# Unveiling the Role of English for Academic Purposes in Multilingual Pesantren Education: A Needs Analysis

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## Abstract

**Purpose** - Pesantren, as Indonesia's longstanding Islamic boarding schools, have traditionally prioritized Arabic for religious instruction. However, in response to global academic demands, many pesantren are now adopting multilingual approaches, including the integration of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This study aims to analyze the specific

linguistic needs of pesantren students to inform the design of EAP curricula tailored to multilingual Islamic education contexts. **Methods** - Employing a descriptive qualitative ethnographic method, the research collected data through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and observations involving 30 randomly selected university students and institutional stakeholders in an East Java pesantren. **Findings** – The findings reveal that multilingualism in pesantren fosters cognitive flexibility, intercultural competence, and religious-literacy development, but it also presents substantial challenges for acquiring academic English proficiency. **Research implications / limitations** -This study highlights the importance of conducting rigorous needs analysis for EAP course design in pesantren and offers practical insights for improving curriculum design, language policy, and teacher preparation. Limitations include the contextual focus on a single pesantren university and the absence of a comparative multilingual education model.**Originality** - The study's originality lies in its integration of EAP with Islamic multilingual education, a combination underexplored in current literature. It provides a framework for enhancing pesantren students' academic readiness in both local and global contexts.

**Keywords**: *Academic Empowerment; English for Academic Purposes; Multilingual Education in Pesantren; Needs Analysis.*

## INTRODUCTION

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) involves a specialized approach to studying English that supports learners in their academic endeavors, whether they are studying, researching, or teaching. The primary aim is to develop critical skills essential for success in English-speaking academic settings.[1] This is especially important for non-native English-speaking students who need to improve skills vital for academic success. EAP is a recognized international program. It is described as "the linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics description of the English language as it occurs in the context of academic study and the exchange itself".[2] The EAP curriculum covers four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with grammar, punctuation, syntax, vocabulary, and discourse. EAP students should recognize that language depends on context, with word choices varying by situation. Unlike informal, subjective general English, academic English is more formal and objective.

Academic English and multilingual environments examine how multilingual students navigate the challenges of using academic language in English-speaking

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[1] Jolanta Hudson, 'Fostering Academic Literacy in English for Academic Purposes Students Through Online Academic Communities of Practice', *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning* 4, no. 2 (4 November 2024): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.21428/8c225f6e.c68f5aa2.

[2] Oksana Zabolotna, Natalia Gut, and Iryna Shcherban, 'The Role of English for Academic Purposes in Maintaining Future Teachers' Interest in Research', *Advanced Education* 20 (1 August 2022): 115–20, https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.256236.

educational systems.[3] These learners often come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, affecting their use of English in academic settings. Today, multilingual environments are common, and multilingualism or bilingualism refers to individuals knowing more than one language code.[4] A bilingual is someone with functional ability in a second language, ranging from strong command to limited skills. Bloomfield describes bilingualism as a speaker's ability to use two languages independently.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are based on the same concept. When a speaker engages in interpersonal communication using multiple languages, this practice is termed bilingualism or multilingualism.[5] A person's choice of language in a multilingual environment is shaped by various factors, such as the topics of conversation, interactions with individuals from diverse social backgrounds, age and gender demographics, and specific contexts of use. The process by which a multilingual individual decides which language to use is known as "code-switching."[6] Code-mixing involves mixing different languages during speech, mainly using words from one language with another, even if less obvious than code-switching.

Indonesia boasts 726 spoken languages, but multilingual education is still new and requires careful study of factors affecting bilingual instruction. Many factors and strategies must be considered before creating bilingual curricula, especially in pesantren. The primary aim of multilingualism in pesantren is to develop proficiency in multiple languages for effective communication understanding.[7] It also encourages greater social cohesion and interaction among students from different language backgrounds.

