

## Navigating Foreign Language Anxiety within Multilingual Learning Environments in the Digital Age: Insights from Students in an Indonesian Pesantren

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### Abstract

Although increasing attention has been given to foreign language anxiety (FLA) in conventional classroom settings, limited research has explored how students in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) navigate multilingualism and manage FLA in digitally mediated learning contexts. This study addressed this gap by investigating how students in an Indonesian pesantren experience and respond to FLA while engaging in public speaking and English language learning in multilingual environments shaped by religious values and digital technologies. Using a qualitative case study design, data were gathered from seven participants through online observations and semi-structured interviews. Guided by sociocultural theory, thematic analysis was employed to investigate how learners manage anxiety and develop language competence. Moreover, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was employed to examine students' perceptions of digital tools, focusing on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which influence how learners engage with technology to support language learning and manage anxiety. Findings reveal that structured preparation, spiritual practices, and digital self-study collectively reduce anxiety and foster confidence. Furthermore, the pesantren setting—featuring bilingual systems, peer collaboration, and teacher support significantly contributes to meaningful language learning. In addition, digital technologies enhance vocabulary acquisition when used both ethically and intentionally. The study offers new insights into the complex intersection of faith, technology, and foreign language learning within Islamic educational settings.

**Keywords:** *Digital Learning, Foreign Language Anxiety, Multilingualism, Pesantren, Sociocultural Theory*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism is a notable feature of contemporary societies enhanced by globalization, transnational migration, and the increasing mobility of knowledge. As Aronin and Singleton (2008) elaborate in their notion of the “new linguistic dispensation,” the relationship between language and society has experienced significant changes, with multilingual practices now constituting a norm rather than an exception in many educational and social settings. In this context, languages are not merely tools for interpersonal communication; they also provide resources for socio-economic mobility and are cultural assets for maintaining local identities (Bin-Tahir et al., 2017; X. Chen et al.,

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2020). Conceptualizing language as an instrument underscores its communicative and utilitarian functions; as a resource, it points to its economic and political capital; and as a cultural asset, it highlights the importance of linguistic diversity in resisting the homogenizing effects of global languages such as English (Zein, 2019). This tripartite framing is particularly relevant in multilingual educational ecologies where competing ideologies of language policy, pedagogy, and identity intersect.

The research on multilingualism acknowledges its dual dimensions that are societal and individual (Clyne, 1997). At the societal level, multilingualism refers to the coexistence of multiple languages within a community or nation, often strengthened by historical, cultural, and political dimensions. At the individual level, it highlights the ability to communicate in more than two languages to varying degrees of proficiency (Ndiribe & Aboh, 2022). While distinctions are often drawn between bilingualism and multilingualism, where the former refers to competence in two languages and the latter to three or more (de Zarobe & de Zarobe, 2015). The boundary between the two is increasingly blurred, with some scholars treating bilingualism as a subset of multilingualism (Aronin & Singleton, 2008). These debates reveal that multilingualism is not a fixed state but a dynamic practice fostered by sociocultural, ideological, and educational contexts (Heugh & Stroud, 2019). Such a perspective is meaningful for comprehending multilingual learning environments in faith-based institutions, where languages are not only educational tools but also markers of religious and cultural affiliation.

However, multilingualism often co-occurs with challenges in language learning, one of which is foreign language anxiety (FLA). FLA is a multifaceted affective response influenced by individual dispositions, situational contexts, and broader socio-educational conditions (Dewaele, 2007). Particularly, it is apparent in oral communication and performance-based tasks such as public speaking, where the fear of negative evaluation and perceived linguistic inadequacy heighten anxiety. Research has demonstrated that positive attitudes toward the target language are related to lower FLA, whereas negative experiences can inhibit participation and hinder language development (Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele, 2007). This highlights the importance of studying FLA not merely as an individual psychological trait but as a socially and culturally mediated phenomenon.

The rise of digital technologies has integrated another layer of complexity to language learning and the experience of FLA. Digital tools such as online dictionaries and automated translators, language learning apps, video-sharing platforms, and virtual discussion forums provide opportunities for personalized, self-paced learning and exposure to authentic language use (Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009; Subair et al., 2024). Nevertheless, they also reshape how students interact with peers, teachers, and target language communities, thereby influencing their motivation, confidence, and anxiety levels. While much of the existing literature on FLA has focused on traditional classroom

contexts, studies emphasize the potential of digital mediation to reduce anxiety by supporting preparation and rehearsal, providing private practice spaces, and facilitating multimodal learning.

