



Navigating Cultural and Religious Identity through Arabic and English Language Education: Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

التفاوض حول الهوية الثقافية والدينية من خلال تعليم اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية:

وجهات نظر الطلاب والمعلمين

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ABSTRACT

This study examined student and instructor opinions of the unique roles that Arabic and English play in influencing cultural and religious identities within Indonesian pesantren, institutions that endeavor to reconcile traditional Islamic education with global expectations. This study used a qualitative research paradigm to perform a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between language acquisition and identity development within the pesantren setting. This study utilizes a case study methodology to perform a thorough uation of how pesantren institutions incorporate Arabic and English training to foster cultural and religious identity. The study utilized questionnaires distributed to 111 students and 8 teachers to determine the impact of various languages on identity formation. Research consistently indicates that Arabic is regarded as essential for religious identity and cultural preservation; pupils strongly associate it with faith and legacy, a perspective unanimously supported by educators. In contrast, English exhibited a complex representation. Although acknowledged for its worldwide prospects and influence on personal identity, many students encountered difficulties in preserving their religious and cultural identity while acquiring English language skills. Educators also recognized this dual function of English. Notwithstanding these conflicts, a significant majority of students contended that bilingualism in both languages eventually enriches their entire identity. This study emphasizes the necessity for a balanced, culturally sensitive teaching that recognizes Arabic's fundamental significance while deliberately incorporating English to cultivate strong, multidimensional identities that are grounded in heritage and engaged worldwide.

Keywords: Cultural Identities, Religious Identities, Arabic, English, Perception.

مستخلص البحث

تناولت هذه الدراسة آراء الطلاب والمعلمين حول الأدوار الفريدة التي تؤديها اللغتان العربية والإنجليزية في التأثير على الهويات الثقافية والدينية داخل المعاهد الإسلامية الإندونيسية (البيسانترن)، وهي مؤسسات تسعى إلى التوفيق بين التعليم الإسلامي التقليدي ومتطلبات العصر العالمي. استخدمت الدراسة استبيانات وُزعت على ١١١ طالبًا و ٨ معلمين لتحديد أثر اللغات المختلفة في تشكيل الهوية. وتشير نتائج البحث باستمرار إلى أن اللغة العربية تُعدّ أساسية للهوية الدينية والحفاظ على الثقافة؛ إذ يربطها الطلاب بقوة بالإيمان والتراث، وهو رأي يحظى بإجماع المعلمين. في المقابل، أظهرت اللغة الإنجليزية تمثيلًا معقدًا؛ فمع الاعتراف بأهميتها في الأفاق العالمية وتأثيرها في الهوية الشخصية، واجه العديد من الطلاب صعوبات في الحفاظ على هويتهم الدينية والثقافية أثناء تعلمها. كما أقرّ المعلمون بهذا الدور المزدوج للغة الإنجليزية. وعلى الرغم من هذه التحديات، يرى غالبية الطلاب أن الثنائية اللغوية في كلتا اللغتين تُثري في النهاية هويتهم الشاملة. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة على ضرورة اعتماد تعليم متوازن وحساس ثقافيًا، يعترف بالأهمية الجوهرية للغة العربية، مع إدماج اللغة الإنجليزية بصورة مدروسة، بما يساهم في تنمية هويات قوية ومتعددة الأبعاد، متجذرة في التراث ومنفتحة على العالم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهويات الثقافية، الهويات الدينية، اللغة العربية، اللغة الإنجليزية، الإدراك.

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic boarding schools, have historically been essential institutions within the Indonesian education system, acting as crucial hubs for disseminating Islamic principles and cultivating graduates with a robust moral and spiritual foundation, Dhofier, Z. (2019). In recent decades, these institutions have experienced substantial alterations, intentionally including new languages like English alongside their established Arabic curriculum to remain pertinent in an increasingly globalized environment, Azra, A. (2018). This dual linguistic emphasis renders pesantren distinctive educational settings where language acquisition immediately meets with the intricate process of cultural and religious identity development. The deliberate integration of English and Arabic seeks to provide pupils with the linguistic skills essential for engaging in the global arena, while also fostering a robust cultural and religious identity, Machmud, M. (2020). Grasping the perception of these languages within the nuanced interplay of tradition and modernity is essential for understanding the evolving dynamics of Islamic education in contemporary Indonesia, Afrianty, D. (2018).

