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Implementation of a System of Levels and Symbolic Punishments by The Language Department in Developing Arabic Language Discipline Among Students at Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This research describes the leveled punishment and symbolic sanctions applied by the language department at Madrasatul Muallimat al-Islamiyah Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School in Balung Jember. It employed the qualitative approach and a case study design. Data collected through observation, interviews and documentations, analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings revealed three main results. First, the Language Department implements a leveled punishment system with three categories: minor (1–3 times), moderate (4–6 times), and severe (more 6 times or using a local language). Second, symbolic sanctions include a necklace bearing" *God bless you*"for moderate offenders and a red hijab for severe offenders. Third, the monitoring system is collective, involving the language department and other student organization members. The novelty lies in the accumulation of violations from the start of the language department, the combination of symbolic sanctions displayed in public, and the cross-organizational collective monitoring. This study contributes to developing Arabic teaching strategies, particularly implementing a structured and socially charged punishment system in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Article Information

Keywords:
Penerapan Hukuman Bahasa, Bagian Bahasa,Kedisiplinan Berbahasa (atau Disiplin Bahasa)

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan sistem hukuman bertingkat dan sanksi simbolis yang diterapkan oleh Bagian Bahasa di Madrasatul Muallimat al-Islamiyah, Pondok Pesantren Baitul Arqom, Balung, Jember. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga temuan utama. Pertama, Bagian Bahasa menerapkan sistem hukuman bertingkat dengan tiga kategori pelanggaran: pelanggaran ringan (1–3 kali), pelanggaran sedang (4–6 kali), dan pelanggaran berat (lebih dari 6 kali atau penggunaan bahasa daerah). Kedua, sanksi yang diterapkan bersifat simbolis, yaitu *kokat* (kalung karton bertuliskan "المتجوّزات قسم إحياء اللغة") untuk pelanggar tingkat sedang dan jilbab merah untuk pelanggar tingkat berat. Ketiga, sistem pengawasan kolektif melibatkan Bagian Bahasa dan pengurus organisasi santri lainnya. Kebaruan (*novelty*) dari penelitian ini terletak pada akumulasi pelanggaran sejak awal masa jabatan, kombinasi sanksi simbolis yang dikenakan di depan umum, serta sistem pengawasan kolektif lintas organisasi. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab, khususnya melalui penerapan sistem hukuman yang terstruktur dan bermuatan sosial di lingkungan pondok pesantren.

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1. Introduction

As Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a strategic role in teaching Arabic. Various pesantren strive to foster Arabic communication habits through rules for language use in everyday life. However, these rules are not always followed by consistent adherence.(Mulyani, 2020)noted that some students viewed punishment as a burden, rather than as part of the development process. This finding needs to be understood specifically within the context of the study and should not be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools. At the same time, discipline is an attitude that can be influenced by the environment and the development patterns implemented.(Bahtiar et al., 2023)Therefore, the implementation of language rules needs to be examined along with the accompanying oversight mechanisms and consequences, including how these consequences are designed to remain proportional and development-oriented.

Previous research has contributed to understanding various aspects of Arabic language teaching in Islamic boarding schools. Podungge and Habibie found that the language department plays a crucial role in supervising and training Arabic and English speaking skills.(Podungge & Habibie, 2022). Humaedi and Uyuni show that the musyrif not only plays the role of teacher but also as supervisor and role model in speaking.(Humaedi & Uyuni, 2025). Efendi, Muttaqien, and Khumairotuzzahra proved that a systematically structured language environment has a positive impact on the fluency and motivation of students.(Efendi et al., 2025). Lutfiani, Sanah, and Nugraha also emphasized that a language environment strategy based on a communicative approach is effective in developing language skills.(Lutfiani et al., 2025).

Based on previous research referenced in this article, several studies have discussed language activities, the role of administrators or language departments in supervision, language environment management, and communicative strategies for improving language skills. These studies provide a foundation for understanding the importance of language environment management, but not all of them explain in detail the internal mechanisms of tiered punishments implemented by the Language Department, specifically the criteria for violation levels, the accumulation of violations, the use of symbolic sanctions, and the involvement of cross-organizational administrators in supervision. Therefore, this research gap is not intended to imply that these aspects have never been studied at all, but rather that the combination of these mechanisms still needs to be explained through contextual studies in Islamic boarding schools.