The interconnection of multilingualism, FLA, and digital learning takes on distinctive significance in Indonesia's pesantren. In this modern era, pesantren represent a unique multilingual ecology: Arabic serves as the primary language for religious instruction and classical texts; Indonesian functions as the national lingua franca for secular subjects and daily communication; Javanese remains an important regional language for cultural and social interaction; and English has been increasingly promoted as a global language for academic and professional advancement. Furthermore, this linguistic formation is enhanced by pesantren's distinctive ethos, which underscores discipline, collective living, and spiritual practices (Bin-Tahir et al., 2017). Although pesantren are central to Indonesia's educational landscape and play a key role in shaping students' linguistic repertoires, their multilingual dynamics and students' affective experiences of learning foreign languages, particularly in learning English, which remains underexplored in applied linguistics research.

Previous studies on multilingualism and foreign language anxiety (FLA) have predominantly focused on conventional educational settings (Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele, 2007), often in Western contexts where religion plays little or no explicit role in language learning. Research in Indonesia has examined multilingual practices in pesantren, showing that these schools employ a simultaneous-sequential instructional model guiding students from monolingualism to multilingual competence (Bin-Tahir et al., 2017), that multilingualism fosters linguistic competence and religious moderation through respect for local languages, tolerance, and national commitment (Subair et al., 2024), and that teaching occurs via a combination of approaches such as immersion, transitional, dual-language, and pullout through teacher-student interactions, peer communication, daily routines, and language-group activities (Chou, 2018; Galante, 2018; Tahir, 2017). However, few studies have explored how the integration of digital technologies interacts with the pesantren's bilingual and faith-based traditions to shape students' language learning experiences and FLA. Consequently, there is limited understanding about how pesantren students navigate the affective challenges of learning. Without understanding the emotional challenges, students faced such as language anxiety, shyness, or lack of self-confidence teachers and policymakers may design learning strategies that are inappropriate for their psychosocial needs. Furthermore, students experiencing affective barriers may not demonstrate their full English language skills. This lack of awareness can lead us to misjudge their abilities as low, when in fact they simply do not feel safe or comfortable learning and communicating within an environment that blends religious discipline, communal peer learning, and increasingly digitalized pedagogies.

The present study addresses this lacuna by investigating how students in Indonesian pesantren experience and respond to FLA in digitally mediated multilingual learning

environments. It contributes in three interrelated ways. First, it highlights a faith-based educational context that has been largely overlooked in global discussions on multilingualism and FLA, showing how local sociocultural and religious practices shape students' linguistic identities and affective experiences. Second, it explores the role of digital technologies in influencing anxiety in this distinctive setting, demonstrating how students use appropriate digital tools for preparation, rehearsal, and vocabulary development in ways aligned with religious values and institutional norms. Third, it extends sociocultural perspectives on language learning by examining how structured preparation, spiritual practices, and digital self-study collectively mediate students' affective responses and communicative competence. These contributions guide the study's focus on two key research questions:

- a. How do students in Indonesian pesantren experience and manage foreign language anxiety within digitally mediated multilingual learning environments shaped by religious values?
- b. In what ways do digital technologies and the pesantren's multilingual context facilitate students' navigation of multilingualism and contribute to reducing foreign language anxiety?

By critically engaging with these intersections, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how multilingualism, FLA, and digital mediation unfold in non-Western, faith-based contexts. It challenges the implicit assumption in much of the FLA literature that language learning anxiety is a universal phenomenon divorced from local ideologies, institutional traditions, and religious practices. Moreover, it promotes insights into how the evolving role of English in Indonesia intersects with the long-standing bilingualism of Arabic and Indonesian in pesantren, offering a new lens on the affective dimensions of language learning in multilingual ecologies shaped by both globalization and faith.

## **2. METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The present study anchored in a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how students in Indonesian pesantren experience and respond to foreign language anxiety (FLA) in digitally mediated multilingual learning environments shaped by religious values. A case study approach was appropriate as it allowed for the exploration of complex, context-dependent phenomena specifically, the interaction between faith-based educational practices, multilingual language learning, and digital technology. Regarding the theoretical framework, this study was guided by sociocultural theory proposed by (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that learning is socially mediated and shaped by the interplay of cultural tools, institutional norms, and interpersonal interactions. Within this perspective, digital technologies are understood as mediational tools that support or constrain language learning and influence students' affective experiences, including foreign language anxiety (FLA). This lens informed the

development of the interview guidelines and the thematic analysis, allowing the study to explore how students' engagement with digital tools such as for preparation, rehearsal, and vocabulary development interacts with the pesantren's multilingual traditions, religious values, and peer collaboration to shape their language learning experiences.

