

The Role of Pesantren Culture in Shaping Linguistic Identity in Arabic and English Among Santri: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of pesantren culture in shaping santri linguistic identity, particularly in Arabic and English, using a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach. The PRISMA method was applied to select and analyze 52 relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025. The analysis results show that pesantren significantly influences the formation of santri's linguistic identity, reflected in two main languages: Arabic, the language of religion, and English, increasingly recognized as important in the context of globalization. This study identifies the duality in the formation of santri linguistic identity, in which Arabic reinforces religious identity, while English opens access to the international world. The findings also demonstrate that pesantren not only functions as a religious educational institution but also as a place to integrate cultural values and global education. Based on this analysis, it is suggested that comparative Research be conducted among pesantrens in various countries and that the integration of technology into language learning be explored to enhance the effectiveness of language learning, balancing tradition and modernity.

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Introduction

Pesantren culture in Indonesia has long been an important element in education, particularly in shaping the linguistic identity of its students (santri) (Zh, 2021). Pesantren not only play a role in strengthening mastery of Arabic, the primary religious language, but have also begun integrating English into a more modern curriculum. (Achmad & Martin, 2020). This phenomenon makes pesantren a unique space where tradition meets modernity, especially in the context of language learning. In recent decades, attention to language socialization has rapidly evolved, with many studies examining how educational environments Influence the formation of individual linguistic identities. For example, (Colleen, 2016) shows that language socialization in kindergarten can have a significant impact on children's academic abilities from an early age. While focusing on a more general context, these findings provide a strong picture of its relevance in the pesantren context, where language socialization occurs through daily social interactions as well as structured formal learning.

Furthermore, various recent studies indicate that pesantren not only Influence the mastery of Arabic but also open opportunities for santri to master English, which is now considered essential as a tool for global communication (Achmad & Martin, 2020). Interestingly, Research by Sofyan et al. (2022) emphasizes that learning activities in pesantren, such as music learning, can strengthen santri's linguistic identity. In this regard, pesantrens serve as more than just

places for language learning; they also facilitate the formation of character and multicultural identity among santri. A study by Muhaemin & Erwin (2021) also found that the multicultural environment in pesantren directly encourages increased tolerance and cross-cultural understanding, which, in turn, influences how santri perceive language as part of their identity.

The approach to language socialization in pesantren is consistent with the findings of Deniz, (2015) It reveals that language learning is not only about mastering vocabulary and grammar but also about how the identities of both teachers and students are shaped through such interactions. Globally, Research on language socialization has increasingly broadened our understanding of how formal and informal education interact to shape linguistic identities. Heather, (2023) affirms that language socialization in multilingual families can Influence individuals' lingistic decisions, which is certainly highly relevant in the pesantren context, where daily life and educational processes mutually Influence each other.

In this context, pesantren culture, which successfully combines tradition with modern language learning, makes it an interesting subject for studying the dynamics of santri linguistic identity formation in the era of globalization. Pesantrens not only serve as centers of religious education but also as vehicles that enable santri to develop language skills essential for their future in an increasingly interconnected world.

Research Methods

This study adopts the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, following the guidelines of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) developed by (Moher et al., 2009). This choice is not without reason, as the PRISMA guidelines have been proven to be a recognized standard for improving the methodological quality and reporting of systematic reviews, particularly in ensuring transparency and consistency (Panic et al., 2013). Moreover, PRISMA has been widely applied across various disciplines, demonstrating its flexibility and relevance in cross-disciplinary Research contexts (Siddaway et al., 2019; ter Huurne & others, 2017).

The first stage of this process is Identification, in which scholarly articles are retrieved through keyword searches relevant to the Research topic. To ensure the most relevant and reliable articles are obtained, Scopus was selected as the primary database. Scopus was chosen for its advantage in providing high-quality scholarly articles through a rigorous indexing process, which minimizes duplicate articles and articles from non-credible journals (Lasda Bergman, 2012). Interestingly, although Google Scholar is often used as an alternative search tool, Scopus has proven superior in terms of search precision and source relevance, avoiding predatory journals and providing more focused articles (Hariningsih & others, 2024). In the initial search, 385 articles were found; after removing duplicates, filtering for relevance based on publication year (2015–2025), and assessing journal quality, the number of remaining articles was reduced to 151.

