

INTEGRATING ENGLISH LEARNING IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO MANDALIKA'S TOURISM LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

While previous research has extensively explored English language teaching in formal educational settings and urban madrasahs, limited attention has been given to pesantren operating in tourism-influenced environments, particularly regarding how these faith-based institutions balance English language instruction with the preservation of Islamic identity and local cultural values. This research gap is significant given the increasing pressure on pesantren to prepare students for engagement with international tourism while maintaining their traditional religious mission. This study examined the integration of English language education within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) located in Mandalika, a rapidly growing tourism hub in Central Lombok, Indonesia. The research aims to explore pedagogical practices in integrating English learning and tourism context, student engagement and perception, and institutional challenges and opportunities in delivering English instruction contextualized within local tourism and Islamic values. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis at two boarding schools: Nurul Ijtihat Al-Ma'arif NU Lengser and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah. The findings revealed that teachers employ four main strategies: contextual module development, role-play simulations, cross-disciplinary projects, and limited field studies to embed tourism-based content in English instruction. These methods not only enhance language acquisition but also foster students' cultural literacy and confidence. Students demonstrated good engagement and a positive perception of learning English in tourism-related contexts, viewing it as both a practical skill and a means for religious outreach (da'wah). However, the study also identified critical challenges, including the lack of specialized materials, limited professional development, and ideological tensions regarding cultural preservation. Besides that, the study also found several opportunities for contextually appropriate integration have emerged, namely strengthening pesantren's economic role, multilingual cultural da'wah, and institutional collaborations. The study contributes original insights into contextualized English teaching in faith-based institutions and proposes pathways for culturally sensitive curriculum development that bridge education, economy, and spirituality.

Keywords: contextual English learning, Islamic Boarding School (pesantren), tourism education, mandalika, student engagement, Islamic values

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, English language education has assumed an increasingly vital role across

diverse educational settings in Indonesia (Permana & Rohmah, 2024; Zein, 2017), extending even into Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that have traditionally focused on religious studies and classical

Arabic (Iksan et al., 2022; Sari, 2023). This shift reflects broader socio-economic transformations, particularly in regions where international tourism is reshaping local livelihoods and communication needs. One such area is Mandalika, located in Central Lombok, which has been officially designated as one of Indonesia's 'super-priority' tourism destinations (Astuti, 2021; Hadi et al., 2025). The surge of both domestic and international visitors has fostered a multilingual environment, presenting both new opportunities and complex challenges for surrounding communities, including *pesantren*. Within this evolving context, the ability of *santri* to communicate in English is no longer considered supplementary, but rather essential for meaningful engagement in economic activities, cross-cultural interactions, and da'wah (a religious outreach) (Kuswanto, 2023).

However, a comparative analysis of existing literature reveals both strengths and limitations in current approaches. Contextual learning methods, as advocated by Jubhari et al. (2022) and Payadnya et al. (2024), demonstrate strong theoretical foundations and practical applicability in connecting language learning to real-world scenarios. Their strength lies in enhancing student motivation through meaningful, culturally relevant activities. Similarly, place-based learning approaches, as highlighted by Montoya Reyes (2024), demonstrate effectiveness in tourism contexts by providing authentic interaction opportunities. Nevertheless, these studies predominantly focus on formal educational settings and lack comprehensive frameworks for implementation in faith-based institutions where religious identity must be preserved alongside language acquisition. In contrast, experiential learning models proposed by Mukharramkhon and Parizoda (2024) offer practical simulation techniques that can be adapted to various contexts. However, their weakness lies in the artificial nature of simulated environments, which may not fully capture the complexities of fundamental tourist interactions. Furthermore, most research in this area focuses on formal schools or urban madrasahs, with limited attention to *pesantren*, especially those operating in rural or semi-urban tourism zones like Mandalika (Yuli et al., 2023). This gap represents a significant limitation in understanding how contextual English instruction can be effectively implemented while maintaining the religious and cultural integrity essential to *pesantren* education.

This gap in the literature highlights the need for studies that examine how boarding schools are responding to the linguistic and cultural demands arising from tourism-driven change. While contextualized English instruction has gained scholarly attention, little is known about how such approaches are implemented in faith-based educational environments, particularly within the boarding school tradition (Anderson, 2025; Lin et al., 2025). Moreover, the perspectives and lived experiences of teachers and students in these institutions remain underexplored.

