is unlikely to resolve challenges rooted in institutional language policy and competing curricular priorities. Future research could examine several Islamic boarding schools, involve more participants across different education levels, and incorporate independent measures of oral language development, in order to provide a broader and more rigorously tested account of oracy pedagogy and its implementation in EFL classroom environments.

7. References

- Adem, H., & Berkessa, M. (2022). A case study of EFL teachers' practice of teaching speaking skills vis-à-vis the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2087458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2087458>
- Akbar, M. A. (2026). Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry as a foundation for rigorous research. *IJHS: Indonesia Journal of Health Services*, 3(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.63202/ijhs.v3i1.133>

- Alamri, W., & Qasem, F. (2024). Foreign language speaking anxiety in relation to gender: Students and teachers' perceptions. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2423440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2423440>
- Alexander, R. (2020). *A dialogic teaching companion*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351040143>
- Almusharraf, N., & Bailey, D. R. (2023). Students know best: Modeling the influence of self-reported proficiency, TOEIC scores, gender, and study experience on foreign language anxiety. *SAGE Open*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231179929>
- Atkins, J., & Heron, M. (2024). Oracy skills in a digital environment: What do foreign language undergraduate students need? *The Language Learning Journal*, 52(5), 585–596. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2024.2342339>
- Auladi, I. R., & Bakhtiar, M. R. (2024). Teaching culture at English language learning in pesantren. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 1(2), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.61251/ijoep.v1i2.62>
- Barnes, D., & Todd, F. (1995). *Communication and learning revisited: Making meaning through talk* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140832>
- Chen, Z. (2024). A study of Chinese undergraduate students' English language speaking anxiety, expectancy-value beliefs and spoken English proficiency. *SAGE Open*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231219312>
- Chow, B. W.-Y., Hui, A. N.-N., Li, Z., & Dong, Y. (2023). Dialogic teaching in English-as-a-second-language classroom: Its effects on first graders with different levels of vocabulary knowledge. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(6), 1408–1430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820981399>
- Christou, P. A. (2023). How to use thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*, 3(2), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.4337/jqrt.2023.0006>
- Cui, Y. (2024). Dialogic instruction in a Chinese EFL classroom: A practitioner perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 58(1), 114–137. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3215>
- Dariyanto, D., Farhana, H., Gumala, Y., & Syaodih, E. (2022). An analysis of the English learning process in Islamic elementary boarding schools. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(1), 925–932. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i1.2053>
- Elov, B., Abdullayeva, I., Raupova, L., Kholikov, A., & Mirkasimova, M. (2025). Speaking exams with less anxiety in Intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Assessment (ICALA): Mirroring EFL learners' foreign language anxiety, shyness, autonomy, and enjoyment. *Language Testing in Asia*, 15, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-024-00340-x>
- Fahim, M., & Haghani, M. (2012). Sociocultural perspectives on foreign language learning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(4), 693–699. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.4.693-699>
- Fathi, J., Rahimi, M., & Derakhshan, A. (2024). Improving EFL learners' speaking skills and willingness to communicate via artificial intelligence-mediated

- interactions. *System*, 121, 103254.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103254>
- Fitria, T. N. (2023). Integrating English Language Teaching (ELT) into Islamic boarding schools: A review of strategy and challenges. *Journal of English and Pedagogy (JELPA)*, 1(2), 64–78. <https://doi.org/10.51826/jelpa.v1i2.772>
- Kakar, Z. U. H., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A., & Akhter, S. (2023). Criteria for assessing and ensuring the trustworthiness in qualitative research. *International Journal of Business Reflections*, 4(2), 150–173.
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/yc_pubs/342/
- Kaldahl, A., Bachinger, A., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2019). Oracy matters, introduction to the special issue on oracy. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 19(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2019.19.03.06>
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 9(3), 3351–33514.
<https://doi.org/10.62707/aishej.v9i3.335>
- Maxwell, B., Burnett, C., Reidy, J., Willis, B., & Demack, S. (2015). *Oracy curriculum, culture and assessment toolkit: Evaluation report and Executive summary*. Sheffield Hallam University.
https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/projects/Oracy_Curriculum.pdf?v=1787300783
- Mercer, N., & Mannion, J. (2018). *Oracy across the Welsh curriculum*. Oracy Cambridge.
<https://oracycambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Oracy-across-the-Welsh-curriculum-July-2018.pdf>
- Munawaroh, N., Ijudin, I., Ainissyifa, H., & Fatonah, N. (2022). Revitalization of socio-cultural values in pesantren. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 683–694. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v11i02.4438>
- Nhan, N. Van. (2020). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory: Discussion and pedagogical implications. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 4(5), 294–297. <https://www.ajhssr.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Zj2045294297.pdf>
- Pinto, F. B. (2025). *Towards oracy in higher education: Policy, discourses, practices, and experiences of communication skills in Australian law and medicine courses* [Doctoral dissertation, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, Australia]. <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/31651>
- Putra, F. M., Suryana, E., & Harto, K. (2025). Sociocultural theory in practice: A case study of Islamic education through Pesantren Ramadhan. *IJGIE: International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education*, 6(1), 179–188.
<https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v6i1.3757>
- Rahmatirad, M. (2020). A review of socio-cultural theory. *SIASAT: Journal of Religion, Social, Cultural, and Political Science*, 5(3), 23–31.
<https://doi.org/10.33258/siasat.v5i3.66>

- Saepullah, U. (2021). Cultural communications of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 13(3), 2188-2202. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v13i3.1154>
- Scott, S., & Palincsar, A. S. (2013). Sociocultural Theory. *Education.com*, 1-10 <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:45279957>
- Sofi, M. J., & Jenks, C. J. (2025). EFL learning, religious faith and globalization in Indonesia's pesantren. *World Englishes*, 45(3), 595-612. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.70005>
- Sreelakshmi, V. S., Vijayakumar, S., Ahamedullah, M., & Sathikulameen, A. (2026). Digital inclusivity in EFL oracy development: Implementing the multimodal cognitive oracy model for Arabic learners in online higher education. *IJAZARABI: Journal of Arabic Learning*, 9(2), 648-666. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v9i2.39744>
- Tsai, K. (2025). Fostering 'talk to learn' in an EFL classroom. *Cogent Education*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2516389>
- Ratnadewi, D., Utami, E. A. R., & Yunianti, S. (2020). The language attitude of Islamic boarding school students toward English. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 14(2), 168-175. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v14i2.15898>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage College Publications. <https://www.sagepub.com/shop/buy-a-book/case-study-research-and-applications-6-250150>
- Yıldırım, Ş., & Uzun, Ş. (2021). An overview of dialogic teaching and its impact on learning. *IJETS: International Journal of Education Technology and Science*, 1(2), 135-153. <https://ijets.org/index.php/IJETS/article/view/11>
- Zuhairati, U., Muslem, A., & Fitrisia, D. (2022). An analysis of English language used in daily communication by students of Dayah or Islamic boarding school. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*, 13(1), 56-77. <https://doi.org/10.24815/eej.v13i1.23112>