Next, in the Screening stage, we examined the remaining articles to ensure they all met the predetermined criteria. This screening process indicated that no articles needed to be excluded, as all were considered relevant. However, 99 reports were inaccessible, leaving only 52 reports eligible for full-text assessment. This stage highlights the importance of a stringent selection process to ensure only high-quality, topic-relevant studies are included in the review.

In the subsequent stage, Eligibility, we assessed the eligibility of the 52 articles that passed the screening. All of these articles met the inclusion criteria and were ultimately included in the systematic analysis. This indicates that the remaining articles genuinely met the standards we set and were relevant to the topic under investigation.

Finally, in the Inclusion stage, we included all 52 studies that met the eligibility criteria in the review. Using thematic analysis, these articles were examined to identify emerging patterns and themes, providing deeper insights into the role of pesantren culture in shaping santri linguistic identity. This method not only provides a systematic analytical structure but also allows us to capture patterns that may be hidden in the data.

Overall, as illustrated in Figure 1, the entire review process was meticulously organized in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines, ensuring each step was conducted with high

transparency and accuracy. Clarity at every stage, from identification to inclusion, as well as the use of relevant keywords and a credible database, is crucial to ensuring the validity of this review's results. This protocol guarantees that all stages were executed with high precision, resulting in a comprehensive, relevant, and timely review that can make a significant contribution to Research on the role of pesantren culture in the formation of linguistic identity.

