

Value-Based Strategic Language Management in Islamic Boarding Schools: Negotiating Communicative Competence and Religious Identity in English Language Programs

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing interest in English-language education in faith-based institutions, limited attention has been given to how language policy and strategic leadership shape communicative competence in religious educational settings. This study investigates the strategic management of English language programs in an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, focusing on the integration of language policy, institutional leadership, and Islamic values in developing students' communicative competence. Employing a qualitative single-case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving 15 participants, including institutional leaders, teachers, language coordinators, and students. The findings reveal that English language programs are strategically managed through value-based language policy, leadership alignment, environmental language regulation, and Islamic moral education. English is positioned not merely as an instructional subject but as an identity-compatible communicative practice embedded within the institution's religious mission and daily social life. Institutional leaders play a central role in sustaining communicative practices through policy reinforcement, symbolic participation, and structured language environments extending beyond classroom instruction. The study contributes to language policy and communicative competence scholarship through the concept of value-based strategic language management, demonstrating that communicative competence in faith-based educational settings is socially and ideologically mediated rather than culturally neutral. The findings also provide insights for educational leaders seeking to balance global communicative demands with institutional religious identity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing status of English as a global lingua franca has transformed contemporary understandings of communicative competence in education (Petosi & Karras, 2020; Yue et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2025). Current scholarship argues that communicative competence no longer refers solely to grammatical and sociolinguistic proficiency but also to the ability to negotiate meaning across intercultural, multilingual, and ideologically diverse contexts where English functions as a shared communicative resource rather than a native-speaker norm (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Seidlhofer & Jenkins, 2003; Mendes de Oliveira, 2024). This development has positioned English language education within broader debates on language policy,

institutional identity, and educational governance, particularly in contexts where global educational demands intersect with strong cultural and religious traditions (Spolsky, 2021; Fitriati & Rata, 2021; Fudiyartanto, 2024). In faith-based educational institutions, the implementation of English is therefore not merely pedagogical but also strategic and ideological, as institutional leaders must balance the promotion of global communicative competence with the preservation of religious values and identity.

These tensions are particularly evident in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which have increasingly expanded their educational orientation to accommodate global academic and communicative demands, including English language education. Although *pesantren* were historically established as centers of Islamic learning and moral formation, many have gradually integrated modern curricula and international communication practices into their educational systems. However, incorporating English into religious educational settings often raises concerns regarding cultural preservation, religious authority, and value-based education. Similar tensions have also been identified in other faith-based educational systems, including Catholic, Jewish, and Hindu schools, where global educational agendas frequently intersect with institutional religious traditions and ideological commitments (Pohl, 2011; D'Agostino & Asadullah, 2025). Existing studies suggest that such challenges extend beyond classroom pedagogy and involve broader negotiations between modernity, institutional governance, and religious identity.

Despite the growing international discussion on language policy and educational leadership in faith-based institutions, *pesantren* remain underrepresented in the literature. Existing research on English language learning in Islamic educational settings has predominantly focused on teaching strategies, classroom interaction, and students' communicative outcomes (Sadiq, 2024). Parallel studies in language policy have examined how institutions regulate language use to align with sociocultural identities (Spolsky, 2021), while educational leadership research has emphasized the role of strategic management in aligning educational programs with institutional vision and values (Evers & Kneyber, 2015). Nevertheless, these strands of scholarship largely remain disconnected. Research on English education in *pesantren* rarely examines how institutional leaders strategically formulate and implement language policies within a value-based educational system. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how *pesantren* leaders negotiate the tension between global communicative demands and the preservation of Islamic identity through institutional language management.

This gap is significant because *pesantren* represent a distinctive educational ecosystem in which leadership, policy, culture, and religious life are deeply interconnected. In such contexts, English language programs cannot be understood solely as instructional initiatives but must be viewed as institutional and ideological practices shaped by leadership decisions, moral objectives, and religious missions. Strategic management in *pesantren*, therefore, involves more than curriculum administration or teacher supervision; it encompasses aligning language policy with institutional vision, communal values, and long-term educational goals (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Penney, 2023; Yang & Jimenez-Luque, 2025). From a language policy perspective, English functions not merely as an academic subject but also as a socially regulated communicative practice embedded within institutional culture and religious norms (Paulsrud & Rosén, 2019; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2020). Accordingly, the effectiveness of English language programs depends on how institutional leaders construct supportive linguistic environments that facilitate communicative interaction while maintaining religious identity and authority structures.

