



Islamic Critical English for Specific Purposes (ESP): Fostering Rooted Cosmopolitanism through Internationalization in Indonesian *Pesantren*

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Islamic Critical ESP (English for Specific Purposes) within the context of internationalization in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Drawing on a qualitative multiple-case study approach and thematic analysis of interview data, documents, and literature, the research explores the general and specific goals of Islamic Critical ESP, teaching methods, content design, and challenges faced in practice. The findings reveal that Islamic Critical ESP in *pesantren* serves dual functions: enhancing students' global communication skills and reinforcing their religious identity through curriculum integration of Islamic values. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as the dominant pedagogical strategy, supplemented by diversified instructional methods tailored to the unique socio-religious context of *pesantren*. Student motivation and ability disparities, heavy curricular loads, and inadequate policy frameworks are key challenges to the implementation. The study recommends the development of contextualized Islamic Critical ESP modules, collaboration with international Islamic institutions, and the adoption of competency-based assessments aligned with global standards. These findings contribute to the discourse on faith-based language education and offer practical insights for designing bilingual curricula that maintain religious integrity while preparing students for global engagement.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, internationalization, *pesantren*, Islamic education, language teaching

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP) Kritis berbasis Islam dalam konteks internasionalisasi di *pesantren* Islam Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif jamak dan analisis tematik terhadap data wawancara, dokumen, dan literatur, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tujuan umum dan spesifik ESP Kritis Berbasis Islam, metode pengajaran, desain konten, serta tantangan yang dihadapi dalam praktik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ESP Kritis Berbasis Islam di *pesantren* memiliki dua fungsi: meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi global siswa dan memperkuat identitas agama mereka melalui integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam kurikulum. Pendekatan Pengajaran Bahasa Komunikatif (CLT) muncul sebagai strategi pedagogis dominan, didukung oleh metode pengajaran yang beragam dan disesuaikan dengan konteks sosial-religius unik *pesantren*. Ketidakeimbangan motivasi dan kemampuan siswa, beban kurikulum yang berat, serta kerangka kebijakan yang tidak memadai menjadi tantangan utama dalam implementasi. Studi ini merekomendasikan pengembangan modul ESP Kritis Berbasis Islam yang kontekstual, kolaborasi dengan lembaga Islam internasional, dan penerapan penilaian berbasis kompetensi yang selaras dengan standar global. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada diskursus tentang pendidikan bahasa berbasis agama

dan menawarkan wawasan praktis untuk merancang kurikulum bilingual yang menjaga integritas agama sekaligus mempersiapkan siswa untuk keterlibatan global.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris untuk tujuan khusus, internasionalisasi, pesantren, pendidikan Islam, pengajaran bahasa

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school, known as *pesantren*, represents a distinctive form of Indonesian Islamic education that serves dual functions: as centers for religious values cultivation and as institutions preparing students for global engagement. *Pesantren* has undergone significant curricular diversification, evolving from exclusively religious instruction (particularly *kitab kuning* or classical Islamic texts study) to incorporating secular subjects in compliance with national education policies (Tamin, 2018). The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia currently recognizes three core functions of *pesantren*: education, da'wah (Islamic propagation), and community empowerment (Ramadhani, 2022). This transformation reflects ongoing efforts to balance traditional Islamic values with modern educational demands, preparing *santri* (*pesantren*' students) for global competitiveness while maintaining religious identity (Murniati, Salsaria, & Kesuma, 2023).

Pesantren faces the imperative of integrating English language competencies, particularly through English for Specific Purposes (ESP), while maintaining its distinctive Islamic character. This linguistic integration responds to the demands of globalization in contemporary education (Kirkpatrick, 2020b, 2020a). An Islamic Critical ESP approach has emerged as a vital solution, serving dual objectives: developing language skills for international communication and global da'wah while ensuring alignment with *pesantren*'s religious foundations. However, implementation encounters several primary challenges, including: (1) policy and curriculum misalignment (discrepancies between *pesantren*-specific needs and national standards) (Dhian Marita Sari, 2023), (2) teachers' limited capacity to develop contextually appropriate Islamic Critical ESP materials or resources (Nasution & Armin, 2025), and (3) significant variation in students' language abilities and skill-related challenges (Muhaemin & Muin, 2024). English proficiency remains crucial for students to access global academic networks (Wieczorek, Mitreğa, & Spáčil, 2021), international scholarship opportunities (Mala & Wahyuningsih, 2024), and economic advancement (Li, Teng, Tsai, & Lin, 2022).

Recent scholarship has increasingly attended to the intersection of English language teaching and Islamic education. Studies by Alfinda and Humaira (2023) and Lina (2023) have established that ESP materials must consider the socio-religious context of learners in Islamic institutions, while Berlin, Apriliaswati, and Rezeki (2022) demonstrated that Islamic English texts (such as Qur'an translations and hadith) effectively serve dual pedagogical functions which enhancing linguistic competence while deepening religious understanding. However, these studies have predominantly focused on Islamic higher education institutions (universities) rather than *pesantren*, which possess distinctive organizational structures, pedagogical traditions, and internationalization trajectories (Azra, 2003; Pohl, 2011). Furthermore, existing research on *pesantren* internationalization (Azmi et al., 2020) has not examined the specific role of Critical ESP as a mechanism for achieving global engagement while preserving Islamic identity. Wette (2018) and Rohmah, Fitriyah, and Hanifiyah (2023) have advanced ESP instruction frameworks for religious contexts, yet neither study provides a comprehensive analysis of how these frameworks translate into *pesantren* settings or addresses the practical challenges of implementation. This study addresses these gaps by examining how Islamic Critical ESP operates within *pesantren*'s unique socio-religious ecosystem, offering both theoretical contributions to religious-context ESP literature and practical guidance for curriculum development that balances global competence with Islamic integrity.

