



PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study explores how an English teacher negotiates professional identity in a pesantren-based secondary school. It focuses on the institutional, cultural-religious, and personal factors that shape teacher identity, as well as the strategies used to align English language teaching with pesantren values. This research employed a qualitative case study design at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Zainul Bahar, Wringin, Bondowoso, East Java. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that the teacher's professional identity is dynamic, contextual, and hybrid. The teacher maintained English learning objectives while adapting materials, filtering culturally sensitive topics, integrating Islamic values, using code-switching, and managing classroom interaction through adab-based practices. The study concludes that English teacher identity in a pesantren context is constructed through continuous negotiation between academic goals and religious-cultural expectations. These findings highlight the need for culturally responsive English pedagogy in Islamic educational settings.

Keywords: English Teacher Identity, Pesantren, Professional Identity, Islamic Values

INTRODUCTION

The issue of teacher professional identity has become a significant one in the field of educational studies, as it influences the manner in which teachers perceive themselves, fulfill their pedagogical responsibilities, make instructional decisions, and establish relationships with students and the institutional environment. Professional identity does not stop at a teacher's formal status as an educator; it also encompasses beliefs, values, experiences, emotions, moral orientations, teaching practices, and the ways in which teachers interpret their responsibilities within a particular educational context. (Beijaard et al., 2004) emphasize that Teachers' professional identities are both changeable and contextual. This indicates that a teacher's identity is constantly shaped by experience, social negotiation, and everyday teaching practice, rather than being a permanent quality that is complete once someone obtains a degree or teaching post.

Research on teacher identification demonstrates that professional identity is complex. Teachers' personal experiences, school culture, educational regulations, curricular demands, collegial connections, and societal expectations all influence how they perceive themselves. (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) characterize teacher identity as a dialogical process, that is, an encounter between several self-positions that sometimes reinforce each other and sometimes cause friction. A teacher may consider themselves as a subject instructor, a moral mentor, a curriculum implementer, a part of the school community, and also as an individual with personal values. As a result, teachers' professional identities are continually shifting between the personal self, social behaviours, and the institutional frameworks in which they operate.

In English language education, the development of teacher identity is significantly more complicated. English is not only taught in schools, but it is also seen as a worldwide language linked to international communication, educational mobility, technology, and knowledge access. English instructors are responsible for increasing students' linguistic proficiency while also interacting with the values, cultures, and global discourses implicit in language teaching resources. (Pennycook, 2007) links English to modernity, globalization, and cross-cultural flows. In this context, teachers need to teach the language in a functional way without neglecting local values, cultural norms, and students' social conditions (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

This intricacy is exacerbated when English is taught in pesantren. Pesantren are Islamic educational institutes that combine religious instruction, general education, moral growth, spiritual activities, and community living. Educational processes take place not just in the classroom, but also via habitual worship, teacher role modelling, social relationships among pupils, moral monitoring, and institutional culture that unfolds throughout the day. As a result, instructors in pesantren are considered more than just subject carriers. They are also meant to be outstanding personalities who defend Islamic beliefs and contribute to the character building of students. (Wekke, 2013)

For English teachers in Islamic-based secondary schools, professional identity is formed within a space of dual demands. On the one hand, teachers need to teach English

as a global language that is important for students' academic access, international communication, and future competencies. On the other hand, they must ensure that learning remains aligned with Islamic values, pesantren norms, and institutional culture. The integration of general and religious education requires teachers to balance the global orientation of English with their moral–religious responsibilities as educators in Islamic institutions (Skourdoumbis & Madkur, 2020).