### Research Contexts and Participants

The study was conducted in a pesantren located in Central Java, Indonesia, that implements a multilingual system, with Indonesian as the national language, Arabic for religious studies, English as a foreign language, and local languages such as Javanese and Madurese for daily social interaction. Seven students (six female and one male) were purposively selected based on their active participation in English public speaking activities and their regular engagement with digital tools for language learning. All participants had experience navigating the pesantren's faith-oriented environment alongside multilingual language learning in increasingly digitalized classrooms. The recruitment of student participants was based on the following criteria: (1) active participation in English public speaking and other language learning activities at the pesantren, (2) regular engagement with digital tools or platforms to support their multilingual learning (Indonesian, Arabic, English, as well as local languages such as Javanese and Madurese), and (3) willingness and ability to share their experiences in managing foreign language anxiety and navigating multilingual practices in a faith-oriented, digitally mediated environment. For the sake of clarity, the profiles of the participants (English language teachers and students) were illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Profile of Students in Pesantren

Participant	Sex	Age (years)	Learning experiences in Pesantren (years)
S1	Female	16	4
S2	Female	16	4
S3	Female	16	4
S4	Female	21	6
S5	Female	22	1
S6	Female	20	1
S7	Male	20	4

### Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations, designed to elicit in-depth insights into students' perspectives and lived experiences in navigating multilingualism and foreign language anxiety (FLA) in the digital age within Indonesian pesantren. This qualitative approach enabled the researchers to examine the complex and context-specific dimensions of how digital technologies mediate language learning and anxiety management in faith-based institutions. The interviews were conducted from August 10 to 15, 2025, via video conferencing platforms to accommodate students' availability and ensure accessibility across geographically dispersed pesantren. To further clarify responses and probe emerging themes, follow-up communication was carried out through video calls and WhatsApp. Observations focused on how students engaged with

digital tools in daily communication and extracurricular public speaking sessions, documenting their strategies for navigating multilingual interactions and alleviating FLA in the pesantren context.

To support coherence while allowing depth and flexibility in responses, the interview process was guided by a structured interview guideline consisting of a structured set of open-ended questions informed by both a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). The sociocultural lens underscores how students' multilingual development and management of foreign language anxiety (FLA) are strengthened through social interactions, mediated by friends, teachers, and digital tools within their culturally situated learning environment. TAM complements this perspective by emphasizing participants' perceptions of technology, particularly two key constructs: perceived usefulness (the extent to which students believe digital tools enhance their language learning and reduce FLA) and perceived ease of use (the extent to which technology is perceived as accessible and effort-free). The questions were developed to capture students' experiences, challenges, strategies, and reflections on the pedagogical and institutional impacts of digital tools in English language teaching. By integrating both frameworks, the interviews allowed for a balance between thematic focus, participant-driven narratives, and the exploration of how technological and social mediation jointly influence multilingual practices and anxiety management.

To maintain ethical conduct, formal permission was received from the head of pesantren and English teachers before recruiting students. This procedure acknowledged the institutional authority of pesantren leaders and respected the community's norms for research engagement. To maintain the trustworthiness of the data, multiple quality assurance strategies were used. Member checking was done, inviting participants to review and verify their interview transcripts to enhance accuracy and authenticity, thereby reinforcing credibility (Athens, 2010). Triangulation was also conducted by comparing data across participants to identify consistent patterns and themes, strengthening the coherence and dependability of the findings. In line with ethical considerations, ethical approval was obtained from the affiliated university's research committee, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Additionally, participants' identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) within an integrated framework of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). The sociocultural perspective highlights the role of social, cultural, and technological facilitations in fostering students' affective experiences and language development, while TAM underscores perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key factors of students' engagement with digital tools. These integrated perspectives offer us to investigate not only the affective and cognitive aspects of multilingual learning and FLA but also how students' adoption of technology was mediated by institutional culture, religious values, and peer and teacher communication.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach including (1) familiarizing ourselves with the data through repeated readings of interview transcripts and observation notes, (2) generating initial codes by classifying salient and relevant excerpts, (3) organizing these codes into preliminary themes reflecting recurring patterns, (4) reviewing and improving the themes to maintain coherence with both theoretical frameworks, (5) defining and naming each theme to capture its essential meaning, and (6) integrating the