This research aims to fill the academic and practical gaps by analyzing the objectives of Islamic Critical ESP (general & special) in the framework of the development of internationalization of Islamic boarding schools, teaching methods in the context of EFL teaching in Indonesia, Islamic value-based content, compatibility, and implementation challenges. The findings of this research can serve as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions that want to adopt internationalization development without ignoring their religious identity. These findings serve both as a contribution to the development of ESP instructions based on religious contexts (Rohmah et al., 2023; Wette, 2018), and as a practical framework for *pesantren* to design bilingual curricula that maintain Islamic identity. This point is a critical need in the era of globalization that has not been answered by previous studies (Azmi et al., 2020; Azra, 2003; Pohl, 2011). Ultimately, researchers can provide concrete recommendations, such as the development of Islamic Critical ESP modules and collaboration with global partners, to strengthen the internationalization of Islamic boarding schools.

Based on this background, this study aims to address the following key questions: (1) How does the implementation of Islamic Critical ESP support the internationalization purposes of *pesantren*? (2) What teaching methods are used in Islamic Critical ESP programs within *pesantren*, and how do they align with both language learning principles and Islamic pedagogical values? (3) How is Islamic Critical ESP content designed to integrate Islamic values with international communication needs? (4) What challenges hinder the effective implementation of Islamic Critical ESP in *pesantren*, and how do stakeholders respond to these challenges? (5) To what extent does Islamic Critical ESP implementation align with the key factors driving internationalization in *pesantren*?

METHOD

This qualitative multiple-case study (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2003) explores how Islamic Critical ESP is implemented in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), with a particular focus on the social dynamics, stakeholder perspectives, and educational experiences within these distinct religious-cultural settings.

The research involved eight English teachers from five different *pesantren* located in West Java, Yogyakarta, and West Kalimantan. These institutions represent various educational levels, such as elementary, junior high, senior high, and university programs. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on several key considerations: First, to target individuals with direct experience and expertise in implementing ESP programs in Islamic contexts. Second, to prioritize depth over breadth, allowing for a detailed exploration of complex phenomena rather than aiming for generalizability. Third, to maximize information richness by including participants with diverse academic backgrounds and teaching experiences across different *pesantren* levels, starting from elementary to university instruction.

In terms of educational qualifications, one participant held a doctoral degree (S3), four had master's degrees (S2), and three held bachelor's degrees (S1). While purposive sampling does not aim for statistical generalizability, it supports theoretical saturation, a point at which no new themes emerge from the data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In this study, thematic saturation was reached after interviewing eight teachers, suggesting that the data collected were sufficient to address the research questions. The table below explains the informants who served as the research subjects:

Table 1. Informants of the Research

Code of Respondent	Initial Name	English Teaching Experiences	Last Education	<i>Pesantren</i> Location		<i>Pesantren</i> Level
G1	HRD	11 years	S3	Banyumas, Jawa	West	University
G2	AMZ	15 years	S2	Banyumas, Jawa	West	Middle and High School
G3	DWI	8 years	S1	Sleman, Yogyakarta		Middle and High School
G4	KHS	7 years	S2	Kaprak, Yogyakarta		Middle and High School
G5	MAA	16 years	S1	Gunung Yogyakarta	Kidul,	Middle and High School
G6	NNA	4 years	S1	Gunung Yogyakarta	Kidul,	Primary, Middle, and High School
G7	RTM	13 years	S2	Singkawang, Kalimantan	West	Middle and High School
G8	NWN	2 years	S2	Sleman, Yogyakarta		Middle and High School

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Additionally, selecting *pesantren* from different regions contributed to contextual diversity, increasing the transferability of findings to other similar educational environments in Indonesia. Therefore, purposive sampling was considered both appropriate and effective for this study, aligning well with the goals of qualitative inquiry: understanding context, meaning, and lived experiences within Islamic boarding schools. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period, from April to June 2025, across multiple *pesantren* sites. Through semi-structured interviews, researchers explored key aspects such as the context of English instruction in *pesantren*, the integration of Islamic Critical ESP materials, implementation challenges, and innovative solutions. Notwithstanding the logistical constraints inherent in coordinating fieldwork across geographically dispersed sites, the study rigorously upheld established ethical guidelines. Participant confidentiality was ensured through anonymization (e.g., G1, G2), written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and all data were used solely for research purposes. No conflicts of interest were involved in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings reveal overarching themes in Islamic Critical ESP implementation, elaborated into seven sub-sections. The exploration is as follows:

Purposes of Islamic Critical ESP in Pesantren

The study identified the purposes of Islamic Critical ESP instruction in supporting the internationalization of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Table 2 below presents the frequency with which participants mentioned various purposes of Islamic Critical ESP. The column "References" shows how many times a particular purpose was stated across all eight interviews (G1–G8). A single respondent could mention multiple purposes; therefore, the total references (18 for general purposes and 22 for specific purposes) exceed the number of respondents. The "Percentage" column indicates the relative emphasis of each sub-purpose within its category

(general or specific). For example, "Global insight" accounts for 44.4% of all general-purpose references, meaning it was the most frequently cited general goal among participants.

