

Dynamics of Transcultural Communication through Language Use in Multicultural Islamic Boarding Schools: A Comparative Study

Virga Putra Dharma¹, Nazwa Auliyah^{2*}, Nasya Dinda Afrilla³

^{1,2,3} Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon. Jl. Brigjen Darsono, Bypass Jl. Cideng Raya No.20, Kertawinangun, Kec. Kedawung, Kabupaten Cirebon, Jawa Barat 45153

E-mail: nazwaauliyah28@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini menganalisis dinamika komunikasi transkultural dan penggunaan bahasa pada dua lembaga pendidikan Islam multikultural, Pondok Pesantren Buntet dan Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, melalui studi komparatif terhadap perbedaan kebijakan dan praktik bahasa di keduanya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana kebijakan bahasa yang berbeda secara fundamental membentuk pengalaman komunikasi antarbudaya dan proses adaptasi para santri. Di Pondok Pesantren Buntet, dominasi bahasa daerah Cirebon mendorong adaptasi bahasa yang bersifat organik dan informal, di mana kesalahpahaman linguistik berubah menjadi pengalaman positif yang mempererat hubungan serta menumbuhkan inklusivitas berbasis nilai-nilai kekeluargaan tradisional. Sebaliknya, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri dengan kewajiban ketat penggunaan bahasa Arab dan Inggris menunjukkan percepatan pemerolehan bahasa asing dan penyatuan komunikasi di tengah keberagaman daerah, menjadikan tantangan linguistik sebagai dorongan untuk saling memahami dan membangun persatuan melalui bahasa yang bersifat universal. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keberagaman latar belakang santri merupakan kekuatan sekaligus tantangan, dan peran kepemimpinan kyai serta ustadz/ustadzah sangat penting dalam menanamkan nilai toleransi dan persatuan yang melampaui batas budaya dan bahasa.

This research analyzes the dynamics of transcultural communication and language use in two multicultural Islamic educational institutions, Pondok Pesantren Buntet and Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, through a comparative study of their contrasting language policies and practices. Using a qualitative approach, this study reveals how different language policies fundamentally shape the intercultural communication and adaptation experiences of santri. At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, the dominance of the Cirebon regional language encourages organic and informal language adaptation, where linguistic misunderstandings turn into positive experiences that strengthen relationships and foster inclusivity based on traditional family values. In contrast, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri with its strict obligation to use Arabic and English, demonstrates accelerated foreign language acquisition and communication unification amidst regional diversity, turning linguistic challenges into a drive for understanding and building unity through a universal language. Overall, this study highlights that the diversity of santri backgrounds is both a strength and a challenge, and the leadership role of kyai and ustadz/ustadzah is crucial in instilling values of tolerance and unity that transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries.



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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has increased intercultural mobility, making transcultural communication a fundamental phenomenon that shapes social interactions in various environments. In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) offer a particularly rich and dynamic context for the study of transcultural communication. This unique setting, where individuals from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds converge, fosters a constant interplay of different perspectives and customs.

This phenomenon highlights *pesantren*'s role not merely as religious educational institutions, but also as 'living laboratories' for complex cross-cultural interactions (Muhadjirin, 2022). Within these institutions, the integration of local wisdom and authentic Islamic values fosters a distinct cultural synergy among students (*santri*) (Fatahillah et al., 2023). Many *pesantren* actively implement multicultural education patterns, aiming to cultivate students' understanding and appreciation of various cultural differences (Wazis, 2018). This proactive approach to diversity management, even in traditional *pesantren* that strive to maintain multiculturalism, makes *pesantren* a compelling subject for studying real-world transcultural communication dynamics (Rosmilawati, 2021)

In this dynamic environment, language use plays a central role in shaping and reflecting transcultural communication. Many *pesantren* environments emphasize the use of foreign languages, particularly Arabic and English, as a primary means of everyday communication (Zahra et al., 2025). This creates a unique linguistic community where students from diverse regional and linguistic backgrounds gather, often guided by strict rules regarding foreign language use. "At the same time, Arabic is the language for students at Ibn Qoyyim as a means of communication every day. Pondok is one of the places where language contact occurs. The students from various regions and languages gather to become one in the language community. In contrast to society in general, which does not have rules in language, Pondok provides strict rules regarding the use of language, especially in the use of foreign languages" (Muhajir & Karomah, 2021)