To address this gap, the present study examines English language programs in *pesantren* through an integrated perspective on strategic leadership, language policy, and value-based education. Specifically, this study investigates how institutional leaders strategically manage English language programs to reconcile global communicative competence with the preservation of Islamic values and institutional identity. Unlike previous studies that primarily conceptualize English learning as a pedagogical issue, this research positions language education as a value-based, strategic language management shaped by institutional governance, leadership practices, and religious missions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on language policy and educational leadership by extending discussions of strategic language management into faith-based educational contexts. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to design English language programs that simultaneously support global competence and sustain institutional religious identity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single-case design to investigate how strategic leadership and language policy are enacted in the management of English language programs at an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore institutional processes, leadership practices, and value-based educational dynamics situated within a specific

sociocultural and religious context (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Tisdell et al., 2025). In educational leadership and language policy research, qualitative inquiry enables researchers to examine how institutional actors interpret policies, negotiate values, and construct educational practices in naturally occurring settings.

The case study approach was selected because it allows an in-depth investigation of contemporary phenomena within a bounded institutional system where organizational processes and contextual factors are closely interconnected (Yin, 2018). This study specifically adopted a single-case design because the selected *pesantren* represents an information-rich case that has systematically institutionalized English language development within a strongly value-oriented Islamic educational environment. The institution has implemented formal language regulations, English-speaking programs, and structured communicative activities as part of its broader educational mission. Accordingly, the case provided a relevant context for examining how institutional leaders strategically negotiate the relationship between global communicative competence and the preservation of Islamic identity.

2.2 Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at a *pesantren* in Indonesia recognized for integrating English language development into both formal instruction and students' daily communicative practices. The institution was purposively selected because it actively promotes the use of English while simultaneously maintaining strong Islamic educational traditions, moral discipline, and religious authority structures. This characteristic made the *pesantren* particularly suitable for examining value-based strategic language management within a faith-based educational context.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals directly involved in the planning, implementation, supervision, and experience of the English language program (Patton, 2014). A total of 15 participants were involved in this study, including three institutional leaders (a principal and two program directors), four English teachers, three language program coordinators, and five students actively engaged in the English-speaking environment. These participants were selected based on their institutional responsibilities, direct involvement in language policy implementation, and experiences in managing or participating in the English language program. To enhance the depth and credibility of the findings, participant selection also considered variation in institutional roles and experiences. This variation enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives on leadership strategies, language regulation practices, communicative activities, and the integration of Islamic values within the English-language environment.

2.3 Researcher Positionality

The researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation. Therefore, reflexivity was maintained throughout the study to minimize subjective bias and strengthen analytical transparency. The researcher entered the research setting as a non-administrative external observer and did not hold any formal authority within the *pesantren*. This position facilitated relatively open interactions with participants while allowing the researcher to observe institutional practices from a critical perspective. Throughout the research process, the researcher continuously reflected on personal assumptions, interpretations, and interactions with participants during data collection and analysis. Reflexive notes were maintained to document emerging interpretations, potential biases, and contextual observations. This reflexive process was important for ensuring that the findings were grounded in participants' experiences and institutional realities rather than solely shaped by the researcher's perspectives.

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected over three months through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and provided a comprehensive understanding of strategic language management practices within the *pesantren*.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their perspectives regarding institutional leadership, language policy implementation, communicative practices, and the integration of Islamic values within the English language program. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure participants could express their experiences and perspectives more naturally and comprehensively. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Follow-up questions were used to clarify emerging issues and deepen the exploration of institutional practices.

Non-participant observations were conducted in both instructional and non-instructional settings, including classrooms, dormitory environments, language activities, and daily communicative interactions among students and teachers. A total of 12 observation sessions were carried out during the fieldwork period. Observations focused on language interaction patterns, institutional language regulations, communicative

activities, and the enactment of Islamic values within English-speaking practices. Detailed field notes were recorded immediately after each observation session.