Table 2. Number of References on Information on the Purposes of ESP Implementation in Indonesian *Pesantren* in 2025

Purposes of Islamic Critical ESP	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
General purposes			
a. Global insight	8	44,4 %	- the ability to speak foreign languages to <u>add global insight</u> (G2, 2025) <u>seek knowledge</u> at the <u>global level</u> (G6, 2025)
b. Global competition	7	38,9 %	- be ready to <u>compete in the outside world</u> (G2, 2025) - to <u>increase global competitiveness</u> (G7, 2025)
c. Culture insight	3	16,7 %	- It is a tool to <u>learn culture</u> (G3, 2025) <u>development of the nation</u> through mastery of the English language (G7, 2025)
Total	18	100 %	
Purposes of Islamic Critical ESP	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Specific purposes			
a. Enhancing international communication	10	45,5 %	- to <u>enable</u> them in <u>international communication</u> (G1, 2025) - Improve international communication skills (G4, 2025)
b. Enhancing the Da'wah	6	27,3 %	- to <u>bridge</u> children in <u>da'wah</u> (G6, 2025) <u>strengthens religious understanding and practice</u> (G7, 2025)
c. Enhancing language skills	3	13,6 %	<u>ability to read</u>, both <u>scientific writing</u> and <u>popular format writing</u> (G1, 2025) - to <u>equip</u> students with <u>one of the languages</u> of <u>science</u> (G8, 2025)
d. Supporting study abroad	3	13,6 %	- It is also to <u>prepare</u> students to <u>study abroad</u> (G4, 2025) - to be able to <u>prepare</u> students who want to <u>continue their studies abroad</u> (G7, 2025)
Total	22	100 %	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 2, the importance of Islamic Critical ESP in the internationalization program of *pesantren* can be seen from the general and specific purposes in the implementation of the program. First, looking at the "General Purposes" section, nearly half (44.4%) of all general-purpose statements made by teachers emphasized global insight meaning that teachers believe English helps students understand world issues. The next most common general purpose, global competition (38.9%), reflects concerns about *santri* being able to compete internationally, not just in religious knowledge but also in language skills. Only a small proportion (16.7%) mentioned cultural insight, suggesting that cultural understanding is a secondary goal. The example of interview quotes translated into English is as follows:

Excerpt 1 In order to be able to compete not only with the provision of religious knowledge but also with the provision of foreign language skills, namely Arabic and English. (G2, 2025)

Second, regarding specific purposes, international communication was the most frequently cited goal (45.5% of all specific-purpose references). This means that when teachers were asked about concrete, measurable objectives, they prioritized the ability to use English for real-world global interactions. Enhancing da'wah (27.3%) was the second most cited specific purpose, indicating that spreading Islamic values internationally is a key driver. Language skills (13.6%) and study abroad preparation (13.6%) were mentioned equally but less frequently, suggesting they are seen as supporting goals rather than primary objectives. In the context of general objectives, Islamic Critical ESP in the internationalization program of *pesantren* is more about increasing global knowledge and competence. Here is an excerpt of the interview:

Excerpt 2 ... Integrate English learning with Islamic values so that learning not only focuses on language but also strengthens religious understanding and practice. (G7, 2025)

Two other special goals, namely enhancing language skills and supporting study abroad, both obtained three references. Language skills purpose focuses on improving overall language proficiency, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, composition, and translation. Supporting study abroad highlights the role of Islamic Critical ESP in preparing students for overseas educational opportunities.

Methods of Teaching Islamic Critical ESP in Pesantren

The methods used for teaching ESP in *pesantren* were explored through the responses of the participants. The researchers found dominant methods that are employed in ESP programs at Islamic boarding schools. The table below represents the total number of references.

Table 3. Number of References to Information Methods used in Islamic Critical ESP in Indonesian *Pesantren* in 2025

Method	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Communication Language Learning	8	44,4 %	• Full immersion, <u>communicative method</u> (G3, 2025) • Modern and <u>communicative approach</u> (G7, 2025)
Diversification method	7	38,9 %	• <u>Diversification of teaching methods</u> (G8, 2025) • <u>Grammar translation method, speaking, role play, and others</u> (G2, 2025)
Classical Instruction	3	16,7 %	• <u>Classic instructional</u> (lectures and Q&A) (G1, 2025) • <u>Drilling translation book</u> (G5, 2025)
Total	18	100 %	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 3, eighteen references were found from the thematic study of respondent data, interviewed with the following sample interview quotes:

Excerpt 3 ... Habituation of the use of English in the *pesantren* environment in every situation. Provide a sizable portion of the English teaching hours in the classroom.” (G8, 2025)

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emerged as the most prominent methodology, with respondents referencing it eight times. This approach emphasizes creating an immersive English environment through regular classroom use, extended instructional time, and a strong focus on developing practical communication skills. Meanwhile, the Diversification Method was similarly prevalent, receiving seven references from respondents. This pedagogical strategy incorporates varied techniques, including role-playing, simulations, and other interactive activities specifically designed to enhance ESP learning outcomes. Last but not least, less dominant, traditional Classical Instruction methods remained relevant, as evidenced by three references. These conventional approaches primarily employ grammar-translation techniques and structured exercises.

The findings indicate respondents' strong preference for communicative language teaching as the primary methodology, while acknowledging the continued, though limited, relevance of classical instructional approaches in ESP contexts.

