Negotiating the complexities of English language teaching in a religiously rooted environment: Indonesian pesantren teachers’ perspectives

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Submitted: 04/01/2024 | Revised: 03/03/2024 | Accepted: 18/04/2024

Abstract. In the dynamic landscape of language education, understanding the perspectives of educators within unique cultural and educational contexts becomes imperative for fostering effective learning environments. This qualitative study explores the perceptions and challenges faced by English language teachers in pesantren schools in Indonesia, where cultural, religious, and linguistic dimensions intricately influence language education. Through in-depth interviews, the research uncovers the complexities teachers navigate in balancing cultural preservation with the imperative of equipping students with English language skills. Findings highlight how English language teachers navigated the integration of ELT practices with students’ context and needs, primarily aiming to convey the importance of learning English, aligning it with Islamic teachings and dispelling misconceptions about its compatibility with religious principles. The study underscores the necessity for tailored pedagogical strategies and contributes insights to the discourse on language education in culturally rich settings.

Keywords: English language teaching, teachers’ experiences, Indonesian pesantren

https://ojs.unm.ac.id/eralingua

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world, characterized by rapid globalization, has necessitated a paradigm shift in education to meet the challenges and opportunities that arise from cross-cultural interactions (Elias & Mansouri, 2023). In the field of English language teaching (ELT), many scholars come with a view that the traditional approach is no longer sufficient in the face of diverse linguistic, cultural, and social landscapes. Kumaravadivelu (1994), for example, pioneered the concept of postmethod pedagogy to address the demand for an optimal approach to teaching English, liberated from the constraints associated with method-based restrictions. Following postmethod theory, the concept of context-sensitive pedagogy has garnered attention in recent years, supported by scholars such as Canagarajah (2005), Carless (2007), and Littlewood (2013). Rather than positioning itself as an alternative to established methods, context-sensitive pedagogy underscores the importance of flexibility in the adoption and adaptation of methods based on students’ needs and the unique features of the teaching context (Canagarajah, 2005). This signifies a fundamental evolution in ELT pedagogy and practices, recognizing the imperative of adaptable methodologies to cater to the diverse and dynamic educational environments.

English language teaching and learning in Islamic schools in different countries face various challenges. In Malaysia, longitudinal research by Adnan (2017) highlighted a challenge faced by an English teacher at an Islamic Primary School, where some teachers strongly opposed English language instruction. Similarly, in Southern Thailand, students in Islamic schools struggled with speaking English, citing internal barriers like low motivation and confidence, and external factors such as limited English practice opportunities and inadequate learning resources (Apichat & Fatimah, 2022). Likewise, ELT in Islamic schools in Bangladesh lacked a supportive environment for English learning (Golam, 2020). In the context of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) in Indonesia, English language teaching faces notable challenges. One such challenge is the prevalent perception among pesantren students, commonly referred to as ‘santri,’ that English lacks practical relevance in their daily lives, resulting in diminished motivation for learning the language (Farid & Lamb, 2020). Another issue is the limited integration of culturally and contextually relevant teaching materials and methodologies. Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, possess unique cultural, religious, and social contexts that distinguish them from conventional educational settings (Isbah, 2020). However, ELT practices in pesantren often rely on generic materials and methodologies that inadequately align with the specific needs, values, and identities of students within these settings. This misalignment impedes effective language acquisition and fails to leverage the rich cultural and religious resources intrinsic to pesantren education, thereby diminishing the impact of ELT in fulfilling the educational and linguistic needs of the students. Given that pesantren students live in a relatively different cultural and social environment from those in non-pesantren schooling context, teachers attempted to navigate their English teaching through several adaptations and improvisation in their practices. It is therefore important to explore and understand...
how teachers in such an Islamic boarding school context perceive of English language learning, and how they appropriate English to the needs of their students.

Despite the pivotal role of pesantren in Indonesia's education landscape, there remains a notable research gap in understanding how English language teachers within pesantren schools perceive language learning and how they negotiate the complexities by appropriating English to the needs of their students. A growing body of studies accentuates the significance of incorporating cultural and religious context into English language teaching (for example Liyanage et al., 2010; Mairs, 2017; Mohammadzadeh, 2009; Nur et al., 2023; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003); however, the perspectives of teachers negotiating the complexities of ELT within pesantren contexts have been insufficiently explored.

