Global Santri Narratives: A Study of English Language Products at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School as a Cultural Strategy for Students in an Automated World Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT

Amidst the rapid flow of globalization and digital transformation marked by the presence of machines, robots, and artificial intelligence, the cultural identity of Islamic boarding schools faces new challenges. This research is significant because it examines how Generation Z students at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School adapt to the automated world through linguistic strategies, particularly in their use of English as a symbol and tool of distinction. This research aims to understand the practices and meanings behind the linguistic products produced by students in a modern context, and how this process shapes their identity and social position in global society. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies and in-depth interviews with students from the Foreign Language Development Institute, language dormitory mentors, and English teachers. Two theories are used to interpret this phenomenon: Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital, which explains how language becomes a form of symbolic capital in the social structure of Islamic boarding schools, and Jan Nederveen Pieterse's Cultural Hybridization, which highlights how local Islamic boarding school values are reformulated into a global format through English narratives. The results show that Islamic boarding school students not only master language as a technical skill but also produce cultural artifacts such as poetry, speeches, and books in English that combine Islamic values with global expressions. The main findings demonstrate the transformation of the students' identities from local actors to global students capable of negotiating their position in the posthuman world order. The novelty of this research lies in the discovery that Islamic boarding schools, as traditional institutions, can create a foreign language-based educational model that is not assimilative, but rather hybrid, blending local values and global strategies. The theoretical implications enrich the discourse on Islamic boarding school education as a space for the production of cultural capital and a dynamic and reflective field of cultural hybridization towards the future.

Keywords: Global Santri Narratives, English Language Products, Cultural Strategy, Automated World Ecosystem

INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the last two decades have entered a revolutionary phase with the emergence of an automated global ecosystem characterized by the dominance of machines, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) in various aspects of human life. A 2023 report by the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that more than 50% of global human jobs could be replaced by automation by 2035. This trend is not only changing the way humans work but also shaking up social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Technology is no longer a tool, but rather an agent that helps shape civilization and human relationships (Lund et al., 2021).

This phenomenon has ushered the world into an era known as posthuman society, a condition in which the boundaries between humans and machines are blurred. Technology has become not only an extension of the body, but also of the human mind and identity.(Braidotti, 2013). A posthuman society marks a shift in how humans think about themselves. In this order, spirituality, tradition, and religious identity face existential challenges as they are redefined by algorithmic devices and automated control systems. This process raises concerns about the "loss of humanity" in the rapid pace of technological advancement.

The generation most impacted by this change is Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, who not only grew up in a digital environment but also inherently live with it. Gen Z experiences education, entertainment, and social interaction simultaneously on automated platforms. In the Indonesian context, this group also forms part of religious communities such as Islamic boarding school students (santri). However, being a Gen Z santri means living in two worlds: one with a deeply rooted tradition of classical Islamic scholarship, and another defined by digital dynamics, global mobility, and algorithms.

Today's santri are faced with the need to navigate their identities in an automated ecosystem that recognizes neither geographical nor cultural boundaries. They no longer face only local challenges, but also global ones, both intellectual and cultural. In this context, English language skills become a crucial tool for existence. English is not only a means of international communication but also a form of cultural capital that determines one's position in global society.(Bourdieu, 2011). Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital explains how linguistic ability, education, and cultural tastes are important assets for social mobility. For Islamic boarding school students, mastery of English can be interpreted as a transformation from traditional capital—literacy in the yellow books and memorization of

religious texts. (Braidotti, 2017). The Posthuman. Polity Press, there is a shift in the form of symbolic power in Islamic boarding school communities, which are slowly accepting the values of modernity through new cultural practices (Grenfell, 2014).

One manifestation of the Islamic boarding school students' cultural strategy in negotiating their existence is through the production of discourse in English. At the Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School, for example, students are not only taught linguistic skills but are also encouraged to produce tangible works such as English-language dramas, poetry, speeches, podcasts, and MC scripts. These products are not merely extracurricular activities, but represent a new narrative of global Islamic boarding school students who want to prove that tradition and modernity do not have to be at odds (Panjaitan et al., 2025).

The presence of English-language works by Islamic boarding school students can be interpreted as an effort to expand their symbolic space in the global realm. Through these products, students not only learn to speak a foreign language but also convey local messages, Islamic values, and cultural identity to the wider world. This is a form of cultural hybridization, where traditional values merge with modern forms of expression (Pieterse, 2019). This process demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools are not static, but rather adapt to the context of the times.

However, this reality has not yet been fully addressed in academic studies. Many studies on English language teaching in Islamic boarding schools focus on pedagogical approaches and learning methods (Sabila et al., 2023). Very few studies have examined the English language production of Islamic boarding school students (santri) as a discourse of resistance and cultural expansion in a world increasingly controlled by the logic of automation. This is where this research is crucial, filling a gap in the literature and broadening the understanding of Islamic boarding school (santri) strategies in responding to the challenges of the times.