Nowadays, practically all pesantren focus on using these two foreign languages as their primary languages of instruction during the teaching and learning process, as well as a means of communication in regular interactions with their teachers and peers.[8] However, because students prefer to learn and communicate in Arabic rather than in English, the implementation of this approach in pesantren has not been entirely successful.[9] Some students worry that learning English could threaten their religious

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[3] Kazi Imran Hossain, 'Reviewing the Role of Culture in English Language Learning: Challenges and Opportunities for Educators', *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100781.

[4] Dinar Dipta, 'Multilingualism and Codeswitching in Language Acquisition', *International Journal of English Learning and Applied Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (15 December 2020): 90–114, https://doi.org/10.21111/ijelal.v1i1.5029.

[5] Mulyani, 'Identifying the Concept of Bilingualism and Bilinguals Through Seven Baker's Dimensions of Bilingualism', *Englisia Journal* 5, no. 1 (1 November 2017): 29, https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v5i1.1669.

[6] Ruben Kipchoge, 'Language and Identity: Code-Switching Practices Among Multilingual Communities', *European Journal of Linguistics* 3, no. 3 (11 July 2024): 40–53, https://doi.org/10.47941/ejl.2053.

[7] Hari Prastyo, Rinda, and Imam Wahyudi, 'Empowering Human Resources Academically Based on Bilingual Environment at Pesantren Al Mulatzam and Darut Taqwa Mojokerto by Using Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach', *Engagement: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 8, no. 1 (2024): 67–85, https://doi.org/10.29062/engagement.v8i1.1689.

[8] Saidna Z. Bin-Tahir et al., 'Multilingual Instructional Model of Pesantren Schools in Indonesia', *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 8, no. 6 (1 November 2017): 1210–16, https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0806.24.

[9] Cut Intan Meutia, 'Citra Modernitas Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Di Madrasah Ulumul Quran', *JL3T (Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching)* 3, no. 1 (16 January 2018): 141–60, https://doi.org/10.32505/jl3t.v3i1.338.

identity, while others think it will aid in the broader dissemination of Islam. Pesantren provides the necessary resources to motivate students to study languages, including Arabic and English, and also creates an environment where the target language is used.[10] Developing a language environment will encourage students to advance and improve their proficiency in the target language (Muhammad & Ashadi, 2019). This policy aims to help students adapt to their new surroundings. During the first three months, they can communicate in "Bahasa," and they receive intensive training to help them adjust to speaking both Arabic and English in a bilingual setting. However, the use of local languages, such as Javanese, Sundanese, etc., is not permitted.[11]

Moreover, multilingualism provides cognitive benefits. Multilingual children exhibit enhanced memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.[12] They foster greater creativity and understanding of diverse cultures. Integrating EAP in this context is relatively novel for this research. While some studies may have explored English learning in Pesantren, the specific focus on EAP in a multilingual environment remains underexplored. To address these gaps, this research examines the effects of multilingualism in pesantren, explores the challenges faced by multilingual students in academic English at pesantren, and highlights various needs that must be considered in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within multilingual educational contexts.

Consequently, performing a needs analysis is essential for impactful learning and presents various benefits. In English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, grasping the specific needs and objectives of learners is crucial, as each individual or group typically has unique requirements. Today's learners have different needs compared to those from last year, and these needs will continue to change over time. Moreover, the demands of the supporting institutions also vary. This variability sets EAP apart in higher education, making needs analysis a vital component in the creation of teaching materials for EAP courses.

## METHOD

This study seeks to collect a thorough contextual overview of specific social acts within the setting. An ethnographic descriptive qualitative approach was employed as the research design.[13] This study integrates participatory research methodologies, engages theoretically, and employs a richly descriptive genre of writing to illustrate the lived

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[10] M Ragil Dwifani Azzura, Dewi Saniati, and Pavla Andrysova, 'Islamic Boarding School Students' Motivations and Challenges in English Language Learning: A Case Study at Nurul Hakim Islamic Boarding School', *Pesantren Reviews* 1, no. 2 (31 July 2023): 116–21, https://doi.org/10.58330/pr.v1i2.324.