These dual demands influence the choice of materials, instructional strategies, classroom interaction, language use, and the way teachers understand their roles. English teaching materials that contain Western cultures, particular social relations, or themes considered less compatible with pesantren norms can create pedagogical dilemmas. In such situations, teachers do not merely deliver textbook content; they interpret, filter, and adapt it. Teaching practice becomes a space in which teachers negotiate their professional identity between academic demands and the religious–cultural expectations of pesantren (Efriзал, 2022)

The professional identity of English teachers in pesantren can be understood as a hybrid identity. This identity brings together the teacher's roles as language instructor, moral mentor, member of the pesantren community, and individual with religious beliefs. (Beijaard et al., 2000a) explain teachers' professional identity in terms of subject-matter expertise, didactical expertise, and pedagogical expertise. In pesantren, these three forms of expertise are related not only to mastery of content, teaching skills, and student development, but also to the teacher's ability to adjust English language teaching to Islamic values, communal culture, and the institution's moral expectations.

The perspective of communities of practice also helps explain how teacher identity is formed. (Wenger, 1998) views identity as the result of participation in particular social practices and communities. English teachers in pesantren participate in professional teacher communities, school communities, religious communities, and the social life of the pesantren. Through interaction with students, colleagues, pesantren leaders, institutional regulations, and everyday religious practices, teachers build an understanding of who they are as educators. Thus, the professional identity of English teachers is not only individual but also social, institutional, and religious (Farnsworth et al., 2016)

Previous studies show that English teachers in Islamic educational institutions often see themselves not only as language instructors but also as moral mentors (Qoyyimah et al., 2020) found that teachers of English as an International Language in Indonesian Islamic schools tend to position their professional identity as caregivers and moral guardians. A related finding shows that (Islam & Ilfiah, 2024) see English teachers in pesantren-based schools as balancing roles as language instructors and moral guides. These studies strengthen the understanding that English language teaching in Islamic contexts cannot be separated from the formation of students' character, values, and imagined futures.

Other studies indicate that religion can be both a source of identity construction and a source of professional tension. (Karimpour et al., 2024) found that religious ideology influences material selection, institutional relations, and tensions between religious norms and teachers' personal beliefs. Teachers do not always accept institutional expectations passively. They may interpret, adjust, or negotiate norms in order to maintain their professional autonomy. Therefore, the identity of English teachers in religious contexts needs to be understood as the result of interaction between compliance, reflection, resistance, and pedagogical adaptation.

In Indonesia, research on the professional identity of English teachers in Islamic educational institutions is developing but still requires further exploration. (Kurniawati et al., 2024) show that novice English teachers in madrasah face challenges related to professional adaptation, diverse student needs, the development of teaching methods, and the integration of Islamic values into teaching materials. (Islam & Ilfiah, 2024) also found that English teachers in pesantren-based schools need to balance their roles as language instructors and moral mentors. However, many studies still focus on the integration of Islamic values in teaching materials or general instructional strategies. Research that explains how teachers construct, negotiate, and express their professional identity within a single pesantren setting remains relatively limited.

This gap forms the basis of the present study. English language teaching in pesantren cannot be sufficiently understood as the mere transfer of linguistic knowledge. It is a social, cultural, and religious practice that involves teacher identity. Teachers need to select appropriate materials, avoid content that conflicts with pesantren norms, use code-switching between English, Indonesian, and Arabic terms, and integrate moral values into classroom activities. Each pedagogical decision reflects how teachers negotiate their professional identity within an educational space that combines academic and spiritual orientations (Norton, 2013)

This study focuses on English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Zainul Bahar, Wringin, Bondowoso, East Java. This context is chosen because it represents an educational environment that integrates formal upper-secondary education, Islamic values, communal life, and pesantren culture. The study does not aim to compare pesantren with general schools or with other pesantren, but rather to gain a contextual understanding of the professional experiences of English teachers within a specific educational setting (Yin, 2018). More specifically, the study analyzes institutional, cultural, and personal factors that shape teachers' negotiation of professional identity, as well as the strategies they use to reconcile English language content with the religious-cultural expectations of pesantren.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teacher Professional Identity

Teacher professional identity refers to the way teachers understand who they are as professionals and how they interpret their roles, responsibilities, values, and practices within educational contexts. Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasize that teachers' professional identities are both changeable and contextual. This means that teacher identity is not a fixed quality that is completed once someone obtains a degree or teaching position. Rather, it is continuously shaped by experience, social interaction, institutional expectations, and everyday teaching practice.