To address this gap, the present study investigates

English language teaching in two Islamic boarding schools located within the Mandalika tourism corridor: Nurul Ijtihat Al-Ma'arif NU Lengser and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah. These institutions provide valuable case studies for understanding how English learning can be integrated with local tourism contexts while maintaining religious educational values. Specifically, this study seeks to answer three fundamental research questions: how do Islamic boarding schools in the Mandalika tourism corridor integrate English language instruction with local tourism contexts, what are the perceptions and experiences of *santri* regarding contextualized English instruction in their boarding school environment, and what challenges and opportunities emerge when implementing tourism-oriented English language programs in faith-based educational institutions.

The primary objectives of this research are to examine the implementation strategies used by Islamic boarding schools to integrate English language learning with tourism-related content and activities, analyze student perceptions and engagement levels with contextualized English instruction that incorporates local tourism elements, identify the challenges faced by teachers and administrators in balancing English language education with religious educational values, explore the opportunities that tourism-oriented English programs create for students' personal development and future career prospects, and provide recommendations for effective integration of contextual English learning in Islamic boarding school settings within tourism destinations. The research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of English education in boarding schools, informed by the dynamics of local culture, tourism, and religious identity.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how English learning is integrated contextually within *pesantren* situated in the Mandalika tourism area of Central Lombok (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The case study approach was selected to allow an in-depth understanding of teaching practices, institutional strategies, and the lived experiences of teachers and students in their natural educational environment. This research focuses on two boarding schools: Nurul Ijtihat Al-Ma'arif NU Lengser and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, capturing a localized yet meaningful perspective on contextual English education in tourism-influenced settings.

The research was conducted at two boarding schools located in Kuta Village, Central Lombok, an area at the heart of the Mandalika tourism zone. These boarding schools were purposively selected due to their proximity to tourism infrastructure and their engagement with English language education. Participants included English teachers, curriculum coordinators, and *santri* in intermediate and advanced levels. A total of thirty participants were involved:

four English teachers, two school administrators, and twenty-four students. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus.

Regarding participants' demographics, the four English teachers ranged in age from 25 to 42 years, with teaching experience varying from 3 to 15 years. Two teachers held bachelor's degrees in English Education, while two had degrees in Islamic Studies with additional certification in English. The two school administrators were both male, aged 38 and 45, with extensive experience in *pesantren* management and curriculum development. Among the twenty-four student participants, 14 were male and 10 were female, aged between 15 and 18 years. These students came from various regions across Lombok and neighboring islands, with 60% originating from rural areas and 40% from semi-urban backgrounds. All student participants had been enrolled in their respective *pesantren* for at least one year and were classified as intermediate to advanced English learners based on their institutional assessment scores.

Data were collected over a two-month period using three primary qualitative techniques: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. For student participants under 18 years of age, additional parental consent was obtained, and the students themselves signed assent forms. All participants were informed about the research objectives, their rights to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality measures that would be implemented.

Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to English instruction within the boarding school context. Classroom observations were used to examine how contextual elements—especially those related to tourism—were embedded in English teaching practices. Relevant school documents, such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and institutional policies, were also analyzed to triangulate the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes across the collected data. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English. Data coding followed an inductive approach using open coding to categorize emerging concepts. Codes were then grouped into broader themes such as 'contextual teaching strategies,' 'teacher adaptation,' 'student engagement,' and 'tourism-based content.' The analysis emphasized how participants made sense of and implemented contextual English teaching within the socio-cultural and economic realities of Mandalika (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was applied across different data sources and collection methods (Miles et al., 2013).

Member checking was also employed by sharing initial interpretations with selected participants to confirm accuracy and representation. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process by using pseudonyms for all participants and institutions, and by securely storing all data in password-protected files accessible only to the research team.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal several critical insights into the integration of English language learning within the tourism context of *pesantren* in Mandalika. Through interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and document analysis, three major themes emerged: curriculum integration, student engagement and perception, and contextual challenges and opportunities. The findings from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and curriculum document analysis at Nurul Ijtihat Islamic boarding school and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah indicate that the integration of English learning with local tourism is not only occurring but also evolving in pedagogically meaningful ways.

Teachers have gone beyond vocabulary lists. They are fostering real-life communicative competencies aligned with the tourism potential of the Mandalika region. The first finding presents the emerging pedagogical practices clearly, with Table 1 categorizing the forms, purposes, and educational effects of integration strategies used across both *pesantren*.

As shown in Table 1, this study identifies four strategic pedagogical approaches employed by English educators in *pesantren* situated near the Mandalika tourism area. These approaches—Contextual Module Development, Role-Play and Simulation, Cross-Disciplinary Projects, and Limited Field Studies are not only pedagogically sound but are also grounded in the socio-cultural and economic realities of the learners. Through classroom observations and a series of semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, the study highlights how these strategies enhance language learning outcomes and foster a deeper connection between English instruction and local tourism development.