[11] Pradi Khusufi Syamsu, 'Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor', *EL-IBTIKAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 2 (18 October 2018): 18, https://doi.org/10.24235/ibtikar.v7i2.3319.

[12] Saidna Zulfiqar Bin Tahir, 'Multilingual Teaching and Learning at Pesantren Schools in Indonesia', *Asian EFL Journal, Professional Teaching Article* 98 (February 2017): 74–94, http://www.asian-efl-journal.com.

[13] David Mills and Missy Morton, *Ethnography in Education*, Research Methods in Education (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446251201.

complexities of learning in all its manifestations. The data were collected regarding learners' needs for English language materials that align with their interests and address their gaps and necessities. The research took place at a Pesantren University in East Java, where 30 students were randomly selected to provide a range of perspectives on English learning.

Interviews with education representatives offered insights into multilingual practices, with data gathered via semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The interviews explored students' learning experiences and needs, while questionnaires provided quantitative data on language use and challenges. Observations in the pesantren context offered understanding of English, Arabic, and Indonesian.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved coding, thematic analysis, and triangulation to identify key language needs and patterns. This methodological approach provided a comprehensive understanding of multilingual dynamics and laid the groundwork for designing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses tailored to the Pesantren context.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Effects of Multilingualism in Pesantren Education

The interview results indicate that multilingualism in Pesantren education impacts multiple dimensions, including linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and educational factors. An analysis based on these aspects is presented below:

1. Linguistic Effects

The first linguistic effect relates to the use of code-switching and translanguaging. Multilingualism encourages code-switching (the act of shifting between languages within a conversation) and translanguaging (the fluid blending of languages), which are commonly observed in classroom discussions and religious studies. As the subject said:

*"In our classroom discussions and religious studies, we often switch between languages. Sometimes, we even blend them together naturally. I don't really know the term, but I guess it is something to do with translanguaging. It just feels normal for us to use whatever language fits best at the moment."* (Datum 15)

Another linguistic effect pertains to cross-linguistic influence. Knowledge of Arabic often impacts English language learning, especially in pronunciation and vocabulary, as both are non-native languages for students. While students may possess strong conversational English skills, they often struggle with the specialized vocabulary and complex syntax found in academic texts. As the subject said:

*"When I learn English, I sometimes notice that my Arabic knowledge affects how I pronounce words and understand vocabulary. Since both are not my native languages, I sometimes mix the sounds or meanings without realizing it. Still, I can have conversations*

*in English pretty well, but when it comes to academic texts with difficult words and complex sentences, it gets much harder."* (Datum 8)

2. Cognitive Effects

According to the cognitive effect, multilingualism in pesantren education enhances students' cognitive flexibility. Exposure to multiple languages is associated with improved cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills. Pesantren students frequently exhibit heightened adaptability in learning contexts. As the subject said:

*"I think learning many languages in Pesantren really helps me become more flexible in how I think. It feels like switching between languages makes it easier for me to solve problems and adapt to different learning situations."* (Datum 20)

Moreover, it also affects students' memory and focus. Learning and managing multiple languages can boost memory capacity and concentration, as students engage with complex religious texts and academic subjects.

*"I feel like learning and using many languages at Pesantren really helps improve my memory and focus. Since we study complex religious texts and different subjects in multiple languages, I've gotten better at remembering things and staying focused."* (Datum 3)

3. Sociocultural Effects

The interview results revealed that multilingualism also affects students' cultural identity and inclusivity. Arabic is linked to religious identity, English helps them compete in global development, while Indonesian serves as a bridge for national communication. Moreover, local languages preserve cultural heritage, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging. As the data said:

*"From what I've experienced, knowing different languages really shapes how I feel about my culture and community. Arabic connects me to my religious identity, English helps me think about global opportunities, and Indonesian is how we all communicate with each other. Plus, speaking my local language makes me feel more connected to my roots and community."* (Datum 9)

