



# Intercultural Dynamics in English Language Learning at Islamic Schools: Impacts on Student Islamic Identity Construction in a Culturally Pluralistic Context

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## ABSTRAK

Dinamika komunikasi antarbudaya dan penguasaan bahasa sangat penting di sekolah-sekolah Islam, di mana pembelajaran bahasa Inggris bersinggungan dengan pembentukan identitas Islam siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dinamika antarbudaya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah-sekolah Islam dan dampaknya terhadap konstruksi identitas keislaman siswa dalam konteks budaya yang pluralistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X, XI, dan XII di empat sekolah yang dipilih, serta guru bahasa Inggris yang mengajar di kelas-kelas tersebut. Kemudian, untuk wawancara mendalam, subjek dipilih secara purposif. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan kuesioner. Data penelitian dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil analisis tematik data menunjukkan bahwa siswa menghadapi tantangan antarbudaya yang signifikan, termasuk hambatan linguistik, kesalahpahaman budaya, dan paparan bahasa Inggris yang terbatas di luar kelas. Tantangan-tantangan ini sering kali menimbulkan ketegangan saat siswa berusaha menyeimbangkan antara tekanan untuk mengadopsi identitas global dan mempertahankan nilai-nilai budaya serta keagamaan lokal mereka. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun sebagian besar siswa menganggap dampak pembelajaran bahasa Inggris terhadap identitas keislaman mereka netral (tidak berpengaruh baik positif maupun negatif), sejumlah siswa mengalami penguatan positif atau potensi konflik dalam konstruksi identitas mereka.

## ABSTRACT

The dynamics of intercultural communication and language acquisition are very important in Islamic schools, where English language learning intersects with the formation of students' Islamic identity. This study aims to analyze the intercultural dynamics in English language learning in Islamic schools and its impact on the construction of students' Islamic identity in a pluralistic cultural context. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The subjects of this study were students in grades X, XI, and XII in four selected schools, as well as English teachers who teach in these classes. Then, for in-depth interviews, subjects were selected purposively. The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The research data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the thematic analysis of the data indicate that students face significant intercultural challenges, including linguistic barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom. These challenges often create tensions as students try to balance the pressure to adopt a global identity and maintain their local cultural and religious values. The findings of this study indicate that although most students considered the impact of English language learning on their Islamic identity to be neutral (having neither positive nor negative effects), a number of students experienced positive reinforcement or potential conflict in their identity construction.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, the intersection of language learning and cultural identity has emerged as a crucial area of research, particularly within educational contexts marked by cultural and religious diversity. The dynamics of intercultural communication and language acquisition are especially significant in Islamic schools, where the learning of English, a language often associated with Western culture, intersects with the construction of students' Islamic identities. Research on English language learning in Islamic schools reveals complex interactions between language acquisition, cultural identity, and religious values. While studies indicate that English learning does not negatively impact students' Islamic self-identity formation—instead, it can instill positive virtues like respect and self-confidence—students still face challenges in learning English, including linguistic barriers, limited exposure outside school, and curriculum constraints (Azmi et al., 2020, 2021; Sofyan et al., 2023). Cross-cultural awareness emerges as a significant hurdle, with students struggling to differentiate

between Islamic values and Western cultures in language materials. Moreover, teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' religious identity through language education, emphasizing the need for educational provisions that extend beyond textbooks (Azmi et al., 2020; Kustati et al., 2023).

Islamic schools represent unique educational environments where religious values are deeply intertwined with the curriculum, aiming to provide students with an education that balances religious teachings with the skills needed to navigate the broader society. In both Islamic-majority countries and Western societies, these schools face the complex challenge of preserving Islamic identity while integrating students into multicultural contexts. The introduction of English language learning, often carrying cultural connotations linked to the West, adds another layer of complexity, as students navigate their dual identities within a culturally pluralistic environment. Research shows that these institutions equip students with cultural capital necessary for broader societal participation, helping them to negotiate their religious identities in both secular and faith-based settings (Ali & Bagley, 2015; Hussain & Read, 2015). Muslim students often experience a dual consciousness, fostering cognitive flexibility as they move between these environments (Alkouatli et al., 2023; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013). Contrary to popular perceptions, Islamic schools can support Muslim participation in mainstream institutions, though attending these schools does not necessarily increase religiosity among Muslim youth (Azmi et al., 2020; Hussain & Read, 2015).