Research on teacher identity demonstrates that professional identity is complex. Teachers' personal experiences, school culture, educational regulations, curricular demands, collegial relationships, and societal expectations all influence how they perceive themselves. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) characterize teacher identity as a dialogical process, namely an encounter between several self-positions that sometimes support each other and sometimes create tension. A teacher may see themselves as a subject instructor, moral mentor, curriculum implementer, member of the school community, and individual with personal values. As a result, teachers' professional identities are continually negotiated between the personal self, social practices, and institutional structures.

Beijaard et al. (2000) explain teachers' professional identity through three forms of expertise: subject-matter expertise, didactical expertise, and pedagogical expertise. Subject-matter expertise refers to teachers' mastery of the content they teach. Didactical expertise refers to teachers' ability to organize, present, and facilitate learning effectively. Pedagogical expertise refers to teachers' responsibility in supporting students' personal, social, and moral development. These three forms of expertise are useful for understanding how teachers construct their professional roles in specific educational contexts.

English Teacher Identity and Global English

In English language education, teacher identity is shaped by the global position of English. Pennycook (2007) links English to modernity, globalization, and cross-cultural flows. English is often associated with global communication, academic mobility, technology, and access to wider knowledge. Therefore, English teachers do not only teach grammar, vocabulary, and language skills; they also engage with cultural meanings, global discourses, and social values embedded in language use and teaching materials.

However, the teaching of English cannot be separated from local contexts. Kumaravadivelu (2003) argues that language teaching needs to be context-sensitive and responsive to local social, cultural, and institutional realities. In this sense, English teachers are not merely implementers of global language teaching methods or textbook content. They are also interpreters and adapters of teaching materials who need to make

pedagogical decisions based on students' needs, cultural values, and institutional expectations.

Norton (2013) also views identity in language learning as multiple, changing, and socially situated. From this perspective, language teaching is not only a linguistic activity but also a social practice connected to identity, power, and imagined futures. This view is relevant for understanding English teachers in pesantren, because their teaching practices involve not only language instruction but also the negotiation of values, beliefs, and institutional expectations.

English Teacher Identity in Pesantren Context

The professional identity of English teachers in pesantren can be understood as a hybrid identity. This identity brings together the teacher's roles as language instructor, moral mentor, member of the pesantren community, and individual with religious beliefs. In pesantren, teachers' subject-matter, didactical, and pedagogical expertise are not only related to mastery of English content, teaching skills, and student development, but also to the ability to adjust English language teaching to Islamic values, communal culture, and the institution's moral expectations.

The concept of communities of practice also helps explain how teacher identity is formed in pesantren. Wenger (1998) views identity as the result of participation in particular social practices and communities. English teachers in pesantren participate in several communities at the same time, including professional teacher communities, school communities, religious communities, and the broader social life of the pesantren. Through interaction with students, colleagues, pesantren leaders, institutional regulations, and everyday religious practices, teachers build an understanding of who they are as educators.

From this perspective, the professional identity of English teachers in pesantren is not only individual but also social, institutional, and religious. Teachers construct their identity through participation in classroom teaching, religious routines, institutional expectations, and social relationships within the pesantren. Their professional identity is therefore shaped by the need to negotiate between English as a global language and pesantren as a religious-cultural educational environment.

