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The Role of Islamic English in Indonesian Society: Bridging Faith, Language, and Modern Identity

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Abstract

This study investigates the function of Islamic English in Indonesia, looking at its importance at the nexus of identity, language, and faith. Indonesian Muslims can engage with a worldwide audience while balancing tradition and modernity thanks to Islamic English, a linguistic phenomenon that combines Islamic values with the English language. It helps Indonesians maintain their religious identity while engaging in global discourse by acting as a medium for education, interfaith discussion, and cultural expression. Using language ethnography, content analysis, and document analysis, the study takes a qualitative approach. Translations of Islamic texts, pesantren (Islamic boarding school) curriculum, and online resources that use Islamic English to spread Islamic principles and debunk myths about Islam are some examples of data sources. The results show that Islamic English improves international communication by giving Indonesians a forum to exchange moderate interpretations of Islam, get access to global resources, and foster interfaith understanding. But there are obstacles to overcome, like a lack of resources and cultural issues. Global alliances, digital education, and standardized curricula are examples of growth opportunities. Islamic English is essential for maintaining Indonesia's religious and cultural legacy in addition to being a tool for international interaction. Indonesia shows its leadership in promoting a harmonious coexistence of faith and modernity on the international scene by adopting this language strategy.

Keywords: Islamic English, Faith and Modernity, Interfaith Dialogue, Global Communication, Cultural Preservation

Introduction

Islamic English is a linguistic movement in Indonesia that links Islamic principles with global communication. Its relevance stems from the global dominance of English and Indonesia's efforts to integrate Islamic precepts into a modern, globalized framework (Al-Attas, 1978; Crystal, 2003). The integration of English into Islamic education demonstrates Indonesia's intention to prepare students for opportunities around the world while maintaining a connection to their faith (Abdullah, 1994; Azra, 2004). For Indonesians to maintain a distinctive balance between tradition and modernity while bridging their religious identity with international relations, Islamic English has become a vital instrument. Given that English is the primary language of communication worldwide, it provides Indonesian Muslims with a means of communicating their cultural customs, beliefs, and interpretations of Islam to a larger audience. Because of this language phenomenon, Indonesia is able to promote its inclusive and moderate interpretation of Islam and participate more actively in global Islamic debate.

Indonesia solidifies its position as a pioneer in encouraging a peaceful fusion of religion and global citizenship by embracing Islamic English. The growing need for bilingualism in a

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globalized industry is another reason why English is being incorporated into Islamic education. English has been incorporated into the curricula of Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, and other Islamic establishments, giving students the tools, they need to succeed in international academic and professional settings. These schools frequently combine religious studies and English training, emphasizing both spiritual development and practical skills. This method of instruction guarantees that students can express their religion in a language that is widely understood while also preparing them for chances abroad.

Additionally, Islamic English offers a platform for dispelling myths and preconceptions about Islam. Indonesian Muslims can actively influence how the world views their faith by using English to communicate real Islamic teachings. Islamic English improves the accessibility of Islamic knowledge for audiences who are not Muslims by translating the Quran and Hadith into English and creating contemporary Islamic content for digital platforms. As a reflection of Indonesia's larger goal of serving as a bridge between civilizations and encouraging the peaceful coexistence of many cultural and religious traditions, this accessibility promotes interfaith conversation and mutual understanding.

Islamic English in Indonesia is a strategic tool for bridging the gap between Islamic teachings and the global community, allowing Indonesia to project a moderate, inclusive vision of Islam on the world stage. By combining the global reach of English with the rich cultural and religious heritage of Islam, Indonesian Muslims can communicate their beliefs and practices in a universally understood language. This not only facilitates cultural exchange but also positions Indonesia as an important player in global Islamic discourse. The use of English in Islamic education plays a dual role: it helps students gain access to global knowledge while ensuring they remain grounded in their religious identity and values.

The introduction of English into Islamic educational institutions, such as pesantren, has transformed the way students engage with both religious and secular knowledge. By acquiring proficiency in English alongside religious education, students are empowered to participate in international discussions, contribute to global academic fields, and secure jobs in diverse professional settings. This bilingual approach equips them to navigate both the spiritual and practical aspects of life, ensuring they remain relevant in a world that demands cross-cultural communication and collaboration.

Research Methodology

A. Research Design

The purpose of this study is to investigate the function and ramifications of Islamic English in Indonesian society, namely at the nexus of faith, language, and identity. It employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive and interpretive approach. To have a thorough grasp of this linguistic phenomenon, the study uses a diverse methodological framework. The study will employ linguistic ethnography to explore the ways in which Islamic English operates in diverse sociocultural and educational settings, offering valuable perspectives on its usefulness and importance. Furthermore, content analysis will be carried out to look at texts, translations, and digital resources created in Islamic English, emphasizing the ways in which this language promotes international communication and reflects Islamic principles.