This research is important because language acquisition takes place through the interaction between rules, supervision, and everyday communication practices.(Mulyani, 2020)Specifically, it shows that some students view punishment as a burden. This finding serves as a reason to examine how the sanction system is implemented, not a basis for concluding that all forms of punishment are always effective. At the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School, the Language Section is tasked with maintaining discipline and consistent use of Arabic in daily communication. Based on the researcher's initial observations, this Islamic boarding school implements a language punishment system with different categories of violations and forms of sanctions. This condition makes the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School relevant to study, especially to understand how the system works and the involvement of parties who support language supervision.

Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze the tiered punishment system and symbolic sanctions implemented by the Language Section at Madrasatul Muallimat al-Islamiyah, Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School, Balung, Jember, and to explain how this system relates to efforts to establish Arabic language discipline among female students. The specific contribution of this study lies in the description of (1) the gradation of violations and their accumulation, (2) the use of kokat and red headscarves as symbolic sanctions, and (3) collective supervision involving the administrators of student organizations. This novelty is limited to the combination of mechanisms found in the research context, not to the statement that each form of sanction has never been used in other Islamic boarding schools.

2. Research Methods

This research focuses on the tiered punishment system and symbolic sanctions implemented by the Language Section at the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School in Balung, Jember. This Islamic boarding school was chosen because it has a more structured and tiered Arabic-language punishment system, particularly in terms of the level of violation (minor, moderate, and severe) and the form of sanctions that have a socio-psychological content.

This research uses a qualitative approach. The aim of using this approach is to gain a more complete and in-depth understanding of the problem being studied.(Riasnugrahani & Analya, 2023)This research is a case study. This type of research allows researchers to more easily obtain clear and detailed information. Researchers can observe how the punishment policy is implemented in real-life situations and how the Language Section maintains a tiered punishment system and symbolic sanctions to ensure effective and sustainable implementation in fostering Arabic language discipline among students.

In this research, the researcher determines the data source that is considered to understand the data needed in the research, also known as the purposive sampling technique.(Sugiyono, 2024). The criteria for selecting informants are: (1) directly involved in the planning, implementation, and supervision of the language punishment system in Islamic boarding schools; (2) directly involved in the practice and activities of supervising language discipline; (3) having in-depth knowledge of the mechanisms of levels of violations and the forms of sanctions applied. The data sources in this study consisted of: the head of the Language Section, the administrators of the Language Section, the administrators of the rayon or dormitory and several female students.

Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe: (1) how the activities of female students in the Islamic boarding school relate to compliance with Arabic language, (2) how female students communicate using Arabic in daily conversations, (3) how the form of direct implementation of the established tiered punishment system, including when female students violate the rules at light, moderate, or severe levels; (4) how the Language Section supervises and enforces language discipline in the Islamic boarding school; and (5) how forms of symbolic sanctions (such as special attributes for violators) are applied in front of other students.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they

allow researchers to gather information more easily and flexibly, while remaining within the context of the research questions. With semi-structured interviews, the data obtained not only describe what the Language Section does in implementing tiered punishments, but also reveal the reasons, considerations, challenges, and perceived effectiveness of implementing the symbolic sanction system. Documentation complements the field data through official documents, such as: the Language Section's organizational structure, the Language Section's work program related to language discipline, a schedule of supervision activities, a list of types of violations and forms of sanctions (gradations of mild-moderate-severe), student violation logs, and photographs of supervision activities and the forms of symbolic sanctions applied.

The collected data was analyzed using Miles and Huberman analysis, and there were three stages after completing the data collection, namely data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions.(Mardawani, 2020). In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected key information related to the tiered punishment system, the gradation of violations (minor, moderate, severe), the form of symbolic sanctions, and the internal dynamics of the Language Section in enforcing language discipline. Data that was not relevant to the focus of the research was set aside. Then, the obtained data was compiled and presented in the form of a brief and clear description to facilitate the researcher in determining the next step, namely concluding the data obtained. In the conclusion-drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the presented data to find meaning and answer the research objectives. Conclusions were drawn gradually, starting from initial findings until a complete final conclusion was obtained regarding how the Language Section plays a role through the tiered punishment system and symbolic sanctions in shaping the Arabic language discipline of students.

3. Research Result

This study uncovered three key findings related to the tiered punishment system and symbolic sanctions implemented by the Language Section at the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School in Balung, Jember. First, the Language Section implemented a tiered punishment system with three levels of violations: minor (1-3 violations), moderate (4-6 violations), and severe (more than 6 violations or using the regional language). Second, the sanctions applied were symbolic, namely a kokat (a cardboard necklace with the inscription "God bless you") for moderate offenders and a red veil for serious offenders, which is worn in public. Third, the monitoring system is not carried out solely by the Language Section, but involves other student organization administrators, so that language discipline becomes a collective responsibility within the boarding school environment.