This language discipline directly influences cross-cultural adaptation and interaction among students, which in turn shapes the dynamics of their communication. The emphasis on these foreign languages in multicultural *pesantren* fosters not only language proficiency but also serves as a critical medium for intercultural dialogue and the integration of multicultural values (Sopian et al., 2025). Furthermore, within these vibrant linguistic settings, phenomena such as translanguaging are frequently observed, enabling students to flexibly leverage their full linguistic repertoire to enhance communication skills and navigate complex cross-cultural interactions more effectively (Umniyah & Setiawan, 2025). Given the diversity of approaches and implementations of multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools, a more granular understanding of how specific language policies influence transcultural communication dynamics remains crucial. While existing research confirms the importance of *pesantren* in fostering multicultural values and facilitating language acquisition, there is a notable gap in comparative studies that directly investigate the varied communicative experiences shaped by contrasting linguistic environments. For instance, previous studies have examined general implementations of multicultural education (Tamyiz et al., 2023) or language learning in specific contexts. However, a direct comparison between *pesantren* emphasizing distinct language policies—such as local language dominance versus mandatory foreign language use—offers a unique lens to explore the nuanced patterns of interaction, adaptation strategies, and sense of belonging among a diverse *santri* population. Through a comparative approach, this study specifically seeks to analyze how these differences in linguistic implementation affect patterns of transcultural communication and language use. Thus, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of cross-cultural adaptation strategies and their implications for multicultural education in Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to deeply understand the complex dynamics of transcultural communication through language use in multicultural Islamic boarding schools. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social and cultural phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Tamyiz et al., 2023) (Muhajir & Karomah, 2021).

The research design is a comparative case study, focusing on two distinct *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia. The selection of these two *pesantren* was carried out using a purposive sampling technique,

with the primary criterion being the differences in their daily language use policies and practices among their multicultural santri populations. One pesantren maintains a relatively flexible language environment, while the other enforces stricter language discipline, particularly regarding the use of specific foreign languages (e.g., Arabic and English) in daily communication. This comparative design aims to describe and analyze the differences in the implementation of multicultural education in various pesantren (Tamyiz et al., 2023) Participants in this study included teachers (ustadz/ustadzah) and santri from both pesantren, similar to other studies in pesantren involving students and teaching staff in in-depth interviews (Rosmilawati, 2021)(Sopian et al., 2025)

Primary data collection was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers and santri from the two selected pesantren. This interview method allows researchers to conduct a direct exploration of the results of in-depth interviews with resource persons (Setiawan et al., 2022). The interviews were designed to explore participants' experiences related to transcultural interactions, their perceptions of language use policies and practices within the pesantren, challenges of language adaptation, and the role of language in fostering intercultural understanding and identity formation.

In addition to interviews, observation and document analysis were also utilized as data collection techniques, consistent with methods applied in similar studies (Tamyiz et al., 2023)(Muhajir & Karomah, 2021) Observational field notes were used to record non-verbal interactions and the daily linguistic atmosphere within the pesantren environment. Document analysis included pesantren handbooks, curricula, and regulations related to language use, serving as contextual data and a means of triangulation to validate findings from the interviews. The data collected from interview transcripts, observational notes, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analytical process followed three main activity flows: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Tamyiz et al., 2023) (Rosmilawati, 2021). By applying a constant comparative method, findings from each pesantren case were compared and contrasted to generate a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the dynamics at play.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the thematic analysis of interview transcripts with teachers and students (santri), observation notes, and a review of relevant documents from the two multicultural Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) studied: Pondok Pesantren Buntet and Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri. These findings highlight the dynamics of transcultural communication and language use, comparing observed patterns in both pondok based on their contrasting language policies and practices. Several key themes emerged, including: (1) Daily Language Policies and Practices, (2) Challenges and Cross-Cultural Communication Adaptation Strategies, (3) Interaction Experiences and the Formation of Intercultural Understanding, and (4) The Role of Santri Background and Pondok Leadership in Communication.