B. Research Object

The following are the object of this study:

- a. Principal Items: the usage of Islamic English in academic institutions like universities and pesantrens, digital platforms that use Islamic English (e.g., social media, blogs, YouTube channels), English translations of Islamic books by

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Indonesian scholars, including the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic literature.

- b. Secondary Items: Islamic educational institutions' English integration policies and curricular materials, writings, lectures, and speeches by well-known Indonesian academics or influential people in Islamic English, Literature on the sociolinguistic and historical evolution of Islamic English in Indonesia.

C. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection use document analysis. In order to comprehend the usage and importance of Islamic English in Indonesia, this study will examine a variety of textual texts. It will look at the curricula of Islamic boarding schools and English-integrated schools, as well as translations of religious scriptures including the Quran and Hadith. Additionally, the project will look at educational materials and policies pertaining to bilingual or Islamic English instruction. Additionally, information from blogs, websites, and social media platforms that uphold Islamic principles, encourage interfaith discussion, and dispel myths about Islam will be examined.

Results and Discussion

a. Indonesian English's Historical Context

English's historical acceptance in Indonesia during and after the colonial era laid the groundwork for its current role in Islamic discourse. During Dutch colonial rule, English was a secondary language; however, following independence, it gained importance as a tool for diplomacy, education, and trade (Brown, 2003; Sneddon, 2003). Because English has been emphasized in curricula since the 1970s, it has been integrated into Islamic institutions like Pesantren (Effendy, 2003; Noor, 2012). Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama helped integrate English into religious education (Gade, 2004; Hefner, 2000).

English's historical origins in Indonesia prepared the way for its current incorporation into Islamic discourse, signifying a change from a colonial imposition to a useful tool for the advancement of the country. English was a minor communication medium during the Dutch colonial era, with Dutch being the primary language. However, English became more significant as a neutral foreign language that could support international trade, diplomacy, and access to world knowledge following Indonesia's independence in 1945. English was progressively included into Indonesia's modernization efforts as a result of this practical adoption, which enabled the country to interact with the outside world while separating from colonial ties.

The Indonesian government recognized the importance of English for international communication and economic competitiveness in the 1970s and made it a mandatory subject in schools. This approach had a big impact on Islamic education, especially at schools like Pesantren, which started incorporating English to help their pupils' minds grow. English was viewed by these Islamic boarding schools as a way to access international Islamic scholarship and resources, in addition to being a tool for secular growth. Students in pesantren might interact with modern Islamic literature, research, and global networks by studying English, which would improve their capacity to make contributions in both religious and secular domains.

The integration of religious instruction and English education was made possible in large part by Islamic groups such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. In order to provide well-rounded curriculum, these groups set up schools and programs that blended traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary disciplines like English. The

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goal of this integration was to provide pupils the tools they would need to live in a globalized environment while maintaining their religious roots. By doing this, these organizations made it possible for Muslims in Indonesia to express their opinions and ideas on a global scale, promoting a vibrant relationship between Islam, education, and worldwide communication.

English's historical acceptance in Indonesia, both during and after the colonial era, laid the groundwork for its current role in Islamic discourse. During Dutch colonial rule, English was a secondary language, but after independence, it became a tool for diplomacy, education, and trade. Since the 1970s, English has been emphasized in curricula and integrated into Islamic institutions like Pesantren. Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama helped integrate English into religious education, promoting a vibrant relationship between Islam, education, and worldwide communication. The Indonesian government recognized English's importance for international communication and economic competitiveness in the 1970s, making it a mandatory subject in schools.

From this the author will give the example from this:

1. Pesantren Incorporating English for Access to Global Islamic Scholarship:

A notable example is the Pesantren Darussalam in Blokagung, Banyuwangi, East Java, where English is taught alongside traditional Islamic subjects. This pesantren has recognized the importance of learning English to access global Islamic literature and engage in international Islamic scholarship. By providing English courses, the pesantren ensures that its students can read modern Islamic research and interact with global Muslim networks, which enhances their ability to contribute to both religious and secular discourse. This integration helps students balance their faith with the need for global communication, allowing them to participate in discussions that shape the broader Islamic community.