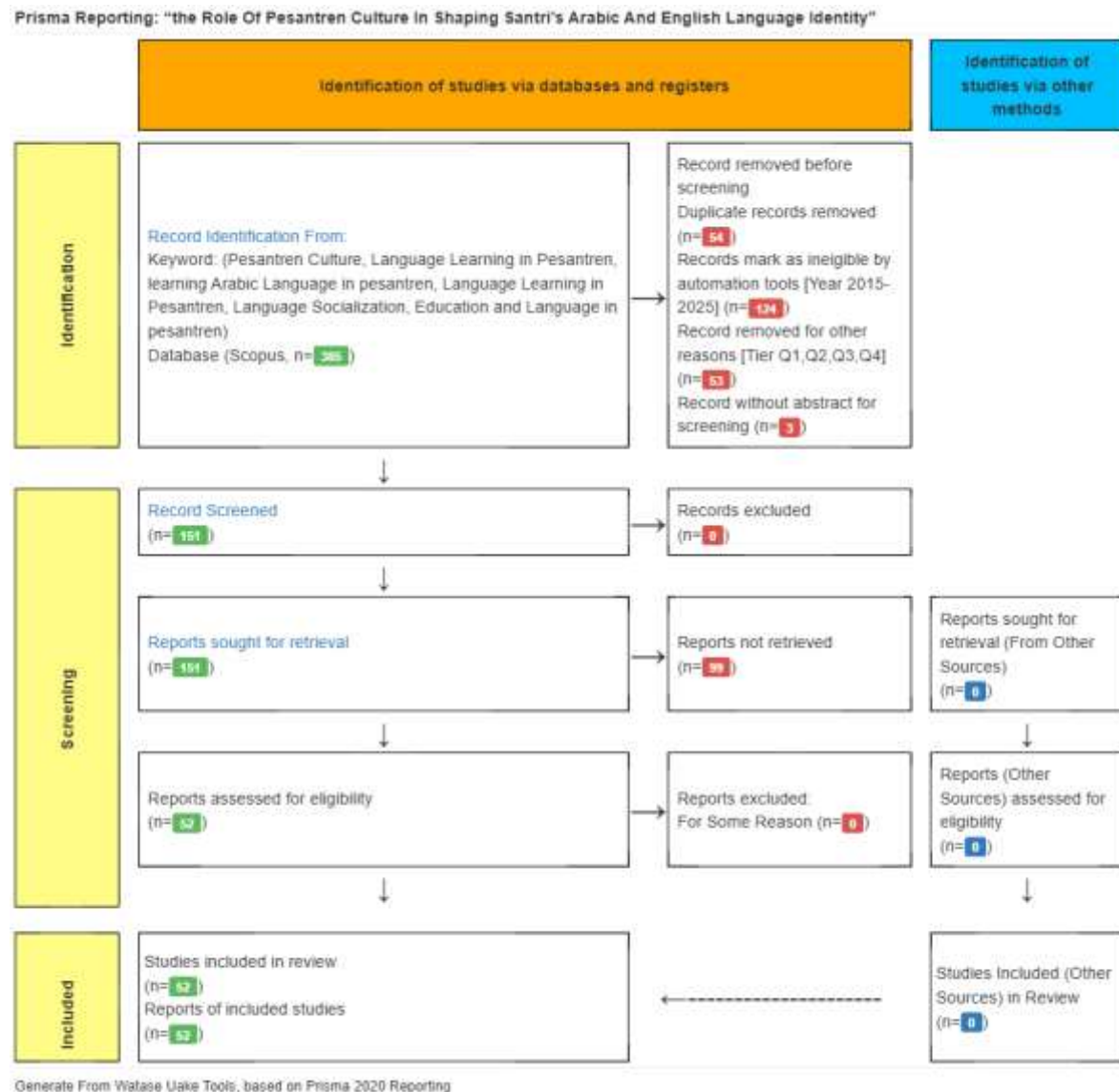


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Results and Discussion

1. Descriptive Overview

The main theme that emerged in this study is "Language Socialization," with 71 occurrences, highlighting the significance of the language socialization process across various social contexts, particularly within the pesantren educational environment. This theme is clearly focused on how language shapes student identity in the Indonesian pesantren context, with 54 occurrences specifically pointing to the pesantren as the primary site of language socialization. Sub-themes such as second-language socialization and multilingualism, though less frequent, still illustrate the linguistic diversity encountered by the santri.

One interesting point to note is the dual role played by Arabic, with its profound religious significance, and English, increasingly essential in a globalized world, in shaping the linguistic identity of santri. Indeed, in recent decades, pesantrens in Indonesia have begun to adopt

English-language teaching in response to the demands of globalization, a shift from their previous focus solely on Arabic instruction. This indicates a significant transition within the pesantren education system, where language is no longer viewed merely as a tool for worship but also as an instrument for navigating an increasingly interconnected international landscape.

Furthermore, this study reveals the importance of multiculturalism and religious moderation within pesantren, which are seen as part of the pesantren's strategy to foster social harmony in a multicultural society. Undoubtedly, this understanding of the pesantren's role in promoting social accord has broader implications, extending beyond Indonesia to the global level.

2. Classification Based on Analytical Framework

Delving deeper, it is evident that Pesantren Culture and Santri's Language Identity are closely interrelated in shaping the landscape of language education within Pesantren. Pesantren culture, with its religious nuances, significantly shapes the formation of santri identity in both Arabic and English contexts. Undeniably, Arabic Language Proficiency remains dominant, as Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and has long been an inseparable part of religious education in pesantren. However, the increasing emphasis on English language teaching reflects the pesantren's adaptation to changing times and global demands.

A particularly interesting aspect is how Arabic and English can complement each other in shaping the santri's linguistic identity. On one hand, proficiency in Arabic solidifies their religious identity, while proficiency in English opens opportunities for santri to broaden their horizons in an increasingly interconnected world. This trend is not only relevant in Indonesia but also in other countries with large Muslim populations, such as Malaysia and Thailand. It demonstrates that pesantren serve not only as centers for religious education but also as bridges to the global world.