Simultaneously, students' sociocultural lives are influenced by their intercultural communication skills. Multilingualism equips students to engage across cultural boundaries, essential for the leadership roles many pesantren graduates assume within their communities. As the data indicated:

*"I think being able to speak different languages really helps me communicate with people from different backgrounds. It's important, especially since many of us from Pesantren go on to take leadership roles in our communities. Knowing how to connect with others makes a big difference."* (Datum 26)

4. Educational Effects

Multilingualism influences students' religious literacy and academic achievement. Proficiency in Arabic improves access to Islamic texts, while English supports broader

academic success. However, a strong emphasis on Arabic can sometimes result in difficulties with English proficiency. As the data indicated:

> *"For me, knowing Arabic really helps when I study Islamic texts—I can understand them better. English is also important for my other subjects too. But I have to admit, because we focus so much on Arabic, sometimes it's harder to get good at English."* (Datum 21)

According to the students' experience, it is also revealed that their multilingual education in pesantren leads them to access higher education. Multilingual competence, especially in English, increases opportunities for higher education, both locally and internationally. As the data indicated:

> *"Drawing from my experience, studying multiple languages at Pesantren truly opens up a world of opportunities for higher education. Being able to speak English, in particular, makes it so much easier to pursue studies, not just here in Indonesia, but even across the globe!"* (Datum 11)

Emphasizing the effects of multilingualism in pesantren education can help stakeholders identify the challenges of creating suitable learning experiences tailored to students' needs. However, a crucial factor to consider before assessing students' needs is recognizing the difficulties they encounter in their academic environments, particularly regarding their English proficiency, as previous results revealed that some students still struggle with this language rather than the Arabic language.

**Challenges Faced by Multilingual Students in Academic English at Pesantren**

In multilingual education, English for Academic Purposes covers skills like listening, reading, writing, and speaking, each with specific competencies. Developing academic English helps students engage with the curriculum, succeed in assessments, and participate in academic settings. Diverse backgrounds influence how multilingual learners use English academically. The interview with pesantren university students highlights challenges: limited exposure, cross-linguistic interference, complex vocabulary and syntax, curriculum constraints, sociocultural perceptions, motivation, limited access to technology and materials, and lack of practical application and immersion. Here is the analysis results.

1. Limited Exposure to English

In pesantren, the primary focus is on Arabic for religious studies. Although English is another mandatory language, it receives less emphasis in practice, resulting in limited exposure. Students may lack opportunities for immersive English experiences, which are crucial for mastering academic English. As the data indicated:

> *"At Pesantren, we primarily focus on Arabic for our religious studies. Although we also learn English, it doesn't receive as much attention, which limits our practice. I feel that we lack sufficient opportunities to use English in ways that improve our academic writing and comprehension."* (Datum 17)

2. Cross-Linguistic Interference

The students believe that the strong presence of Arabic can influence English learning, especially in pronunciation and syntax. For example, Arabic phonetic patterns sometimes affect how students pronounce English words. As the data indicated:

*"I think the fact that we study Arabic so much actually affects how we learn English. Sometimes, the way we pronounce English words is influenced by Arabic sounds, and it even affects how we structure our sentences."* (Datum 9)

Besides, literal translation from Arabic or Indonesian to English often leads to grammatical errors and awkward sentence structures in academic writing. As the data indicated:

*"Sometimes when I write in English, I catch myself translating directly from Arabic or Indonesian. That's when my sentences come out sounding strange or have grammar mistakes. It's hard not to do it sometimes."* (Datum 22)

3. Academic Vocabulary and Syntax Complexity

Academic English demands a sophisticated vocabulary and a grasp of complex sentence structures. Many pesantren students find it challenging to engage with specialized terms and the formal writing styles that are seldom practiced in daily communication. As the data stated:

*"I struggle with Academic English due to its requirement for extensive vocabulary and intricate sentence structures. In Pesantren, we don't normally engage in that type of formal writing daily, making it tough to grasp those challenging terms."* (Datum 20)

4. Curriculum Limitations

Pesantren curricula often prioritize religious and moral education while providing limited structured emphasis on Academic English skills, such as critical reading, academic writing, and research methodologies. Resources for learning Academic English, including research journals, advanced reading materials, and interactive learning platforms, are frequently scarce. As the data stated:

*"In Pesantren, most of our classes focus on religious and moral studies, so there isn't much emphasis on academic English skills such as critical reading, academic writing, or research methods. We also lack many resources, such as research journals or advanced reading materials, to practice with."* (Datum 30)

5. Sociocultural Perceptions and Motivation

Some students may prioritize Arabic and Indonesian due to their immediate relevance in religious studies and daily life, while viewing English as secondary. This perception can sometimes reduce motivation to excel in Academic English, impacting learning outcomes. As the data indicated:

*"For many of us, Arabic and Indonesian feel more important because we use them every day for religious studies and daily life. Because of that, sometimes we see English as less important, so we're not always as motivated to get better at it."* (Datum 6)

6. Limited Access to Technology and Learning Materials

Though access to digital resources such as online journals, e-books, and interactive English learning platforms is developing in Pesantren, students' ability to use such technology is underexplored. This digital gap can restrict opportunities for self-learning and exploration of English beyond the classroom. As the data stated:

> *"We're starting to get more access to things like online journals, e-books, and English learning platforms at Pesantren, but I don't think many of us really know how to use them well. This makes it harder for us to learn English on our own outside of class."* (Datum 9)

7. Lack of Practical Application and Language Immersion

Even though opportunities to apply Academic English skills in real-world settings, such as participating in debates, seminars, or international programs, are widely available, some students tend to avoid them, thinking they are not ready. This lack of practical application hinders their language fluency and confidence in academic contexts. As the data stated:

> *"There are actually lots of opportunities for us to practice Academic English, like in debates, seminars, or even international programs. But honestly, some of us avoid joining because we don't feel ready. I think that's why it's hard to build fluency and confidence in real academic situations."* (Datum 24)

Highlighting the challenges students face in academic English within pesantren education, several methods can address these issues. This includes implementing integrated language programs that promote a balanced approach to all languages involved (Arabic, English, and others), helping students develop holistic multilingual competence. Additionally, stakeholders may offer extra language support, like tutoring or workshops, to aid students in managing linguistic demands. They can also allow students to use all their linguistic resources (e.g., English and Arabic during discussions) to improve comprehension and confidence in all the languages they learn.

By addressing these issues with innovative teaching methods and curriculum design, pesantren can transform into more linguistically supportive environments, ensuring that students not only achieve their religious language goals but also excel in general education and global contexts.

**Needs Analysis for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at Pesantren University**

This crucial step in designing an effective EAP program tailors it to learners' needs. It identifies necessary language skills, strategies, and resources, especially for non-native English speakers. A thorough needs analysis ensures the course prepares students for linguistic and academic challenges, improving their success chances in English-speaking environments.

The analysis of the students revealed several points related to various needs that can serve as the foundation for designing English courses in Pesantren. These include the need for English as a means of daily communication, the need to present ideas, the need to read specific Islamic sources in English, and the need to write scientific papers.

Most of these four points were expressed during the interview responses according to the questions posed by the researchers. The following is the analysis.

1. The Need to Use English in Daily Communication

This study shows students regularly communicate in English at campus and dorms due to policies promoting multilingualism. Some lessons are in English, encouraging use. Despite frequent English use, students face challenges like limited vocabulary and few speaking opportunities, such as lack of English-speaking partners. They suggest strategies like watching foreign films, revisiting vocabulary, and using a dictionary. They also highlight key factors for fostering multilingualism at Pesantren: creating environments for frequent multilingual interactions, engaging in conversational activities, and establishing rules to support multi-language use.