This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions and challenges faced by English language teachers in pesantren school contexts, thereby contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on language education in culturally rich and diverse educational settings. By unraveling their perspectives on language learning and uncovering how they tailor English instruction to meet the specific needs of their students, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on language education in diverse and culturally rich educational settings. The findings hold the potential to inform pedagogical practices, curriculum development, and educational policies tailored to the unique requirements of pesantren schools, while also offering a nuanced understanding of the intersection between language learning and the long-established cultural and religious values.

RESEARCH METHOD

Employing a qualitative case study methodology, this research delves into the complexity of English language teaching situated in pesantren schools. The selection of a case study approach was driven its capacity to comprehensively explore and capture significant aspects of real-life events (Stake, 2003). This methodology aligns with the research objective, ensuring the preservation of richness and meaningfulness in understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2003).

Regarding the participants, they were selected purposefully based on length of teaching experience, ranging from five to over ten years, and the type of pesantren where they are employed. All pesantrens in this study were categorized as pesantren terpadu (mixed) i.e.: Islamic boarding schools that integrate both traditional and modern educational approaches in their educational practices (Lukens-Bull, 2010). The study comprised seven English language teachers as participants, currently employed in different pesantren schools across three different districts: Kota Metro, Lampung Timur, and Lampung Tengah. More information about the teacher participants can be seen in Table 1 below.

Understanding the demographic data of participants helps in contextualizing the findings and understanding how different variables may impact the results. For example, the challenges faced by pesantren English language teachers in urban areas might differ from those in rural settings. Moreover, knowing the demographic characteristics of participants enhances the generalizability of the study findings. It allows researchers to make more informed conclusions and recommendations that can be applicable to similar contexts or populations.
Negotiating the complexities of English language teaching – Ahmad Madkur (201-215)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>School level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Location of the pesantren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bu Siti</td>
<td>Senior secondary school</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lampung Timur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pak Rahman</td>
<td>Junior secondary school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lampung Tengah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pak Hasan</td>
<td>Junior secondary school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kota Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pak Abdur</td>
<td>Senior secondary school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kota Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bu Fatima</td>
<td>Senior secondary school</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lampung Tengah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pak Razak</td>
<td>Junior secondary school</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kota Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bu Zahra</td>
<td>Junior secondary school</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lampung Timur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lampung was chosen as the location of this study because of its position in Indonesia’s top 10 provinces with the most pesantren¹. In addition, despite its position and a growing number of studies on pesantren education system, the issue of English language teaching in this schooling context in the province of Lampung gains scant attention, compared to that in Java provinces. To maintain the confidentiality, no participants were identified in this paper; all teachers are refereed using pseudonyms (Rahman, Hasan, Abdur, Fatima, Siti, Razak, and Zahra). The pseudonyms are preceded by the polite form of address Pak (Mr) for male teachers or Bu (Ms) for female teachers as a common way to refer to others in professional circumstance in Indonesia. The participants’ consent was voluntary, and they were fully informed that they had right to withdraw their participation in this research at any stage and any time without any consequences.

For data generation, the teachers were invited to participate in an in-depth semi-structured interview to allow them to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings (Berg & Lune, 2007: 96). The teachers’ voice is pivotal

¹ The data regarding the number of pesantren across provinces in Indonesia can be accessed in Directorate of Pondok Pesantren, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022 via their official website: https://pendis.kemenag.go.id/category/direktorat-pd-pontren
to study as it could portray how teachers define their educational philosophy and act consequently towards realizing sustainable changes in the educational landscape (Kincheloe, 2003). The interviews, lasting between 60 to 90 minutes, were recorded in audio format, transcribed, and translated into English.

To analyze the data, I used qualitative data analysis consisting of a sequence of four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2019). This analytical framework facilitated a systematic examination of the data obtained from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. By adhering to this approach, I, as the researcher, could conduct a thorough and structured analysis, enabling the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights pertinent teachers’ perceptions and experiences of English language teaching practices in Indonesian pesantren schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The section begins with exposing teachers’ points of view about the significance of learning English language for Muslim students in pesantren. The next part of the section elaborates how teachers improvise their teaching practices to make ELT appropriate with the needs of students and the socio-cultural context of pesantren educational values and tradition.