In this study, the theoretical framework combines teacher professional identity, dialogical identity, English teacher identity, communities of practice, and hybrid identity. These perspectives are used to analyze how English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Pondok Pesantren Zainul Bahar construct, negotiate, and express their professional identity. The framework also helps explain how teachers respond to institutional, cultural, and personal factors, as well as how they adapt English language content to align with the religious-cultural expectations of pesantren.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The design was selected because the study sought to explore how English teachers in a pesantren-based secondary school construct, negotiate, and express their professional identity within a specific institutional, cultural, and religious setting. A qualitative case study is appropriate for examining a contemporary educational phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the phenomenon and its context are closely intertwined (Yin, 2018)

The case was bounded by the institutional context of Madrasah Aliyah at Pondok Pesantren Zainul Bahar, Wringin, Bondowoso, East Java. The study did not compare pesantren-based schools with public schools or other Islamic institutions. Instead, it aimed to produce a contextual understanding of English teachers' professional identity negotiation within a pesantren environment. This approach allowed the researcher to examine complex social and pedagogical realities through rich description, contextual interpretation, and multiple sources of evidence (Stake, 1995)

The data consisted of qualitative verbal, textual, and observational data. Verbal data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with English teachers, particularly their narratives, reflections, and explanations about professional roles, teaching experiences, institutional expectations, and strategies for dealing with religious-cultural values. Textual data came from curriculum documents, lesson plans, school profiles, teaching materials, and relevant school policies. Observational data were collected from classroom observations, including teacher-student interaction, language use, material adaptation, classroom management, and the integration of Islamic values in English language teaching.

The main data source was an English teacher who teaches at the Madrasah Aliyah level in Pondok Pesantren Zainul Bahar. The participant was selected through purposive sampling because she was directly relevant to the focus of the study. The criteria included teaching English at the senior secondary level, having experience in a pesantren-based school, and being directly involved in classroom instruction. Students were not selected as formal research participants because the study focused on teachers' professional experiences, identity negotiation, and pedagogical practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews explored the teacher's personal and professional perspectives, including how she interpreted her role, how institutional, cultural, and personal factors influenced her identity, and how she experienced the dual demands of teaching English and upholding pesantren values. Classroom observation examined how identity was enacted in actual teaching practices, especially in material selection, interaction patterns, language use, value integration, and responses to culturally sensitive content. Document analysis was used to understand the institutional and pedagogical context that shaped teacher roles, curriculum demands, and pesantren expectations ((Bowen, 2009).

The instruments consisted of an interview guide, classroom observation protocol, document analysis matrix, and field notes. The interview guide contained open-ended questions about professional background, teaching experience, beliefs about English language teaching, perceptions of pesantren values, institutional expectations, and identity negotiation. The observation protocol guided systematic attention to lesson opening and closing, use of English and other languages, teacher-student interaction, teaching strategies, material adaptation, value integration, classroom management, and teacher responses to sensitive content. Field notes recorded contextual details, non-verbal behavior, classroom atmosphere, and spontaneous events that might not appear in the formal observation sheet.

The research procedure began with permission from the pesantren authority and school administration. After permission was granted, the researcher contacted the participant, explained the purpose of the study, described the data collection process, emphasized voluntary participation, and ensured confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained before interviews and observations. The first stage of data collection was a semi-structured interview in the school or pesantren environment. The second stage was classroom observation, in which the researcher observed English teaching without participating in the lesson. The third stage was document collection and analysis, including lesson plans, syllabi, teaching materials, school profiles, and institutional regulations.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis because this method allows the researcher to identify and interpret patterns of meaning across interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with repeated reading of the data, followed by initial coding of words, phrases, statements, and events relevant to teacher identity negotiation. Codes were grouped into broader categories, such as institutional expectations, cultural-religious values, personal beliefs, material adaptation, value integration, and code-switching. These categories were then developed into themes and compared across data sources to identify consistency, contradiction, or additional contextual meaning. Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation, member checking, thick description, and an audit trail (Houghton et al., 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion on the professional identity of an English teacher in a pesantren-based secondary school. The data were obtained through classroom observation and post-observation interviews with an English teacher identified as TA. The findings are organized around two research concerns: the institutional, cultural-religious, and personal factors shaping professional identity negotiation; and the strategies used by the teacher to reconcile English language content, pedagogical practice, and pesantren expectations.