2. Muhammadiyah's Role in Integrating English into Religious Education:

Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, has played a significant role in promoting English within its educational institutions. For instance, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) offers programs that combine Islamic studies with English proficiency. The university's curriculum emphasizes bilingual education, where students learn to engage with both local and international Islamic scholarship in English. This approach aligns with Muhammadiyah's vision of producing graduates who can participate in global academic and professional environments without compromising their religious values. By integrating English into their educational framework, Muhammadiyah strengthens the connection between Islam and global communication, enabling its students to engage with contemporary issues from an informed and Islamic perspective.

b. How English and Islam Intersect in Indonesian Society

English has facilitated the dissemination of Islamic teachings to diverse audiences, as evidenced by the creation of Islamic English literature and the translation of religious texts (Hamid, 2015; Rahman, 1980). Since well-known people utilize English to spread

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Islamic content globally, internet channels have improved this function (Bunt, 2000; Eickelman & Anderson, 2003). Furthermore, by exposing non-Muslim listeners to Islam's inclusive beliefs, English promotes interfaith dialogue (Esposito, 2005; Zainal, 2019).

An important advancement in making Islamic teachings understandable to a wide range of people has been the translation of religious books into English. Both Muslims and non-Muslims around the world can interact with the rich traditions of Islamic knowledge through classical Islamic texts, such as translations of the Quran and Hadith. These translations are useful tools for scholarly research, individual investigation, and interfaith understanding since they frequently include annotations and essays that offer cultural and religious context. This reach is further extended by Islamic English literature, which includes anything from scholarly treatises to current observations, enabling Indonesia to offer distinctive viewpoints to the worldwide Islamic conversation.

English's significance in disseminating Islamic teachings has been enhanced by digital platforms, giving Indonesian academics and influencers access to a worldwide audience. English-language sermons, instructional materials, and theological conversations can now be shared via social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Prominent individuals use these forums to discuss current events from an Islamic perspective, promoting discussions about faith and modernity on a worldwide scale. In addition to making Islamic teachings easier to understand, this digital interaction displays Indonesia's unique Islamic character and its inclusive and moderate worldview.

Additionally, English facilitates interfaith communication and offers chances to introduce non-Muslim audiences to the global tenets of Islam. Indonesian Muslims can communicate stories that highlight Islam's inclusive and nonviolent values by speaking a language that is widely understood. This function is especially important in dispelling myths and encouraging tolerance across religious divides. English helps Indonesian Muslims to collaborate and build understanding with other populations through conferences, publications, and internet projects, further solidifying Indonesia's image as a model of interfaith tolerance and moderation in the Muslim world.

English has significantly aided in the dissemination of Islamic teachings to diverse audiences, through the creation of Islamic English literature and translation of religious texts. This has been enhanced by digital platforms, allowing Indonesian academics and influencers to reach a global audience. Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter allow for the sharing of English-language sermons, instructional materials, and theological conversations. This digital interaction promotes discussions about faith and modernity, showcasing Indonesia's unique Islamic character and its inclusive and moderate worldview. English also facilitates interfaith communication, allowing Indonesian Muslims to communicate stories that highlight Islam's inclusive values, dispelling myths, and encouraging tolerance across religious divides.

From this the author will give the example from this:

1. The Translation of the Quran and Hadith into English for Global Accessibility: A key example of using English to spread Islamic knowledge globally is the translation of the **Quran** and **Hadith** into English. One prominent translation is that of **Saheeh International**, which offers an English translation of the Quran with clear and modern language. This translation, along with accompanying notes and explanations, helps both Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide engage with Islamic texts, providing valuable insights into Islamic theology, history, and law. The availability of such translations has

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significantly contributed to the academic and interfaith dialogue, as scholars, students, and individuals from diverse backgrounds can explore Islamic teachings in English. This has made Islamic knowledge more accessible, fostering understanding among people of different faiths and cultures.

2. Digital Platforms and social media to Promote Islamic Teachings: A prominent example of how English is used to promote Islamic teachings globally is the **YouTube channel of Dr. Zakir Naik**, a well-known Islamic scholar. Dr. Naik frequently conducts lectures in English, addressing topics such as Islamic values, interfaith dialogue, and contemporary issues facing the Muslim world. His videos have reached millions of viewers across the globe, with a wide range of topics that cater to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Through digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, these English-language discussions allow Indonesian Muslims to present Islam's inclusive values and engage in meaningful conversations on faith and modernity. By using English to address global audiences, Indonesian scholars and influencers can share a moderate and peaceful interpretation of Islam, contributing to interfaith dialogue and promoting tolerance.

c. **Islamic English's Importance in Contemporary Indonesia**

Islamic English is crucial for achieving a balance between modernity and religious identity. It helps Indonesians preserve their spiritual and cultural legacy while engaging with audiences worldwide (Liddle, 1996; Madjid, 1987). It prepares students for interactions with people around the world by providing them with access to global academic resources (Abdullah, 2016; Peacock, 1978). Furthermore, it enables Indonesia to position itself as a proponent of moderate Islam in international fora (Fealy & Hooker, 2006; Ricklefs, 2001).