In the pesantren curriculum, Arabic and English serve unique yet frequently complementary functions in forming pupils' perspectives and self-identities, Rahim, R., & Daud, N. (2015). Arabic is intrinsically integrated within Islamic heritage, functioning as the sacred language of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the cornerstone of Islamic scholarship and spiritual advancement, Setiyadi et al. (2023). Its proficiency is often regarded as a direct correlation to religious authenticity and cultural preservation, profoundly linking learners to their spiritual heritage. Conversely, English is acknowledged as the global lingua franca, providing students with essential access to worldwide information, varied communication networks, and enhanced employment prospects in a competitive landscape. The contrast between a sacred heritage language and a global instrumental language fosters a complex linguistic environment that significantly affects pupils' self-perception, Azami (2021), resulting in diverse interpretations of their influence on identity.

The correlation between language learning and identity formation is a recognized domain in sociolinguistics, with researchers such as Hall highlighting the essential role of language in forming and expressing identity, Hall, S. (1997). Norton asserts that language acquisition is fundamentally connected to identity, significantly influencing

individuals' self-perceptions and their interactions with their surroundings, Norton, B. (2013). In the distinctive dual-language environment of pesantren, this dynamic is markedly intensified as students interact with two influential languages, each possessing considerable cultural and symbolic capital. The incorporation of Arabic and English within the curriculum not only improves linguistic proficiency but also shapes students' identities as global citizens and advocates of Islamic principles, Sholeh et al. (2022). This frequently leads to a dual identity, illustrating the significant tensions and synergies within pesantren as they navigate traditional and modern realms, Mujiburrahman. (2019).

Despite the acknowledged significance of both languages and the theoretical frameworks connecting language to identity, a thorough comprehension of how students and teachers perceive their unique roles in identity formation remains largely unexamined within the specific context of Indonesian pesantren. Prior studies have addressed issues in bilingual education and identity negotiation although a targeted examination of the specific perceptions of these principal players is essential, Huda, N. (2020). The fundamental purpose of this research is to accurately determine how students and teachers see the distinct roles of Arabic and English in creating their cultural and religious identities, Zein (2021). This study aims to elucidate the intricate ideas, attitudes, and experiences of individuals directly engaged in this distinctive bilingual learning context, Malla & Pettalongi (2019).

This study is significant for various academic and practical fields, including educational theory, language instruction, and cultural studies. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the broader discussion of bilingual education in Islamic educational contexts by providing empirical insights into students' and teachers' experiences of identity formation. The findings may support the development of culturally sensitive language teaching approaches that acknowledge the different roles of Arabic and English in shaping cultural and religious identity. In addition, the study offers valuable implications for curriculum developers and policymakers seeking to balance global competencies with the preservation of local cultural and religious values. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of educational practices that help students engage with globalization while maintaining strong connections to their cultural and religious heritage.

Literature Review

The domain of bilingual education and identity development in Indonesian

pesantren has garnered increasing scholarly attention, highlighting the changing significance of these institutions in a globalized context. Huda's research identified substantial pedagogical and linguistic obstacles in implementing bilingual education in pesantren, Huda, N. (2020), especially regarding teacher training and student ability in Arabic and English, Nurseha, I. (2025). These practical obstacles are significant as they can directly affect how students and teachers assess the effectiveness and usefulness of each language in their daily experiences. The challenges of language learning may influence judgments of its worth and its capacity to undermine established cultural and religious structures, thereby impacting identity negotiation, Madkur (2024).

Mujiburrahman examined the underlying tension between the adoption of modern educational practices, such as English language instruction, and the preservation of traditional Islamic beliefs within pesantren, Mujiburrahman. (2019). This research revealed that although pesantren are progressively adopting modern techniques to maintain relevance, this modernization frequently engenders a perceived conflict with their fundamental function as guardians of Islamic knowledge and values. This contradiction is particularly relevant to the current study, as it offers a crucial perspective for examining how students and teachers may view English as either a collaborative instrument for global involvement or a possible threat to their entrenched religious and cultural identities, Rahmah & Hadi (2025). Comprehending this seeming conflict or harmony is essential for deciphering their varied perspectives on the role of language in identity formation.