Institutional Factors in Shaping Teacher Professional Identity

The first finding shows that institutional factors strongly shaped how TA negotiated her professional identity. As an English teacher at MA Zainul Bahar, TA maintained the formal goals of English learning, including vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking, and writing. In the observed lesson, she taught daily activities and descriptive expressions by asking students to produce sentences in English. However, these objectives were not delivered as neutral content detached from pesantren life. TA connected the material with students' daily routines, such as waking up early, performing Subuh prayer, joining tahfidz, studying in class, learning in the dormitory, and respecting teachers. Through this adaptation, English learning objectives remained intact while the content became closer to students' lived experience.

The practice indicates that teacher identity was shaped not only by the formal curriculum but also by pesantren institutional culture. TA opened and closed the lesson with Islamic greetings, began the class with gratitude, and reminded students to maintain adab during interaction. These practices show that she positioned herself as a subject teacher and as part of the pesantren moral community. She did not separate English teaching from the religious atmosphere of the school. Instead, she framed the English lesson as a space where language competence and character formation could occur together. This finding confirms that institutional expectations influence how teachers define professional responsibility in faith-based educational settings.

Cultural-Religious Factors in Material Adaptation

The second finding shows that cultural-religious factors influenced how TA selected, filtered, and adapted English materials. During classroom observation, she avoided topics considered sensitive in pesantren culture, such as dating, parties involving alcohol, free lifestyle, or inappropriate dressing. In the interview, TA explained, "Ada beberapa topik yang cukup sensitif seperti pacaran, pesta yang melibatkan minuman keras, gaya hidup bebas." This statement shows that English materials were not evaluated only by their linguistic usefulness. They were also examined in relation to pesantren moral norms and religious values.

Importantly, TA did not reject English as a foreign language. She viewed English as useful knowledge that santri needed to learn. What she filtered was not the language itself, but particular cultural contexts that might conflict with pesantren values. When she found a useful language point in a less suitable context, she modified examples, changed situations, or provided additional explanation. This selective approach reflects a negotiated identity. TA acted as a language teacher who protected linguistic objectives and as a cultural mediator who ensured that the classroom remained aligned with pesantren expectations.

Personal Beliefs and Teacher Professional Negotiation

The third finding reveals that personal beliefs also shaped TA's professional identity. TA viewed English as a means of gaining knowledge and broadening students' horizons. She stated, "Belajar bahasa Inggris itu untuk menambah ilmu dan membuka wawasan." This belief became the basis for her material adaptation. She did not contextualize lessons merely because the institution required it; she believed learning would become more meaningful when examples were close to students' real lives. Thus, personal conviction, academic responsibility, and pesantren values interacted in her professional decision-making.

TA's personal belief also showed her pedagogical agency. She was not a passive implementer of textbooks or institutional rules. She reflected on students' needs, evaluated the appropriateness of materials, and made decisions that balanced linguistic targets with moral sensitivity. This agency is important because it demonstrates that teacher identity emerges through active interpretation. TA's identity was shaped by her ability to read the classroom context, respond to students' background, and transform English learning into a meaningful activity within pesantren life (Priestley et al., 2015).

Hybrid Professional Identity of Pesantren-Based English Teacher

Based on the three factors above, TA's professional identity can be understood as hybrid. She was not only an English teacher, but also a moral guide and mediator of values. This hybrid identity appeared through three forms of expertise. First, subject-matter expertise was visible when she continued teaching descriptive text, daily activities, simple present tense, vocabulary, speaking, and writing. Second, didactical expertise appeared in her ability to modify examples, simplify explanations, and use familiar contexts. Third, pedagogical expertise appeared in her attention to students' character, adab, discipline, and religious habits.

Hybrid identity was also visible in code-switching. TA used English for basic instructions and sentence models, Indonesian for conceptual clarification, and Arabic or pesantren terms such as adab, akhlak, santri, and istiqamah to strengthen religious meaning. This multilingual movement was not random. Each language served a pedagogical and symbolic function. English represented academic and global competence, Indonesian supported understanding, and pesantren terms anchored learning in students' moral-religious world. Through this practice, TA showed that English could be taught without separating students from their Islamic identity.