*In our Pesantren, we use English daily on campus and in dorms, as the pesantren encourages speaking multiple languages. Some lessons are taught in English, which helps. Despite frequent use, we face challenges like limited vocabulary and few conversation partners. To improve, we watch foreign movies, review vocabulary, and consult dictionaries. For multilingualism to flourish, we need an environment with regular multiple-language use, more conversation activities, and rules that encourage us to use different languages in our daily conversations."* (Datum 25)

2. The Needs to Present the Ideas

Alongside daily multilingual communication, Pesantren holds weekly discussions in various languages, including a dedicated week for higher grades. However, student participation often remains low. Observations reveal weaknesses like pronunciation issues, grammatical errors, and limited understanding. To improve, students need relevant, current topics, good dictionaries, and comprehensive materials. Data indicates:

*"At Pesantren, we hold weekly multilingual discussions, with a special week for higher grades. Not everyone participates fully due to issues like pronunciation errors, grammar mistakes, and unfamiliarity with topics. To improve, we need more relevant subjects, better resources, and access to good dictionaries."*(Datum 8)

3. The Need to Read Several Islamic Sources in the English Language

Many students access Islamic texts in English, including journals and stories, for assignments or to broaden knowledge. They face challenges like limited vocabulary, unfamiliar terms, complex sentences, and pronunciation issues. These resources are necessary because their pesantren incorporates Islamic values and promotes multilingualism. Gaining Islamic knowledge helps students understand Allah, His laws, and brings blessings in this life and the hereafter. As data shows:

*"A lot of us have read Islamic sources in English, like journals and Islamic stories, either for school assignments or just to learn more. But we still struggle with these sources because of things like not knowing enough vocabulary, unfamiliar terms, tricky sentence*

*structures, and even pronunciation when reading these texts. The reason we need to engage with these Islamic resources in English is that our Pesantren encourages multilingualism in daily life, and it's part of our learning. I believe that understanding these texts better helps us learn more about Allah, understand His laws, and gain blessings in both this life and the afterlife."* (Datum 10)

4. The Need to Create Academic Writings

In academia, daily writing is key for learning. While writing has become a habit of recording info, improvements are needed in pesantren multilingual writing due to frequent use of two languages, like *Imla'* or dictation. Improving these will help students develop communication skills. Many students still struggle with multilingual writing, facing issues like lack of interest, writing mainly for competitions, and deficiencies in vocabulary, style, sentence structure, and grammar. Therefore, boosting student literacy through rewards in writing contests, seminars, writing tasks, grammar lessons, and error correction sessions is crucial. According to data:

*"In our studies, we do a lot of writing to record what we learn every day. But when it comes to multilingual writing in Pesantren, there's still a lot to improve, especially since we tend to use two languages, like with Imla' or dictation. This improvement would also help us with communication skills. The problem is, many of us struggle with multilingual writing—some of us aren't interested, some only write for competitions, and we face issues with vocabulary, writing style rules, sentence structure, grammar, and more. I believe what needs to be done is to enhance our literacy, offer rewards for writing competitions, hold writing seminars, encourage us to share our writing experiences, teach us grammar, and organize sessions to help correct our mistakes."* (Datum 18)

**Discussions**

This study contributes to the growing literature on multilingual education by exploring the unique intersection of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within pesantren settings. The findings indicate that multilingualism in pesantren positively influences linguistic awareness and cognitive development while also presenting obstacles in acquiring academic English skills. These results align with, and expand upon, previous research in several key areas.

First, the linguistic effects observed in this study—such as heightened metalinguistic awareness, code-switching, and cross-linguistic influence—support the conclusions of Kipchoge,[14] and Abidah,[15] who highlighted the fluidity of multilingual communication and the prevalence of code-mixing in bilingual environments. However, this study adds nuance by specifically addressing how Arabic, as a dominant religious language, interferes with English pronunciation and grammar.

