Code-Switching, Critical Pedagogy, and Religious Identity: Insights from Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Classrooms

https://doi.org/10.30598/tahurivol22issue1page17-33

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Abstract

This study analyzes code-switching practices in pesantren classrooms, with a focus on Pesantren Darul Ulum in West Sumatra, and examines their pedagogical role in integrating religious values with academic subjects. A qualitative classroom ethnography was conducted, drawing on participatory and non-participatory observations across twelve lessons, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. Data were examined using thematic coding informed by sociolinguistic and critical pedagogy perspectives, with source and method triangulation employed to ensure validity. Findings reveal that code-switching between Indonesian, Arabic (Qur'anic verses, hadiths, religious terminology), and Minangkabau operates not only as a communicative tool but also as a pedagogical and ideological practice. Teachers strategically employ code-switching to connect modern academic knowledge with Islamic values, reinforcing students' religious identities while fostering critical literacy. These insights challenge conventional views that position code-switching merely as pragmatic communication, highlighting instead its function as a medium of religiously grounded critical pedagogy. The novelty of this study lies in shifting the focus of code-switching research from pragmatic communication toward pedagogical, ideological, and identity-related dimensions within Islamic education. It offers a conceptual framework for understanding code-switching as an integrative tool bridging national curricula with religious values, thereby contributing to sociolinguistics, education, and the study of critical religious pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of education, language is often regarded as a neutral medium that merely functions to convey information from teacher to student. In reality, however, classroom language practices carry more complex ideological and cultural dimensions (Madkur, 2025; Susylowati et al., 2019). One of the most common practices is code-switching, namely the shift from one linguistic code to another within conversation. In mainstream schools, code-switching is generally understood as a pragmatic strategy: teachers or students switch between Indonesian and local languages, or vice versa, to facilitate comprehension. In the context of Islamic boarding school education (pesantren), however, code-switching assumes a much deeper meaning. Teachers do not merely switch languages to clarify a concept, but also intersperse Qur'anic verses, hadith, or scholarly opinions within the

teaching of general subjects such as sociology, language, or history (Madkur, 2024; Ruslan et al., 2024). This practice creates a distinctive learning landscape in which language serves to bind modern knowledge with religious values while simultaneously shaping students' religious identities. This fact is crucial to discuss because it reveals the pedagogical and ideological dimensions of language that are often overlooked in conventional sociolinguistic research.

In recent years, attention to code-switching phenomena in education has been increasing. Research in bilingual schools shows that teachers employ code-switching as a strategy to bridge linguistic gaps between the formal curriculum and students' everyday language (Munandar & Newton, 2021; Tahir & Maarof, 2021). In Indonesia, classroom studies on code-switching typically highlight its function as a communicative strategy to clarify subject matter (Arifianto et al., 2024; Solehudin & Arisandi, 2024). Such research has found that the use of local languages helps students better understand difficult academic terms. Similarly, studies in international schools demonstrate that switching from English to local languages fosters students' active participation, as they feel more comfortable using their mother tongues (Tiawati et al., 2024). Nevertheless, most of these studies frame code-switching solely in terms of communication and pedagogical pragmatism.

Conversely, the literature on critical pedagogy demonstrates that language holds the power to shape critical consciousness. Crookes (2022) and McLaren (2023) stress the importance of language as a dialogical medium that enables students to understand the relationship between knowledge, power, and emancipation. In the context of education in Muslim-majority countries, research has revealed that language is used not only for communicative purposes but also as a means of internalizing religious values (Alsaawi, 2022; Ekaningtyas & Yasa, 2022). In Malaysia, for example, Ashoumi et al. (2022) and Tambak et al. (2021) found that teachers in religious schools use code-switching between Malay and Arabic to reinforce religious authority and to link general subject matter with Islamic teachings. Similar findings were reported in Pakistan, where students understood the use of Arabic in social science classes as a reminder of their Islamic identity (Shiddiq et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2022). However, these studies remain largely descriptive of code-switching functions and have yet to elaborate on the critical dimensions that such practices may foster.