Furthermore, this research opens up a space for discussion about how Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), as traditional institutions, can become future laboratories in shaping religious subjects who are not alienated from the modern world. In a posthuman context, where humans are being displaced by algorithms and data, Islamic boarding schools (santri) offer an alternative: individuals who are knowledgeable, moral, and spiritually aware, yet remain adaptive and responsive to technology. Thus, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) can become centers for the production of "soulful" individuals in a world that tends to lose its human dimension.

Based on the above description, this research is crucial. It not only documents the phenomenon of Islamic boarding school students learning a foreign language but also explores the deeper meaning of this cultural practice. This research examines the English language production of Al-Yasini Islamic boarding school students as a representation of the cultural strategies of Gen Z Islamic boarding school students in negotiating their identity, existence, and position amidst the hegemony of global automation. With an interdisciplinary approach, this research offers a new perspective on the relationship between Islamic boarding schools, language, technology, and the identity of future students.

Based on the above background, the research questions are as follows: First, what are the forms and characteristics of the English language products produced by students at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School? Second, how do these English language products reflect the cultural strategies of Gen Z students in facing the challenges of an automated world ecosystem? Third, what is the position of students as cultural agents in the context of cultural capital and a posthuman global society?

This research aims to: First, describe the forms and characteristics of English language products produced by students at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School. Second, analyze the strategic significance of these English language products as part of the students' responses to changes in an automated and global world. Third, explain the transformation of students' cultural capital in the context of Pierre Bourdieu's theory and cultural hybridization from the perspective of Jan Nederveen Pieterse.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive study type, because the main focus is to understand the cultural meaning of the English language products of Islamic boarding school students and the social context in which these products are produced and interpreted (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Research Location

The research was conducted at the Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School in Pasuruan, East Java, which is known for its active participation in developing foreign language skills, particularly English, for its students.

Research Subjects and Objects

The research objects were various English-language products produced by students, such as speeches, poems, plays, podcasts, and MC scripts. The research subjects were the students who produced these works and their English language tutors.

Data Collection Techniques

In-depth interviews with students and English teachers. Documentation of students' English works. Participatory observation of English-language extracurricular activities.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted interpretively using a semiotic and cultural discourse approach, analyzing the symbols, narrative structures, and values contained in these English-language works (Fairclough, 2013). Bourdieu and Pieterse's theories are used to interpret the findings sociologically and culturally.

FINDINGS

This research was conducted at the Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School in Pasuruan, focusing on the dynamics of learning and cultural production among students in the context of English language acquisition. Through in-depth interviews with students from the Foreign Language Development Institute and the language dormitory, as well as with teaching and mentoring teachers, it was found that English learning practices are not only formal but also integrated into the students' daily lives.

According to Ustadz Lutfi, one of the Foreign Language Development Institute teachers, language learning is divided into four levels: First Semester (FS), Second Semester (SS), Third Semester (TS), and Last Semester (LS). Each level consists of several classes that students must complete in stages, such as Parts of Speech, Pronouns, and Tenses. "Students will move up a level if they pass a test at the   Foreign Language Development Institute office. For example, from Parts of Speech to Pronouns, and so on," he explained (Lutfi, personal communication, July 11, 2025).

The learning method used by the Foreign Language Development Institute focuses on strengthening grammatical aspects first before encouraging oral production. "The learning method focuses on grammar first, Ma'am," continued Ustadz Lutfi. Then, as a form

of practical application of the learning, meeting classes are held, which assign students to create language products such as MC scripts, speeches, storytelling, poetry, and reading news.

Students not only learn in class, but also apply the use of English in their daily lives through the language dormitory. Ustadz Lutfi added, "Speaking practice is prioritized in the language dormitory, Ma'am. So, at the Islamic boarding school, there is a language dormitory that supports students in practicing English every day." This demonstrates that language learning is not merely an academic aspect, but also part of the students' cultural habitus.

The presence of the language dormitory creates a strategic ecosystem for habituation. This is where Bourdieu's symbolic practice comes into play: English becomes symbolic capital acquired through daily interactions and habits. Language becomes a tool of differentiation and a marker of a new class among students who are active and able to use it well.

Students at the Foreign Language Development Institute and the dormitory are also actively producing scientific and creative products. Some have compiled short story books, learning modules, and collections of English speeches. This is a concrete form of objective capital in Bourdieu's theory—linguistic products that reflect the symbolic value and bargaining power of students in a modern, automated space.

Male students in Kluwut, for example, not only study religious texts but also interpret English-language scriptures, demonstrating a shift from traditional literacy to global literacy. "In Kluwut, it's the boys who interpret English-language scriptures," explained Ustadz Lutfi. This demonstrates that traditional values are being reinterpreted through modern media.