themes into a cohesive analytical narrative enhanced by excerpts. This approach showcased how structured preparation, spiritual practices, and digital self-study facilitated students' experiences of FLA and fostered multilingual competence. Further, the combined use of sociocultural theory and TAM demonstrated how students' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of digital tools were shaped by the pesantren's religious values, thereby influencing how technology was adopted to enhance language learning and anxiety management.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Students' Experiences and Management of Foreign Language Anxiety in Multilingual Contexts**

The students' experiences in an Indonesian pesantren highlight that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is not just a psychological experience, but one that is linguistically, culturally and socially integrated into the pesantren, particularly in a multilingual and religiously oriented environment. Based on the interviews and observations, participants reported that learning English alongside Arabic and local languages, such as Javanese and Madurese, in the pesantren context offers both challenges and emotional benefits. In this matter, anxiety could emerge from the demand to communicate in English during public speaking tasks, online presentations, and daily multilingual interactions with peers and teachers. The shift to technology-enhanced learning such as the use of video-conferencing platforms and online assessment tools further heightened these feelings by reinforcing the perception of being monitored. As reported by S3 regarding the combined demands of multilingual engagement and digital immersion.

“I got nervous when I spoke English in front of my friends during public speaking classes. Somehow, I was familiar with the word in Arabic but not in English, and I worried that my friends would laugh at me” (S3).

Observation data corroborated these experiences. In this case, students often hesitated before responding in English during classroom interactions and were noticeably more self-conscious when required to present via video or other media. In the same vein, S5 emphasized the accumulated tension linked to presenting in virtual contexts such as such as recorded video assignments, YouTube-based presentations, and Zoom presentations.

“When we had to present our speech on Zoom, my hands were shaking. I thought about my pronunciation and worried that my friends would hear my mistakes more clearly online.” (S 5)

The data emphasize that what is significantly different in the pesantren context is the manner in which students' strategies for managing anxiety are closely enhanced by the pesantren's faith-based principles and its unique multilingual community. Unlike conventional approaches that mainly emphasize academic preparation, students' coping mechanisms cover a broader spectrum of practices. These include faith-based rituals and reflections through daily prayers, spiritual readings, and meditation practices that help students manage anxiety, collaborative learning with friends, and ethically guided interaction with digital tools and online platforms. Such strategies demonstrate how the pesantren incorporates spiritual, social, and technological aspects, offering students to manage language anxiety in ways that are both culturally grounded and pedagogically effective.

In more detail, the strategies of managing foreign language anxiety in the pesantren context include structured preparation, peer collaboration and collaborative learning, and ethical and intentional digital engagement. These strategies are considerably helpful for students in managing their foreign language anxiety. As asserted by students in the excerpts below.

“Before I give a speech, I write it down and practice again and again in front of the mirror. Practicing makes me feel calmer and less afraid.” (S2)

“Before presenting, I usually pray and read a short surah. It makes me feel calmer and reminds me that doing my best is part of worship.” (S1)

“We often practice together in the dormitory. If I make mistakes, my friends help me fix them. I feel more confident because I know I’m not alone.” (S4)

“I use a vocabulary app on my phone to prepare for speeches. It helps me find the right words and makes me feel more ready. I try to use it wisely so I don’t get distracted.” (S6)

The data above underscore that, in terms of structured preparation as a practical strategy, students persistently highlight the urgency of structured preparation in managing anxiety. This can be done by creating speech drafts, rehearsing in front of friends or mirrors, and utilizing digital tools to foster English pronunciation. A defining aspect of the pesantren context is the role of spiritual practices in managing FLA. Students often turned to prayer and Qur’anic recitation as sources of emotional stability and self-confidence. This integration of religious practice with multilingual learning underscores the sociocultural specificity of pesantren students’ experiences. Moreover, the pesantren’s culture of communal learning and peer support also reduced students’ anxiety. In this sense, practicing with friends across multiple languages shaped a non-threatening and collaborative community. In addition, dealing with ethical and intentional digital engagement, digital technologies initially posed challenges but became powerful resources for self-paced learning, vocabulary development, and rehearsal when used intentionally and in alignment with pesantren values.