Teachers’ espoused beliefs about the importance of English language for pesantren students

To respond the advent of modernisation and globalisation, pesantren leaders decide to combine Islamic and non-Islamic subjects, including English, in their curricula (Isbah, 2020). By this way, they envisage that once students graduate from pesantren, they can become individuals who are modern, globalised, and at the same time, Indonesian as well as Islamic (Lukens-Bull, 2001); and teaching foreign languages especially English is one of a pesantren’s ways to be modern and globalised. This is reflected in some teachers’ responses below around the connection between the importance of ELT provision in pesantren with the undeniable emergence of modernization and globalization.

“…most of pesantrens today have moved forward to be modern institution and one of the ways to show that they are modern is by providing students with foreign languages teaching”. (Pak Hasan)

“by mastering English, pesantren students can fight against the stigma that pesantrens are generally old-fashioned and left behind school”. (Pak Rahman)

Pak Hasan’s emphasis on the modernization of pesantrens through foreign language teaching reflects a broader societal shift in acknowledging the importance of staying abreast of global advancements. By offering students foreign language instruction, pesantrens aim to signal their alignment with modern educational practices. This perspective aligns with contemporary views that equate modernity with the ability to engage with global languages. Similarly, Pak Rahman’s belief in mastering English as a means for pesantren students to combat stereotypes and dispel the notion of being outdated echoes a strategic response to societal
perceptions. This viewpoint suggests a conscious effort to challenge stereotypes about pesantrens, positioning English proficiency as a tool for altering societal perspectives. It highlights the recognition that language proficiency serves as a powerful instrument in shaping public perceptions, portraying pesantrens as dynamic and responsive institutions.

These teachers’ insights resonate with broader Indonesian sentiments, as (Lauder, 2008) observes, where English proficiency is not merely perceived as a skill for employment but is also symbolic of high education and modernity. This dual perception underscores the multifaceted role of English language proficiency, extending beyond utilitarian employment needs to encompass broader societal dynamics, educational status, and perceptions of modernity. The teachers' perspectives illuminate the strategic positioning of English within pesantrens, not only as a linguistic skill but as a symbol of educational advancement and cultural relevance within the contemporary Indonesian landscape.

The teacher participants also realized that in addition to possession of Islamic knowledge, one of the most important skills is foreign languages which might help students craft their future career and involve in the community. With respect to this, Bu Fatima, a teacher in a reputable pesantren school in Lampung Timur, expressed

“... to me, the young generation today not only needs deep religious knowledge but also non-religious knowledge. When the students graduate from pesantren, they will most likely be considered as someone who has good understanding in religious subjects. However, in my opinion, it is not enough; they have to be equipped with other skills and knowledge to help them make a living and involve in their community...”(Bu Fatima)

Here, Bu Fatima implied that English teaching provision in pesantren indicates that this Islam-affiliated educational institution also responded to globalized education agendas, in which English language proficiency is positioned as a strategic skill and resource for the contemporary political economy (O’Regan, 2021). A report by Nambiar et al. (2019) puts English skill among the most recommended skills to acquire for good job opportunities in Indonesia at present and in the future.

Furthermore, her assertion that the young generation requires both religious and non-religious knowledge reflects a forward-thinking approach, advocating for a well-rounded education that equips students for life beyond the pesantren environment. By acknowledging the value of additional skills and knowledge, Bu Fatima articulated a vision that extends beyond academic proficiency, emphasizing the practical application of knowledge in real-world scenarios. Bu Fatima’s perspective echoes the evolving role of pesantrens in shaping not only devout individuals but also well-rounded contributors to society. The recognition of the necessity for diverse skills aligns with broader educational trends that emphasize the development of individuals who can navigate multifaceted challenges and contribute meaningfully to their communities (Forsling & Tjernberg, 2023). Overall, her insights illuminate the educators’ awareness of the evolving needs of the young generation and their commitment to providing a comprehensive education that goes beyond religious knowledge to foster a more holistic and adaptable skill set.
Meanwhile, Pak Abdur declared that pesantren students should learn English because

“…all Muslims here have to realize that Islam is not in Indonesia only. It is there in all parts of the world. If some important issues related to Islam happen, it will be published in English language. If you do not have any competence in English, you cannot understand the issue and do not know how to respond it. The other important reason is that to spread the information about Islam in Indonesia to foreigners, it is impossible you do it without English at all. So, using English, people in other countries could see how Muslims in Indonesia live.” (Pak Abdur)