The integration of local contexts into English learning was achieved by designing lesson modules centered on nearby tourist attractions and religious heritage sites (Chang & Chuang, 2021). Activities such as planning tour routes from the *pesantren* to Seger Beach and drafting Islamic tour itineraries allowed students to use English within familiar geographical and religious frameworks. As T1, a senior English teacher, explained, "*Ketika santri mendesain rute tour dari pesantren mereka sendiri, mereka jadi lebih antusias karena mereka tahu tempat-tempat itu. Bahasa Inggris terasa lebih dekat.*" ("When students design tour routes from their *pesantren*, they become

Table 1 Pedagogical Integration of English and Tourism in Mandalika-Based *Pesantren*

Integration Strategy	Example Activities	Learning Focus	Reported Educational Impact
Contextual Module Development	Designing routes from pesantren to Seger Beach; creating Islamic tour itineraries	Vocabulary building, reading comprehension	Improved relevance; higher engagement through localized topics
Role-Play and Simulation	Simulating hotel check-ins, tour guide scenarios, MotoGP welcoming speeches	Speaking fluency, intercultural awareness	Increased confidence, better real-world preparation
Cross-Disciplinary Projects	Translating Sasak house information from Bahasa to English	Translation, presentation skills, cultural literacy	Strengthened critical thinking and cross-subject connection
Limited Field Studies	Mini visits to traditional markets or beaches; simple interviews with tourism workers	Listening and speaking in authentic settings	Greater real-world exposure, increased student motivation

more enthusiastic because they know those places. English feels closer.”)

Another teacher, T2, emphasized that, “*Mengaitkan materi dengan tempat seperti Pantai Seger dan Sirkuit Mandalika membuat pembelajaran lebih hidup dan aplikatif.*” (“Connecting the material with places like Seger Beach and the Mandalika Circuit makes learning more vivid and applicable.”) The learning objectives, mainly vocabulary building and reading comprehension, are achieved more effectively due to the localized and meaningful content. Students reported higher engagement, as the materials resonated with their lived experiences and surroundings, thus increasing both retention and motivation.

Interactive simulations, such as hotel check-ins, MotoGP welcoming speeches, and guided tour role-plays, were highly effective in promoting spoken English fluency and intercultural communication skills. These activities were particularly popular among students who appreciated the practical nature of the tasks. T3, a local English facilitator, observed, “*Anak-anak sangat menikmati peran sebagai pemandu wisata. Mereka belajar memilih kata yang tepat dan berlatih berbicara dengan percaya diri.*” (“The students really enjoyed playing the role of tour guides. They learned to choose the right words and practiced speaking confidently.”)

Students also expressed how such simulations made them feel more prepared to interact with foreigners. One participant, S1, shared, “*Saya gugup awalnya, tapi pura-pura jadi resepsionis membuat saya berani bicara dalam bahasa Inggris.*” (“I was nervous at first, but pretending to be a receptionist helped me gain the courage to speak English.”) These activities not only built confidence but also allowed students to develop essential soft skills such as politeness, turn-taking, and intercultural awareness—skills crucial for effective communication in tourism-related contexts.

Cross-curricular integration, especially between English and local culture or history classes,

was achieved through projects such as translating information about traditional Sasak houses or religious customs from Bahasa Indonesia into English. These projects required both language accuracy and cultural sensitivity. T4, a curriculum coordinator, noted, “*Siswa tidak hanya menerjemahkan, tapi juga memahami konteks budaya. Ini latihan berpikir kritis sekaligus literasi budaya.*” (“Students don't just translate; they also understand the cultural context. It's an exercise in critical thinking and cultural literacy.”)

Another teacher, T5, elaborated on the benefits, saying, “*Saat siswa mempresentasikan hasil terjemahan mereka, mereka jadi lebih percaya diri, dan mereka melihat langsung hubungan antara bahasa Inggris dan budaya lokal.*” (“When students present their translations, they become more confident and directly see the link between English and local culture.”) This strategy not only promoted interdisciplinary learning but also deepened students' appreciation of their cultural heritage while positioning English as a means to share it globally.

Short educational excursions to nearby tourist destinations—such as traditional markets and coastal areas—offered students authentic opportunities to practice conversational English (Ergashevna, 2024). These low-stakes, high-impact activities placed learners in real-world contexts where they had to initiate conversations, ask questions, and respond spontaneously. According to T6, who accompanied students on a field study, “*Mereka belajar langsung di lapangan. Saat harus bertanya pada wisatawan asing, mereka keluar dari zona nyaman mereka.*” (“They learn directly in the field. When they have to talk to foreign tourists, they step out of their comfort zones.”)