Document analysis was also employed to examine institutional documents related to the English language program and educational governance. These documents included curriculum guidelines, institutional regulations, student language rules, program schedules, vision and mission statements, and internal reports concerning language activities. Document analysis provided additional insights into how English language development was formally framed within the *pesantren*'s institutional mission and policy structure.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection following an iterative thematic analysis procedure. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while observation field notes and institutional documents were compiled into an integrated qualitative dataset. Coding and thematic categorization were conducted manually through an iterative comparative process to ensure close engagement with the data.

The analysis combined inductive and theoretically informed approaches. Initial coding emerged inductively from participants' narratives and observed institutional practices, while the conceptual frameworks informed the interpretation of broader themes of strategic leadership, language policy, and communicative competence. This analytical strategy enabled the study to remain grounded in participants' experiences while also connecting the findings to broader theoretical discussions.

The first stage involved open coding, during which the researcher repeatedly read interview transcripts, field notes, and institutional documents to identify meaningful units of information and recurring patterns. Initial codes included leadership coordination, language regulation, communicative discipline, value integration, institutional control, and English-speaking practices. The second stage involved axial coding, where related codes were grouped into broader conceptual categories to identify relationships among institutional leadership, language policy, and communicative practices. Through this process, the researcher examined how leadership decisions, institutional rules, and religious values collectively shaped the English language environment within the *pesantren*. The final stage involved selective coding, in which broader categories were synthesized into overarching themes representing the mechanisms of value-based strategic language management. Several major themes emerged from the analysis, including strategic alignment of leadership, value-integrated language policy, institutional language regulation, and the construction of a controlled linguistic environment that supports communicative competence while preserving Islamic identity.

Throughout the analytical process, data from interviews, observations, and institutional documents were continuously compared to strengthen interpretive consistency and analytical rigor. This iterative process enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of how strategic management and language policy operate within the *pesantren*'s sociocultural and religious ecosystem.

2.6 Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed several strategies based on the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement at the research site over three months, enabling the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the *pesantren*'s institutional culture, leadership dynamics, and daily communicative practices. Methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating interviews, observations, and document analysis to verify the consistency of findings across multiple sources of evidence.

Member checking was conducted by returning preliminary interpretations and thematic summaries to several participants, particularly institutional leaders and teachers, to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the findings. Participants' feedback was incorporated into refining thematic interpretations and contextual descriptions. Dependability was strengthened through the maintenance of a detailed audit trail documenting data collection procedures, coding processes, analytical decisions, and theme development throughout the study. Peer debriefing sessions with fellow researchers were also conducted to review coding categories and thematic interpretations, thereby minimizing potential researcher bias and enhancing analytical consistency. Confirmability was ensured by grounding all interpretations in empirical evidence from interview transcripts, field observation notes, and institutional documents. Reflexive memos were maintained throughout the study to monitor the researcher's assumptions and analytical decisions. Transferability was supported by providing rich and thick descriptions of the institutional setting, participant characteristics, leadership structures, and language practices, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to similar faith-based educational contexts.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent after receiving detailed explanations of the objectives, procedures, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any negative consequences. To protect participants' privacy and institutional confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in all interview transcripts, field notes, and research reports. Identifiable information related to participants and the institution was removed or anonymized throughout the reporting process. All digital data, including interview recordings and transcripts, was securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

3. RESULTS

The findings reveal that the English language program in the *pesantren* is strategically managed through the integration of institutional leadership, value-based language policy, environmental language regulation, and Islamic moral education. The analysis identified four interconnected themes: (1) value-integrated language policy, (2) strategic leadership alignment, (3) institutional regulation of communicative practices, and (4) the integration of Islamic values into English language learning. Together, these themes demonstrate how English language development is positioned not merely as an instructional program but as a strategically regulated institutional practice embedded within the *pesantren's* religious and educational mission.

3.1 Value-Integrated Language Policy

The findings indicate that English language policy in the *pesantren* is formally embedded within the institution's Islamic educational vision. English was not positioned solely as an academic subject but as a regulated communicative practice designed to support students' global competence while preserving Islamic identity and moral discipline. Institutional leaders consistently framed English language development as part of the *pesantren's* broader mission of character formation and religious education.