For Indonesians to successfully balance the demands of modernity and religious identity, Islamic English is essential. Indonesians can communicate with audiences around the world while preserving their spiritual and cultural legacy by using English as a platform to convey Islamic teachings. In a time of globalization, where preserving a unique identity frequently necessitates balancing regional customs with global standards, this duality is particularly crucial. By enabling Indonesian Muslims to express their beliefs and cultural customs in ways that are widely relatable, Islamic English helps to maintain the vibrancy and relevance of their religious identity on the international scene.

Islamic English in the classroom gives pupils access to international academic materials and possibilities, preparing them to engage in a globalized society. Indonesian students can participate in international conferences, access international scholarship, and work together on research projects by incorporating English into Islamic curricula. In addition to improving their academic and career opportunities, these experiences equip students to speak for Indonesia's distinct Islamic viewpoint in a variety of contexts. Their intellectual prowess and foundation in Islamic principles are strengthened by exposure to international discourse, allowing them to be both pious people and contemporary professionals.

Additionally, Indonesia is positioned on worldwide stages as a leading voice in support of inclusive and moderate views of Islam thanks to Islamic English. Indonesia demonstrates its approach to solving global issues, promoting peaceful coexistence, and striking a balance between faith and modernity by communicating Islamic ideas in English. By encouraging interfaith communication and collaboration, this function strengthens Indonesia's standing as a supporter of moderate Islam. Indonesia contributes

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to international debates on religion and modernity by using Islamic English to convey its vision of a peaceful and forward-thinking Muslim society that uplifts people everywhere.

Islamic English is essential for Indonesians to balance modernity and religious identity, preserving their spiritual and cultural legacy while engaging with global audiences. It prepares students for global interactions by providing access to global academic resources and enabling Indonesia to position itself as a proponent of moderate Islam. By incorporating English into Islamic curricula, students can participate in international conferences, access scholarship, and work on research projects. This exposure strengthens their intellectual prowess and foundation in Islamic principles, allowing them to be both pious and contemporary professionals. Indonesia is also positioned as a leading voice in supporting inclusive and moderate views of Islam, promoting peaceful coexistence and contributing to international debates on religion and modernity.

From this the author will give the example from this:

1. **Islamic English in Pesantren for Global Academic Engagement:** An example of Islamic English being used to provide access to global academic resources is the **Pesantren Al-Azhar** in Jakarta, which incorporates English into its curriculum alongside traditional Islamic studies. This pesantren offers a bilingual education that prepares students to engage with international academic resources and participate in global scholarly discussions. Students who graduate from such institutions often attend international conferences and collaborate on research projects, where they can represent Indonesia's distinctive Islamic viewpoint. This exposure not only strengthens their understanding of Islamic principles but also equips them with the skills needed to navigate the modern academic and professional world, ensuring they can be both devout and globally engaged.
2. **Indonesia's Role in Promoting Moderate Islam Through Digital Platforms:** Another example is the use of digital platforms by Indonesian Islamic scholars, such as **Prof. Azyumardi Azra**, who has actively used English to address global audiences on issues related to Islam and modernity. Prof. Azra's English-language publications and public lectures have contributed to the global conversation on Islam, promoting Indonesia's moderate and inclusive interpretation of the faith. His work, alongside other Indonesian scholars who engage in English-language forums, helps to position Indonesia as a leading advocate for a peaceful and progressive approach to Islam, balancing religious identity with the demands of modernity. These efforts strengthen Indonesia's role in international interfaith dialogues and reinforce its position as a proponent of moderate Islam on the global stage.

d. Opportunities and Difficulties in Advancing Islamic English

Promoting Islamic English is hampered by a lack of resources and worries about cultural dilution. However, these are counterbalanced by opportunities including worldwide partnerships, online learning resources, and Indonesia's growing participation in the global Islamic conversation. Cooperation can standardize curricula and enhance teacher preparation (Baker, 2015; Wardhaugh, 2006).