Norton¹ offers a foundational theoretical perspective for this study, emphasizing the intrinsic connection between language acquisition and identity development, and asserting that language learning significantly influences individuals' self-conceptions and their social interactions, Bonny Norton (2013). Hall underscored the essential role of language in forming and expressing identity via cultural representation, wherein meaning is formed through linguistic symbols, Hall (1997). Within the unique environment of pesantren, students are exposed to two influential languages, Arabic and English, both of which carry important cultural and symbolic meanings. In this context, theories of bilingualism and identity formation become highly relevant because language plays a significant role in shaping students' cultural and religious identities. Therefore, examining students' and teachers' perspectives on the roles of Arabic and English is

essential for understanding how identity is constructed and negotiated within a dual-language educational setting.

These prior research collectively provide a crucial basis for understanding the distinctive dynamics of bilingual education in pesantren, emphasizing pedagogical obstacles (Huda, N. (2020)) and the conflict between tradition and modernity, Mujiburrahman. (2019). Although these works elucidate different facets of identity negotiation, they frequently approach the topic indirectly or as a byproduct of overarching educational reforms. A thorough knowledge of how students and teachers perceive the distinct roles of Arabic and English in creating their cultural and religious identities remains largely unexamined. The current literature has inadequately explored the subjective experiences and explicit perceptions of these key stakeholders concerning the distinctive contributions and challenges each language presents to their identity and sense of belonging.

Consequently, the present study seeks to address this significant gap by directly examining these intricate views. This study offers a direct and focused analysis of how individuals in pesantren see the influence of Arabic and English on their cultural and religious identities, building upon the highlighted problems and theoretical foundations of language and identity. This research delves into subjective perspectives, providing a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between language education and identity formation, transcending general observations to encapsulate the lived experiences and explicit beliefs of students and teachers within this distinctive educational context. This direct approach is crucial for informing culturally sensitive teaching techniques that effectively promote the holistic development of students' identities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is fundamentally based on Hall's theory of cultural representation, which highlights the essential role of language in constructing and expressing identity, Stuart Hall (1997). Hall asserts that cultural representation entails the construction of meaning via language, wherein people and groups employ linguistic symbols to express their identities and positions within a wider cultural context. Within the pesantren environment, Arabic unequivocally represents religious identity and spiritual development, profoundly linking pupils to their Islamic history via its sacred books and academic traditions, Azyumardi Azra (2012). In contrast, English signifies modernity, global engagement, and access to a broader world, reflecting a distinct array of cultural

ideals and ambitions. This approach is essential for examining how students and teachers view these two languages as influencing different aspects of their cultural and religious identities, and how they manage these representations in their everyday lives.

Hall's theory is especially relevant for examining how pesantren students and teachers understand and navigate the diverse language contexts of Arabic and English, thus forming hybrid identities that harmonize religious tenets with global competencies, Bhabha (1994). This analysis will critically explore the perspectives of students and teachers concerning the symbolic power and cultural representations inherent in each language. This method facilitates a profound comprehension of how various interpretations affect their self-identity, affiliation with particular cultural and religious communities, and their preparedness to participate in a worldwide society. This study intends to reveal the subjective meanings associated with each language and their perceived influence on identity by concentrating on these representations, so directly addressing the research purpose of identifying distinct roles.

Building upon Hall's research, the theoretical framework developed by Rahim and Daud² regarding religious identity formation in Islamic education offers valuable insights into the incorporation of moral and spiritual growth into language studies at pesantren, Rahim & Daud (2015). Their research highlights the essential role of Islamic educational institutions in shaping students' religious identity by explicitly incorporating ethical and spiritual components into their courses. This concept is particularly relevant in the pesantren context, as Arabic functions not only as a means of communication but also as a significant medium for interacting with Islamic literature, sacred texts, and fundamental teachings, thereby inherently connecting linguistic competence with spiritual development and identity. This paradigm elucidates why Arabic is predominantly regarded as essential for religious identity.

This theory explains the close relationship between Arabic language learning and religious identity in pesantren, providing a strong foundation for understanding the perspectives identified in this study. The research applies Rahim and Daud's approach to examine how pesantren integrate religious values into Arabic language education. Through this integration, Arabic learning contributes to the development and reinforcement of students' religious identity. This theoretical framework elucidates why students and educators predominantly regard Arabic as essential to religious identity,

providing a crucial foundation for examining these deeply entrenched beliefs. It emphasizes the deliberate educational tactics utilized to guarantee that Arabic language acquisition is intrinsically linked to spiritual and moral growth, hence establishing a unique and esteemed religious significance for the language.