These findings underscore the interconnected influence of faith-based practices, multilingual norms, and digital technologies in enhancing students’ experiences and strategies for managing foreign language anxiety (FLA). In addition, students in pesantren use spiritual discipline as a psychological resource, employing practices such as prayer and recitation to cultivate composure. Moreover, the multilingual community—which integrates Arabic for religious instruction, English for academic and communicative purposes, and local languages such as Javanese and Madurese for everyday interaction—generates linguistic dynamics that affect how anxiety is experienced and regulated.

The study emphasizes that within pesantren contexts, the management of language learning anxiety extends beyond conventional pedagogical methods, encompassing religious practices, collaborative peer engagement, and ethically guided digital participation. Consequently, effective interventions to mitigate FLA must account for these intersecting dimensions—spirituality, peer collaboration, multilingual competence, and purposeful digital literacy—which are deeply incorporated into students’ sociocultural and educational identity.

## **The role of digital technologies and the pesantren’s multilingual context in facilitating students’ navigation of multilingualism and in reducing foreign language anxiety**

The findings indicate that digital technologies and the pesantren’s multilingual context serve distinct but mutually reinforcing functions in facilitating students’ multilingual engagement and in mitigating foreign language anxiety (FLA). These components are not merely pedagogical but also culturally, socially, and religiously situated, reflecting the pesantren’s unique integration of faith, communal norms, and multilingual learning practices. Digital technologies play a crucial role in promoting self-paced, faith-aligned learning. For instance, Google Translate, online dictionaries, YouTube, and WhatsApp function as mechanisms for enhancing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation practice, and language rehearsal. These resources facilitate students to prepare and review language content independently, creating a safe environment that mitigates anxiety. As emphasized by participants in the following excerpts:

“I often use Google Translate to check vocabulary and pronunciation” (S1).

“YouTube and Google Translate are very helpful because they are accessible anytime and easy to understand” (S6).

“There is a YouTube channel I created to post content in English, and WhatsApp is used to communicate in English” (S7).

The data highlight that students strategically utilize widely available digital tools—such as translation apps, video-sharing platforms, and messaging services—to enhance their multilingual learning and reduce barriers in English communication. These tools enable flexible, self-paced learning, increase exposure to authentic English input, and provide opportunities for active production. Moreover, in the pesantren context, digital technologies not only facilitate cognitive learning but also align with religiously grounded educational values that highlight preparation, discipline, and repetition. By having private practice, such tools help students adhere to pesantren traditions of careful and respectful learning while mitigating the pressure of making mistakes in front of friends or teachers. The unity between digital resources and religiously reflected learning practices fosters students’ confidence, motivation, and management of foreign language anxiety.

Digital tools and the multilingual community in pesantren operate synergistically, providing both self-directed preparation and socially mediated practice. Students prepare independently using online dictionaries, translation apps, or other digital resources and then apply knowledge in authentic multilingual interactions with peers and teachers. As S5 asserted:

“I use online apps to learn new words, then practice with my friends in the dorm. They help me if I make mistakes, so I don’t feel so nervous in class” (S5).

Observational notes further confirmed that students frequently rehearsed speeches individually in quiet spaces or in small peer groups in the dormitory, demonstrating a blend of personal discipline and communal support as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Students’ rehearsal of English speeches through technology-assisted practice

Figure 1 reveal that the combination of such strategies reflects the pesantren’s sociocultural specificity, where structured preparation and peer collaboration are framed by spiritual discipline and respect for ethical digital engagement. This dual system resonates with the pesantren’s values of discipline, collaboration, and ethical learning. In this matter, technology provides careful, private rehearsal, consistent with pesantren norms of thoughtful preparation, while multilingual immersion facilitates socially scaffolded practice, reinforcing language skills and confidence within a morally, culturally, and linguistically coherent environment.

In addition, religious values enhance how students engage with both digital technologies and multilingual practices. Participants highlighted that language learning is framed by ethical and spiritual guidelines, encouraging careful selection of vocabulary and respectful communication:

“If we learn English, we are taught good vocabulary that is appropriate for santri and in line with religious teachings” (S2).

“Digital tools are used responsibly, choosing content that aligns with pesantren ethics” (S6).