A particularly illustrative case is that of S2, a 16-year-old student who enthusiastically shared his experience: “*Saya tidak tahu apakah pengunjung itu akan mengerti saya, tapi saya coba menyapa dan menanyakan dari mana asalnya. Ternyata dia senang diajak bicara. Saya jadi percaya diri.*” (“I wasn't sure

if the visitor would understand me, but I tried greeting him and asking where he was from. He was happy to talk. It gave me confidence.”) Such moments were frequently cited in interviews as turning points where students recognized the tangible value of their English skills.

The second finding, which is based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 24 students, indicates a generally strong enthusiasm for the integration of English learning with the local tourism context (Xiaoju & Sy, 2025). Students reported heightened motivation, a stronger connection to their local identity, and a clearer sense of purpose in learning English not only as a school subject, but as a practical skill linked to livelihood and *da'wah* (religious outreach). To deepen the analysis of student attitudes, Table 2 summarizes their perceptions based on their responses during FGDs and interviews:

As presented in Table 2, this table reinforces earlier qualitative findings. A combined 66.7% of students (16 out of 24) showed positive perceptions—either highly satisfied or generally supportive—of the contextualized English learning approach. These students were motivated by both utilitarian goals (e.g., becoming tour guides or entrepreneurs) and spiritual intentions, such as serving tourists while promoting Islamic values. As one final-year student at Al-Irsyad noted, “We want to serve tourists, but also introduce Islam through kindness.”

This positive perception was further evidenced in authentic classroom projects, including the development of tourism brochures, video presentations, and halal travel packages. These projects are often showcased in events like Expo *Santri* Mandalika. This opportunity enables students to express both their creativity and religious identity, reinforcing their belief that English is not just a subject, but a tool for socio-economic participation and cultural representation.

However, Table 2 also reveals challenges. Around 25% of students reported being satisfied but struggling with confidence in speaking English. This aligns with qualitative insights under the theme “Linguistic Self-Awareness and Confidence Gaps”, where students acknowledged their fluency limitations due to a lack of real-life speaking opportunities or exposure to native speakers. For instance, one student shared, “We practice English with each other, but we don't know if it's correct.” In response, some boarding schools have started inviting English-speaking guests or arranging virtual exchanges to build confidence.

Meanwhile, 16.6% of students expressed either dissatisfaction or uncertainty about the integration. These students often cited language difficulty or the perceived irrelevance of tourism themes to their *pesantren* life. Such responses highlight the need for differentiated instruction, more localized content, and clearer explanations of the long-term benefits of contextual English learning.

Despite infrastructural constraints—such as limited internet access and the absence of language

labs—the overall sentiment was one of peer-driven motivations. Students emphasized the role of teacher commitment and mutual encouragement. One student from Al-Ma'arif reflected, “We might not have digital labs, but we have each other and strong will.”

In sum, the integration of tourism contexts into English learning has been largely well-received by students. It resonates with their aspirations and identities while also providing a bridge between religious education and real-world communication. The challenges observed, particularly in fluency, confidence, and instructional support, suggest areas for further development—but do not diminish the transformative potential of contextualized learning in these faith-based environments.

The third finding is amid growing interest in integrating English learning with the tourism potential of Mandalika, *pesantren* face a complex terrain of challenges. While the vision of nurturing globally competent yet spiritually grounded students is inspiring, its implementation reveals several structural, pedagogical, and ideological hurdles. These challenges—ranging from the lack of contextualized materials to limited teacher training and cultural tensions—must be addressed thoughtfully to ensure that English education in *pesantren* becomes not only functional but also faithful to Islamic identity (Firdaus & Sidik, 2024).

Table 3 illustrates that in implementing English learning within the unique context of *pesantren* situated near the Mandalika tourism area, several interconnected challenges have emerged. These challenges reflect not only practical and pedagogical constraints, but also deeper cultural and institutional dynamics that shape the integration of English and tourism into religious education. Among the most pressing of these is the scarcity of appropriate learning materials that can bridge the gap between global tourism discourse and local Islamic values.

One of the most pervasive challenges is the absence of formal instructional materials that blend tourism topics with *pesantren* values and Islamic identity. Teachers frequently rely on eclectic resources—ranging from YouTube videos and travel blogs to self-designed worksheets. While this demonstrates commendable creativity and adaptability, it often leads to inconsistency and pedagogical fatigue.

As T1, an English teacher, remarked, “We often have to build materials from scratch. It's creative, but also exhausting. We need textbooks or modules that reflect our reality.” Similarly, T6 noted that while digital resources are plentiful, they are not contextually relevant: “Tourism English videos online are great, but they usually feature Western culture and lifestyles, not Islamic values or local customs.” This gap underscores the urgent need for context-aware, pedagogically sound English-for-tourism modules that align with both the Islamic ethos and the regional tourism economy. Another key challenge lies in teacher capacity. The majority of English teachers at the *pesantren* level have limited exposure to specialized

pedagogical approaches, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)(Rahman et al., 2023). Despite the relevance of these approaches for tourism education, most teachers reported learning through trial and error or informal exchanges.