Contents of Islamic Critical ESP in Pesantren

The content of Islamic Critical ESP programs in *pesantren* was found to be multifaceted, with a strong emphasis on integrating Islamic values and international communication. The table below represents the numerical information:

Table 4. Number of References to Contents Information used in Islamic Critical ESP in Indonesian *Pesantren* in 2025

Content	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Islamic Value	10	32,2 %	- articles on <u>Islamic culture and history</u>, public speaking on the theme of <u>global da'wah</u> (G4, 2025) - there is a study of <u>books (about Fiqh)</u> that are <u>translated into English</u> (G5, 2025)
International communication	11	35,6 %	- English materials should be designed <u>to support international communication</u> (G7, 2025) - The material tends <u>to focus on international communication</u> (G8, 2025)
Curriculum	10	32,2 %	- as well as through a <u>curriculum</u> that is contextual (G4, 2025) - Implementing an <u>international curriculum</u> (G8, 2025)
Total	31	100 %	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 4, thirty-one references were found from eight respondents interviewed. The content in question is enhancing the international context, followed by Islamic content and content related to the *pesantren* curriculum. Sample interview excerpts:

Excerpt 4 ...articles on Islamic culture and history, public speaking on the theme of global da'wah, writing an essay or speech in English about tolerance and peace. (G4, 2025)

To operationalize what constitutes "integration of Islamic values" in this study, the researchers identified five measurable indicators based on participant responses, which served as the analytical framework for coding and categorizing the 10 references reported in Table 4. The first indicator is the use of Islamic religious texts as English language materials, meaning that English instruction incorporates authentic Islamic sources such as Fiqh, Hadith, or *kitab kuning* (classical yellow books), either in their original English translations or as English-translated versions of classical Arabic texts. This was evidenced by participants stating that "there is a study of books (about Fiqh) that are translated into English" (G5) and that "in the field of hadith books, there are books translated into English" (G6). The second indicator is English-medium instruction for Islamic topics, where English is used as the medium to teach explicitly Islamic content, including da'wah strategies, Islamic civilization history, and Islamic ethics (*akhlak*). Evidence for this indicator includes the use of "articles on Islamic culture and history" (G4), "public speaking on the theme of global da'wah" (G4), and "writing essays or speeches in English about tolerance and peace" (G4). The third indicator is the production of Islamic-themed English outputs, requiring students to produce spoken or written English outputs that reflect Islamic themes or values, beyond merely translating religious texts. This was reflected in activities such as "performances of dramas in foreign languages" (G2), "speech competitions" (G2), and "public speaking on the theme of global da'wah" (G4), where student assignments are evaluated both for English proficiency and for their representation of Islamic values.

The fourth indicator is the alignment of ESP content with the pesantren's Islamic vision and mission, whereby the selection of English materials is explicitly guided by the *pesantren's* institutional Islamic vision, such as producing global *da'i* or promoting Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Participants confirmed that "materials are adapted to the vision and mission of the pesantren" (G4), involving "integrating Islamic content and global issues" (G4) "through a curriculum that is contextual and based on the needs of students" (G4). This indicator is identifiable when teachers or curriculum documents explicitly state that material selection is filtered through Islamic criteria, such as avoiding content that contradicts Islamic values and prioritizing content that supports Islamic outreach. The fifth indicator is the use of English for Islamic outreach and interfaith dialogue, where English is taught as a tool for global Islamic communication, including interfaith dialogue, promoting Islamic moderation, and expanding *pesantren's* international networks. This was evidenced by the inclusion of "conversations on diplomacy and interfaith dialogue" (G4) and the explicit goal that "English is used as an effective language of instruction in a global context, especially to promote Islamic moderation and expand the institutional network of *pesantren* at the international level" (G7). Together, these five indicators provide a transparent and replicable framework for identifying Islamic values integration in ESP contexts within Indonesian *pesantren*.

Challenges in Islamic Critical ESP Implementation

Several challenges were identified in implementing Islamic Critical ESP programs within *pesantren* settings. The table below represents the quantitative information:

Table 5. Number of References on Challenges Informationin Implementation
Islamic Critical ESP in Indonesian *Pesantren* in 2025

Challenge	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Student factors	10	47,6 %	• many <u>students are not interested or motivated</u> in learning English (G7, 2025) • the level of <u>ability, interest, and exposure</u> to English of <u>students</u> is <u>very diverse</u> (G8, 2025)
Learning process	8	38,1%	• a <u>large learning load</u> (G3, 2025) • <u>limited time</u> due to the density of religious activities (G4, 2025)
Policy	3	14,3 %	• <u>English is inadequate</u> in the <u>curriculum guide</u> (G2, 2025) • English is considered <u>less relevant to the life of the Islamic boarding school</u> (G4, 2025)
Total	21	100 %	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 5, twenty-one references were found from the thematic study of the respondent data. The major challenge lies in the students themselves, followed by the factors of the learning process and the policy. The sample interview quote is as follows:

Excerpt 5 The main challenge is that students often face difficulties in memorizing a lot of new vocabulary and pronouncing English words correctly. (G7, 2025)

Student-related factors emerged as the most significant challenge, with respondents raising this issue across ten references. The study found that variations in students' abilities, interests, and prior exposure to English made it difficult to tailor instruction to meet their diverse needs. The learning process itself presented substantial challenges, as highlighted by respondents in eight references. Key issues included difficulties with vocabulary retention and English pronunciation, the heavy workload from combining national and *pesantren* curricula, and insufficient access to digital learning tools. While less frequently mentioned, policy challenges were noted by respondents in three references. These comments suggested potential gaps in institutional support and curriculum guidelines for ESP implementation.