Thus, this research opens avenues for further exploration into how Arabic and English, as dual linguistic identities, interact in shaping the perspectives of santri in modern pesantren. It presents a significant opportunity for deeper investigation into the integration of these two dimensions, while still honoring the traditional values upheld within the pesantren.

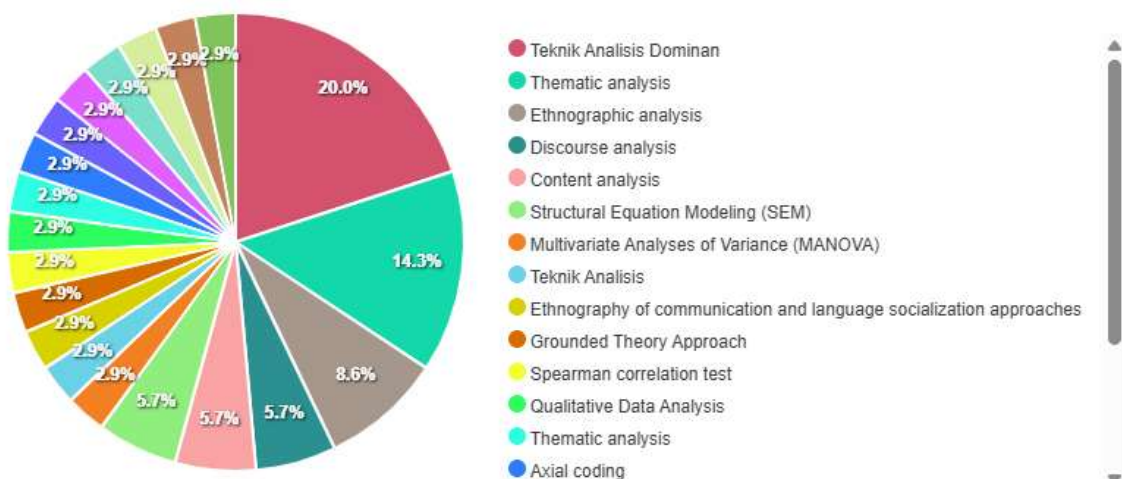


Figure 2. Classification Based on Analytical Framework

3. In-depth Thematic Analysis

Through deeper analysis, we can see that Pesantren Culture plays a central role in shaping the linguistic identity of santri. Fundamentally, pesantrens have a significant influence on integrating religious tradition into language education practices, leading not only to linguistic

mastery but also to the formation of santri character. However, the interesting aspect here is how pesantren now teach not only Arabic for religious purposes but also English, which has become a vital skill in an increasingly developed global world.

This phenomenon signifies a duality in the formation of the santri's linguistic identity: a strong command of Arabic as a symbol of religious devotion, and English viewed as a bridge to the international arena. This uniqueness creates a fascinating dynamic in which santri must balance maintaining a deep understanding of their religion with preparing to face global challenges.

Indeed, language use within pesantren is more than just linguistic learning; it is a tool for shaping a broader identity that encompasses social, cultural, and religious dimensions. This analysis reveals the rapid evolution within the pesantren education system, which is now more oriented toward integrating religious values with the demands of the times. This certainly signifies that pesantren no longer function solely as religious educational institutions but also as social spaces that assist santri in forming a multicultural linguistic identity.

4. Visualizations

The visualizations, presented as graphs and network diagrams, provide a clear picture of the interrelationships among pesantren culture, language socialization, and the linguistic identity of santri. These visualizations are highly effective at mapping the complex connections between Arabic and English and illustrating how they interact in the formation of linguistic identity. Furthermore, these visuals offer an in-depth explanation of how social and cultural influences shape the santri's language experience.

Through this visual approach, we can clearly see how in-depth Arabic instruction shapes the religious character of santri, while English offers opportunities for them to interact with the wider world. Thus, these visualizations not only depict this phenomenon but also provide crucial insights into how pesantren can adapt to the challenges of globalization.