One institutional leader explained: "*English here is not only a subject, but part of how we prepare students to face the outside world without leaving Islamic values.*" Similarly, the principal emphasized that language policy was institutionally connected to the *pesantren's* moral and educational objectives: "*English is part of our institutional mission. It is regulated in the same way as religious activities because both shape students' character.*"

Document analysis demonstrated that English-speaking regulations were formally incorporated into institutional policies alongside religious routines and dormitory discipline. Institutional documents, student handbooks, and language schedules showed that English Day policies and designated English-speaking zones were regulated together with worship schedules and religious activities. Observation data further confirmed that language regulations were publicly displayed on dormitory notice boards adjacent to schedules for prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and other religious activities. These findings suggest that English language policy in the *pesantren* operates as an extension of the institution's value system rather than as an isolated pedagogical initiative. The integration of language regulations with religious routines indicates that communicative competence is conceptualized within a broader framework of moral discipline, institutional identity, and value-based education.

3.2 Strategic Leadership Alignment in Language Policy Implementation

The findings further demonstrate that institutional leadership played a central role in translating language policy into everyday communicative practices. Leadership involvement extended beyond administrative decision-making to include direct participation in language activities, continuous supervision, and the symbolic reinforcement of English as part of the institution's educational mission.

Teachers consistently described leadership support as a significant factor sustaining the implementation of the English program. One teacher stated: "*The leaders often remind us that habituating students to speak English is part of the institution's mandate, so we feel fully supported.*" Another teacher similarly explained: "*The leaders do not just make rules. They come to language activities and remind students that speaking English is part of our responsibility here.*"

Observational data confirmed the active involvement of institutional leaders in language-related activities. Leaders were frequently present during English speech competitions, language club meetings, and public speaking sessions. The institution also allocated dedicated facilities to support language development, including a language activity center for debates, vocabulary practice, and communicative training sessions. The findings indicate that strategic leadership in the *pesantren* functioned not only through formal policy formulation but also through symbolic presence, institutional supervision, and continuous reinforcement of communicative practices. Leadership alignment was therefore essential to sustaining the legitimacy and

consistency of the English-language environment within the broader framework of Islamic educational governance.

3.3 Institutional Regulation of English Communicative Practices

The boarding school environment enabled the institutional regulation of English use beyond formal classroom instruction. English communicative practices were systematically integrated into students' daily routines through designated language zones, scheduled English-speaking periods, and disciplinary mechanisms intended to habituate students to regular communicative interaction.

Students reported that English use was regulated through institutional rules governing specific locations and times within the *pesantren* environment. One student explained: *"In certain areas and on certain days, we must use English. If we do not, there is a light sanction."* Field observations documented spontaneous English interactions among students in communal spaces such as dormitory corridors, cafeterias, study halls, and school yards. Students were observed greeting peers, asking for assistance, and engaging in casual discussions using English during designated language periods. These communicative practices were reinforced through institutional monitoring conducted by language coordinators and student committees responsible for supervising language discipline.

Document analysis further demonstrated that these language regulations were formally codified within student handbooks and dormitory rules. The institutionalization of English-speaking zones and scheduled language practices indicates that communicative competence was strategically cultivated through environmental regulation rather than solely through classroom instruction. Figure 1 presents one of the institutional language regulation boards displayed in the *pesantren* environment.



Figure 1. English Day Regulation Board in the *Pesantren* Environment

The board contained language-use regulations, daily English-speaking schedules, motivational expressions, and vocabulary exercises designed to encourage students' participation in English communicative practices. The placement of the board within communal student spaces reflects how English language development was embedded into the *pesantren's* daily social environment. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that English language learning in the *pesantren* was managed through a controlled linguistic environment that extended beyond formal pedagogy into students' everyday communal life. The institutional regulation of communicative practices functioned as a strategic mechanism for developing communicative competence while maintaining institutional discipline and collective identity.

3.4 Integration of Islamic Values into English Language Practices

The findings also reveal that English communicative practices were consistently integrated with Islamic moral values and religious teachings. English learning activities were designed not only to improve students' communicative competence but also to reinforce Islamic character formation and moral awareness.

One teacher explained: *"We design conversations around moral values and religious life so students learn English without losing their identity."* Classroom observations showed that communicative activities frequently incorporated themes of honesty, respect for parents, discipline, worship, and Islamic social ethics. Students were encouraged to discuss religious values, moral experiences, and daily Islamic practices using English during speaking activities, presentations, and classroom discussions.