However, despite these multifaceted challenges, the participating *pesantren* have not remained passive. Several institutional-level strategies have been implemented to address these obstacles, moving beyond individual teacher initiatives. Beyond the individual initiatives taken by teachers, this study also identified several institutional-level strategies that *pesantren* have implemented to address the challenges of Islamic Critical ESP instruction. The first institutional strategy is curriculum and syllabus redesign, where some *pesantren* have responded to the diversity of student abilities and the density of religious activities by systematically revising their English curriculum. As one participant explained, the institution engages in "preparing the curriculum and syllabus as best as possible and trying to follow them, while still paying attention

to the condition of the students and facilitating different needs as much as possible" (G3, 2025). This redesign often includes the creation of additional classes (*kelas tambahan*) to provide extra English instruction without disrupting the core religious curriculum (G3, 2025). Another participant confirmed that their institution provides "a sizable portion of the English teaching hours in the classroom" (G8, 2025), demonstrating institutional commitment to allocating sufficient time for ESP despite the dense *pesantren* schedule.

The second institutional strategy is the systematic integration of Islamic content into English materials through formal curriculum alignment. Rather than leaving material selection entirely to individual teachers, some *pesantren* have adopted a policy of "integrating Islamic content in English materials" and "using thematic approaches relevant to students' lives" (G4, 2025). This institutional approach ensures that even when teachers rotate or change, the core Islamic orientation of ESP instruction remains consistent. The integration is further supported by "aligning the syllabus with *pesantren* subjects" (G5, 2025), creating coherence between English instruction and the broader Islamic curriculum. Additionally, some *pesantren* have established collaboration with madrasas and implemented "summative and formative assessments (performance, final exams)" (G3, 2025) to ensure that learning outcomes are measured systematically across all students, regardless of which teacher instructs them.

The third institutional strategy is the adoption of international curriculum frameworks adapted to *pesantren* contexts, though this was only reported by institutions with established internationalization programs. One respondent reported that their institution "implements an international curriculum" and "provides a variety of internationally standardized English tests" (G8, 2025), while another noted that their *pesantren* "follows the Cambridge curriculum and uses English in subjects other than English" (G3, 2025). Based on the gaps identified in this study, additional institutional strategies to further minimize potential obstacles include: establishing a dedicated ESP curriculum development team that includes both language and Islamic studies teachers, providing structured professional development for teachers on integrating Islamic values into ESP, developing a *pesantren*-specific English material bank that filters international resources through Islamic criteria, and creating formal partnership programs with English-speaking Islamic institutions abroad to provide authentic communication opportunities for *santri*.

Alignments Islamic Critical ESP within Aspects in Developing Internationalization Pesantren

The alignments of Islamic Critical ESP programs within the broader framework of *pesantren*'s internationalization efforts were assessed based on several criteria. The table below represents the quantitative information:

Table 6. Number of References on Alignment Aspects in Implementation of Islamic Critical ESP in Indonesian *Pesantren* in 2025

Aspect	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Material	5	29,4 %	• <u>ensuring the material</u> is as <u>needed</u> (G6, 2025) • The <u>material must include</u> the <u>development of complete language skills</u> (G7, 2025)
Testing standard	4	23,5 %	• <u>collaboration</u> with madrasas, <u>summative and formative assessments</u> (performance, final exams) (G3, 2025)

Aspect	References (f)	Percentage (%)	Examples Quote (Participant Code)
Curriculum	3	17,7 %	• <u>providing a wide range of internationally standardized English language tests</u> (G8, 2025) • <u>prepare the curriculum</u> and syllabus as best as <u>possible</u> and try to <u>follow them</u> (G3, 2025) • <u>a curriculum</u> that is <u>contextual</u> and <u>based on the needs of students</u> (G4, 2025)
Student need	3	17,7 %	• <u>a curriculum</u> that is contextual and <u>based on the needs of students</u> (G4, 2025) • <u>using thematic approaches</u> relevant to <u>students' lives</u> (G4, 2025)
Syllabus	2	11,7 %	• <u>prepare</u> the curriculum and <u>syllabus</u> as best as <u>possible</u> and try to <u>follow them</u> (G3, 2025) • <u>The syllabus</u> should be <u>in line with boarding school subjects</u> (G5, 2025)
Total	17	100 %	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on Table 6, seventeen references were found from the thematic study of the respondent data. ESP in the aspects of materials, assessment standards, curriculum, student needs, and syllabus is considered following the Islamic boarding school internationalization program. Here is an excerpt of the interview:

Excerpt 6 English materials should be designed to support international communication, so that English is used as an effective language of instruction in a global context, especially to promote Islamic moderation and expand the institutional network of Islamic boarding schools at the international level. (G7, 2025)

The study identified several key aspects of Islamic Critical ESP implementation based on participant responses. Regarding materials, respondents cited this theme in five references, emphasizing that Islamic Critical ESP materials should facilitate international communication, positioning English as an effective medium for global interaction.

Testing standards were mentioned by respondents across four references, underscoring the importance of standardized assessments to monitor student progress and maintain alignment with international benchmarks.

Curriculum development was highlighted by respondents in three references. They stressed the need for careful curriculum design to seamlessly integrate Islamic Critical ESP with other educational elements, thereby supporting both language acquisition and internationalization objectives.

Student needs were cited by respondents in three references. The findings suggest that Islamic Critical ESP programs should cater specifically to *pesantren* students' requirements, striking a balance between language skill development and cultural-religious education.

Finally, the syllabus was mentioned by two respondents in two references. Participants agreed that a well-structured syllabus, when implemented consistently, is crucial for ensuring coherent and effective Islamic Critical ESP instruction.