The combined theoretical frameworks of Hall and Rahim and Daud offer a thorough analytical instrument for comprehending the complex interplay between language acquisition and identity formation in pesantren, Stuart Hall (1997) & Rahim & Daud (2015). Hall's theory examines the extensive cultural dimensions and symbolic meanings of language, elucidating how English may be regarded as a global cultural medium, whereas Rahim and Daud's research emphasizes the spiritual and ethical ramifications within an Islamic educational framework, elucidating Arabic's perceived sacred significance. This dual lens facilitates a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the impact of Arabic and English instruction on the cultural and religious identities of students, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of these impacts by both students and educators. This comprehensive approach guarantees an in-depth investigation of the equilibrium between Islamic principles and global capacities, as perceived and interpreted by those actively engaged in the pesantren context, thereby directly fulfilling the primary research purpose.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore students' and teachers' perspectives on the roles of Arabic and English in shaping cultural and religious identities within pesantren institutions. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions within their educational and cultural context. The study also aimed to ensure research transparency by clearly describing the data collection and analysis procedures.

The research was systematically executed at Pondok Pesantren NWDI Pancor, an institution distinguished for its vigorous Arabic and English language programs, where both languages are essential to the curriculum and daily interactions. This context was intentionally chosen because the active utilization and explicit instruction of both languages would likely cultivate more nuanced and recognizable perceptions among students and teachers concerning their influence on identity, hence offering a conducive environment for addressing the research topic.

Purposive sampling was employed for participant selection to guarantee the

participation of persons most immediately engaged with and informed about the topic being studied. The sample included 111 students and 8 language instructors (both Arabic and English) from the selected pesantren, as well as pertinent officials. This strategy choice ensured the effective gathering of extensive insights into the perceptions of individuals directly involved in language learning and identity construction.

The data collection predominantly aimed at generating these impressions via a mixed-methods technique. Semi-structured interviews were performed with a select group of kids, all educators, and administrators. The interviews, structured around open-ended questions, aimed to thoroughly investigate participants' subjective experiences, attitudes, and beliefs concerning the individual and collective impact of Arabic and English on their cultural and religious identities. To augment this, perception-based surveys were distributed to all 111 students and 8 teachers, employing Likert-scale items to quantify overarching trends in their perspectives on language and identity. Classroom observations of Arabic and English sessions were conducted to gather contextual data on teaching techniques and student involvement, while document analysis of curricular materials revealed the explicit values inherent in language training. Ethical considerations, including as informed permission and the maintenance of participant anonymity and confidentiality, were rigorously upheld during the data gathering process.

The data analysis method included a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative methodologies customized to the data kinds. Thematic analysis was utilized on the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews, carefully identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring themes concerning identity, culture, and religion as viewed by the participants. This facilitated the development of intricate subjective interpretations. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, averages) were utilized to synthesize and convey the perspectives of students and teachers concerning the diverse roles of English and Arabic based on the quantitative data from the questionnaires. Moreover, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was judiciously employed on segments of interview transcripts and pertinent documents to reveal how language (within educational materials and participant dialogue) constructs and mirrors cultural and religious values, providing profound insights into the implicit messages that influence identity perceptions.

To guarantee the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was

methodically utilized, comparing and corroborating data acquired via interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. This multifaceted strategy enhanced the veracity of the recognized perceptions. Furthermore, member checking was performed with a select group of participants, enabling them to assess early findings and interpretations for accuracy and authenticity, thus augmenting the reliability of the research's depiction of their opinions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section delineates the findings that directly respond to the key research question: "What are the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the role of English and Arabic in shaping cultural and religious identity?" The data, collected via questionnaires from 111 pupils and 8 teachers, indicates clear and occasionally intersecting perspectives concerning the role of each language in shaping or complicating identity formation within the pesantren environment.

1. Students' Perceptions of the Role of Arabic and English in Shaping Cultural and Religious Identity

Students generally articulated strong and specific perceptions regarding the influence of both English and Arabic on their cultural and religious identities.