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[14] Kipchoge, 'Language and Identity'.

[15] Nabila Farah Abidah, Margaretha Jihad Fitri Sabilillah, and Alfy Rifngatul Habibah, 'Exploring the Multilingual Delight: A Linguistic Analysis of Code Switching and Code Mixing in Livy Renata's Youtube Videos', *LITERASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Ilmu Humaniora* 2, no. 2 (2023): 38–50, https://doi.org/10.51747/literasi.v2i2.1460.

Unlike the general multilingual settings discussed by Bloomfield, pesantren students face dual language interference (from Arabic and Indonesian), compounding their English learning challenges.

Second, as vocabulary is a collection of words in the language that must be mastered as a foundational comprehension skill, it is also one of the active factors involved in listening, reading, speaking, and writing effectively; it needs a special mastery in academic English.[16] Vocabulary poses a significant challenge for us when using English for everyday communication, as the English language contains over 750,000 words.[17] People's memory can be sharp but limited. The main issue is selecting the right word among many, with complex meanings and nuances. Knowing words is as vital as grammar for effective communication. Vocabulary gaps hinder language learning and practice. The result of the study on the students' challenge dealing with vocabulary is in line with the research performed by Elmahdi and Hezam[18] who revealed that communicating without using words is almost impossible. Both teacher's and students' vocabulary acquisition are one of the main factors in learning English.

Third, the cognitive and sociocultural benefits of multilingualism found in this study reflect earlier findings by Syamsu,[19] who argued that multilingual environments foster adaptability and intercultural competence. Yet, this study extends that insight by demonstrating how these benefits are tempered by practical issues such as limited teacher preparation, insufficient academic materials, and sociocultural perceptions that deprioritize English. While Azzura et al., emphasized language immersion and policy enforcement in pesantren, our findings suggest that policy alone is inadequate without pedagogical and institutional support.[20]

Fourth, in comparison to Meutia,[21] who found that English is often perceived as secondary in pesantren due to concerns regarding religious identity, our study confirms this perception while also identifying a growing recognition among students of English's role in global academic engagement. This shift indicates an evolving mindset within pesantren communities, suggesting a readiness for a more integrated multilingual curriculum that includes academic English.

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[16] Nur Rahmah, M Tahir, and A Talib, 'The Effect of Vocabulary Mastery on Students' Reading Comprehension', *International Journal of Business, English, and Communication (IJoBEC)* 1, no. 1 (2023): 36–44, https://journal.unm.ac.id/index.php/ijobec/index.

[17] Yasminar Amaerita Telaumbanua et al., 'Second-Semester Students' Challenges Towards Vocabulary Mastery in English Language Learning', *English Teaching and Linguistics Journal (ETLiJ)* 5, no. 2 (2024): 120–29, https://doi.org/10.30596/etlij.v5i2.20473.

[18] Omer Elsheikh Hago Elmahdi and Abdulrahman Mokbel Mahyoub Hezam, 'Challenges for Methods of Teaching English Vocabulary to Non-Native Students', *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 7, no. 5 (7 June 2020): 556–75, https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.75.8263.

[19] Syamsu, 'Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor'.

[20] Azzura, Saniati, and Andrysova, 'Islamic Boarding School Students' Motivations and Challenges in English Language Learning: A Case Study at Nurul Hakim Islamic Boarding School'.

[21] Meutia, 'Citra Modernitas Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Di Madrasah Ulumul Quran'.

Alongside the integration of English with Islamic education, Islamic knowledge includes aspects like morality and ethics, which embody the objectives and results of education. The term 'Akhlak' refers to behavior informed by morals and ideals related to personal actions.[22] It refers to the lessons students should learn, as well as the objectives of education. The goals are divided into three categories: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, which are also referred to as achievement. Each component should contribute to the development of Akhlak in individuals or students.