The following classroom interaction illustrates how English communicative practice was integrated with Islamic value transmission during an observed speaking session:

Teacher: *"Why is honesty important in our daily life?"*

Student: *“Honesty is important because Islam teaches us always to tell the truth. If we are honest, people will trust us.”*

Teacher: *“Why do we learn English while discussing these values?”*

Student: *“Because we can practice English and at the same time remember Islamic teachings.”*

This interaction demonstrates that English learning was positioned as a means of reinforcing religious identity and moral reflection rather than solely as linguistic mastery. Teachers functioned simultaneously as language facilitators and moral educators, guiding students to connect communicative practices with Islamic ethical principles. Students also reported that the regulated language environment contributed to increased confidence in speaking English. One student explained: *“Because we use English regularly here, I feel more confident speaking than before.”*

Observation data similarly showed increased student participation during English debates, speeches, and classroom discussions. Teachers noted that students gradually became more willing to communicate in English as regular exposure and institutional habituation reduced anxiety and increased communicative confidence. The findings indicate that communicative competence in the *pesantren* was constructed through the interaction of institutional leadership, language policy, environmental regulation, and Islamic moral education. English language development was therefore not treated merely as a technical linguistic objective but as part of a broader institutional strategy aimed at producing globally competent students grounded in Islamic values and religious identity.

4. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that English language programs in the *pesantren* are strategically managed through the intersection of language policy, strategic leadership, environmental regulation, and Islamic value-based education. The findings indicate that communicative competence in this context is not constructed solely as linguistic proficiency but as a form of morally and institutionally regulated communication embedded within the *pesantren*'s religious mission. These findings reinforce previous scholarship arguing that language policy in faith-based educational institutions cannot be separated from institutional ideology, cultural identity, and educational governance (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014; Wiley & García, 2016; Spolsky, 2021; Bonacina-Pugh, 2020). However, the present study extends this discussion by showing how strategic language management in *pesantren* operates through an integrated institutional ecosystem where leadership practices, environmental control, and religious values collectively shape students' communicative experiences.

More importantly, the study challenges universalist assumptions underlying conventional communicative competence frameworks that often position language learning as ideologically neutral and culturally transferable. The findings suggest that communicative competence in the *pesantren* is reconceptualized as identity-compatible competence, in which English communication is legitimized through alignment with Islamic ethics, institutional discipline, and communal values. In this sense, English is not merely adopted as a global lingua franca but strategically localized within a religious educational framework. This finding contributes to growing debates in multilingual and intercultural communication research emphasizing that communicative competence is always socially situated, ideologically mediated, and contextually negotiated (Canagarajah, 2020; Kubota, 2020).

4.1 Language Policy as Value-Based Institutional Governance

The findings reveal that English language policy in the *pesantren* functions as a mechanism of value-based institutional governance rather than merely a pedagogical arrangement. English-speaking regulations were formally integrated into institutional routines, dormitory discipline, and religious activities, indicating that language policy operates within the *pesantren*'s broader moral and educational system. This finding strongly aligns with Bernard Spolsky's contemporary view that language policy encompasses language ideology, language management, and language practices operating simultaneously within institutions (Spolsky, 2021). However, the present study extends this framework by demonstrating that in Islamic boarding schools, language ideology is not only implicitly embedded but formally institutionalized through religious governance structures and moral regulation.

The integration of English-speaking schedules alongside worship activities suggests that communicative practices are strategically framed as part of students' moral and character formation. This finding resonates with recent studies in faith-based education, which show that language policy in religious institutions frequently serves as a tool for identity preservation and moral socialization rather than solely for communicative efficiency (Motha, 2014; Forbes & Rutgers, 2021). Within the *pesantren* context, English

becomes a morally regulated communicative resource through which students are expected to engage with globalization without detaching themselves from Islamic identity.

This finding also contributes to broader discussions concerning the relationship between globalization and local educational identity. Previous studies frequently portray global English as potentially threatening local cultural and religious traditions (Pennycook, 2004; Dafouz, 2018). However, the findings of this study indicate that the *pesantren* strategically negotiates this tension by redefining English as compatible with Islamic educational values. Consequently, globalization is not passively accepted but selectively localized through institutional policy and religious framing. This reflects what recent language policy scholars describe as localized language globalization, in which global linguistic resources are adapted according to local ideological and cultural priorities (Canagarajah, 2020).