The data above reveal that such values mediate the learning process, guiding students to navigate multilingual environments thoughtfully while maintaining focus on moral and spiritual development. By embedding religious principles into language learning, the pesantren ensures that technology and multilingual practice mitigate anxiety rather than exacerbate it. Moreover, the data highlight those digital technologies and the multilingual context function as mutually reinforcing mechanisms for navigating multilingualism and managing foreign language anxiety in pesantren. Digital tools provide preparatory, self-paced support, while the multilingual environment offers authentic, socially and religiously mediated opportunities for practice. Taken together, they create a culturally, ethically, and spiritually coherent learning ecosystem where multilingual competence is fostered, and anxiety is transformed into manageable, constructive challenges. This underscores the urgency of incorporating digital literacy, multilingual pedagogy, and religious values to maximize language learning in the pesantren contexts.

## DISCUSSION

The finding of the study highlights that foreign language anxiety (FLA) in Indonesian pesantren is a socially, linguistically, and culturally embedded experience rather than a merely individual psychological reaction. Moreover, the findings underscore that students' experiences of FLA are enhanced by the communication of multilingual practices—especially the concurrence of Arabic, English, and local languages—and the pesantren's religious tradition. Unlike in formal school contexts, where FLA is generally linked to linguistic proficiency or classroom dynamics (Dewaele, 2007; Horwitz, 2016), students in pesantren need to manage religiously informed norms of communication, the use of Arabic for religious purposes, and public performance expectations. This is in line with a sociocultural perspective advocated by Vygotsky (1978), that the aspect of sociocultural contributes to the heightened affective stakes of English communication in classroom and online settings. Moreover, the incorporation of digital tools gave another part of complexity, shaping the perception of being supervised during video-based assignments and online presentations, and increasing anxiety (Horwitz, 2016).

In addition, by linking these findings with sociocultural theory, it can be deduced that students' responses to FLA are mediated not only by internal factors such as personality but also by the cultural tools, social communication, and values incorporated in the pesantren community. The dependence on spiritual practice such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and ethical values played a meaningful role as cultural tools to mediate affective regulation, reframing language-learning efforts as acts of religious practice. This finding aligns with research that emphasizes spirituality as a resource for mitigating language-learning anxiety and promoting self-regulation (Chen & Lin, 2009; Mahboob & Lin, 2016; Mambu, 2017). In this matter, sociocultural facilitation does not only happen through material tools or social communication but also through symbolic and moral practices that provide meaning to learning and strengthen students' emotional involvement.

The findings also demonstrate that peer collaboration and the utilization of digital tools functioned as additional mediational tools. In addition, data from observations highlight that students frequently implemented structured peer rehearsal—sharing feedback, correcting mistakes, and enhancing others—mitigating the affective load of public performance. This is in line with sociocultural perspective that places emphasis on collaborative scaffolding, where learning and affective regulation are established within supportive social communication (Basith et al., 2019; Gkonou & Miller, 2019; Tour & Barnes, 2022; Wood et al., 2018; Yang, 2012). Furthermore, students' utilisation of technologies such as Google Translate, YouTube, and WhatsApp was not influenced by practical purposes but by their perceived usefulness and ease of use within the moral and disciplinary framework of the pesantren, illustrating key constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by (Davis, 1989). The digital technologies provided private, self-paced rehearsal mitigating the risk of public embarrassment and resonated with pesantren traditions of disciplined and respectful learning (Colton, 2020; Hamzaoglu & Koçoğlu, 2016; Liu et al., 2024). This underscores that technology adoption in faith-based multilingual contexts is facilitated through sociocultural and ethical values and practices.

Moreover, the study reported that FLA in pesantren emerges at the interplay of multilingualism and digital mediation, forming tensions such as the cognitive pressure of switching between Arabic, English, and local languages, and the increased self-consciousness generated by technology-enhanced performance. While these dual tensions initially caused anxiety, they also fostered the development of culturally and pedagogically meaningful coping strategies. The combination of spiritual practice, collaborative peer

support, and self-paced digital rehearsal emphasized how sociocultural mediation transforms anxiety from a purely challenging factor into a manageable and even productive component of the learning process (Nisa et al., 2024). More importantly, these findings emphasize that FLA in pesantren is not just a problem to tackle, but a learning experience that, when enhanced through cultural, spiritual, and digital practices, can foster students to learn more effectively and encourage confidence.