In line with it, language connects with the social entity through being both a site of and a stake in struggles of power, and is also the principal domain of ideology.[23] To be global citizens, students need to learn English. However, English textbooks often lack leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Thus, conducting a needs analysis is crucial to address all teaching requirements in Pesantren.

Furthermore, this study's detailed needs analysis—highlighting the necessity for English in daily communication, idea presentation, reading Islamic texts, and academic writing—adds a practical dimension often missing in earlier studies. While previous literature has addressed general English learning in pesantren, few have specifically analyzed the academic functions of English in this context. By focusing on EAP, this research addresses a critical gap, as noted by Chemir and Kitila,[24] Zabolotna[25], and Al-Maamari,[26] who argue that needs analysis is essential for context-specific course design.

The aforementioned writing needs are important skills required for various tasks, including publication, communication, and research. Writing well is a skill that teachers, lecturers, and students must possess, whether they are composing research papers, requests for funding, scholarly articles, or lesson plans.[27] Writing helps organize ideas and analyze materials, making it vital for developing critical thinking. Strong writing skills are essential for students to complete homework, lab reports, and publish research. While writing can be difficult, anyone can improve with dedication

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[22] Ujang Sutisna et al., 'Islamic Education Values In Extracurricular Activities', *Journal of Advanced Islamic Educational Management* 3, no. 1 (30 June 2023): 61–74, https://doi.org/10.24042/jaiem.v3i1.16227.

[23] Nathan Albury, 'Language Attitudes and Ideologies on Linguistic Diversity', in *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics*, ed. Andrea C. Schalley and Susana A. Eisenchlas, A. C. Schalley&S. A. Eisenchlas (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2020), 357–76, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-018.

[24] Sileshi Chemir and Tamene Kitila, 'English for Academic Purposes Learners' Needs Analysis: Language Difficulties Encountered by University Students in Ethiopia', *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics* 9, no. 1 (30 June 2022): 97–119, https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v9i1.20646.

[25] Zabolotna, Gut, and Shcherban, 'The Role of English for Academic Purposes in Maintaining Future Teachers' Interest in Research'.

[26] Faisal Al-Maamari, 'Informal Order, Needs Analysis, and the EAP Curriculum', *The Qualitative Report* 22, no. 6 (19 June 2017): 1653–72, https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2662.

[27] Eliwarti Eliwarti and Indah Tri Purwanti, 'The Effect of Journal Writing Technique on Students' Writing Ability', *International Journal of Educational Best Practices* 5, no. 2 (26 October 2021): 183, https://doi.org/10.31258/ijebp.v5n2.p183-196.

and practice. Scientific professionals can enhance their skills through workshops, online resources, and peer support mentors.[28]

Writing is vital in Pesantren, where students complete varied assignments, from single paragraphs to lengthy essays, including test responses. Academic English writing differs from regular and native-language academic writing.[29] Therefore, by acknowledging the students' challenges and needs, this can be utilized to assist students in identifying and creating the type of writing that can be completed at Pesantren. This study reaffirms research on multilingualism's benefits and challenges, offering insights into its impact on academic English in pesantren. It shows that despite opportunities in multilingual settings, institutional and teaching gaps remain, needing address to meet students' academic and linguistic needs.

**CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that while multilingualism in pesantren fosters cognitive and sociocultural development, it simultaneously presents significant challenges to the acquisition of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Pesantren students demonstrate a clear need for English skills that support academic success, including daily communication, idea presentation, reading Islamic texts, and academic writing.

The research reveals that current pesantren curricula and learning environments do not sufficiently address these needs. Key obstacles include limited English exposure, cross-linguistic interference, and sociocultural perceptions that prioritize Arabic. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic redesign of the English curriculum, incorporating learner-centered methodologies, integrated language instruction, and enhanced teacher training. Aligning EAP programs with multilingual pesantren education helps stakeholders equip students with linguistic and academic skills for success in religious and global academic arenas.

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