T3, a local English facilitator, expressed this concern clearly, "We want to teach tourism English properly, but we need workshops—maybe even peer-sharing sessions among *pesantren*." Similarly, T7, a mid-career teacher, admitted, "We're willing to try project-based learning, but sometimes we don't even

Table 2 Student Perceptions Toward the Integration of English Learning and Tourism Context

Perception Category	Description	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Very Satisfied and Highly Motivated	Strong enthusiasm; saw clear career and religious benefits	10	41.7%
Satisfied but Struggling with Speaking Confidence	Motivated but anxious about fluency and pronunciation	6	25.0%
Neutral or Uncertain	Unclear about learning objectives or long-term benefits	4	16.7%
Less Satisfied Due to Language Difficulty	Found content too difficult; overwhelmed	2	8.3%
Unsatisfied / Felt Unconnected with the Context	Did not relate the tourism theme to their daily lives	2	8.3%
Total		24	100%

Table 3 Challenges and Opportunities in Contextualizing English through Tourism in Mandalika-Based *Pesantren*

Category	Key Theme	Description	Supporting Interview Insight
Challenges Identified	Lack of Specialized Resources	Absence of formal English materials combining tourism with <i>pesantren</i> values; teachers rely on YouTube, brochures, or self-made content with limited training.	"We often have to build materials from scratch. It's creative, but also exhausting." – T1
	Limited Professional Development	Teachers lack exposure to ESP or CLIL approaches despite their relevance for tourism English. Desire for workshops and peer learning is strong.	"We want to teach tourism English properly, but we need workshops." – T3
	Cultural and Ideological Tensions	Some <i>pesantren</i> leaders worry that English immersion could dilute Islamic identity; they favor English as a tool for <i>da'wah</i> , not cultural assimilation.	"English is important, but must be guarded. It is a tool for <i>da'wah</i> , not assimilation." – A1
Opportunities Emerging	<i>Pesantren</i> can become community-based training hubs offering certifications in Islamic tour guiding or halal tourism services.	"Why not certify our students as halal-friendly guides?" – T4	<i>Pesantren</i> can become community-based training hubs offering certifications in Islamic tour guiding or halal tourism services.
	Students are trained to communicate local Islamic values and traditions in English, becoming global-facing cultural ambassadors.	"We want our students to speak to the world, but from a foundation of faith." – A2	Students are trained to communicate local Islamic values and traditions in English, becoming global-facing cultural ambassadors.
	Potential collaborations with tourism offices, NGOs, and English educators can enhance learning through guest lectures, internships, and co-designed materials.	"Collaborating with external partners can open our students' minds." – T5	Potential collaborations with tourism offices, NGOs, and English educators can enhance learning through guest lectures, internships, and co-designed materials.

know where to start. What topics, what vocabulary, what activities?" This situation highlights the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives that provide teachers not only with methods but also with the confidence to innovate within their specific context.

Beyond technical and logistical issues, some *pesantren* experience ideological resistance to full-scale English immersion. For certain *kyais* or senior administrators, the adoption of foreign languages—especially those linked with Western secularism—raises concerns about cultural dilution. A1, a senior religious leader, emphasized: "*Bahasa Inggris itu penting, tapi harus dikawal. Ini alat dakwah, bukan alat asimilasi.*" ("English is important, but must be guarded. It is a tool for *da'wah*, not assimilation.") This perspective is not uncommon. Other administrators voiced similar concerns, arguing that language education must remain anchored in Islamic purpose. T2 added, "We support English, but only if it serves religion. Not the other way around." Thus, English instruction in these settings must carefully balance openness to global competencies with commitment to faith-based identity, creating a need for value-sensitive curriculum development.

Despite these challenges, several opportunities for meaningful and contextually appropriate integration have emerged, as presented in Table 3. With Mandalika being developed as an international tourist destination, *pesantren* are strategically positioned to contribute to the halal tourism sector. Educators proposed the establishment of certification programs for *santri* in 'Islamic Tour Guiding,' 'Halal Homestay Management,' or 'Sharia-compliant Tour Assistance.' T4, a curriculum coordinator, stated, "Why not certify our students as halal-friendly guides? They know religion and culture—they just need the English." Field observations confirmed that students respond positively when their learning is linked with real-world roles, particularly those that align with their religious commitments. Such an initiative could offer *pesantren* graduates both employability and empowerment, situating them as professionals who bring ethical values into the tourism workforce.