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The worry about cultural dilution is one of the major obstacles to spreading Islamic English. Opponents fear that giving English priority could obscure the value of traditional languages like Arabic, the Islamic holy language, or Indonesia's diverse range of regional tongues. Because it is necessary to comprehend the Quran and Hadith in their original versions, Arabic has a special place in Islamic education. It takes careful curriculum design that honors both religious and cultural objectives to strike a balance between teaching English and preserving these language traditions. Instead of replacing traditional languages, addressing these issues entails highlighting English's complementary function as a tool for global participation.

Lack of resources and trained teachers who can teach English with an Islamic focus provide another difficulty. Due to limited availability to qualified teachers and instructional resources, many Islamic schools, particularly those in rural areas, struggle to include English into their curricula. The uniform application of Islamic English instruction throughout the nation is hampered by this disparity. The creation of culturally relevant instructional materials and the development of specialized training programs for educators are essential steps in addressing this challenge. These initiatives can guarantee that English teaching satisfies the demands of various student populations while still being consistent with Islamic principles.

There are plenty of chances to promote Islamic English in spite of these obstacles. International partnerships with Islamic educational institutions and organizations have the potential to revolutionize curriculum standardization and teacher development. Partnerships can promote exchange programs, give educators access to top-notch materials, and support their professional growth. Furthermore, students in faraway locations can now obtain Islamic English instruction thanks to digital learning resources including virtual classrooms, smartphone apps, and e-learning platforms. By taking advantage of these chances, Islamic English can become more widely accepted and of higher quality, strengthening Indonesia's position in the global Islamic conversation and enabling its young people to prosper in an interconnected world.

Promoting Islamic English faces challenges such as lack of resources and concerns about cultural dilution. Opponents argue that prioritizing English could overlook the importance of traditional languages like Arabic and Indonesia's regional languages. To address these issues, curriculum design should balance teaching English with preserving these languages. Limited resources and trained teachers in Islamic schools hinder uniform application of English instruction. However, international partnerships and digital learning resources can help standardize curricula and enhance teacher preparation. These opportunities can strengthen Indonesia's position in the global Islamic conversation and enable its youth to thrive in an interconnected world.

From this the author will give the example from this:

1. **Balancing English and Arabic in Islamic Education:** A practical example of balancing English with traditional languages is seen in **Pesantren Modern Gontor** in East Java. Gontor is known for its bilingual curriculum that integrates both Arabic and English. While Arabic remains central to the religious curriculum, especially for studying the Quran and Hadith, the pesantren also incorporates English into its programs. This approach ensures that students maintain a strong foundation in the religious texts in their original languages, while also gaining proficiency in English for global communication and academic opportunities. The school's curriculum design allows for the complementary roles

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of both languages—Arabic for religious understanding and English for modern academic and professional engagement—without diluting the importance of either.

2. **Digital Learning Platforms Expanding Access to Islamic English:** An example of utilizing digital learning resources to promote Islamic English is **Islamic Online University (IOU)**, which offers a variety of courses in Islamic studies in English. This platform provides access to quality Islamic education for students across Indonesia, including remote areas, where access to formal Islamic schools may be limited. Through online courses, students can learn about Islamic principles in English while also interacting with global Islamic scholars and peers. The availability of these digital resources ensures that students from diverse backgrounds, including those in rural or underserved regions, can engage in global Islamic discourse and improve their English proficiency, thus addressing the resource gaps that hinder traditional Islamic school.

Conclusions

Islamic English enhances Muslim communities locally and internationally by demonstrating Indonesia's capacity to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. Indonesia can dispel myths about Islam and promote better cross-cultural understanding by utilizing its potential (Woodward, 2012; Millie, 2017; Yusoff, 2021).

Islamic English is a linguistic bridge that benefits Muslim communities locally and internationally, embodying Indonesia's creative approach to balancing tradition and advancement. Indonesia shows how faith and modernity may coexist without sacrificing identity by communicating Islamic ideals and cultural heritage in English. Through this dual involvement, Indonesians can contribute to the global Islamic debate by sharing their distinctive Islamic traditions and moderate viewpoints. In order to ensure that Indonesia's voice is heard across cultural divides while maintaining its religious validity, Islamic English uses translations, educational programs, and internet channels.

This language technique is also essential for dispelling myths about Islam around the world. Indonesia helps to dispel misconceptions and promote a more accurate understanding of Islam by providing genuine Islamic teachings in English. By promoting intercultural communication and creating links between Muslim and non-Muslim populations, the use of English broadens the audience for Indonesia's inclusive and nonviolent vision of Islam. By fostering tolerance and understanding across various cultural and religious groups, this initiative not only solidifies Indonesia's position as a pioneer in advancing moderate Islam but also advances world peace.

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