Unlike mostly well-known assumptions that learning English in Indonesia is linked to bigger employment opportunities, better access to technological and scientific development, and even social status (Dharmaputra, 2019; Lauder, 2008), Pak Abdur’s argument above advocates the function of English language for Muslim students to be updated about international information related to Islam, and to spread Islamic teachings to wider audience. To assure his students about the importance of learning foreign language, Pak Abdur once told his students a story of Prophet Mohammed asking one of his companions, Zayd, to learn the language of the Jews and later the Prophet also learned the language to communicate with the Jews. Some recent studies (for example Farid & Lamb, 2020; Gusmuliana et al., 2023; Ulfa, 2018) have also confirmed the benefits of possessing English language knowledge and skill for religious purposes particularly for da’wah, the preaching of Islam to others.

Pak Abdur’s perspective challenges the prevailing discourse on the utilitarian aspects of English learning in Indonesia, positioning it instead as a strategic tool for engaging with international Islamic developments and fostering a global dialogue about Islam. This nuanced perspective emphasizes the broader societal and cultural implications of English language education within pesantrens, adding depth to the multifaceted role that English proficiency plays in the lives of students beyond the conventional employment-focused narrative.

**Teachers’ improvisations for appropriating English in pesantren context**

This section centers on the resourceful and adaptive strategies employed by teachers as they navigate the complexities of appropriating English within the distinctive cultural and religious milieu of pesantren. Through an in-depth examination of teachers’ improvisations, the section presents the creative measures the teachers made English instruction resonate authentically with the values, identity, and linguistic diversity inherent in pesantren education.

1. **Using the Arabic names and Arabic linguistic equivalence**

Situated in such a complex education system of pesantren which develops local curriculum to achieve Islamic educational goals and, at the same time, is instructed to implement national curriculum, English teachers in pesantren try to respond the obligation to teach English and negotiate their ELT practices with the needs of students and the context of pesantren. Pak Hasan, a participant with nine
years of teaching experience in a modern pesantren in Kota Metro, stated his experiences:

“… The simplest example I often do is by changing proper names commonly found in English textbooks like Smith, Barbara and John with Islamic names like Abdurrahman, Fatimah and Ahmad. To me, this is one of ways to implement contextual teaching and learning method and I find it useful to make students feel close to English and stimulate them to learn it more”. (Pak Hasan)

Meanwhile, as pesantren students are familiar with and often have a good proficiency in Arabic language, Bu Zahra used language term in Arabic equivalent to that in English to

“… make it easier to understand my English material. For example, when I explain about verb, I also told to my students that verb in English has similar characteristics and function as “fi’il” in Arabic language”. (Bu Zahra)

Similar to Bu Zahra, Pak Razak mentioned that using language term in Arabic can help him to clarify and explain the same term in English more easily. He said,

“When I delivered a material about English pronoun, I found it difficult until I used “dlomir” (Arabic pronoun) as it is easier to comprehend by my students”. (Pak Razak)

The quotes from Bu Zahra and Pak Razak show that to increase the students’ comprehension about certain material in English, teachers in pesantren make use of prior knowledge of other languages possessed by students. What they did in negotiating their ELT practices is also in line with the concept of multilingual pedagogy in which students’ prior knowledge of other languages are valued as a advantageous resource for their linguistic and cognitive development and therefore can become a part instructional strategies. It is of paramount importance that learners’ pre-existing knowledge, experiences and skills be recognized in the improvement of pedagogical practices for they have a big impact on the way students reflect, understand and master something new to them (Dávila, 2015). This is in harmony with the current trends in language teaching where the use of students’ linguistic repertoires in English classroom is increasingly acknowledged (Brevik & Rindal, 2020; García & Wei, 2013; Illman & Pietilä, 2018).

2. Involving Qur’anic Verses and Hadith

Different from two previous teachers, Pak Rahman chose to cite Qur’anic verses and hadith in his ELT practices, referring to the fact that one of the main subjects to learn in pesantren is Qur’an and Hadith. From his statement “…I try to find out the verses related to my teaching topics and include them in inserting them in my materials. For example, for topic “Greetings”, I cite verses or hadiths related to greetings.” He also attempted to integrate Islamic values into the enactment of his English teaching and he found that the integration

“… gives a positive impact because I could tell my students that learning foreign language is not in contradiction with religious teaching in pesantren. Even I told to my students that many Moslem scholars are good at speaking English. This may
help students to be more motivated and find a good reason to learn English.”