Research on English language learning in Islamic contexts reveals complex interactions between language, culture, and religious identity. Studies indicate that while tensions may arise between Western cultural values embedded in English and Islamic teachings, many students successfully navigate these challenges. Learners often recognize potential conflicts but feel capable of maintaining their Islamic identity while acquiring English skills. However, some students face difficulties in distinguishing between Western and Islamic cultural elements in language materials (Diallo, 2014; Kustati et al., 2023). Teachers play a crucial role in this process, with research suggesting that English language instruction can actually reinforce positive virtues aligned with Islamic values, such as respect and diligence. The school environment is also influential in shaping students' Islamic self-identity during language learning (Azmi et al., 2020; Fatimah & Santiana, 2017). Further, other recent studies also explore the complex dynamics of English language teaching in Islamic educational contexts. Research indicates that learning English does not negatively impact students' Islamic identity formation in religious secondary schools (Azmi et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2019). Instead, it can instill positive values such as respect, confidence, and diligence. Teachers play a crucial role in negotiating cultural and religious aspects within language instruction, often connecting English topics to Islamic teachings (Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Rosalina, 2021). In Indonesian pesantren schools, teachers strive to align English language teaching with Islamic principles while addressing misconceptions about their compatibility. The school environment significantly influences Islamic self-identity formation, and teachers should focus on providing educational experiences that support students' religious identity beyond textbook content (Azmi et al., 2020; Bleiler-Baxter et al., 2023). These findings highlight the importance of tailored pedagogical strategies in culturally rich settings to effectively balance language education with cultural preservation.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform educational practices in Islamic schools, particularly in culturally pluralistic societies like Indonesia, with significant Muslim populations. These societies are characterized by their cultural diversity and the coexistence of various religious and cultural groups. In such environments, Islamic schools play a crucial role in maintaining and transmitting religious and cultural values to the younger generation (Inawati, 2017; Susilo et al., 2022). However, the introduction of English language learning, with its associated cultural influences, poses a challenge to this role. By examining the intercultural dynamics at play, this research aims to provide insights into how Islamic schools can better support students in navigating these challenges and developing a strong sense of Islamic identity (Ali & Bagley, 2015; Alkouatli et al., 2023). Moreover, this research is timely given the growing emphasis on intercultural competence in education. As societies become more interconnected, there is an increasing need for individuals who can navigate cultural differences and engage in meaningful intercultural communication. In this context, English language learning in Islamic schools represents both a challenge and an opportunity (Alfian et al., 2021; Jailani et al., 2020). On the one hand, it introduces students to a global language that can enhance their intercultural communication skills. On the other hand, it requires careful consideration of how to balance the acquisition of these skills with the preservation of religious and cultural identities.

While much of the existing literature has focused on the role of language learning in intercultural competence and identity formation, there remains a significant research gap in understanding these processes within the specific context of Islamic schools. Most studies have concentrated on secular educational settings or have not fully addressed the unique religious and cultural dynamics present in Islamic schools. This research seeks to fill this gap, the novelty of this study providing an in-depth exploration of the intercultural challenges and identity implications specific to Islamic schools. By focusing on the nuanced experiences of students in these schools, this study contributes new insights into how English language learning intersects with religious identity

in a pluralistic cultural environment, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of intercultural dynamics in education.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method. The case study method is a research strategy used to explore complex phenomena within a specific context in-depth (Baškarada, 2014; Yin, 2003). The research was conducted in four public and private Islamic schools in Central and East Java, Indonesia. The selection criteria for these schools focused on institutions with a high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity, ensuring a comprehensive representation of intercultural dynamics in English language learning within Islamic schools. The subjects of this study were students from grades X, XI, and XII at the four selected schools, as well as the English teachers who instruct these classes. The subjects were chosen purposively, considering factors such as (1) availability and willingness to participate in the study, (2) students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as reflected in their English learning experiences, and (3) teachers' experience in implementing strategies to create a positive and inclusive intercultural learning environment that supports students' identity development. Data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires. In-depth interviews were conducted with four English teachers from the selected schools and twelve students from the same institutions to explore the impact of English language learning on the construction of students' Islamic identities within a culturally pluralistic context, and to uncover the key intercultural challenges faced by students when learning English and to understand how these challenges influence their cultural and religious identities. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed to all students at the four selected schools to gather broader insights on how English language learning in Islamic schools affects their identity construction.