1.1 Arabic and religious identity: Students overwhelmingly perceived Arabic as fundamental to their religious and cultural identity. A significant majority, 98 out of 111 students, agreed or strongly agreed that learning Arabic helps them feel deeply connected to their faith. This perception extended to cultural preservation, with 99 students considering Arabic more vital than English for maintaining their cultural and religious identity, and 98 students specifically affirming its importance for cultural preservation. Furthermore, students reported a stronger connection to their cultural heritage when speaking Arabic (103 students) and felt it allowed them to express cultural values more effectively (111 students). The daily use of Arabic was also seen as strengthening their sense of belonging (108 students). These findings underscore Arabic's perceived role as an intrinsic, non-negotiable component of their core identity.

This phenomenon aligns with sociolinguistic theories discussing the role of sacred languages in shaping group identity. Arabic, as the language of the Quran and worship, holds strong symbolic value within Muslim communities (Ferguson, 1959; Abu-Lughod, 1986). Its use functions not only as a communication tool but also as a

marker of religious and cultural identity, and a bridge to intellectual and spiritual heritage. The ability of students to express their cultural values and beliefs (111 of students, based on combined agree/strongly agree scores) and strengthen their sense of belonging to their cultural community (108 of students) through Arabic demonstrates its role as a vehicle for cultural transmission and social cohesion (Kramsch, 1998). These strong perceptions reflect a linguistic ideology (Woolard, 1989) where Arabic is intrinsically linked to religious and cultural authenticity within the pesantren context.

1.2 English and global identity: Students' perceptions of English were more complex, reflecting both opportunities and perceived tensions regarding identity. While 91 students believed learning English helped them connect with global culture without diminishing their religious identity, a considerable number (105 students) found it challenging to maintain their religious or cultural identity when learning English. This suggests a perceived threat or difficulty in reconciling global engagement with traditional identity. Despite this, 102 students perceived English as playing an important role in shaping their personal identity, and interestingly, 95 students felt English had a more significant influence on their identity than Arabic. This highlights English's perceived pragmatic power and its role in individual self-development and future aspirations, as 100 students recognized it for providing important opportunities for future education or employment.

The finding that 95 of students (39 agreeing and 56 strongly agreeing) feel English has a more significant influence on their identity than Arabic indicates an acknowledgment of the pragmatic power of English in a modern context. This can be analyzed through the lens of linguistic capital theory (Bourdieu, 1991), where proficiency in a global language like English can confer significant social and economic advantages

1.3 Bilingualism and identity negotiation: A large majority of students (108) believed that being bilingual in Arabic and English ultimately enhanced their overall identity. They felt their identity was influenced by the language they used in various social contexts (104 students), and their experiences with both languages had shaped their worldview and perspective (105 students). This indicates that while individual languages present distinct roles and challenges, the combination is largely viewed as additive and enriching. Interestingly, despite the potential for conflict, a majority of

students (108, with 41 agreeing and 67 strongly agreeing) believe that being bilingual in English and Arabic enhances their identity. This supports research on the cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism, where bilingual individuals often possess more flexible and adaptive identities (Grosjean, 2010; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Students feel their identity is influenced by the language they use in various social contexts (104, with 31 agreeing and 73 strongly agreeing) and that experiences with both languages have shaped their worldview and perspective (105, with 44 agreeing and 61 strongly agreeing).

2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Arabic and English in Shaping Cultural and Religious Identity

Teachers consistently emphasized the paramount importance of Arabic for religious identity and acknowledged the dual nature of English, which they perceived as both supportive and challenging regarding students' identity.

2.1 Regarding Arabic's Role: All 8 teachers unanimously and strongly agreed that teaching Arabic is essential for maintaining students' religious identity. This collective perception reinforces Arabic's foundational and non-negotiable role within the pesantren's educational and spiritual mission. Teachers viewed Arabic not just as a subject but as a conduit for preserving and transmitting the core values and identity of the institution.

2.2 Regarding English's Role: Teachers' views on English were more nuanced, reflecting an awareness of its potential benefits and risks. Four teachers strongly agreed, one agreed, and three were neutral on the notion that teaching English could both support and challenge students' cultural and religious identity. This indicates a cautious approach, recognizing English's role in global engagement while also acknowledging its potential to introduce external cultural influences that might conflict with traditional values. Furthermore, a majority of teachers (5 strongly agreed, 2 agreed, 1 neutral) perceived that parents and the community expected pesantren to prioritize the maintenance of religious identity over mere language competence, reflecting external pressures and the institution's commitment to its religious mandate.