What Pak Rahman did strengthened a research by (Azahari, 2014) which avowed the English translation of Quran can be one of suitable materials within the curriculum of teaching English to Muslim learners.

In the same vein, Pak Abdur added one of pesantren’s long-preserved pedagogical cultures, i.e.: learning hadith using Javanese language with English translation as a way to enrich students’ vocabularies.

“... seem to be happy and excited as they have been accustomed to learning hadith with Javanese but then they can increase their vocabulary from English translation version of the hadith”

Here, Pak Abdur adapted his English teaching with one of most commonly applied instructional activities in the pesantren, i.e. understanding and comprehending Prophetic tradition, which is written in Arabic language, by using Javanese language, a native language of the majority of his students in pesantren. By doing this, Pak Abdur claimed that he could better bring English into the nuance of pesantren lives and his students.

3. The use of Islamic knowledge terminologies

Another strategy employed by teachers to incorporate English within the pesantren context is to retain the use of Islamic terminologies in Arabic, such as shalat, da’wa, halal, haram, hajj, zakat, and adzan in English learning materials. Addressing this aspect, Pak Hasan articulated,

“Although I am an English teacher, I used original Arabic Islamic terms such as ‘shalat’, ‘adzan’, and ‘zakat’ in making English sentences. For instance, when teaching simple present tense, I wrote an example Muslims perform shalat five times a day. Here I prefer to use shalat rather than translating it into prayer...”. (Pak Hasan)

Pak Hasan claimed that using popular Islamic terms in Arabic, instead of translating them into English, could grab more attention from pesantren students since it is more familiar and more related to their everyday lives. Similarly, Pak Rahman inserted Islamic terms to show expressions into English sentences. For instance, when students are taught to use the auxiliary verb will in simple future tenses to talk about promises or plans, the teacher added the suffix insya Allah (God willing) in sentences like “My father will pick me up tonight, insya’ Allah”. This, Pak Rahman argued, adds the Islamic nuance of English learning and draws students’ engagement culturally and emotionally, just like what they experience in religious subject classes. Pak Rahman’s use of Islamic terms has also been found by Fahrudin (2012) to be beneficial to increase students’ attention and participation and promote the integration of Islamic values in ELT.

The utilizing of Arabic language in English language teaching practices in pesantren indicates how teachers address the fact that Arabic language is in top priority of Islamic education enacted in this institution (Wekke, 2015) due to its significant position as the language of Islamic teachings and religious rituals.
Negotiating the complexities of English language teaching – Ahmad Madkur (201-215)

In Indonesia, it is becoming increasingly common for pesantren schools to encourage their students to learn and use two foreign languages, Arabic and English, in daily communication (Tahir, 2017); however, the fact is that Arabic gains more attention and preference from students due to the use of Arabic-written textbooks in the teaching Islamic subjects in pesantren. This, as experienced by Pak Hasan, drives pesantren students to be far more familiar and enthusiastic in learning Arabic than English. As a consequence, teachers in pesantren decide to incorporate Islamic terms into their original Arabic word, instead of translating them into English, to attract more enthusiasm and motivation from students in learning English.

4. Modifying English textbooks

Another way of English appropriation in pesantren is connected with English textbooks used as a main material source in ELT. In this Islam-affiliated schooling context, teachers modify reading passages presented in the English textbooks with passages containing Islamic stories, such as history of prophets, his families, followers, and ulama, or Islamic cultural events such as celebrations of Ied Al-Fitr, Ied Al-Adha, and new Hijri year. In this regard, Bu Siti highlighted,

“To modify English reading passages provided in the textbooks, I try to select some Islamic stories I found in Qur’an, hadith, or the kitab kuning which is used in Islamic subject instruction. I could say that using Islamic popular stories such as Al-Kahfi youth, 25 Prophets, Khulafaurrosyidin, and some funny stories of Abu Nawas could increase students’ engagement in English reading activities.” (Bu Siti)

The teacher’s quote above delineates that the use of the selected Islamic stories was considered to fit the needs and contextual condition of pesantren as it allows students to learn English and gives spaces for teachers to integrate Islamic values into their ELT practices mandated by pesantren education system. This practice, in Indonesian context, goes well with the agenda of character education in national curriculum which aims to create society with strong possession of values in Pancasila, namely religion, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. With respect to the use of Islamic stories, (Faridi & Bahri, 2016) developed English learning material containing Islamic narrative stories and found it effective to be used to teach English to their Muslim students and to support their Islamic character building process, one of core missions of pesantren education.