Indonesian literature also reflects a strong tendency to separate "general knowledge" from "religious knowledge" within the education system. Several studies note that students in mainstream schools often perceive religious education as disconnected from other subjects (Choirin et al., 2024; Dakir et al., 2022; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Conversely, pesantren provide spaces where such boundaries become more fluid. Research by Abidin & Sirojuddin (2024) and Archakis & Tsakona (2022) affirms that pesantren are educational institutions capable of integrating religious values with the demands of modernity. In the pesantren classroom, code-switching becomes an essential mechanism to demonstrate this interconnection. For instance, when a sociology teacher introduces the concept of social stratification, they may immediately relate it to a hadith about the virtue of human equality before God. In this context, language is not merely explanatory but also ideological, shaping students' worldview.

Yet, research that explores the critical dimensions of this practice in Indonesia remains scarce.

Broadly speaking, studies on religious identity in education demonstrate that students' identities are shaped not only by the formal curriculum but also by everyday classroom practices (Karimullah et al., 2023). In pesantren, religious identity is cultivated through intensive interaction with teachers, the use of Arabic, and the embedding of Islamic values in every aspect of life. Studies by Dian et al. (2024) and Saepullah (2021) on pesantren culture illustrate how the scholarly authority of kiai and teachers profoundly influences the internalization of religious values. However, these studies have not sufficiently addressed how everyday language practices in the classroom directly contribute to the construction of student identity. This underscores the importance of viewing code-switching not merely from a linguistic perspective but also as a strategy for religious identity formation aligned with critical pedagogy.

Accordingly, this study seeks to fill the gap in academic discourse. To date, much research on code-switching has emphasized its linguistic and narrowly pedagogical aspects, while the ideological and critical dimensions remain neglected. Similarly, studies on Islamic education in Indonesia have largely focused on curriculum, the role of kiai, or institutional transformation, rather than the everyday language practices in classrooms. Yet, through language, and particularly through code-switching, we can observe how teachers negotiate authority, instill values, and cultivate students' critical consciousness. This is what makes the pesantren context both unique and crucial to explore within sociolinguistic and critical education frameworks.

This study proceeds from the conviction that code-switching in pesantren is not merely a strategy to clarify subject matter but part of a pedagogical approach that integrates knowledge with religious values. Preliminary observations at Pesantren Darul Ulum, West Sumatra, reveal how teachers employ Indonesian to deliver core material, then switch to Arabic when citing Qur'anic verses or hadith, and occasionally use Minangkabau to affirm cultural proximity with students. This pattern not only strengthens students' comprehension of the material but also consolidates their religious identity while opening space for the growth of critical awareness. In other words, code-switching in pesantren serves as a gateway to understanding how Islamic education achieves integration between modern knowledge and spiritual values.

The purpose of this study is to identify code-switching practices in pesantren classrooms, analyze how teachers employ them as pedagogical strategies, and examine their contribution to the formation of students' religious identity and critical literacy. By highlighting these dimensions, this research enriches sociolinguistic discourse while also contributing to critical pedagogy theory in the context of Islamic education. Moreover, it offers fresh insights for the development of the social sciences and politics by showing how classroom language practices shape young citizens who are not only academically competent but also critically conscious and firmly grounded in religious identity.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a classroom ethnographic case study design, as the nature of the research problem requires an in-depth understanding of the practices, meanings, and socio-cultural contexts underpinning code-switching in the pesantren classroom. Code-switching is not merely a surface phenomenon measurable in quantitative terms; it is rooted in pedagogical practices, teachers' authoritative positions, and the processes of religious identity formation that demand participant observation, discourse interpretation, and exploration of subjective meanings (Lim, 2024; Oe et al., 2022). Classroom ethnography was chosen to enable the researcher to follow the rhythm of daily interactions, capture the nuances of code-switching, and observe how the pesantren context, as a boarding environment with particular scholarly traditions, frames language use in instruction (Mohajan, 2018; Priya, 2021).