Discussion

This section elucidates and analyzes the principal findings that directly respond to the core research inquiry: "What are the perceptions of students and teachers

regarding the influence of English and Arabic on cultural and religious identity?" The data, collected via surveys from 111 pupils and 8 teachers, elucidates unique yet interwoven opinions concerning the role of each language in shaping or complicating identity formation within the pesantren environment.

Arabic: The Unifying Anchor of Religious and Cultural Identity

The results clearly indicate that both students and teachers predominantly view Arabic as essential to their religious identity and cultural preservation. Students significantly associated Arabic with their faith and history; 98 of 111 students concurred or strongly concurred that learning Arabic fosters a connection to their faith, and 99 deemed it more essential than English for preserving their cultural and religious identity. This perspective was further corroborated by 111 students who said that Arabic facilitated a more effective expression of cultural values, and 108 who indicated that its everyday usage enhanced their sense of belonging. All eight teachers uniformly emphasized the crucial relevance of Arabic in sustaining pupils' religious identity. This shared perception corresponds with Hall's theory of cultural representation, wherein language functions as a vital symbolic indicator of group identification, and Rahim and Daud's framework, which emphasizes Arabic's significance as a sacred medium for Islamic literature and spiritual growth. This indicates that Arabic is regarded not only as a language but as an essential, non-negotiable element of their fundamental identity.

English: A Dual-Natured Influence on Identity

Conversely, students' perceptions of English revealed a more intricate and varied landscape, encompassing both opportunities and perceived difficulties related to identity. On one hand, English was acknowledged for its instrumental value and contribution to personal development: 100 students recognized its significance for future educational or employment prospects, while 102 viewed it as a crucial factor in forming their personal identity. This favorable perception corresponds with Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, wherein mastery in a global language bestows social and economic benefits, Bourdieu, P. (1991). A considerable percentage of students (105) encountered difficulties in preserving their religious or cultural identity while learning English, suggesting a perceived threat or challenge in harmonizing global involvement with traditional identity. Educators similarly recognized this dichotomy, with four strongly concurring and one agreeing that English may both facilitate and contest students' cultural and religious identities. This perceived contradiction aligns with discourse on linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, R. (1992)) and cultural hegemony, Canagarajah, A. S.

(1999), wherein a prevailing global language may undermine local identities.

Bilingualism: An Enhancer of Multifaceted Identity

Notwithstanding the apparent difficulties of English, a notable and predominantly favorable observation was that a significant majority of students (108) asserted that bilingualism in both English and Arabic ultimately enriched their entire identity. They indicated that their identity was affected by the language they employed (104 students) and that their experiences with both languages had informed their worldview and viewpoint (105 students). This indicates that students perceive English and Arabic not as opposing languages, but as complementing assets that enhance their diverse identities. This viewpoint corresponds with Norton's claim that language acquisition is fundamentally connected to identity formation, and corroborates studies highlighting the advantages of bilingualism, which frequently results in enhanced cognitive flexibility and adaptable identities, Grosjean, F. (2010). This signifies an ongoing negotiation and assimilation of various language elements into a broader self-concept within the pesantren framework, Cummins, J. (2000).

Implications and Significance

These findings have substantial consequences for both educational practice and theoretical comprehension. The research highlights the essential requirement for a balanced and culturally responsive teaching in pesantren. Educators must acknowledge Arabic's essential function as the cornerstone of religion and cultural identity while selectively incorporating English to alleviate perceived dangers and emphasize its complimentary advantages. This may entail overtly connecting English curriculum to Islamic principles or local culture, so promoting a sense of hybridity rather than discord. This study theoretically provides empirical data to the wider discussion on language and identity, especially in non-Western, religiously-based educational settings. It illustrates that identity negotiation is an active process in which learners, despite possible tensions, can view bilingualism as a beneficial element, resulting in strong, diverse identities.