The research data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify and analyze patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis for this study involves several key steps to address the research questions comprehensively. First, the process begins with familiarization with the data, which includes reviewing interview transcripts and completed questionnaires from students and teachers to understand the key intercultural challenges faced by students in Islamic schools and the impact of English language learning on their cultural and religious identities. Next, during the coding phase, data is systematically categorized into codes that represent significant aspects of how English language learning influences students' Islamic identity and the challenges they encounter in balancing cultural and religious aspects. Following coding, these related codes are grouped into broader themes based on observed patterns. The identified themes are then reviewed to ensure they accurately reflect the data and address the research questions. Themes are clearly defined and named, such as "Key Intercultural Challenges in English Language Learning," which captures the specific difficulties students face, and "Impact of English Language Learning on Islamic Identity Construction," which explores how these challenges influence students' cultural and religious self-perception. Finally, the analysis is synthesized into a comprehensive report that details how these themes address the research questions, highlighting the key intercultural challenges faced by students in Islamic schools and the impact of English language learning on their cultural and religious identities.

The validity of the data in this research was ensured through data triangulation. Data triangulation is a technique for checking the validity of data by comparing information from various sources (Jick, 1979). In this study, data were triangulated from interviews and questionnaire. Additionally, data validity was further ensured through peer review. Peer review was conducted by two qualitative research experts who provided feedback on this study. The instrument validity grid is show in Table 1.

**Table 1. Instrumen Validity Grid**

Research Variable	Instrument	Data Source	Validation Technique
Intercultural dynamic in English language learning	In-depth interviews	English teacher and students	Data triangulation (interview and Questionnaires), Peer Review
	Questionnaire	Students	Data triangulation (interview and Questionnaires), Peer Review
Impact of English in English language learning	In-depth interviews	English teacher and students	Data triangulation (interview and Questionnaires), PeerReview
	Questionnaire	Students	Data triangulation (interview and Questionnaires), Peer Review
Teachers' strategies for Creating an inclusive Learning environment	In-depth interviews	English teacher and students	Data triangulation (interview and Questionnaires), Peer Review