Daily Language Policies and Practices

Both pondok pesantren demonstrate highly different approaches to daily language policies and practices, which fundamentally shape the communication patterns within them.

At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, the use of the Cirebon regional language, specifically the Javanese dialect of Cirebon or what santri refer to as "Bahasa Babasan," is the dominant and almost exclusive communication practice in daily interactions, both formal and informal. Santri from outside the Cirebon area who do not understand this language adapt by learning Cirebon language or by using Bahasa Indonesia when communicating with fellow santri from outside the region. This pondok does not have a mandatory policy for the use of Arabic or English in daily conversations. Arabic is taught in the context of studying classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), but not as a daily communication language.

"Here, we use Cirebon language. It's already a habit and an unwritten rule. If there are new friends from Jakarta or outside Java, they are the ones who have to learn Cirebon. Sometimes, if it's necessary, we use Bahasa Indonesia." (Santri Santi, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

"The language I use most often is Bahasa Indonesia. Why? Because Indonesian is my mother tongue. But now it's easy because I understand... Now I often use Bahasa Babasan when interacting with friends." (Santri Santi, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

The teacher at Pondok Pesantren Buntet explained that the use of this regional language is part of the pondok's tradition and identity, and serves as the initial basis for intercultural encounters that influence the santri.

"Our main program at Pondok Pesantren Buntet is to familiarize santri with communicating using Bahasa Babasan [Cirebon language] in their daily interactions. Unlike foreign languages like English and Arabic, which are studied more intensively in classes or special religious studies, the use of Bahasa Babasan develops gradually and naturally throughout the entire pondok environment, whether in class, in the dormitory, or in rooms. We do not have a specific formal teaching program for Bahasa Babasan; santri are expected to master it through habituation and the influence of the Cirebon-speaking environment that we create." (Teacher, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

Conversely, at Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, the language policy is very strict and structured. Arabic and English are mandatory as the main languages of instruction in all daily activities, both formal and informal, as an effort to accelerate language proficiency. The teacher emphasized that this is done to avoid misunderstandings among santri who come from various regions in Indonesia.

"The main challenge in communication among santri is language differences. Because santri here come from various regions, the main challenge is language differences. Well, from that background, Arabic is eventually used as the daily language in this pondok. This is to prevent misunderstandings when santri talk and communicate with each other." (Teacher, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

Santri at Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri reported that despite initial challenges, this policy is effective in rapidly improving their foreign language abilities.

"The rules here are very strict; if you don't speak Arabic or English, you can get reprimanded. At first, it felt really heavy, especially when I just arrived, I felt like I could only stay silent. But gradually, I got used to it and became fluent quickly. This is indeed the most effective way to learn a foreign language." (Aisyah, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

Challenges and Cross-Cultural Communication Adaptation Strategies

The differing language policies give rise to distinct communication adaptation challenges in both pondok, and santri and teachers employ their own strategies to overcome them.

At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, the main challenge faced by santri from outside the Cirebon area is the difficulty in understanding and speaking the Cirebon regional language, or "Bahasa Babasan" (as per Santri Santi's answer to Q2). This becomes the first significant communication barrier.

"When I first came here, I had difficulty understanding the language because of language differences. At home, I was used to speaking Sundanese and Indonesian, whereas here I use Bahasa Babasan." (Santri Santi, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

The teacher at Buntet stated that the challenge is "unifying" the children through language, but this usually resolves itself over time. The existing strategy is to facilitate senior santri to teach juniors informally.

"The level of children's comprehension can sometimes lead to amusing, funny things, because of language differences, there are certainly some languages used in other regions. This eventually leads to misunderstandings, although the misunderstandings are usually just funny, it's rare for the challenges to be so severe as to cause major problems. The challenge is just to unite them, eventually, the children will understand the language, after a year or so, they will understand." (Teacher, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

"The pondok facilitates especially the santri, to gradually teach them about Bahasa Babasan... later the seniors teach the juniors." (Teacher, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

At Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, the initial challenge faced by santri is the immediate requirement to communicate in Arabic or English, especially for those with minimal language foundation. This often leads to frustration and a sense of isolation in the first few weeks.