Limitations and Future Research

This study offers valuable insights; yet, as a case study conducted in a particular pesantren, it has limitations in terms of generalizability to all Indonesian pesantren. The dependence on self-reported perceptions, while beneficial, may also be affected by social desirability bias. Future study may investigate the particular teaching practices that effectively integrate Arabic and English while reinforcing identity, either through

longitudinal studies or comparative analyses among various pesantren. Additional qualitative investigation into how students navigate the perceived conflicts between English and their religious identity would yield more profound insights.

In conclusion, students and educators in Indonesian pesantren regard Arabic as the unequivocal essence of religious and cultural identity. English, acknowledged for its worldwide prospects, embodies a multifaceted, dualistic function that may complicate established identities. Importantly, students predominantly perceive bilingualism in both languages as a beneficial element, cultivating a yearning for integrated, diverse selves. This underscores the necessity for a balanced, culturally responsive educational strategy that effectively utilizes both languages to develop students who are firmly grounded in their background while actively participating in the globalized world.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated student and teacher opinions of the distinct roles that Arabic and English play in shaping cultural and religious identities within Indonesian pesantren. The study demonstrated a complex interplay in which Arabic undeniably functions as the foundation of religious and cultural identity, inherently connected to faith, tradition, and communal affiliation. Conversely, English is recognized for its considerable influence in offering worldwide opportunities and creating personal identity; but, it also creates a perceived conflict for many pupils over the preservation of their traditional values. A significant majority of students perceived bilingualism in both languages as an upgrade to their total identity, indicating an adaptive and diversified identity formation inside these institutions.

The perceptions of students and instructors concerning the distinct functions of Arabic and English in forming identity are complex and significant. Students predominantly regard Arabic as essential for religious affiliation and cultural preservation, enhancing their sense of belonging and facilitating the efficient articulation of cultural values. Educators unanimously assert the critical significance of Arabic in preserving pupils' religious identity. This perspective is congruent with sociolinguistic theories regarding sacred languages, wherein Arabic serves not only as a means of communication but also as a potent emblem of religious and cultural validity within the pesantren framework.

English, however, has a more intricate identity landscape. Although numerous students assert that English links them to global culture without compromising their

religious identity, a significant proportion encounter difficulties in preserving their religious or cultural identity during the learning process. This illustrates a conundrum frequently examined in research on English as a Lingua Franca, where worldwide accessibility and opportunity are balanced against issues of cultural hegemony. Notwithstanding this contradiction, a considerable proportion of students perceive English as having a more profound impact on their personal identity than Arabic, acknowledging its pragmatic value as linguistic capital for future educational and employment opportunities.

In summary, pesantren exhibit a fundamental dedication to Arabic as the principal medium for religious and cultural identity, while adopting English for its practical advantages and worldwide significance. Nonetheless, its integration requires meticulous management to alleviate perceived identity concerns and tackle actual implementation obstacles. The research emphasizes that a balanced and culturally responsive pedagogy is essential; this approach must unequivocally affirm the central role of Arabic, strategically incorporate English to prepare students for global competencies, and actively integrate cultural and religious content into language curricula. By cultivating a rich linguistic environment and utilizing pedagogical approaches that enhance confidence and align language with students' core values, pesantren can enable students to cultivate strong, multifaceted identities that are firmly anchored in their heritage while actively engaging with the globalized world.

Suggestions for Future Research:

1. **Qualitative Exploration of Student Identity Negotiation:** Conduct in-depth interviews or focus groups with students to explore their lived experiences and coping mechanisms when facing perceived identity conflicts while learning English. Specifically, address the unanswered open-ended question from the student questionnaire regarding difficulties in maintaining identity at school.
2. **Effectiveness of Integrated Pedagogies:** Implement and evaluate specific culturally and religiously integrated language teaching methodologies (e.g., CLIL with Islamic content) in pesantren settings to assess their impact on student motivation, language proficiency, and identity affirmation.
3. **Comparative Studies:** Conduct comparative research across different types of pesantren (e.g., traditional vs. modern, those with varying emphasis on English) to understand how institutional context influences language teaching practices and identity outcomes.

4. Teacher Professional Development Impact: Investigate the impact of targeted teacher training programs in culturally responsive language pedagogy on teachers' confidence, classroom practices, and student perceptions of identity support.
5. Parental and Community Perceptions: Extend the research to include the perceptions of parents and the broader community regarding the role of English and Arabic in their children's identity formation, as these external expectations significantly influence pesantren policies and practices.

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