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

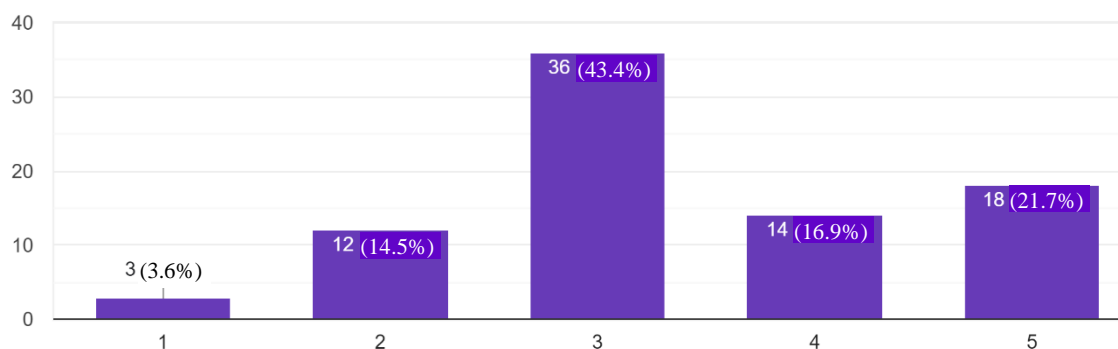
#### Result

##### *Key Intercultural Challenges Faced by Students in Islamic Schools when Learning English*

Students in Indonesian Islamic schools encounter a variety of intercultural challenges when learning English, which significantly impacts their cultural and religious identities. These challenges arise from the intersection of their religious beliefs, cultural norms, and the global positioning of English as a lingua franca. To shed light on these dynamics, insights from interviews with four English teachers and four students reveal their experiences and perceptions. Many students struggle with the linguistic complexities of English, leading to misunderstandings of cultural nuances. The lack of an immersive English-speaking environment poses another challenge. The curriculum often lacks integration of cultural elements that resonate with students' identities. The pressure to adopt a global identity while maintaining local cultural values creates tension for students. The challenges faced by students in learning English significantly influence their cultural and religious identities. The struggle to reconcile their Islamic beliefs with the demands of learning a foreign language can lead to a sense of disconnection from both their cultural roots and the global community. Teachers emphasized the importance of integrating cultural competence into English language teaching to help students navigate these challenges.

##### *How English Language Learning in Islamic Schools Impacts the Construction of Islamic Identity among Students in a Culturally Pluralistic Context*

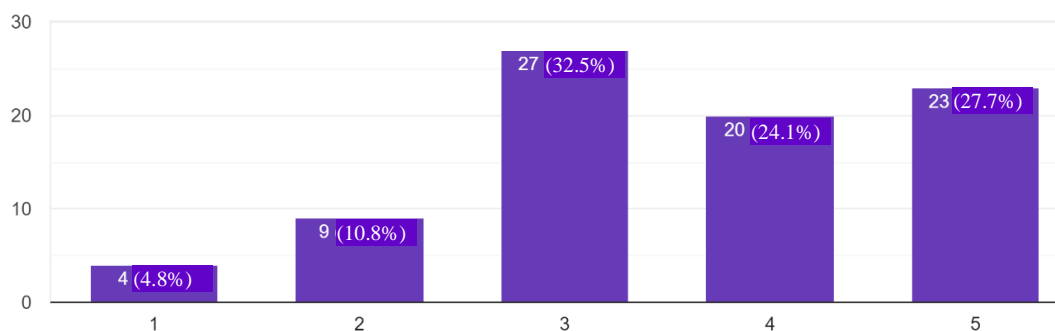
To answer this research focus, the researchers use questionnaire and in-depth interview. Here is the survey result given to students regarding the influence of English language learning on the construction of their Islamic identity. The survey responses were organized using a 5-point Likert scale. For positive statements, the scale ranged from 1, indicating "Strongly Disagree," to 5, indicating "Strongly Agree." Conversely, for negative statements, the scale was reversed, with 1 representing "Strongly Agree" and 5 representing "Strongly Disagree." The first survey theme explores how English language learning at school/madrasah contributes to reinforcing students' Islamic identity. The result is show in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1.** Students' Perceptions of English Learning Impact on Islamic Identity (Item 1)

Based on [Figure 1](#), it can be inferred that the majority of respondents (43.4%) maintain a neutral stance, not clearly indicating a significant impact of English language learning on their Islamic identity. However, when aggregating the data, it is evident that the proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree (38.6%) exceeds those who disagree or strongly disagree (18.1%). This suggests a discernible positive trend among students who perceive English language learning as contributing to the reinforcement of their Islamic identity. These findings hold critical implications for educators and policymakers within schools and madrasahs when developing English language curricula and instructional methods. A more holistic approach that not only emphasizes linguistic proficiency but also considers the students' Islamic identity is essential. Such an approach would facilitate the integration of language learning with Islamic values and promote cultural pluralism.