Tiered Penalty System

The research findings indicate that the Language Section is fully responsible for ensuring that female students use Arabic in their daily communication, especially within the Islamic boarding school. Interviews with the Head of the Language Section revealed that the section has a rule requiring female students to alternately master two foreign languages (Arabic and English). During Arabic language week, all female students are required to use Arabic and are prohibited from speaking anything other than Arabic. Conversely, during English language week, they are required to use English. This rule applies in all outdoor areas, while inside classrooms or rooms, female students are permitted to use Indonesian, provided they do not use it loudly. The researchers' observations demonstrate that female students consistently use Arabic when communicating with their peers, even without direct supervision from the Language Section. The uniqueness of the punishment system at this Islamic boarding school lies in the clear levels of violations. As shown in Table 1, the level of violation is determined based on the frequency of violations accumulated since the beginning of the Language Section's term, rather than being reset weekly or monthly.

Table 1. Gradation of Violations and Sanctions by Language Section

No	Type of Offender	Criteria	Sanctions
1	Minor Offenders	Violating language rules 1-3 times	Writing vocabulary, making sentences and memorizing them
2	Moderate Offender	Violating language rules 4-6 times	Wearing a necklace (a cardboard necklace with the words " God bless you"), writing vocabulary, making sentences and memorizing them
3	Serious Offenders	Violating language rules more than 6 times and violating language rules by speaking in regional languages (Javanese/Madurese)	Wearing a red veil, writing vocabulary, making sentences and memorizing them

Grouping violations into levels allows the Language Department to differentiate consequences based on the frequency and type of violation. However, the data in this study are insufficient to conclude that all female students respond to sanctions in the same way or that these sanctions directly lead to improved language skills.(Orji et al., 2024)explains that consequences in the form of rewards or punishments can motivate or demotivate, depending on the mechanism and context of their application. Therefore, the findings at Baitul Arqom are more accurately understood as a depiction of a disciplinary system that regulates the consequences of violations. The educational goals of this system need to be assessed based on how it is implemented, the proportionality of sanctions, and its relationship to the habituation of Arabic language use.(Dwi Jayanti, 2022)explain the purpose of having The purpose of giving punishment is to discipline and change negative student behavior into positive behavior so that students develop responsible and disciplined traits.

Language discipline often weakens when there is no specific supervision, so Islamic boarding schools require structured language instruments and clear and firm language

discipline. As found in research on the implementation of language environments, a planned and sustainable environment has proven crucial in building effective language habits, as input and intensity influence students' communicative abilities.(Hamid et al., 2024)This statement is in accordance with the researcher's observations, which show that female students always use Arabic when communicating with their friends.

This finding is similar to previous research on the role of the Language Section in language supervision and discipline. However, it also differs from previous research, which generally only reported single punishments without levels. For example, Podungge and Habibie's study only stated that the Language Section imposed sanctions in the form of writing and memorization without differentiating the level of violation.(Podungge & Habibie, 2022)Likewise, the results of Agni and Hermawan's research show that the implementation of punishment is not effective, so an evaluation is needed, and they also do not discuss in detail what punishments are applied.(Agae Agni & Hermawan, 2025). Thus, the violation grading system implemented at Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School is a novelty that has not been widely discussed in the literature.

Symbolic Sanctions as a Teaching Strategy

The second most significant finding in this study is the existence of symbolic sanctions in the form of a kokat (a cardboard necklace with the words "God bless you ") for moderate violators and a red veil for serious violators. Based on interviews with the language section, this sanction is imposed wherever the violators are, except when at school. The sanction lasts for the duration of the female students' punishment of writing, making sentences, and memorizing vocabulary. After completing and submitting the memorization to the Language Section, the symbolic sanction can be removed. Researchers also found a notice board used to write a list of language violators as additional social control. This symbolic sanction has a dual function: (1) as a psychological punishment because it causes shame in front of peers, and (2) as a visual reminder for other students not to commit similar violations.