"My first challenge was having to immediately speak Arabic or English. Even though I rarely used them at home. It felt like I was out of ideas, trying to tell anything was very difficult." (Aisyah, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

The teacher at Birruna emphasized that this challenge is part of the adaptation process due to the diverse backgrounds of santri from various regions in Indonesia, and the mandatory use of Arabic is the solution to unify communication.

"The main challenge in communication among santri is language differences. Because santri here come from various regions, the main challenge is language differences." (Teacher, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

Interaction Experiences and the Formation of Intercultural Understanding

Intercultural interaction experiences vary significantly between the two pondok, shaping santri's understanding and tolerance in different ways.

At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, misunderstandings due to dialect or regional language differences occasionally occurred, but these experiences often became learning moments and jokes that strengthened relationships. The most memorable experiences for santri were often related to the exchange of traditions and daily habits brought from their respective home regions, creating a "mini Indonesia" atmosphere within the regional language context.

"Yes, I once experienced a misunderstanding with a friend. For example, 'kates' in Javanese means papaya, while in my Sundanese language, 'kates' means banana." (Santri Santi, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

"The most memorable experience was when I interacted with my friend who came from Sulawesi." (Santri Santi, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

Pondok Pesantren Buntet builds tolerance through strengthening values of togetherness and kinship within the pesantren tradition, where cultural differences are considered a richness. This is also manifested in pondok activities that accommodate various local cultural expressions.

At Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, misunderstandings occurred more frequently due to limited foreign language proficiency, but this prompted santri to be more patient and strive for understanding. The most memorable experiences were often related to moments of successful communication in foreign languages and cross-regional collaboration within Indonesia, fostering a sense of unity.

"I once had a big misunderstanding with a friend from Sumatra because of a different word usage in Arabic, but that actually became an opportunity to learn. Another memorable experience was when we could have a long discussion with a santri from Kalimantan using English; it felt like we were all one in this language." (Aisyah, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri builds tolerance and intercultural understanding through strict language discipline that indirectly compels santri to focus on the essence of communication understandable to all, as well as through role models from teachers and activities highlighting Islamic brotherhood within Indonesia's diversity.

The Role of Santri Background and Pondok Leadership in Communication

The cultural background of santri is a fundamental element in transcultural communication in both pondok, with the leadership of kyai and ustadz/ustadzah playing a key role in shaping an inclusive environment. In both pondok, the highly heterogeneous background of santri serves as a source of cultural richness and a point of communication challenge. Santri come from various provinces across Indonesia, with diverse regional languages, customs, and even different religious interpretations.

"The background of the santri in this pondok varies because they come from various regions, with different customs and cultures." (Teacher, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

"Based on the pesantren environment, where santri come from various regions, it naturally becomes the initial basis for cultural differences, especially language, which influences the santri." (Teacher, Pondok Pesantren Buntet)

Teachers actively facilitate interaction and mediate in cases of misunderstanding, ensuring no discrimination based on regional origin or language.

The leadership of kyai and ustadz/ustadzah in both pesantren is highly influential in building tolerance and intercultural understanding. Through sermons, religious studies (pengajian), and daily examples, they consistently convey messages of unity, respect for differences, and the importance of noble character in interaction, regardless of the santri's background. They emphasize that Islamic values transcend cultural boundaries, encouraging santri to apply universal values in their communication, albeit through different linguistic pathways (regional languages vs. mandatory foreign languages).

"However, the pondok's own culture will become the dominant culture shaping the santri, encompassing religious values, discipline and independence, kinship and togetherness, as well as language and local traditions." (Teacher, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri)

This section discusses and interprets the specific findings obtained from the data analysis at Pondok Pesantren Buntet and Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri. This discussion carefully links the qualitative research results to theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from relevant literature, highlighting the implications of contrasting language policies, as well as the role of social dynamics and leadership in shaping intercultural understanding within the multicultural pesantren environments studied.