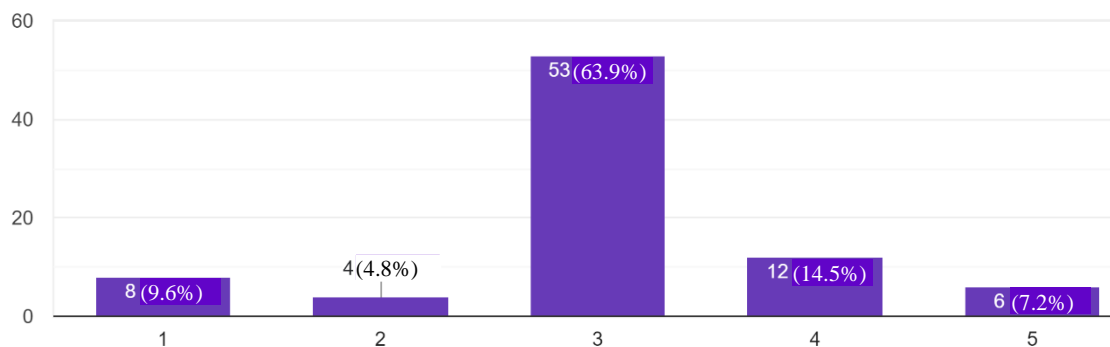
The second survey question explores whether English language learning at school/madrasah negatively impacts the construction of students' Islamic identity, as show in [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 2.** Students' Perceptions of English Learning Impact on Islamic Identity (Item 2)

Base on Figure 2, the data reveals that 51.8% of respondents (43 respondents) overall disagree or strongly disagree that English language learning has a negative impact on their Islamic identity. Conversely, only 15.6% of respondents (13 respondents) agree or strongly agree that English language learning negatively affects their Islamic identity. Meanwhile, 32.5% of respondents (27 respondents) remain neutral, indicating that they do not perceive a significant impact of English language learning on their Islamic identity. These findings suggest that the majority of students do not believe that English language learning at their school or madrasah negatively influences their Islamic identity. However, a small proportion of students do feel that there is a negative impact. This is a critical point for educators and policymakers to consider, as it highlights the importance of identifying and addressing potential concerns. Ensuring that English language instruction is harmoniously integrated with Islamic values is essential. By developing pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to students' Islamic identity and cultural background, educators can minimize potential negative impacts and reinforce students' Islamic identity within the English language learning process.

The next survey question examines whether English language learning at my school/madrasah has a significant impact on the construction of students' Islamic identity within the context of cultural pluralism. The results is show in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Students' Perceptions of English Learning Impact on Islamic Identity (Item 5)

Base on Figure 3, the data indicates that a majority of respondents (63.9%) are neutral regarding the statement, suggesting they do not perceive a significant impact of English language learning on the construction of their Islamic identity within the context of cultural pluralism. However, a portion of respondents (21.7%) agree or strongly agree that English language learning has a significant impact, while only 14.4% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. The conclusion drawn from these results is that, although most respondents remain neutral, a notable number of students do perceive a significant influence of English language learning on their Islamic identity within a multicultural context. This highlights the need for educators and policymakers to ensure that English language instruction accommodates and reinforces students' Islamic identity while respecting and integrating cultural pluralism values. Thus, implementing pedagogical approaches that are both sensitive and inclusive can support the development of students' Islamic identity in a multicultural learning environment, allowing them to benefit from English language education without compromising their Islamic identity. Based on the survey results, most students do not feel a strong impact of English language learning on reinforcing their Islamic identity, although some report positive effects. Regarding negative impacts, the majority of students do not perceive significant negative effects of English language learning on their Islamic identity, suggesting that concerns about potential negative impacts may not be fully justified. While most students do not hold strong views

on the significant influence of English language learning on their Islamic identity within a multicultural context, a small minority do perceive a significant impact.

Overall, the survey results indicate that while some students see benefits in strengthening their Islamic identity through English language learning, the majority do not experience a significant impact, whether positive or negative. This underscores the need for a more integrated and culturally sensitive approach in English language education at schools and madrasahs. The survey findings are further corroborated by interviews with English teachers at the research school. From the teachers' responses, it can be concluded that English language learning in Islamic schools is generally regarded as neutral in its impact on the construction of students' Islamic identity. Students do not experience significant negative effects, and many feel that their identity remains intact or even strengthened through approaches that integrate Islamic values into the curriculum. These findings align with the survey results, which indicate that the majority of students are neutral regarding the impact of English on their Islamic identity.