An increasingly popular vision among *pesantren* leaders is the concept of multilingual cultural *da'wah*. Rather than viewing English as a secular threat, some *pesantren* have begun to see it as a tool for global Islamic outreach. This involves training students to explain Islamic principles, Sasak customs, and Lombok's religious traditions to foreign visitors using English.

A2 affirmed this approach, "We want our students to speak to the world, but from a foundation of faith." Likewise, T5 explained how students were taught to introduce prayer etiquette, concepts of halal food, and mosque tours in English. "This is not just about tourism—it's *da'wah* with professionalism," he said. This positioning empowers students to become confident, globally literate, and spiritually grounded individuals.

Finally, multiple informants expressed

enthusiasm for building partnerships with external organizations. These include collaborations with regional tourism boards, NGOs focused on education, or English language centers. Teachers highlighted the potential for guest lectures, field-based internships, and joint development of mobile learning apps or tourism English modules. T6 shared, "We once invited a tour operator to speak to the class. Students were so inspired—they saw the real world of work and how English fits into it." Similarly, T3 suggested, "If we had a network of *pesantren* doing similar things, we could learn from each other—maybe develop an e-book or platform together." Such partnerships could help fill the existing resource and training gaps while making *pesantren* active contributors to sustainable, culturally grounded tourism education in Lombok.

The findings of this study shed new light on how *pesantren* located in tourism-influenced areas such as Mandalika are adapting their English language instruction to meet evolving societal demands. As highlighted in the Introduction, English has become increasingly relevant in *pesantren*, not only as an academic subject but also as a tool for economic participation, cross-cultural communication, and religious outreach (*da'wah*) (Raihani, 2020; Saepullah, 2020). This significance has been further emphasized in recent research on English language teaching in *pesantren* contexts, where *pesantrens*, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have undergone significant transformations to adapt to the demands of the times by incorporating English instruction into their curriculum (Harisu, 2022). The results of this research reveal that the two *pesantren* studied—Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ijtihat Al-Ma'arif NU Lengser and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah—are taking deliberate yet context-sensitive steps toward integrating English learning into their curricula.

One major insight emerging from the data is the use of contextual and experiential learning strategies. Teachers leverage students' proximity to the tourism sector to design authentic learning experiences, such as simulations of guiding foreign visitors or learning vocabulary related to local culture and places of interest. These strategies align with previous research, reinforcing the notion that English instruction grounded in a real-life context increases learner motivation and retention (Mammadova, 2024). Portegies, De Haan, Isaac, and Roovers (2011) point out the importance of contextual learning as a 'best practice for knowledge production in the field of tourism'. The application of experiential learning in tourism education has been proven effective, as it enables students to create and participate in real-life scenarios that apply their knowledge and theory (Doğantan, 2023). However, this study goes further by demonstrating how such contextualization takes on distinctive features in the *pesantren* environment, where religious identity and tradition remain central (Sya'bani, 2024). This is particularly relevant given that experiential learning at formal and informal field trip venues increases student interest, knowledge, and motivation (Dabamona

& Cater, 2018), which resonates with the tourism-influenced setting of these *pesantren*.

Notably, the study reveals that the incorporation of English does not necessarily lead to cultural dilution. On the contrary, students and teachers expressed that English is being reframed as a medium for *da'wah* and cultural representation, allowing *santri* to share Islamic teachings and local values with a broader audience. This insight is supported by research on translanguaging pedagogy in Indonesian EFL contexts, which emphasizes the application as a transformative tool for enhancing English language learning outcomes in Indonesia (Aribah & Pradita, 2022). This suggests a new conceptualization of English in *pesantren*: not as a foreign imposition, but as a strategic resource to engage with a globalized world while upholding religious identity. This perspective aligns with contemporary discourse on English language education in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, as well as a nation predicted to rise as the world's fifth-largest economy by 2030 (Zein et al., 2020), where English has become increasingly important for economic and cultural participation. This insight contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how global languages are localized in faith-based educational settings, particularly when teachers refer to someone or themselves to introduce Islamic values to students in their English instruction (Umar, 2022).

Another key finding involves the challenges faced by *pesantren* in this process, including limited teaching resources, teachers' varying levels of English proficiency, and the absence of structured curriculum support tailored to their unique context. These challenges are consistent with broader research findings that indicate teachers encounter several challenges in integrating Islamic values in ELT. First, the limited availability of English textbooks integrated with Islamic values. Second, the teachers have limited knowledge of how to integrate Islamic values into the teaching and learning process optimally (Umar, 2022). Despite these limitations, evidence of innovation and adaptability is evident, often driven by teacher initiative and community collaboration. This echoes the broader transformation of *pesantren*, as they evolve beyond traditional roles and engage with contemporary socio-economic issues. Research on English Language Teaching in *pesantren* has spread to most institutions in Indonesia, including in *Pesantren*. This spread has resulted in certain challenges because English has been a compulsory subject for *pesantren*'s students (Ekasani et al., 2020).