Strategies in Reconciling English Content and Pesantren Values

The second research question concerns the strategies used by TA to reconcile tension between English content, teaching practice, and pesantren expectations. The data show seven main strategies: contextualizing materials with santri life, modifying materials without deleting language objectives, filtering sensitive topics, integrating pesantren values into language activities, using code-switching, managing the class

through adab-based interaction, and explaining material adaptation to students. These strategies show that teacher identity was expressed through concrete classroom decisions.

The first strategy was contextualizing materials with students' daily life. In the observed lesson, TA changed general examples such as "I go to the mall with my friends" into sentences closer to pesantren routines, such as "I study in the library with my friends," "I wake up for Subuh prayer," and "I memorize Qur'an after Maghrib." This contextualization made English more meaningful because students could connect grammar and vocabulary with their actual experiences. The material remained linguistically relevant, but the context became culturally familiar.

The second strategy was modifying materials without removing language objectives. TA did not discard all materials that seemed culturally unsuitable. Instead, she changed examples, adjusted contexts, or added explanations while maintaining the core competence. She explained, "I usually don't delete the entire material right away. I more often replace examples, modify the context, or provide additional explanations." This statement shows that adaptation was selective. The teacher protected the purpose of language learning while keeping the lesson compatible with pesantren values.

The third strategy was filtering culturally and religiously sensitive topics. TA checked pictures, stories, and situations before using them in class. If a topic was considered inconsistent with pesantren norms, she replaced it with a more suitable example. This filtering did not mean reducing students' exposure to English. Instead, it reflected cultural awareness and professional responsibility. TA positioned herself as a teacher who needed to understand both the linguistic value of materials and their social meaning in a religious educational environment.

The fourth strategy was integrating pesantren values into language activities. Values such as discipline, responsibility, adab, respect for teachers, helping friends, and cleanliness were not delivered as separate moral lectures. They were inserted into example sentences, speaking exercises, writing tasks, and brief reflections. During observation, TA used expressions such as "be responsible," "respect your friends," and "discipline is part of good character." In this way, English became a medium for expressing values, not a symbol of foreign culture separated from santri identity.

The fifth strategy was code-switching as a bridge between language and values. TA used English to train language competence, Indonesian to clarify meaning, and Arabic or pesantren terms to reinforce religious concepts. This practice shows pedagogical flexibility in a multilingual classroom. Code-switching was not simply a response to student's limited English proficiency. It also reflected the symbolic role of each language in pesantren learning. English, Indonesian, and religious terms functioned together to support understanding and identity.

The sixth strategy was managing classroom interaction through adab. TA opened and closed the lesson with Islamic greetings, reminded students to learn with good intention, and asked them to respect classmates who were speaking. When students became noisy, she did not rely on harsh reprimands. She related classroom order to adab.

This approach shows that classroom management was not merely behavioral control. It became part of moral formation. Teacher authority was built through firmness, pedagogical closeness, and character guidance.

The seventh strategy was explaining the reasons for material adaptation to students. TA did not simply replace examples or avoid topics without explanation. When students asked why certain examples were changed or why some parts were not discussed, she explained that the knowledge could still be learned while the context could be adjusted. She stated, "In that case, let me just explain it simply."

This transparency is important because students were invited to understand that English can be learned selectively without imitating all cultural contexts attached to it.

Table 1. Summary of Teacher's Interview Findings

No	Focus of Interview	Teacher's Statement	Data Interpretation	Coding
1	Material adaptation to students' daily life	"I do adjust some parts of the material to make them closer to the lives of the pesantren students. Some examples in the textbook use contexts that are not very familiar to the students, so I replace them with situations they encounter in their daily lives at the pesantren"	Teachers adapt the material to make it more relevant to the students' real-life experiences.	Material contextualization
2	Consideration before using material	"If there are any examples that are not appropriate, whether from the images, stories, or situations discussed, I will consider changing them."	Teachers select materials based on suitability with Islamic boarding school values	Value-based material selection
3	Sensitive topics in ELT materials	"There are some topics that are quite sensitive, such as dating, parties involving alcohol, and a free lifestyle."	Teachers identify potential cultural and religious conflicts in English language materials.	Cultural-religious sensitivity
4	Response to inappropriate material	"I don't usually delete the entire material outright. I often replace examples, modify the context, or	The teacher makes selective modifications so that the	Selective modification