## Discussion

### *Key Intercultural Challenges Faced by Students in Islamic Schools when Learning English*

The findings highlight the significant intercultural challenges students in Islamic schools face when learning English. These challenges, including linguistic barriers, limited exposure to the language outside the classroom, curriculum constraints, and the pressure to balance global and local identities, all have profound implications on students' cultural and religious self-perception (Azmi et al., 2021; Kustati et al., 2023; Munandar, 2022; SABIQ et al., 2022).

The research highlights significant challenges in teaching English in Islamic schools in Indonesia, particularly regarding linguistic barriers and cultural misunderstandings. Many students struggle with the complexities of English, such as idiomatic expressions and cultural references that do not translate well into Indonesian, leading to a sense of alienation and a perceived erosion of their cultural identity (Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Suryanto, 2014). This disconnect between the language and students' cultural backgrounds creates difficulties in expressing their thoughts and maintaining their beliefs, as articulated by both students and teachers. Teachers face the challenge of integrating English language instruction with Islamic principles, addressing misconceptions about their compatibility. Moreover, students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom, along with curriculum constraints and lack of resources, exacerbates these issues (Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Sofyan et al., 2023). The incorporation of culturally sensitive teaching methods is essential for balancing effective language acquisition with the preservation of students' religious and cultural identities. Cross-cultural awareness remains a critical component, as students often struggle to differentiate between Islamic values and Western cultural elements presented in English textbooks (Azmi et al., 2020; Kustati et al., 2023). Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires an approach that respects and integrates cultural diversity while promoting language learning.

The lack of exposure to English outside the classroom presents a significant challenge for students learning English as a foreign language, particularly in Islamic schools. This limitation hinders students' ability to develop practical language skills and apply their learning in authentic contexts, affecting their overall fluency and motivation (Alharbi, 2015; Sofyan et al., 2023). As highlighted by Teacher 2, the restricted opportunities for practicing English beyond the classroom setting prevent students from engaging with the language in real-life situations, which is crucial for achieving fluency. Student 2 also expresses frustration over the limited opportunities to interact with native speakers and use English in everyday situations, which underscores the disconnect between classroom learning and practical application (Dam et al., 2019; Pahlevi et al., 2018).

The absence of immersive English-speaking environments impacts not only language development but also students' engagement and confidence. Immersive experiences, such as conversational practice with native speakers and exposure to English media, are vital for reinforcing classroom learning and fostering language skills (Alharbi, 2015; Richards, 2015). Researchers suggest various strategies to address these challenges, including reforming education policies, implementing contemporary teaching approaches, and converting some schools to bilingual institutions. Additionally, leveraging technology, media, and social networks can provide meaningful opportunities for language use outside the classroom (Richards, 2015; Saikat et al., 2021). Previous study emphasizes the importance of practical language use and proposes strategies such as language exchange programs and the integration of authentic materials to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world communication (Kim, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach to enhance language learning and provide students with more opportunities to practice English in diverse and engaging contexts.

The integration of Islamic values and cultural sensitivity in English language teaching presents significant challenges in Islamic educational contexts. The existing curriculum often fails to include cultural elements that resonate with students' identities, creating a disconnect between the predominantly Western-centric content and students' Islamic and cultural values. This gap is evident in the lack of Islamic cultural representation in English textbooks, which predominantly feature Western content (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2022; Rosida & Azwar, 2021).

Teacher 3 noted that the curriculum should incorporate both Western and Indonesian Islamic perspectives to help students relate better to the material and view English as a tool for expressing their own culture. Student 3 echoed this concern, expressing frustration with the Westernized nature of the lessons and a desire for content that reflects their Islamic identity.

This study also highlights that this disconnect leads to difficulties in relating to the material and can result in students perceiving English as a foreign language incongruent with their cultural and religious values (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2022; Kustati et al., 2023). Teachers recognize the importance of integrating Islamic values but often struggle with practical implementation in their lesson plans, despite some efforts to draw on religious significance and home knowledge to contextualize English instruction (Alfian et al., 2021; Munandar, 2022). This underscores the need for curricula that balance Islamic perspectives with global content, allowing students to express their religious identities while learning English. Such an approach could enhance students' engagement by bridging the gap between language learning and cultural values, making English a more meaningful and integrative tool within Islamic educational settings (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2022; Kustati et al., 2023).