The process of Islamic Islamic Critical ESP Implementation

The implementation process of Islamic Critical ESP in *pesantren* follows a cyclical and adaptive model, moving from planning to application, then to problem-solving, and finally to realignment. Based on the respondent data, the process typically begins with goal setting (see Table 2), focusing on global communication and da'wah. Following this, teachers proceed to method selection (see Table 3), where they predominantly choose Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and diversification methods. Concurrently, they engage in content development (see Table 4), integrating Islamic values with international communication materials, often by adapting international sources or translating classical texts (*kitab kuning*) into English.

However, the process does not run smoothly. During implementation, teachers immediately encounter contextual challenges (see Table 5), primarily student-related factors (low motivation, diverse proficiency levels) and learning process constraints (dense religious schedules, limited technology). This triggers a critical stage of the process namely problem-solving and adaptation. As shown in Table 6, teachers actively realign various aspects, such as material design (29.4% of references), testing standards (23.5%), and curriculum (17.7%). By these aspects, teachers create a workable implementation model. One respondent described this as a continuous adjustment, as stated in this excerpt:

Excerpt 7 preparing the curriculum and syllabus as best as possible and trying to follow them... [then] diversifying teaching methods and taking a personal approach. (G8, 2025)

Outcomes of Islamic Critical ESP Implementation

The implementation process yields both achieved and ongoing outcomes. On the positive side, the most significant outcome is the successful integration of Islamic values into English instruction without compromising language skill development. As G7 (2025) reported, learning is structured so that "English is used as an effective language of instruction in a global context, especially to promote Islamic moderation." Another tangible outcome is the creation of contextualized, Islamic-based ESP materials, such as English-translated Fiqh books (G5, 2025) and essays on tolerance and peace (G4, 2025). Additionally, the process has resulted in pedagogical diversification, where teachers now routinely combine CLT with role-plays, speech contests, drama performances, and task-based learning (G2, G3, G4, 2025).

However, the implementation also reveals several outcomes that are still in progress or remain as gaps. First, student motivation and vocabulary mastery have improved but remain inconsistent, as many *santri* still struggle with retention and confidence (G7, 2025). Second, institutional policy support is still weak; three respondents explicitly noted that English is often considered "less relevant to *pesantren* life" (G4, 2025) or that the "curriculum guide is inadequate for English" (G2, 2025). Third, standardized assessment outcomes are not yet fully achieved although some *pesantren* collaborate with madrasas or use international tests (G3, G8), most rely on internal, teacher-made assessments. Overall, the implementation of Islamic Critical ESP has successfully created an Islamically-grounded communicative model, but its outcomes are still partially constrained by student diversity and policy gaps.

Discussion

The findings are summarized in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1:

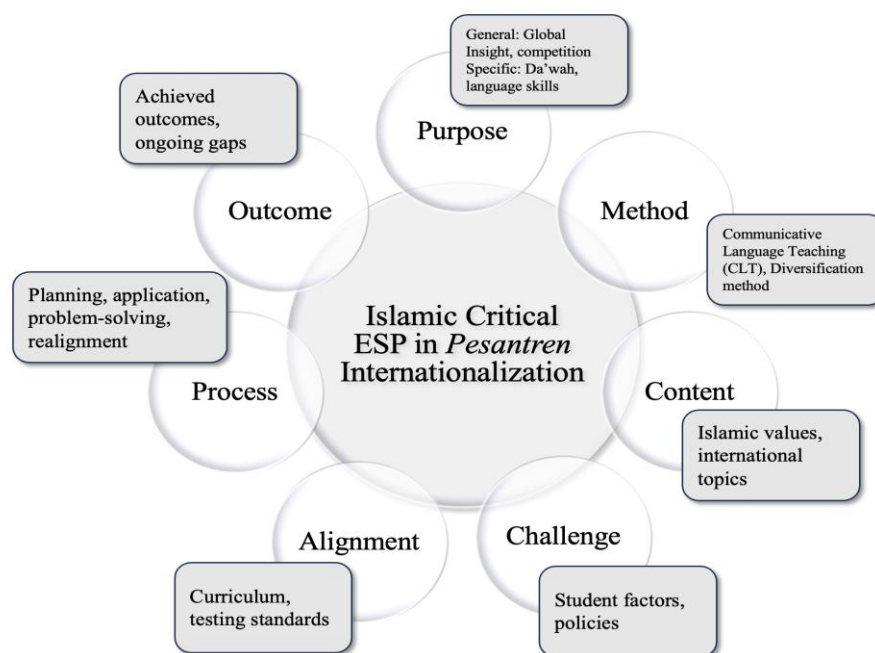


Figure 1. The Mind Map of Islamic Critical ESP in *Pesantren* Internalization

This mind map illustrates seven key components: purposes, methods, content, challenges, alignment, process, and outcomes. By mapping these elements, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of how Islamic Critical ESP functions within the unique sociocultural and religious context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. The mind map not only summarizes the empirical findings but also offers a practical model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to integrate language learning with religious values in an era of globalization. The cyclical relationship between process and outcomes where partial outcomes inform continuous realignment. These interconnected components highlight the adaptive, emergent nature of Islamic Critical ESP implementation. Each component is elaborated in the following arguments.