From sociocultural and technology acceptance model perspectives, these findings shape our insights into FLA by integrating sociocultural and technology-acceptance perspectives. Sociocultural perspective underscores the mediating role of culturally grounded practices and collaborative interaction in enhancing both learning and affective experiences (Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2017). Moreover, TAM demonstrates how students' engagement with digital technology is influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and compatibility with religious and communal norms (Abubakari et al., 2023; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020, 2022; Wahyuningsih & Untsa, 2023). Consequently, these frameworks highlight that FLA is not only a function of individual linguistic competence or technological skills but also is co-constructed within a wider ecosystem of cultural values, peer dynamics, and mediated practices.

Pedagogically, this study underscores the necessity of adopting contextually responsive and multidimensional approaches to addressing foreign language anxiety (FLA), moving beyond conventional focus on linguistic competence, corrective feedback, or task instruction (Muhammad & Purbani, 2024; Subair et al., 2024). In the pesantren contexts, such interventions need to be holistically formulated, incorporating the spiritual, social, multilingual, and technological aspects that foster students' learning experiences. This perspective undermines the dominance of skill-oriented and cognitively reductionist models of FLA intervention, generally overlooking the affective, cultural, and ethical components of language learning in pesantren contexts. Considering these interconnected aspects not only confirms students' agency in managing both emotional and cognitive demands but also develops the imperative to design pedagogical and technological strategies that are ethically embedded and culturally situated, fostering both inclusivity and sustainability in educational practice.

Finally, this study shapes continuous discussion in applied linguistics and educational technology by highlighting that foreign language anxiety (FLA) in the pesantren context is comprehended through a combined sociocultural-TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) lens. Such an integrative perspective challenges the dominance of reductionist approaches that view FLA as an individual cognitive or affective factor, overlooking how culturally grounded practices, collaborative scaffolding, and value-oriented digital tools mediate students' involvement. By considering these mediating factors, the study highlights that the framework of pedagogical and technological responses to FLA cannot be separated from the sociocultural, spiritual, and institutional dimensions that enhance language learning in pesantren contexts. This approach underscores the need for a shift from universalized, proficiency-focused programs toward contextually situated, ethically responsive, and socially adaptive strategies that adopt technology to enhance, rather than marginalize, students' agency and well-being. More importantly, the findings offer the implication, including the need for teachers and policymakers to reconceptualize conducive learning environments not merely as spaces for addressing linguistic and cognitive challenges but as ecologically embedded ecosystems in which affective, cultural, and technological dimensions are dynamically interrelated.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated how students in Indonesian pesantren experience and responds to FLA while getting involved in public speaking and English language learning in multilingual environments shaped by religious values and digital technologies. The findings provide a nuanced insight into foreign language anxiety (FLA) in Indonesian pesantren, highlighting that anxiety is not just an individual psychological response but a socially, culturally, and technologically mediated experience. By investigating students' experiences through the dual lenses of sociocultural theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the findings reveal that FLA emerges at the interplay of multilingual practices, religious norms, and digital-mediated learning. Moreover, students manage cognitive and affective tensions such as language switching, public performance, and technology-enhanced self-consciousness through strategies embedded in spiritual practices, collaborative peer support, and self-paced digital rehearsal. These findings underscore that anxiety can function as a productive and manageable component of learning, fostering both linguistic competence and emotional resilience when mediated through culturally and ethically situated practices. In addition, the study emphasizes that effective pedagogical and technological interventions need to be contextually responsive, ethically embedded, and holistically constructed, incorporating spiritual, social, multilingual, and technological aspects to enhance student agency and sustainable learning.

The study promotes implications for teachers, policymakers, and scholars. First, it underscores the importance of designing language learning environments that are sensitive to the sociocultural, spiritual, and technological realities of faith-based multilingual institutions, moving beyond universalized proficiency-focused models. Teachers and curriculum designers are encouraged to integrate collaborative scaffolding, culturally grounded practices, and ethically aligned digital tools to enhance both affective and cognitive dimensions. For policymakers, this understanding offers the need to support interventions that balance traditional pedagogical values with innovative digital practices. However, this study has limitations. The findings are based on a qualitative case study of seven students in an Indonesian pesantren, which may limit generalizability to other faith-based or multilingual contexts. Future research could extend the sample size, include comparative studies across diverse educational settings, and examine the long-term impact of integrating spiritual, social, and technological strategies on FLA and language learning outcomes.

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