Figure 3. The Interrelationship between Pesantren Culture, Language Socialization, and Santri's Linguistic Identity

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the existing literature reveals that pesantren culture and the linguistic identity of santri are the two dominant themes in research on language education in pesantren. These themes appear consistently across various studies, focusing on how the pesantren

environment shapes the mastery of both Arabic and English among santri. Interestingly, although Arabic holds the primary position as the language of worship, there is a growing interest in English as a response to the demands of globalization (Ahmad, 2018; Siregar, 2019). This indicates an effort by pesantren not only to preserve traditional values but also to adapt to contemporary needs, aligning with previous findings that highlight the importance of English in the pesantren curriculum (Hadi, 2020; A. Y. Firdaus & Novitasari, 2023).

Thus, these findings enrich our understanding of how pesantren, as distinctive Islamic educational institutions, play a dual role: preserving traditional cultural richness while anticipating the changes brought by modernity and globalization. On the other hand, this study offers a new perspective by highlighting the more complex phenomenon of santri's dual linguistic identity, an aspect not fully explored in previous studies.

6. Refining the Findings of Previous Studies

The concept of Language Socialization has become a dominant theory in explaining how linguistic identity is formed through social interactions within the pesantren. Unlike previous research, which often highlighted language merely as a communication tool, this study advances the theory by integrating a deeper cultural dimension. Here, the use of Arabic in pesantren is not solely a linguistic skill but also a means of reinforcing religious identity. However, what is particularly interesting in this research is the addition of English to the modern pesantren curriculum. This process, while presenting new challenges in balancing tradition with global demands, also opens the door to a broader understanding of how pesantren respond to global dynamics.

This study demonstrates that while much prior research has emphasized the use of Arabic as a factor in shaping the religious identity of santri (Aziz, 2019) The integration of English adds a new layer to their linguistic identity. This is a highly relevant finding, especially considering the deepening interconnectedness of nations in the era of globalization. For instance, research by M. I. Firdaus (2021) indicates that proficiency in English is not only important for academic purposes but also for accessing global information and developing professional competencies.

7. Theoretical Contributions and New Perspectives

In contrast to previous studies, which often overlooked the challenges santri face in constructing a harmonious bilingual identity, this research adds a new dimension by highlighting the tension between religious and global identities. This makes a significant theoretical contribution by expanding the Theory of Language Socialization, shifting the focus beyond mere language acquisition to examine how local and global values interact and co-construct linguistic identity.

Furthermore, this study introduces a perspective seldom explored: how digital media and bilingual curricula shape the formation of santri linguistic identity. In this regard, research by (Suryani, 2021) indicates that the use of digital media in modern pesantren has the potential to enhance santri language skills. However, it also introduces new challenges related to technological dependence. This is a compelling aspect that warrants deeper investigation, especially given the increasing dominance of the digital era in education worldwide, including within pesantren.

8. Implications for Future Research

Based on these findings, it is clear that there is significant potential to delve deeper into the interplay of global and local contexts in shaping the linguistic identity of santri. For instance, a comparative study of pesantrens in Indonesia and those in other countries, such as Malaysia or Egypt, could provide new insights into how cultural and social factors influence language socialization within pesantrens. This is particularly important given that pesantren are unique educational institutions with a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation.

Additionally, the integration of technology in language learning within pesantren warrants further exploration in future research. While digital technology offers substantial opportunities to support more interactive language learning, challenges persist, particularly concerning technological dependency, which may diminish the role of direct, in-person instruction characteristic of pesantren. Further research should explore how technology can be optimally utilized without sidelining the direct teaching methods that are a hallmark of the pesantren tradition (Desi Eri et al., 2025).

9. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, these findings expand Language Socialization Theory by incorporating global elements that have previously received less attention in research on pesantren. It is hoped that this study will inspire other, more inclusive theories, such as Ecological Systems Theory or Cultural Discourse Theory, to delve deeper into understanding how pesantren, as local educational institutions, adapt to global educational demands (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)(Engeström, 2001).