		provide additional explanations."	language objectives are still achieved.	
5	Maintaining language learning objectives	"I ensure that language learning objectives are achieved while maintaining core competencies."	The teacher maintains the linguistic target even though the context of the material is adapted.	Maintaining linguistic goals
6	Negotiating textbook and pesantren context	"Sometimes books contain good learning material, but the context isn't quite right. That's where I have to find a compromise."	Teachers negotiate the academic benefits of the material with the suitability of the Islamic boarding school culture.	Material negotiation
7	Teacher's view of English	"Learning English is to increase knowledge and broaden horizons."	Teachers view English as a means of knowledge, not a threat to Islamic values.	English as knowledge
8	Explaining adaptation to students	"Then I'll just explain it simply."	Teachers practice pedagogical transparency in explaining the reasons for adapting the material.	Pedagogical transparency

Discussion: Teacher Identity as a Negotiated and Contextual Practice

The findings show that the professional identity of the English teacher in a pesantren-based secondary school is dynamic, contextual, and hybrid. It was shaped not only by competence in teaching English but also by the teacher's participation in a pesantren community that emphasizes religious, moral, and communal values. In (Beijaard et al., 2000b) framework, TA demonstrated subject-matter, didactical, and pedagogical expertise. Yet, in the pesantren context, these dimensions were continuously connected to Islamic values and institutional norms.

The findings extend the understanding of teacher professional identity by showing that English teachers in pesantren build identity through the ability to balance global and local demands. English as a global language carries international communicative orientation, while pesantren as a religious educational institution carries moral expectations. TA did not resolve this tension by rejecting English. She taught English while choosing contexts that fit santri life. Her identity therefore emerged through ongoing negotiation between academic aims and pesantren values.

This finding aligns with (Wenger, 1998) concept of communities of practice. TA participated in the professional community of teachers, the school community, and the pesantren community. These overlapping communities shaped her understanding of professional roles, responsibilities, and pedagogical boundaries. She learned to adapt teaching through interaction with students, institutional norms, religious culture, and daily teaching experience. Professional identity therefore emerged not only from personal reflection, but also from social practice within a community.

From a hybrid identity perspective, TA stood at the intersection of language instructor and moral educator. She taught grammar, vocabulary, speaking, and writing, but connected these skills with adab, discipline, responsibility, and students' religious routines. This finding supports (Qoyyimah et al., 2020) who found that English teachers in Indonesian Islamic schools often see themselves as caregivers and moral guardians. It also supports the Consensus-identified study by (Islam & Ilfiah, 2024), which emphasizes that English teachers in pesantren-based schools balance the role of language instructor and moral guide.

The findings can also be interpreted through (Berry, 2017) concept of acculturation. TA did not fully adopt all external cultural contexts found in English materials, but she did not reject English as a whole. Her strategy reflects integration: English learning objectives were maintained, while pesantren values served as the moral frame. English was treated as useful knowledge, not as an ideological threat. This shows that the teacher had agency in determining how English could be taught in a way that respected students' religious and cultural context.

The teacher's decisions to replace examples, avoid sensitive topics, use pesantren terms, and connect grammar with santri routines show that teaching strategies were manifestations of professional identity. They were not merely classroom techniques. They were ways for the teacher to display who she was as an educator: a language teacher, value guardian, and contextual interpreter. Her professional identity was enacted through concrete pedagogical choices.