Clear rules and sanctions make female students more cautious in their communication and gradually develop the habit of using Arabic in everyday interactions. In her research, Milner explains that the practice of punishment in education, including that carried out by teachers, tends to marginalize students and separate them from meaningful learning experiences.(Milner, 2025)However, the findings of this study indicate that in the context of Islamic boarding schools, the sanction system actually functions the opposite: connecting students with the goals of learning Arabic, building language awareness, and accustoming them to actively communicating in Arabic. This difference suggests that the effectiveness of punishment depends heavily on the context, design, and pedagogical objectives, not solely on the presence or absence of punishment. When female students are in an environment that demands the consistent use of Arabic with clear consistency, their language behavior shifts from being merely a task to a habit. Because sanctions are consistently applied, they help enforce discipline more effectively, as students understand that every action has consequences.(Hakim et al., 2024).

The difference from previous research lies in the accumulation of violations. In this Islamic boarding school, the number of violations is counted from the beginning of the Language Department's term, rather than resetting weekly or monthly. This system encourages female students to be more disciplined, as even minor violations accumulate to more serious levels. In contrast, in Siregar's research on linguistic punishment practices in traditional Islamic boarding schools, punishments tended to be given incidentally without a structured accumulation system.(Siregar, 2025).

Collective Supervision System

The third finding indicates that the Language Section does not conduct independent supervision. Although the language section does conduct rounds to monitor female students' language use at unspecified times (not formally scheduled), they are also assisted by other student organization administrators, such as dormitory administrators and the chairperson of the female student organization at the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School (OSBA). Interviews revealed that each organization administrator is required to maintain Arabic communication to support the language discipline program.

by administrators of other student organizations, such as dormitory administrators and the general chairperson of the female students' organization at the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School (OSBA). Based on interviews, each organization administrator is required to continue using Arabic when communicating to support the language discipline program.

These findings indicate that language discipline at Baitul Arqom is not solely monitored by the Language Section. Dormitory administrators, the OSBA head, and other female student organization administrators also support supervision and are expected to be role models in Arabic language use. This finding aligns with the findings of(Humaedi & Uyuni, 2025), that the musyrif (administrators) are not only teachers but also supervisors and role models. The contextual contribution of this research is to show that supervision occurs collectively across organizations. However, the available data do not yet measure the relative contributions of each party, so their involvement is explained as a pattern of coordination found, not as evidence that all parties exert equal influence on language discipline.

Theoretically, this study adds to the empirical description of Arabic language discipline management in Islamic boarding schools through three interrelated aspects: the gradation of violations, symbolic sanctions, and collective supervision. Practically, these findings can be used as considerations for Islamic boarding schools seeking to establish clearer language regulations while adapting policies to their respective contexts. If a similar mechanism is to be adapted, several things that need to be considered are clarity of violation criteria, consistency of recording, proportionality of consequences, involvement of administrators, and evaluation of its impact on students. Because this research is a case study in a single location, the results cannot be directly generalized as a model that will be effective in all Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, the application of symbolic sanctions in public spaces needs to be ethically evaluated to ensure that the goal of development does not become an act that humiliates or demeans students.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion, this study concludes three main points. First, Qismu al-Lughah at the Baitul Arqom Islamic Boarding School in Balung, Jember, implements a tiered punishment system with three levels of violation: minor (1-3 times), moderate (4-6 times), and severe (more than 6 times or using the local language). Second, the form of sanctions applied is symbolic, namely a kokat (a cardboard necklace with the inscription "God willing") for moderate violators and red headscarves for serious violators. Third, the supervision system is carried out collectively involving the Language Section and other santri organization administrators. These three findings directly answer the research objective which is to describe the mechanism of gradation of violations and symbolic sanctions in forming the discipline of Arabic language among santri.

This study's unique contribution lies in its presentation of three elements found to coexist in a single Islamic boarding school context: the accumulation of violations since the beginning of the Language Section's tenure, the use of two forms of symbolic sanctions at different levels of violation, and cross-organizational oversight. Based on the studies referenced in this article, this combination provides a contextual perspective on language disciplinary practices. This statement is not intended to claim that such mechanisms have never existed elsewhere, but rather to emphasize the aspects that are the focus and descriptive contribution of this study. Application to other Islamic boarding schools requires consideration of the characteristics of the institution, the goals of development, and the protection of the dignity and well-being of students.

This study has limitations because it was conducted at a single location using a qualitative approach, so its findings are not intended to be statistically generalized. It also did not quantitatively measure changes in Arabic language ability before and after the implementation of sanctions, so a causal relationship cannot be established. Future research could compare the implementation of disciplinary systems in several Islamic boarding schools, explore students' experiences of symbolic sanctions, and use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to more measurably assess the relationship between rules, supervision, motivation, and language practices.

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