Strengthening English skills at the Foreign Language Development Institute and the dormitory is not merely a cognitive matter, but also a form of cultural hybridization. Students use English not to escape their pesantren identity, but rather as a strategy to expand that identity in a global context.

The works of students represent a narrative of resistance to an increasingly automated and impersonal world. By packaging local values in a global language, Al-Yasini students successfully project a fluid, contextual, and strategic identity. They demonstrate that Islamic boarding schools are not ivory towers, but rather dialectical spaces between tradition and modernity.

Through a qualitative approach, this research confirms that students are not merely religious learners but also cultural agents who create value. With English as a symbolic instrument and cultural expression, they emerge as active subjects in the ecosystem of an

automated world. Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School, with its Foreign Language Development Institute and language dormitory, has become an adaptive and relevant future educational ecosystem.

The English language learning system at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School is not simply a form of linguistic mastery, but a structured cultural strategy. The Foreign Language Development Institute program and language dormitory create a dialectical space between traditional educational structures and the demands of globalization. Herein lies its novelty: English is not simply a skill tool, but a new expression of students' identities in the landscape of an automated world (Naufal, personal communication, June 10, 2025).

DISCUSSION

Within the Foreign Language Development Institute system, students undergo a multi-level process: starting with grammar classes on Parts of Speech, Pronouns, and Tenses, to a final meeting that requires them to produce tangible works: poetry, speeches, MCs, and storytelling. In the dormitory, English is practiced as a social routine. This shows that students not only receive instruction but also internalize the language as a social habit, representing what Bourdieu calls linguistic habitus (Naufal, personal communication, June 10, 2025).

Bourdieu (1986) classifies cultural capital into three forms: **(Szeman & Kaposy, 2010)** Incorporation (absorbed in the body and mind as habitus), Objectivation (manifested in objects such as books, works of art, linguistic products), and Institutionalization (recognized in the form of certificates and degrees).

Pierre Bourdieu views society as constructed by various types of capital: economic capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital. Among these, cultural capital is a key determinant in creating class distinctions, prestige, and bargaining power within a particular social field. (Szeman & Kaposy, 2010). Cultural capital has three forms: incorporation (habitus), objectification (cultural products), and institutionalization (formal recognition such as diplomas).

In the context of this research, students at Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School demonstrate a shift in cultural capital from a traditional model to a global hybrid model. The English language products they produce (such as poetry, speeches, drama, and podcasts) are forms of objective capital, namely symbolic representations of competencies that can be exchanged within a global value system.

Furthermore, the students' habitus, previously embedded in the tradition of yellow book literacy and classical Arabic, has undergone an expansion of meaning. They have formed a new habitus that accommodates English as a symbolic tool for their struggle to speak in the global space, without losing their Islamic identity. This is a form of habitus transformation, in which an individual's internal structure adapts to the rapidly changing social terrain caused by globalization and automation (Bourdieu, 1991).

The cultural capital of Islamic boarding school students (santri) becomes a tool for social negotiation in a posthuman society increasingly dominated by technology and automation. As global society assesses an individual's existence based on their ability to access global languages and technology, the students' mastery of English is a form of symbolic investment that elevates their bargaining position in the broader social arena. In Bourdieu's terms, this is a struggle to define the value of those values. (Bourdieu, 1993). The English language production of Al-Yasini students can be positioned as the result of the construction of new cultural capital, enabling them to participate in the global arena while still upholding local values.

At Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School, all three are evident. The habitualization of English language practices shapes the students' new disposition as both members of the Islamic boarding school and global citizens. Products such as short story books, speeches, and learning modules represent objective capital. Meanwhile, the Foreign Language Development Institute certificate signifies symbolic and institutional recognition of their abilities. This cultural capital transforms the students' internal social stratification. Students who are fluent in English gain higher social standing, are invited to emcee official events, and are recognized in forums outside the Islamic boarding school. English becomes a tool of social distinction, forming a new symbolic class within the Islamic boarding school environment.

The students' English production is not merely a form of assimilation of Western culture, but a rearticulation of Islamic values in a global format. Al-Yasini students write speeches in English about Islamic brotherhood, compose poetry about struggle, and tell stories of the Prophet in an international language. In each of their narratives, the values of the Islamic boarding school remain alive, even though they are packaged in Western symbols and grammar. The students who interpret the English-language texts are in Kluwut. They create interpretations using the Islamic boarding school narratives in a global language (Lutfi, personal communication, July 11, 2025)

According to Jan Nederveen Pieterse, this is a form of cultural hybridization, meaning the process of mixing and combining local and global elements, resulting in new cultural forms. This hybridization is not a form of homogenization, but a creative process. Students use foreign languages as a medium of symbolic struggle, presenting the values of the Islamic boarding school in the world narrative (Pieterse, 2019).

Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) developed the concept of cultural hybridization as a response to views of globalization that oversimplify cultural dynamics. **(Pieterse, 2019).** In his theory, he states that globalization not only spreads dominant cultures (e.g., Westernization) but also gives rise to new forms resulting from the blending of local and global cultures.

In this study, the works of Al-Yasini students using English represent a concrete manifestation of this hybridization process. They integrate traditional Islamic symbols with modern linguistic forms of expression. For example, English-language speeches discussing themes of Islamic brotherhood or etiquette toward teachers reflect local narratives in a global context.

According to Pieterse, this hybridization process is creative and inevitable in an interconnected world. Culture does not "die" due to globalization, but is instead reborn in new, reflective, and contextual forms. In this sense, Islamic boarding school students (santri) become active cultural agents, not passive victims of external culture. They produce new values that combine religiosity, nationalism, and globality within a single framework of English expression.

Interestingly, Islamic boarding school students do not simply imitate Western culture, but incorporate Islamic boarding school values and Islamic spirituality into their foreign language products. This confirms Pieterse's idea that globalization is neither linear nor hegemonic, but rather opens up space for symbolic resistance and the rearticulation of identity.

The cultural products of Al-Yasini Islamic boarding school students demonstrate the practice of active hybridization, where they create new cultural forms by combining traditional Islamic values and global languages within an automated global ecosystem.

Integrating the Two: Cultural Strategies in an Automated Ecosystem

The combination of Bourdieu and Pieterse's theories shows that Islamic boarding school students (santri) are not merely surviving, but also strategically employing them. They

use English as cultural capital and a medium of hybridization to: (1) Gain recognition on the global stage, (2) Maintain local identity, (3) Play a role in an increasingly automated and digitalized world.

This cultural strategy is relevant to the nature of the automated world ecosystem, which is characterized by the disruption of traditional values due to AI, social media, and robotics. The English produced by Islamic boarding school students is a form of counternarrative to the depersonalizing tendencies of posthuman society.

Bourdieu's theory demonstrates that cultural capital is no longer limited to Islamic books and Arabic but extends to English language proficiency as a new form of legitimacy within Islamic boarding schools. Pieterse's theory, meanwhile, deepens our understanding that Islamic boarding school culture can hybridize with global values without being uprooted, but rather expanding its reach and vitality.

Practically, Islamic boarding schools need to develop a bilingual and culturally reflective education system as part of a strategy to face a digitalized future. Institutions such as Foreign Language Development Institutes and language dormitories should be positioned as centers of cultural production, not simply linguistic instruction. Training Islamic boarding school teachers to manage this symbolic capital with an approach that respects both local and global values is crucial.

The uniqueness and scientific contribution of this research lie in, first, the reconstruction of the identity of Islamic boarding school students as global subjects, not merely local religious ones. Second, English is a symbol of cultural struggle, not merely a means of communication. Third, Islamic boarding school practices that integrate symbolic capital and cultural hybridization processes create hybrid actors in a posthuman and automated society. This research shows a new model of Islamic boarding school education that is able to respond to the challenges of technology, AI, and globalization without losing its local identity and spiritual values.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School has successfully created a model of Islamic boarding school education that is responsive to global challenges, particularly in the context of an automated world marked by the presence of digital technology, artificial intelligence, and a posthuman society.

Through the Foreign Language Development Institute system and language dormitories, students are equipped with English language skills that are not only technical, but also symbolic and cultural. English becomes a new form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), enabling students to negotiate their identities amidst the currents of globalization.

The students' linguistic products, such as speeches, poetry, and short stories in English, are a concrete representation of cultural hybridization (Pieterse, 2009), where local Islamic boarding school values can be presented in a global format. Students are not victims of globalization, but rather active actors, recreating meaning through global language.

These findings collectively confirm that Islamic boarding schools can be dialectical spaces that integrate traditional Islamic values with modern expressions through cultural and linguistic strategies.

Furthermore, in this study, the researcher recommends that, first, students need to improve their English literacy critically and creatively, and utilize it as a medium for da'wah, global communication, and a tool to expand the influence of Islamic boarding school values in the international space. Second, guardians of students are expected to provide full support for the process of learning foreign languages, especially English, and view it as part of strengthening the character of students so that they are able to live in the global era while maintaining Islamic values. Third, it is recommended to strengthen the English learning system based on Islamic boarding school values. Programs such as the Foreign Language Development Institute and language dormitories need to be developed into incubation spaces for students' creativity to produce foreign language works with local and universal value. Fourth, it is recommended to make the experience of Al-Yasini Islamic Boarding School as a model for research and development of Islamic boarding school-based education systems that are able to address issues of sustainability and inclusivity through linguistic and cultural approaches that are relevant to the times.

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