Daily Language Policies and Practices: Reflections of the Pesantren Communication Environment

The fundamental differences in daily language policies and practices between Pondok Pesantren Buntet and Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri significantly shape their communication environments. At Buntet, the dominance of "Bahasa Babasan" (Cirebon Javanese dialect) as the primary communication language creates a context where language adaptation occurs organically, as expressed by Santri Santi, who had to adapt by learning Cirebon language or using Bahasa Indonesia. This unwritten policy reflects the pesantren's local identity and tradition. This finding provides an additional perspective to the study by (Muhajir & Karomah, 2021) which focuses on the dynamics of foreign languages like Arabic and English; at Buntet, it is the regional language that becomes a central element in the linguistic adaptation process of multicultural santri.

Conversely, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri implements a very strict language policy, mandating the use of Arabic and English. The Teacher at Birruna explained that this strategy aims to accelerate foreign language proficiency while avoiding misunderstandings due to the diverse regional languages of the santri. This practice is highly consistent with the concept of language discipline discussed by Setiawan, (Setiawan et al., 2022) who state that communication patterns can be specifically formed within a framework of language discipline, where santri are required to use certain languages in daily interactions and learning. Santri Aisyah's experience of initially feeling 'stuck' but then quickly becoming fluent confirms the effectiveness of this disciplinary approach in accelerating foreign language acquisition, demonstrating that a mandatory language environment can be an accelerator for second language proficiency.

Challenges and Cross-Cultural Communication Adaptation Strategies: Responses to Different Language Policies

The contrasting language policies in both *pondok* give rise to different communication adaptation challenges for *santri* and teachers. At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, the main challenge is mastering the Cirebon regional language. Santri Santi experienced initial difficulty understanding "Bahasa Babasan" due to the difference in their native language habits (Sundanese/Indonesian). Nevertheless, the Teacher at Buntet stated that this challenge often leads to humorous moments and can be overcome over time, with an informal strategy where senior *santri* guide juniors in mastering the regional language. This natural and informal adaptation process supports (Wazis, 2018) view that in the *pesantren* environment, *santri* from different cultures can understand each other and form friendships, indicating an intrinsic adaptive capacity within a tradition-based *pesantren* community.

At Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, the adaptation challenge shifts to the realm of foreign languages. Santri Aisyah described initial frustration due to the immediate requirement to communicate in Arabic or English with minimal foundational knowledge. However, as emphasized by the Teacher at Birruna, the mandatory use of Arabic is considered a solution to unify communication amidst the diverse backgrounds of the *santri*. This condition reflects the complex dynamics described by (Muhajir & Karomah, 2021) regarding the phenomena of code-mixing and code-switching in Arabic language programs, where *santri* must navigate a multilingual environment dominated by mandatory foreign languages. Although challenging, this discipline is believed to accelerate linguistic adaptation and uniform communication, aligning with the language discipline framework outlined by (Setiawan et al., 2022)

Interaction Experiences and the Formation of Intercultural Understanding: Unique Dynamics of Inclusivity

Intercultural interaction experiences in both *pondok* demonstrate how different environments shape intercultural understanding and tolerance. At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, misunderstandings due to dialect or regional language differences, such as the humorous "kates" example experienced by Santri Santi, actually became learning moments and strengthened relationships. The Buntet environment fostered a "mini-Indonesia" atmosphere where the exchange of regional traditions and customs became memorable. This *pondok* builds tolerance through strengthening values of togetherness and kinship,

which are part of the *pesantren* tradition. This is consistent with (Rosmilawati, 2021) findings that examine traditional *pesantren* strategies in maintaining multiculturalism values to build *santri*'s cross-cultural competencies, and also aligns with (Lampung, 2025) argument that the internalization of multicultural values occurs through daily interactions and communal lifestyle.

At Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, misunderstandings occurred more frequently due to limitations in foreign language proficiency, but this prompted *santri* to be more patient and strive for understanding. The most memorable experiences were often related to moments of successful communication in foreign languages and cross-regional collaboration, fostering a sense of unity. Aisyah's experience of being able to have long discussions with a *santri* from Kalimantan using English demonstrates how foreign language proficiency becomes a tool to unite diverse backgrounds. Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri builds tolerance and intercultural understanding through strict language discipline that indirectly compels *santri* to focus on the essence of communication understandable to all, as well as through role models from teachers and activities highlighting Islamic brotherhood within Indonesia's diversity.

This aligns with (Sopian et al., 2025) findings, which show that Arabic language learning in *pesantren* reflects four dimensions of multicultural integration (cultural, social, intellectual, and spiritual), where language serves as a medium for intercultural dialogue.

The Role of Santri Background and Pondok Leadership in Communication: The Foundation of Tolerance

The highly heterogeneous cultural background of *santri* is a fundamental element in transcultural communication in both *pondok*, as emphasized by the Teachers from both *pesantren*. *Santri* from various provinces across Indonesia bring with them diverse regional languages, customs, and religious interpretations, which can be both a source of cultural richness and a point of communication challenge. This condition reinforces the argument by (Tamyiz et al., 2023) about the importance of implementing multicultural education in *pesantren* that can manage plurality to create an effective and harmonious educational environment.

The leadership of *kyai* and *ustadz/ustadzah* in both *pesantren* proved to be highly influential in building tolerance and intercultural understanding. Through sermons, religious studies (*pengajian*), and daily examples, they consistently convey messages of unity, respect for differences, and the importance of noble character in interaction, regardless of the *santri*'s background. This role is consistent with (Wazis, 2018) finding that *kyai* have a strong influence in conveying messages of intercultural communication using *pesantren* symbols, as well as (Lampung, 2025) emphasis on the *role modeling* of religious leaders in internalizing multicultural values. They stress that Islamic values transcend cultural boundaries, encouraging *santri* to apply universal values in their communication, albeit through different linguistic pathways (regional languages in Buntet versus mandatory foreign languages in Birruna). The dominant *pondok* culture, as expressed by the Teacher at Birruna, also shapes *santri* with religious values, discipline, independence, kinship, and togetherness, as well as local language and traditions, which ultimately facilitates harmonious communication in diversity.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the dynamics of transcultural communication and language use in two multicultural Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Pondok Pesantren Buntet and Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, by comparing their communication patterns based on their contrasting language policies and practices. The research findings indicate that the language policies implemented by each *pondok* fundamentally shape the *santri*'s communication experiences and intercultural adaptation.

At Pondok Pesantren Buntet, the dominance of the Cirebon regional language ("Bahasa Babasan") fostered an organic and informal language adaptation, where initial challenges related to understanding the regional language were overcome through immersion and senior guidance. This environment promoted inclusivity through the exchange of local traditions, often transforming linguistic misunderstandings into moments of humor and learning that strengthened relationships, in line with the traditional *pesantren*'s values of kinship.

Conversely, Pondok Qur'an Birruna Putri, with its strict policy of mandatory Arabic and English use, offered an accelerated approach to foreign language acquisition. Although it posed initial adaptation challenges in the form of linguistic frustration, this discipline proved effective in rapidly improving *santri*'s language abilities and unifying communication amidst diverse regional backgrounds.

Misunderstandings here more often arose from foreign language limitations, which in turn spurred patience and a desire to understand, building a sense of unity through universal languages.

Overall, this research demonstrates that the diverse backgrounds of *santri* in both *pondok* serve as both a source of cultural richness and a communication challenge. However, the role of *kyai* and *ustadz/ustadzah* (religious leaders) in leadership proved crucial in building tolerance and intercultural understanding. They consistently instilled values of unity and noble character that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, whether through regional languages or foreign languages.

Thus, this study contributes to a richer understanding of how multicultural *pesantren* manage transcultural communication through different language strategies, both those based on local traditions and those on foreign language discipline. Future research could explore the long-term impact of these two language approaches on *santri*'s identity, as well as compare the effectiveness of cultural adaptation in *pesantren* with non-*pesantren* multicultural educational institutions.

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