From a practical standpoint, the implications of this research are highly significant for the development of bilingual curricula in pesantren. Integrating Arabic and English into a balanced curriculum without compromising the pesantren's religious values is a challenge that must be addressed by pesantren administrators. Therefore, the development of innovative teaching methods that combine technology with traditional pedagogical approaches should be prioritized to create a more holistic learning experience for santri.

Conclusion

This study presents a systematic review of the literature on the role of pesantren culture in shaping santri linguistic identity, with a focus on Arabic and English. Based on the TCM (Theory, Context, Methodology) approach, the key findings indicate that Language Socialization Theory plays a crucial role in understanding how pesantren serve as a space for cultural and linguistic socialization (Patricia A., 2019; Farid & Lamb, 2020). This theory emphasizes that language learning is not merely a linguistic process but also encompasses the internalization of cultural and religious values, which are reflected in the daily practices of santri (Deniz, 2015). Geographically, most of the research is concentrated in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest network of pesantren. Studies such as those by Farid and Lamb (2020) and Sauri (2022) demonstrate that pesantren culture significantly influences the formation of santri linguistic identity through the use of Arabic as a religious language and English as a global language. This research also reflects the adaptation of pesantren to the challenges of globalization, such as the implementation of educational technology and bilingual curricula (Desi Eri et al., 2025). Interestingly, however, studies from other regions, such as Malaysia and the Middle East, reveal variations in language identity formation strategies, heavily influenced by local social and cultural contexts (Hassan, 2021; Al-Maamari, 2017).

Methodologically, qualitative approaches such as case studies, ethnography, and discourse analysis remain dominant due to their ability to deeply explore the dynamics of language socialization (Behnam & Ly, 2023; Sofyan et al., 2022). Nonetheless, a notable trend in recent research is the increasing use of mixed methods, such as surveys and interviews, which provide a more holistic understanding of language socialization in a multicultural and globalized era (Anna et al., 2025).

Overall, this review offers a comprehensive overview of how pesantren culture shapes the linguistic identity of santri, while simultaneously opening avenues for new research to address contemporary educational challenges. Although Arabic retains its central role as the language of religion, there has been a significant increase in the development of English in response to the demands of globalization (Wahyudi, 2020; Rahman A., 2023). Future challenges include developing teaching methods that balance tradition with modernity and enhancing santri digital literacy in language learning processes (Zarkasyi, 2021). This study also underscores the importance of further exploring how pesantren, as traditional educational institutions, can

contribute to the development of linguistic identity in a global context. Ultimately, this Research offers crucial insights that enrich our understanding of the relationship between religious educational culture and linguistic identity in the era of globalization.

Interestingly, future research should focus more on how pesantren traditions can be preserved while meeting the demands of modernity, particularly by integrating technology and developing bilingual curricula. One significant gap in the current research is the interaction between Arabic and English in modern pesantren, which has not yet been thoroughly explored. Given the evolving dynamics of globalization, it is essential to conduct further research on how pesantren can balance traditional lessons with the need for global language skills. Comparative studies across regions, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East, would also be highly beneficial for understanding how local cultural contexts shape the formation of santri linguistic identity. Furthermore, another major challenge is how pesantren can integrate digital literacy into language learning, especially as the digital era increasingly dominates education worldwide. Therefore, mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative research are crucial for providing a more comprehensive picture of language socialization in pesantren.

Research should also delve deeper into the role of pesantren in facilitating multilingualism and intercultural competence among santri, ensuring they are prepared to face increasingly complex global challenges. Beyond serving as a space for shaping character and religious identity, pesantren can also be a strategic venue for developing language skills relevant to the international world, particularly in an increasingly globalized and interconnected educational context.

In summary, this review makes a significant contribution to understanding how pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a vital role in shaping santri's linguistic and cultural competencies. Future research should continue to build on these insights, emphasizing the importance of balancing the preservation of local values with the adoption of global educational practices. In this way, pesantren can remain relevant in addressing future educational challenges while preserving the cultural and religious roots that have long served as a strong foundation in the lives of santri.

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