In Islamic educational settings, balancing global and local identities presents a complex challenge for students learning English. This issue is underscored by the tension between adopting a global identity and maintaining local cultural and religious values. As noted by Teacher 4, students often grapple with the desire to fit into a globalized world while adhering to their Islamic values, which can lead to identity conflicts. Student 4's perspective further illustrates this struggle, expressing a sense of having to choose between excelling in English and staying true to their Islamic identity. While some research suggests that English language learning can potentially erode Islamic identity (Agustina Sari et al., 2021; Suhaimi, 2019), other studies highlight that students can successfully integrate English into their self-concept without sacrificing their cultural and religious values (Baum, 2014). Evidence shows that learners can cultivate a composite self-identity by merging global and local cultural elements, developing hybrid, glocal identities in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts (Leung, 2022; Sung, 2014). This indicates that despite concerns about adopting foreign values, many students effectively use English as a means of personal and national development, demonstrating that ELF communication can support diverse identity options for language learners. Thus, fostering an inclusive and culturally sensitive English curriculum that respects and integrates students' local values while providing global perspectives is crucial for addressing these identity-related challenges.

### ***How the Challenges Influence Students' Cultural and Religious Identity***

The intercultural challenges faced by students in Indonesian Islamic schools when learning English are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with their cultural and religious identities. Addressing these challenges through culturally sensitive curricula and teaching practices can foster an environment where students feel empowered to embrace both their Islamic identity and their English language skills. Insights from teachers and students highlight the need for a more integrated approach to language learning that respects and celebrates cultural diversity while promoting effective communication in a global context.

In Indonesian Islamic schools, the challenges of teaching English are deeply intertwined with balancing cultural preservation and language acquisition. Teachers strive to align English learning with Islamic teachings, addressing misconceptions about the compatibility of Western language and Islamic values. This alignment is crucial as educators use religious significance to contextualize English concepts, navigating the paradox between meeting educational needs and resisting Western cultural influences (Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Munandar, 2022). Novice teachers, with intercultural experiences, often adopt globally-oriented approaches, underscoring the necessity for improved preparation in teaching cultural content. Conversely, studies from Malaysian religious secondary schools suggest that English language learning can positively influence Islamic self-identity by fostering virtues like respect and self-confidence, rather than eroding it (Azmi et al., 2020; Kidwell, 2019). Teachers and students both emphasize the need for culturally sensitive curricula that respect religious backgrounds while promoting effective global communication. Integrating cultural competence into English teaching helps students navigate the challenges of reconciling their Islamic identity with global language demands, ultimately supporting their development of a balanced and confident self-identity (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2022; Kustati et al., 2023).

### ***How English Language Learning in Islamic Schools Impacts the Construction of Islamic Identity among Students in a Culturally Pluralistic Context***

#### ***Majority of Students Are Neutral Regarding the Impact of English Language Learning***

Approximately 43.4% of respondents are neutral regarding the influence of English language learning on their Islamic identity, suggesting that most students do not perceive a significant impact, whether positive or negative. This finding aligns with broader research on the impact of English language learning on Islamic identity among students in Muslim-majority countries. Various studies have revealed mixed results: some indicate that English learning does not significantly affect Islamic identity (Azmi et al., 2021; Suhaimi, 2019), while others highlight a more nuanced relationship. For instance, a majority of students seem neutral about the influence of

English on their religious identity (Jailani et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2019), with many reporting that English learning does not negatively impact their Islamic values or identity formation (Azmi et al., 2021; Jailani et al., 2020). Additionally, some research suggests that English language education can foster positive attributes such as confidence, teamwork, and respect (Azmi et al., 2021; Suhaimi, 2019). However, the process of identity formation through language learning is dynamic and multidimensional. Overall, these studies suggest that while English language learning is valued for educational and professional advancement, it does not necessarily lead to a significant erosion of Islamic identity among Muslim students.