This study, therefore, makes a significant contribution to existing scholarship in several ways. First, it fills a gap in the literature by focusing on rural *pesantren* in a tourism zone. This setting has received little academic attention, particularly given that Indonesia, as a populous country in the non-English-speaking world, continues to emerge as an important market for English language education (Zein et al., 2020). Second, it expands the discourse on contextualized English learning by examining its

implementation within Islamic institutions, offering empirical evidence of how educational, religious, and economic agendas intersect. This contribution is significant given that English educational tourism (EET) represents a breakthrough in the tourism industry in eastern Indonesia, carrying the concept of a global village to promote economic development, education, and tourism (Basri et al., 2022). Third, it offers practical insights for policymakers and educators interested in promoting English learning that is both effective and culturally rooted, especially considering that Educational Tourism is one of the types of tourism activities that has been recognized by the Indonesian government, which is a field trip related to an activity or trip whose purpose is for recreation or entertainment and contains educational activities in it (Ekasani et al., 2020).

In light of these findings, the study underscores the transformative potential of English education in *pesantren*—not merely as a linguistic skill, but as a means to navigate and shape local realities affected by global tourism. This reflects a broader socio-educational shift described in the introduction. As Mandalika continues to develop as a super-priority tourism destination, nearby *pesantren* are not passive observers but active agents of change, responding creatively to the multilingual and multicultural demands of their environment.

Another dimension that emerges from the findings is the dynamic role of teachers as cultural mediators. In the *pesantren* setting, English language teachers are not merely conveyors of linguistic knowledge but also serve as navigators between global competencies and local values. Many teachers reported negotiating lesson content to ensure alignment with Islamic principles, while still exposing students to international discourse. This dual responsibility underscores the complex pedagogical balancing act required in faith-based institutions operating within globalized localities (Suryani & Muslim, 2024). The teacher's agency in curating culturally appropriate yet globally relevant materials affirms the adaptability of Islamic education to modern demands. This approach aligns with research on culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes that 21st-century teachers need to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in this interconnected world (Nurbatra & Masyhud, 2022). Furthermore, studies on the pedagogical approach to Islamic education should begin with the vital component of education, i.e., the teacher, since the teacher contributes significantly to the development of students in almost all aspects (Prasetia, 2024).

Additionally, the role of community involvement cannot be understated. Several *pesantren* featured in the study benefit from strong partnerships with local tourism stakeholders, including hotels, tour guides, and local government initiatives. These collaborations have led to practical training opportunities and exposure to authentic language use, significantly enriching the learning environment. This reflects

a model of community-based language education, wherein learning transcends classroom boundaries and becomes embedded in the social and economic fabric of the village. Such models not only bolster student motivation but also foster a sense of collective responsibility for education. This community-based approach resonates with research on Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which considers it a sustainable form of tourism that enhances relationships between tourists and local communities (Basri et al., 2022). In this context, local communities play a crucial role in shaping educational tourism experiences.

Notably, students themselves play an active role in shaping their learning journey. The study found that *santri* often take initiative by forming English clubs, organizing tourism-related events, or creating content such as bilingual brochures and videos that promote both tourism and religious messages. These learner-driven activities point to the development of learner autonomy and critical engagement, core competencies in 21st-century education. Moreover, this challenges the stereotypical image of *pesantren* as rigid and isolated, revealing a more dynamic, participatory, and future-oriented educational space. This finding is particularly significant when considering that experiential learning is widely regarded as an excellent means of promoting practice and application. Moreover, the teaching effect of experiential learning on tourism practitioners has been proven in terms of their ability, practical action, and future competitiveness (Zhang et al., 2021).

There are also implications for teacher training and curriculum development. Given the unique socio-religious context of these *pesantren*, teacher training programs should be context-sensitive, integrating not only pedagogical and linguistic skills but also interfaith communication and intercultural competence. (Lestari, 2024). This recommendation aligns with research indicating that a culturally responsive teaching approach is most effective in classes with diverse student cultural backgrounds (Reskyani et al., 2024). Additionally, curriculum design should allow for flexibility and localization, enabling institutions to adapt content to their community's values and realities. As highlighted by recent research, culturally responsive pedagogy is essential for achieving both equity and academic excellence in diverse educational settings (Dayagbil et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant given that PSETs in Indonesia possess the four dimensions of multicultural dispositions, facilitating them to navigate school-level multicultural education (Nurhayati et al., 2022). The integration of Islamic values in English language teaching requires careful consideration, as appropriate teaching materials are essential for the design and effectiveness of the educational process. The integration of modern pedagogies within the Islamic education system in Indonesia, as revealed by these findings, underscores the need for a dynamic and adaptable approach to meet the evolving educational landscape in the country (Rajaminsah et al., 2022).