Students' responses also indicate that contextualization can improve engagement. They responded more easily when examples related to their routines, such as Subuh prayer, tahfidz, dormitory study, and respect for teachers. Some students produced sentences such as "My daily activity starts with Subuh prayer," "I usually memorize Qur'an after Maghrib," and "We must respect our teacher and listen to our friends."

Although grammatical errors remained, especially in subject-verb agreement, the pesantren context helped students connect English with meaningful experiences.

Thus, English language teaching in pesantren cannot be understood merely as language transfer. It is a space of negotiation among identity, value, culture, and pedagogy. The teacher plays a central role in deciding how English can be taught academically while remaining aligned with religious-cultural values. The quality of English teaching in pesantren depends not only on linguistic competence, but also on the teacher's ability to read context, interpret values, and negotiate professional identity in classroom practice.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, this study found that the professional identity of the English teacher in a pesantren-based secondary school was shaped by institutional, cultural-religious, and personal factors. Institutional factors appeared in the demand to maintain English learning objectives. Cultural-religious factors appeared in pesantren norms that guided the teacher to select, filter, and adapt materials. Personal factors appeared in the teacher's belief that English is a means of knowledge that can be learned without leaving Islamic values.

Material contextualization, selective modification, screening sensitive themes, incorporating pesantren values, code-switching, adab-based classroom management, and explaining the reasons for adaptation to students were some of the tactics utilized to reconcile English content and expectations. These tactics demonstrate that the instructor has agency in regulating English learning in context. The findings support the idea that pesantren's professional identities are mixed and negotiated. The teacher retained English learning objectives, but framed them in situations relevant to santri life and consistent with pesantren principles.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that the English teacher's professional identity in a pesantren-based secondary school is formed via ongoing negotiation of institutional demands, cultural-religious expectations, and personal views. The teacher serves not just as an English instructor, but also as a moral educator and cultural mediator within the pesantren community. Her professional identity is multifaceted, contextualized, and hybrid. She preserves English learning objectives while altering materials, examples, classroom interaction, and pedagogical approaches to match with Islamic beliefs and pesantren customs.

In relation to the first research question, institutional, cultural-religious, and personal factors simultaneously shape teacher professional identity. Institutionally, the teacher remains responsible for achieving English learning objectives, including vocabulary, grammar, reading, speaking, and writing. Culturally and religiously, she filters and modifies topics considered inconsistent with pesantren values, such as dating, parties, alcohol-related contexts, free lifestyle, and inappropriate dressing. Personally, she

views English as a means of gaining knowledge and broadening students' horizons, while Islamic values remain the moral foundation of students' daily lives.

In response to the second study question, the instructor employs a variety of ways to balance English content, teaching practice, and pesantren expectations. These strategies include contextualizing English materials with Santri daily life, modifying examples without sacrificing linguistic objectives, filtering culturally sensitive topics, incorporating pesantren values into language activities, using code-switching as a bridge between language and values, managing the classroom through adab-based interaction, and explaining adaptation decisions to students. These tactics demonstrate that the instructor has pedagogical agency in tailoring English instruction to the pesantren setting. She does not dismiss English as a global language; she views it as beneficial information that can be mastered without surrendering the Islamic identity.

Theoretically, this study supports the view that teacher professional identity is socially and contextually constructed. The findings are consistent with the idea that professional identity involves subject-matter, didactical, and pedagogical expertise, but this study shows that in pesantren these forms of expertise are closely related to moral and religious expectations. Practically, the study implies that English language teaching in pesantren requires pedagogy that is linguistically meaningful and culturally responsive. Teachers need support in developing materials that maintain English learning objectives while remaining sensitive to Islamic values and pesantren culture.

This study is limited to the case of one English teacher in one pesantren-based secondary school; therefore, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization. However, the study provides a contextual understanding of how professional identity is negotiated in a religious educational setting. Future research may involve more English teachers from different pesantren, compare various types of Islamic educational institutions, include students' perspectives, or examine how professional development programs can strengthen teachers' ability to integrate English language teaching with culturally and religiously responsive pedagogy.

STUDI PESANTREN

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