In Indonesia, a home for the largest Muslim population and more than 50.000 Islamic schools (Tan, 2014), a privileged status of English as a mandatory subject to learn (Mappiasse & Bin Sihes, 2014) leads to the great rise of the number of English language learners, making the country one of biggest markets for English language education (Zein, 2019). Nevertheless, with this context in mind, the textual representation of the culture of (Indonesian) Muslims in English textbooks remains scantly investigated. Meanwhile, in this era of industrialization of English, Mahboob (2011) reminds us to be aware and cautious of efforts at using English textbooks to “colonize the minds of the people”, by explicitly or implicitly bestowing only western values, traditions, norms, and practices (p. 56). What Bu Siti attempted to incorporate Islamic reading passages implies the significance of equitable portrayal
of local cultures – Muslim (and Indonesian) – and Western cultures in English language textbooks because the balanced culture representation, as current study by Shah et al. (2019) ascertained, has motivational effect on English language learning.

**Potential Research Implications**

Calling on teacher participants’ stated narrations in this study, there are some implications that should be considered for English language teaching policy and practices in Islamic schools, particularly in pesantren. First, it is expected that government involves pesantren stakeholders to develop ELT curriculum specialized for Islamic education context. Second, the level of difficulty in English learning materials should be differentiated from that in general non-pesantren schools. Last but not least, to mitigate the problem of students’ low proficiency, pesantren leaders (kyai), with their legitimate authority, are highly expected to provide more spaces and time for learning English and consider making policy that supports the English teachers’ sustainable academic and professional development.

**CONCLUSION**

English language teachers’ negotiations and improvisations to appropriate their ELT practices with the context and needs of students in pesantren mainly aim to make students get fully informed that learning English language is important and not far, let alone forbidden, from the principle of Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the appropriation in pesantren context is expected to meet two agendas: implementation of government curriculum which places English as a mandatory subject, and supporting the accomplishment of the main educational goals in pesantren to equip students with Islamic knowledge, values and culture. To this end, different from ELT in non-Islamic schools, ELT in pesantren context is tailored with Islamic culture and values. This phenomenon of English teaching for Islamic values is noted by (Kirkpatrick, 2016) as the new example of English as a lingua franca in new fields and in cultural contexts that are strongly separated from the Anglo-American influence.

It is also worth to note that due to key role of Arabic as the main language in the instruction of Islamic subjects in pesantren, the appropriation of English in the pesantren context adapts and widely involves the use of Arabic proper names, finding and using the equivalent grammatical term in Arabic and English, citing Qur’anic verses and Hadith, instilling popular Islamic terms in its original Arabic words, modifying English western stories with Islam-related stories, and bringing daily lives of pesantren into English classroom activities. Viewed from perspectives of language education, their frequent use of Arabic terms in English teaching delineates that they also accommodate students’ knowledge and skills of other language. Meaning to say, teachers identify students’ linguistic repertoire, with Arabic in it, as a useful resource, not an obstruction, to appropriate English for Muslim students due to some purposes such as performing identity, linking instruction with values and cultures ingrained in school context, and building good social relationship in educational contexts (Canagarajah, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Preece & Marshall, 2020). Furthermore, from the perspective of multilingualism, the accommodation of other
language in English language teaching is in congruence with the concept of translanguaging pedagogy which integrates two or more languages in a target language classroom and proposes new viewpoint on language learning by asserting and leveraging learners’ linguistics repertoire as constructive resources for their new language learning (Cenoz, 2019).

One limitation of this study could be the potential for a limited sample size. Depending on the scope of the study and the availability of participants, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the broader population of English language teachers in pesantren schools. Additionally, the study’s reliance on qualitative data may also pose limitations in terms of quantifying and statistically analyzing certain aspects of the findings, such as the prevalence of specific challenges or the impact of certain factors on teacher perceptions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend my sincere gratitude to the teacher participants whose invaluable insights and dedicated involvement significantly enriched the depth and authenticity of this study.

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Negotiating the complexities of English language teaching – Ahmad Madkur (201-215)