Finally, this study opens avenues for further

research, particularly longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of contextualized English learning in *pesantren* on students' academic and professional trajectories. It would also be valuable to compare similar initiatives in other faith-based institutions within different tourism zones to examine patterns and divergences. Given that educational travel influences an individual's attitude toward learning and that travel contributes to learning, which in turn makes travel more meaningful (Chau & Ren, 2024), future research could explore how the tourism context specifically enhances language learning outcomes in *pesantren* settings. Ultimately, the findings affirm that with adequate support and creative agency, *pesantren* can serve as models of integrative education—where language learning, cultural identity, and economic participation coalesce meaningfully in response to global change. This conclusion is supported by research showing that policies related to Islamic education have undergone a shift from a domestication approach to an accommodation approach, indicating a broader trend toward inclusive and adaptive Islamic education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides valuable insights into the integration of English language learning within the tourism context of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Mandalika. It highlights both the challenges and opportunities present in this evolving educational landscape. Through an exploration of curriculum integration, student engagement, and contextual challenges, several key findings emerged.

First, the integration of English learning with local tourism is not only evident but also evolving in pedagogically meaningful ways. *Pesantren* educators are using localized approaches—such as contextual module development, role-plays, cross-disciplinary projects, and limited field studies—to create more relevant and engaging learning experiences for students. These strategies are grounded in the socio-cultural and economic realities of the Mandalika region, helping students develop practical language skills that align with tourism-related competencies.

Second, students have shown strong enthusiasm for this integrated approach, and good perception, particularly in how it connects their learning to their local identity, faith, and the potential for employment within the tourism industry. Third, challenges and opportunities persist, particularly in terms of limited resources, the need for professional development among teachers, and concerns about preserving religious identity amid globalization. Despite these obstacles, there are significant opportunities for enhancing the role of *pesantren* in the local tourism economy, including the potential for certification programs in Islamic tour guiding and halal tourism services.

Several limitations should be acknowledged

when interpreting these findings. First, this study was conducted exclusively in two Islamic boarding schools within the Mandalika tourism corridor, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other *pesantren* in different geographical contexts or those with varying levels of tourism exposure. The unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Central Lombok may not be representative of other regions in Indonesia where *pesantren* operate.

Second, the relatively small sample size of 30 participants, while appropriate for qualitative case study research, constrains the breadth of perspectives captured. The purposive sampling approach, though methodologically sound, may have inadvertently excluded voices that could have provided alternative or contrasting viewpoints on English-tourism integration. Third, the two-month data collection period, while intensive, represents a limited timeframe that may not capture the full complexity of seasonal variations in tourism activity or the long-term sustainability of implemented teaching strategies. The study provides a snapshot of current practices rather than longitudinal insights into the evolution of these approaches.

Fourth, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews and focus group discussions introduces potential social desirability bias, particularly given the researcher's position as an outsider to the *pesantren* community. Participants may have presented more favorable views of English integration than they genuinely held. Fifth, language barriers and translation processes may have influenced data interpretation. While interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and carefully translated, nuances in meaning and cultural context may have been lost in translation, potentially affecting the accuracy of reported findings. Finally, the study's focus on intermediate and advanced English learners may not accurately reflect the experiences of beginning-level students, who may face different challenges and exhibit varying levels of enthusiasm for tourism-integrated English learning.

Looking ahead, further research could explore ways to address the resource gaps and provide more tailored professional development for teachers. Additionally, investigating the long-term impacts of contextualized English learning on students' academic, professional, and personal outcomes could offer a deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of integrating English within *pesantren* in tourism-driven areas. Future studies could also explore how to bridge the cultural and ideological tensions surrounding English instruction in these contexts, ensuring that educational practices remain both globally relevant and culturally sensitive. Longitudinal studies involving multiple *pesantren* across different regions and tourism development stages would strengthen the generalizability of findings and provide more comprehensive insights into this educational phenomenon.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on contextualized language learning in faith-based settings. It offers practical

recommendations for integrating English in ways that are both effective and aligned with local cultural and religious values. Despite the acknowledged limitations, the findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in understanding the complex dynamics of English language education within Islamic educational contexts in tourism-developing regions.

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