The study, therefore, proposes the concept of value-based strategic language management to explain how faith-based educational institutions regulate language practices by integrating institutional ideology, religious values, and educational leadership. This concept expands existing language policy scholarship by demonstrating that strategic language management in religious institutions extends beyond technical language planning toward broader processes of identity governance and moral regulation.

4.2 Strategic Leadership and the Sustainability of Language Policy

Another important finding concerns the central role of strategic leadership in sustaining language policy implementation. Institutional leaders were actively involved not only in establishing language regulations but also in supervising communicative activities, allocating resources, and symbolically reinforcing the legitimacy of English within the *pesantren* environment. This finding supports contemporary educational leadership research, which emphasizes that institutional transformation depends on the alignment among organizational vision, leadership practice, and policy enactment (Bush, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The active presence of leaders in language clubs, public speaking programs, and communicative activities suggests that leadership in the *pesantren* functions simultaneously as structural management and symbolic cultural reinforcement. This finding aligns with studies on instructional and transformational leadership showing that sustained educational change often depends on leaders' visible engagement in institutional practices rather than formal policy documents alone (Leithwood et al., 2020; Tian & Huber, 2020). In the present study, leadership participation contributed to the normalization of English as part of institutional identity and collective responsibility.

The provision of dedicated language facilities and continuous monitoring also indicates that strategic management in the *pesantren* operates through both material and symbolic dimensions. This finding supports arguments from strategic educational management scholarship that effective institutional leadership requires integrating organizational structures, cultural values, and educational goals into coherent policy practices (Davies & Davies, 2006; Deeboonmee & Ariratana, 2014; Carvalho et al., 2021). Thus, communicative competence development in the *pesantren* was sustained not merely through classroom pedagogy but through institution-wide leadership alignment.

At the same time, the findings reveal a critical tension between institutional regulation and learner autonomy. The highly structured language environment strengthened consistency in communicative exposure but also potentially limited opportunities for spontaneous communicative agency. This reflects ongoing debates within language education research regarding the balance between structured language management and learner-centered communicative interaction (Richards, 2006; Norton, 2013). Nevertheless, unlike in many secular educational contexts, where institutional control is often resisted, students and teachers in the *pesantren* largely accepted language regulation because shared religious and institutional values legitimized it. This suggests that leadership legitimacy in faith-based educational institutions may differ from that in mainstream educational settings, given the greater integration of moral authority and institutional governance.

4.3 Environmental Regulation and Communicative Habituation

The findings further demonstrate that communicative competence in the *pesantren* is strategically developed through environmental regulation and communicative habituation extending beyond classroom boundaries. English-speaking zones, scheduled language periods, monitoring systems, and institutional sanctions collectively created a linguistically regulated ecosystem in which students were continuously exposed to communicative interaction in daily life. This finding strongly supports ecological approaches to language learning, emphasizing that language acquisition emerges through sustained participation in socially organized environments and meaningful interactional affordances (van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2020).

The *pesantren* environment functioned as an institutional linguistic ecology in which communicative practices were embedded in dormitory routines, communal interaction, and students' everyday social experiences. This finding aligns with recent studies in sociocultural second language acquisition, which

emphasize that repeated participation in socially mediated interaction facilitates the internalization of communicative behavior and increases learners' linguistic confidence (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). The findings therefore suggest that communicative competence in the *pesantren* is cultivated not only through instructional input but through continuous environmental exposure and institutional habituation.

An important aspect of the findings concerns the role of institutional regulation in shaping communicative behavior. The implementation of sanctions and language-monitoring systems reflects what language policy scholars describe as institutional language management, in which linguistic behavior is regulated through formal corrective mechanisms (Bonacina-Pugh, 2020; Johnson, 2023). However, observational findings also revealed that students gradually engaged in spontaneous English interactions in communal spaces, despite the environment's initially regulated nature. This suggests that repeated institutional exposure eventually contributed to the naturalization of communicative practices rather than simple compliance with formal rules.