Each dimension noted in the mind map is explained in some arguments: First, the bifurcation of goals into general (global insight, global competition, cultural insight) and specific (da'wah, international communication, language skills, study abroad) reflects the dual mission of *pesantren*. They are preparing students for both worldly and spiritual success. This duality is central to what Azra (2003, 2015) conceptualizes as "rooted cosmopolitanism," where *pesantren* produce graduates who are globally engaged yet deeply grounded in Islamic traditions. Unlike conventional ESP models that prioritize economic or academic utility (Dudley-Evans & John, 2011), the *pesantren* context extends the scope of ESP to include spiritual and civilizational goals (Mohd-Asraf, 2005), particularly the use of English as a vehicle for global da'wah. The finding that "enhancing international communication" and "enhancing da'wah" were the two most cited specific purposes confirms that Islamic Critical ESP functions as a form of what can be termed "English for Islamic Purposes" (EIP), where language learning becomes an act of religious agency. This reframing positions *pesantren* not as passive recipients of globalization but as active agents who selectively appropriate global linguistic resources for Islamic outreach. The

cosmopolitan vision here is not rootless or Westernizing; rather, it is a deliberate, theologically informed engagement with the global sphere.

Second, the dominance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the most frequently cited approach (44.4% of references) reflects a pedagogical shift from rote memorization toward functional language use. However, the adaptation of CLT in *pesantren* is not a direct import but a contextual hybridization, as evidenced by the continued but limited use of classical instruction methods (16.7% of references). This blended approach, combining CLT with traditional methods such as *sorogan* (tutorial-based learning) and grammar-translation for foundational literacy. It exemplifies what Mahboob (2009) describes as "English as an Islamic language": a localized, value-laden use of English that resists linguistic imperialism. From a cosmopolitanism perspective, this pedagogical hybridization is significant because it demonstrates that *pesantren* are cultivating what Mutammam et al. (2024) call "adaptive cosmopolitanism". It means the ability to engage with global pedagogical trends without abandoning local religious epistemologies. The diversification method (38.9% of references), which includes role-plays, speech competitions, and drama performances, further supports the development of cosmopolitan competencies by providing *santri* with simulated global interaction spaces within the safe boundaries of the *pesantren* environment.

Third, the integration of Islamic values into English materials alongside international topics and a contextualized curriculum, demonstrates how *pesantren* maintain their religious ethos while engaging with global issues such as peace, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue. This finding is particularly important because Fahriany & Wahyunengsih (2025) found that most available English materials are general and rarely refer to Islamic values, and are less contextual with the daily lives of students. The fact that Islamic values and curriculum each accounted for 32.2% of content references, while international communication accounted for 35.6%, shows that *pesantren* are deliberately creating what can be called "cosmopolitan Islamic content". These materials are simultaneously globally oriented and theologically grounded. Examples such as English-translated *kitab kuning* (classical yellow books), essays on tolerance and peace, and public speaking on global da'wah illustrate how *pesantren* educators curate content that is both linguistically authentic and theologically sound. This practice not only enhances linguistic competence but also reinforces moral and religious identity, contributing to the holistic development of the *santri* (Rohmah et al., 2023). It challenges the assumption that ESP must be secular, proposing instead a faith-integrated model that is both academically rigorous and spiritually grounded. In terms of cosmopolitanism, this content strategy produces what experts termed "rooted cosmopolitans" as individuals who are capable of global discourse precisely because they are secure in their particular cultural and religious identity (Kofman, 2005; Nielsen, 1999; Wang & B. Wang, 2018).

Fourth, student diversity in motivation and proficiency (47.6% of challenge references) and learning process constraints (38.1%) complicate curriculum design and instructional delivery. The heavy religious curriculum limits instructional time and cognitive bandwidth for language learning, while the lack of standardized policy support for Islamic Critical ESP in *pesantren* (14.3% of references) results in fragmented implementation and resource inequity. These barriers echo broader tensions in Islamic education between tradition and modernity (Pohl, 2011). However, from a cosmopolitanism perspective, these challenges are not merely obstacles but also indicators of the complex negotiation that *pesantren* must navigate. As Azra (2015) notes, rooted cosmopolitanism is not an easy or automatic achievement; it requires deliberate institutional work to balance global engagement with local authenticity. The fact that *pesantren* face these challenges is itself evidence that they are actively attempting to produce cosmopolitan subjects (Sodikin, 2026). The institutional strategies identified in this study by curriculum redesign, additional classes, integration of Islamic content, and adoption of

international curriculum frameworks. These strategies represent concrete attempts to manage this tension. Addressing these challenges fully requires institutional frameworks that recognize Islamic Critical ESP as a core component of *pesantren* internationalization, not merely an add-on to the religious curriculum.

Fifth, the findings show that Islamic Critical ESP is aligned with *pesantren* internationalization through five aspects: materials (29.4% of references), testing standards (23.5%), curriculum (17.7%), student needs (17.7%), and syllabus (11.7%). This alignment positions *pesantren* as unique actors in the global educational landscape (Suwendi, Gama, Farabi, Fuady, & Arman, 2024). A well-aligned program ensures that students are prepared for global engagement while maintaining their religious identity. From a cosmopolitanism perspective, this alignment is crucial because it transforms internationalization from a vague aspiration into a concrete, measurable set of practices. The use of internationally standardized tests (e.g., Cambridge curriculum, as reported by G3 and G8) alongside Islamic content integration exemplifies what can be termed "selective cosmopolitan alignment". It means that *pesantren* adopt global standards not passively but selectively, filtering them through Islamic criteria. This finding supports Komarudin et al. (2022) and Maman et al. (2022), who argue that *pesantren* internationalization requires a specific environment that can support relationships between *pesantren* communities and international societies. However, sustainable progress requires more than pedagogical innovation (Lathifah et al., 2025; S Maulida & Ali, 2023); it demands strategic partnerships with international Islamic institutions, the development of contextualized Islamic Critical ESP modules, and teacher training programs that bridge linguistic and religious expertise.