### ***Positive Trend Toward Reinforcement of Islamic Identity***

When combined, the proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree (38.6%) that English language learning contributes to strengthening their Islamic identity exceeds those who disagree or strongly disagree (18.1%). This suggests a positive trend among students who view English language learning as beneficial in reinforcing their Islamic identity. This finding aligns with recent studies that highlight a growing trend of Islamic identity reinforcement among Indonesian Muslims, especially millennials. This trend is evident in movements such as the "hijrah," which signifies a shift towards a more devout Islamic lifestyle (Fajriani & Sugandi, 2019; Taufik & Taufik, 2020). It is characterized by increased religious observance, adoption of Islamic fashion, and active engagement in religious studies. Additionally, the rise of Integrated Islamic Schools, which balance religious moral values with modern education, and efforts in urban areas like Jakarta to strengthen Islamic identity among ethnic groups such as the Betawi, further reflect this trend (Miharja et al., 2019; Suyatno, 2013). These developments suggest a broader movement toward reinforcing Islamic identity in Indonesia, particularly among younger generations, while simultaneously integrating with modernity and popular culture.

### ***Minimal Negative Impact on Islamic Identity***

The majority of respondents (51.8%) disagree or strongly disagree with the notion that English language learning negatively impacts their Islamic identity, in contrast to only 15.6% who perceive a negative effect. This finding is consistent with recent studies that have examined the relationship between English language learning and Islamic identity formation among students. Contrary to concerns about potential negative influences, several studies have found that English language learning does not adversely affect students' Islamic self-identity (Azmi et al., 2020, 2021; Jailani et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2019). In fact, English language education is reported to instill positive virtues such as respect, self-confidence, and cooperation (Azmi et al., 2021; Suhaimi, 2019). Most students in religious secondary schools indicated that English did not alter their Islamic identity, with only a small percentage reporting negative influences. Additionally, students in Islamic-oriented tertiary programs demonstrated high acceptance of English and strongly disagreed that it negatively affected their religious identity (Jailani et al., 2020; Taufik & Taufik, 2020). These findings suggest that English language learning can coexist with and even enhance the formation of Islamic self-identity in educational settings.

### ***Neutrality in Constructing Islamic Identity Within the Context of Cultural Pluralism***

About 63.9% of respondents feel neutral regarding the impact of English language learning within the context of cultural pluralism. Meanwhile, 21.7% agree or strongly agree that there is a significant impact, while 14.4% disagree or strongly disagree. These findings are consistent with recent studies on the influence of English language learning on Islamic identity formation among Malaysian students. Contrary to concerns about the erosion of Islamic values, multiple studies have found that English language learning does not negatively impact students' Islamic identity (Azmi et al., 2020, 2021; Jailani et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2019). In fact, a majority of students (94.5%) in one study affirmed that English did not alter their Islamic identity. English language education was found to foster positive values such as confidence, teamwork, respect, and self-esteem (Azmi et al., 2020, 2021; Suhaimi, 2019). Teachers also noted that the school environment plays a crucial role in Islamic identity formation, with English language learning contributing positively to this process. Overall, these findings suggest a high level of acceptance of English language learning among Muslim students, without compromising their religious identity and values (Jailani et al., 2020; Suhaimi, 2019).

The research underscores the necessity of educational approaches that harmoniously blend language learning with cultural and religious preservation, fostering an identity that encompasses both global engagement and adherence to local traditions. Consequently, this study contributes valuable insights for educators and policymakers, advocating for the alignment of language education with cultural and religious values to support students in negotiating the complexities of global influences and local identities. However, the study's limitations, including its specific cultural context and reliance on qualitative data, suggest the need for further research in diverse educational settings, including longitudinal studies to explore the lasting effects of English language learning on identity formation as students transition into adulthood and broader global interactions.



## 4. CONCLUSION

This study elucidates the intricate relationship between English language learning and identity construction within Indonesian Islamic schools, highlighting how students successfully navigate their cultural and religious identities amid a landscape of cultural pluralism. Rather than diminishing their religious or cultural affiliations, English language acquisition emerges as a vehicle for broadening students' global perspectives while simultaneously reinforcing their Islamic values. This finding challenges the prevailing assumption that mastering a global language necessitates the erosion of local identities.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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