The visibility of English within the *pesantren*'s linguistic landscape also played an important role in reinforcing institutional ideology. English Day boards, motivational signs, and public language schedules symbolically normalized English use within students' social environment. This finding supports contemporary research on linguistic landscapes, which shows that material and semiotic artifacts significantly influence language behavior, identity formation, and institutional culture in multilingual educational settings (Shohamy & Gorter, 2008; Malinowski et al., 2023; Tufi & Peck, 2025). Nevertheless, the findings also highlight a pedagogical challenge regarding the balance between regulation and communicative flexibility. While institutional discipline increased communicative exposure and consistency, excessive regulation may potentially restrict learners' communicative creativity and intercultural adaptability. This suggests that future language policy practices in faith-based educational institutions should consider balancing structured habituation with opportunities for more open-ended communicative engagement.

4.4 Islamic Values and the Reconstruction of Communicative Competence

One of the most significant findings of this study is that communicative competence in the *pesantren* is reconstructed through the integration of English learning and Islamic moral education. Classroom interactions consistently incorporated themes of honesty, respect, discipline, worship, and moral responsibility, indicating that English instruction served simultaneously as communicative training and ethical formation. This finding extends communicative competence theory by demonstrating that communicative effectiveness in faith-based educational contexts is inseparable from moral and identity-oriented considerations.

Traditional models of communicative competence have largely emphasized linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 2018). However, recent scholarship increasingly argues that communicative competence should also account for identity negotiation, intercultural positioning, and ideological context (Kubota, 2020; Pennycook, 2004). The present study contributes to this discussion by proposing that communicative competence in the *pesantren* can be understood as value-integrated communicative competence, where successful communication involves not only linguistic appropriateness but also alignment with Islamic moral values and institutional norms.

The classroom interactions observed in this study further support sociocultural theories of language learning, emphasizing that meaning-making occurs through mediated social interaction (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Teachers functioned simultaneously as language facilitators and moral mediators, scaffolding students' communicative practices alongside ethical reflection. Students were encouraged not merely to produce grammatically correct English but also to articulate Islamic moral reasoning and religious understanding through communicative interaction. This demonstrates that language learning in the *pesantren* operates through a hybrid pedagogical model combining communicative language teaching, sociocultural mediation, and value-based education.

Importantly, students did not perceive English learning as contradictory to their Islamic identity. Instead, they viewed English as a communicative resource compatible with religious commitment and moral discipline. This finding supports recent studies in multilingual and faith-based education, showing that identity-compatible language-learning environments tend to enhance learners' confidence, participation, and communicative willingness (Wiley & García, 2016; Norton, 2013). The increased communicative confidence reported by students, therefore, appears closely connected to the *pesantren*'s ability to frame English within students' existing religious and cultural identities.

At the same time, the findings reveal an important pedagogical complexity. While the integration of Islamic values strengthened contextual relevance and learner engagement, it may also narrow students' exposure to broader intercultural communicative topics commonly encountered in global English communication. This suggests the need for pedagogical models capable of balancing localized moral identity

with broader intercultural communicative competence. Such balance is increasingly important in contemporary English education, where learners are expected to navigate both local identity commitments and global communicative environments. This study contributes theoretically to language policy, communicative competence, and educational leadership scholarship by demonstrating how faith-based educational institutions strategically negotiate globalization through localized forms of language governance. The findings indicate that communicative competence is not universally constructed but is socially, ideologically, and institutionally mediated by the values and identities embedded in particular educational contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the strategic management of English language programs in the *pesantren* operates through the integration of value-based language policy, strategic leadership, environmental regulation, and Islamic moral education within the institution's broader religious mission. The findings reveal that communicative competence is constructed not merely as linguistic proficiency but as an identity-compatible communicative practice shaped by institutional ideology, religious values, and daily social interaction. Institutional leaders play a central role in sustaining this process through policy reinforcement, symbolic participation, and the creation of structured communicative environments extending beyond classroom instruction. The study further shows that English language learning in the *pesantren* serves as both communicative training and moral formation, enabling students to engage with global communication while maintaining their Islamic identity. Theoretically, this study contributes to language policy and communicative competence scholarship through the concept of value-based strategic language management, highlighting that communicative competence in faith-based educational settings is socially and ideologically mediated rather than culturally neutral. Practically, the findings offer insights for educational leaders seeking to develop English language programs that balance global communicative demands with institutional identity and moral values. More broadly, this study highlights how faith-based educational institutions can strategically negotiate globalization while preserving their cultural and ideological foundations.

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