Sixth, the cyclical and adaptive model identified in this study. That is moving from planning (goal setting, method selection, content development), to application (classroom implementation), to problem-solving (identifying and addressing challenges), and finally to realignment (adjusting curriculum, materials, and assessment based on experience). The model reveals that Islamic Critical ESP implementation is not a linear top-down process but an emergent, teacher-driven practice. As shown in Table 6, teachers actively realign various aspects of instruction, with material design (29.4% of references), testing standards (23.5%), and curriculum (17.7%) being the most frequently realigned components. One respondent (G8, 2025) described this as a continuous adjustment: "preparing the curriculum and syllabus as best as possible and trying to follow them... (then) diversifying teaching methods and taking a personal approach." From a cosmopolitanism perspective, this cyclical process is significant because it demonstrates that rooted cosmopolitanism is not achieved through a one-time curriculum reform but through ongoing, iterative adaptation. *Pesantren* teachers act as practitioners who assemble and reassemble global and local elements in response to emerging challenges (Abdurrazal, Sumardi, & Putra, 2022; Rasyidin, Prasetyo, Naeem, & Ritonga, 2025). This finding challenges top-down models of educational internationalization and instead highlights the centrality of teacher agency in navigating the tensions between global aspirations and local realities.

Seventh, the implementation process yields both achieved outcomes and ongoing gaps. On the positive side, the most significant outcome is the successful integration of Islamic values into English instruction without compromising language skill development. As G7 (2025) reported, learning is structured so that "English is used as an effective language of instruction in a global context, especially to promote Islamic moderation." Another tangible outcome is the creation of contextualized, Islamic-based ESP materials, such as English-translated Fiqh books (G5, 2025) and essays on tolerance and peace (G4, 2025). Additionally, the process has resulted in pedagogical diversification, where teachers now routinely combine CLT with role-plays, speech contests, drama performances, and task-based learning (G2, G3, G4, 2025). However,

the implementation also reveals several outcomes that are still in progress or remain as gaps: (1) student motivation and vocabulary mastery have improved but remain inconsistent, as many *santri* still struggle with retention and confidence (G7, 2025). (2) institutional policy support is still weak; three respondents explicitly noted that English is often considered "less relevant to *pesantren* life" (G4, 2025) or that the "curriculum guide is inadequate for English" (G2, 2025). (3). standardized assessment outcomes are not yet fully achieved although some *pesantren* collaborate with madrasas or use international tests (G3, G8), most rely on internal, teacher-made assessments. From a cosmopolitanism perspective, these partial outcomes are significant because they indicate that the production of "rooted cosmopolitans" is an ongoing, unfinished project. As Azra (2003) emphasizes, *pesantren* cosmopolitanism is historically rooted in the archipelago's long tradition of international Islamic networks, but contemporary globalization presents new challenges that require continuous adaptation. The cyclical arrow in Figure 1 between Process and Outcomes visually represents this insight: partial outcomes inform realignment, which then feeds back into the planning stage, creating an ever-evolving cycle of implementation.

Finally, this study advances a novel theoretical contribution named the "Islamic Critical ESP" framework. As illustrated in Figure 1, this model extends Dudley-Evans and John's (2011) needs analysis by incorporating three Islamic-specific dimensions: (1) religious developmental (*tarbawi*) stages in learner profiling, (2) theological authenticity as a criterion for material selection (reflected in Component 3), and (3) faith-language integration as a core assessment domain (reflected in Component 5). This framework challenges the secular bias in mainstream ESP and offers a context-sensitive alternative for Muslim-majority educational settings. It positions language learning not as a neutral skill but as a moral and spiritual practice embedded in Islamic pedagogy (Ilyas & Tarmini, 2025; Selvi et al., 2025). In terms of cosmopolitanism, the Islamic Critical ESP framework operationalizes "rooted cosmopolitanism" at the curricular level. Unlike conventional cosmopolitan education, which often assumes a universal, secular subject, Islamic Critical ESP recognizes that cosmopolitan competence can be and in *pesantren* contexts, must be grounded in a particular religious tradition. The framework does not reject globalization but engages it critically, selectively appropriating global linguistic resources for locally defined religious purposes. This is consistent with Azra's (2015) argument that *pesantren* have historically been sites of "cosmopolitan Islam", long before the term became fashionable in educational discourse. By making this framework explicit, this study provides other Islamic educational institutions with a practical tool for designing ESP programs that produce graduates who are, as emphasized by Mutammam et al. (2024), adaptive to change especially in facing the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Muslim Society 5.0 without losing their Islamic identity. Islamic Critical ESP in Indonesian *pesantren* thus reflects a strategic response to globalization, balancing religious preservation with global engagement. It is not merely a linguistic tool but a curricular mechanism for cultivating "rooted cosmopolitans", students who can navigate global discourse while maintaining a strong Islamic identity.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that language education in *pesantren* is evolving beyond linguistic competence toward the cultivation of 'rooted cosmopolitans'. They are graduates who are globally engaged without compromising their religious identity. The proposed Islamic Critical ESP framework offers a transformative model for faith-based language education by integrating religious developmental stages, theological authenticity, and faith-language integration. For sustainable internationalization, *pesantren* require institutional support, contextualized Islamic Critical ESP modules, and teacher training that bridges linguistic and religious expertise. Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of this model on students' academic and professional trajectories in global Islamic networks.

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