The research site is Pesantren Darul Ulum, West Sumatra, selected for its distinctive teaching practices: the integration of Qur'anic verses, hadith, and scholarly opinions within the teaching of general subjects, providing a unique opportunity to examine the pedagogical and ideological functions of code-switching. The choice of location was also informed by its ethnographic accessibility and theoretical relevance in demonstrating how the boundary between "general knowledge" and "religious knowledge" is renegotiated through language (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Yani et al., 2025).

The primary informants consist of four teachers responsible for Sociology, Indonesian Language, History, and Islamic Religious Education, along with twenty eleventh-grade students selected purposively. Teachers were chosen due to their roles as pedagogical agents actively embedding religious texts in instruction, making them able to explain the motives, strategies, and linguistic repertoires employed. Students were selected based on their active classroom participation and reflective ability to articulate how code-switching influences their understanding and identity; this number was deemed sufficient to achieve data depth and thematic saturation for qualitative research (Land, 2024; Mäder, 2023).

Data collection was conducted using three complementary techniques. Classroom observations were carried out across twelve sessions using both participatory and non-participatory modes to record code-switching practices, their triggers, and student responses. Observations were documented through fieldnotes, audio recordings, and episodic transcriptions for discourse analysis. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers and students were conducted to explore pedagogical motives, beliefs, and subjective experiences; interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed. Pedagogical documentation, including lesson plans, textbooks, and teachers' notes, was examined to verify connections between instructional planning and actual classroom practices. This methodological triangulation was designed to capture practice (what happens), meaning (how actors interpret it), and artifacts (supporting documents) (Motulsky, 2021; Nha, 2021).

Data analysis followed the steps of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing in line with Miles and Huberman's model, with thematic coding integrating both sociolinguistic and critical pedagogy perspectives. Validity was ensured through source triangulation (teachers,

students, documents), methodological triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation), member checking with teachers to confirm interpretations, and peer debriefing with academic supervisors. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed, including institutional approval, informed consent from participants, data anonymization, and respect for pesantren norms to ensure the research was conducted sensitively and responsibly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of Code-Switching in the Pesantren Classroom

In the Darul Ulum Pesantren classroom, patterns of code-switching are highly evident and inseparable from the dynamics of daily teaching. Indonesian functions as the primary medium for delivering formal subject matter, especially when teachers explain topics related to the national curriculum such as mathematics, social sciences, or Indonesian language itself. However, whenever teachers wish to emphasize Islamic values or anchor a concept in religious legitimacy, Arabic is immediately invoked, whether through quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, or religious terms laden with symbolic meaning. Meanwhile, Minangkabau appears in more fluid interactions, usually to ease the atmosphere, reduce classroom tension, or build emotional closeness between teacher and students. This switching does not occur randomly but reveals recurring patterns, as though it were a shared and internalized communicative strategy.

Classroom observations indicate that the atmosphere is filled not only with academic texts but also with religious interjections flowing from the teacher's speech. In one tafsir session, for instance, the teacher explained the meaning of a verse in Indonesian, then suddenly switched to Arabic to cite a passage as the basis of his argument, and concluded with Minangkabau to ensure that the students grasped its everyday relevance. The transition occurred so seamlessly that students did not perceive it as a linguistic leap, but rather as part of the natural rhythm of learning. One informant, Hs., expressed that abstract concepts were easier to understand when the teacher supplemented explanations in Minangkabau, as the language felt closer to lived experience. This demonstrates that code-switching is not merely a linguistic strategy but also a social practice enabling the integration of modern knowledge, religious authority, and local identity.

Interviews with one ustaz, M., further highlight the specificity of these shifts. He stated that the use of Arabic in class was not only intended to add authority or a religious impression, but also to remind students that all knowledge ultimately derives from divine revelation. According to him, Arabic carries a sacred nuance that no other language can replace. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that without Indonesian as the primary medium, messages could not be comprehensively conveyed. Minangkabau, in his view, serves as an affective bridge between teacher and students, ensuring that their relationship remains warm and grounded. This illustrates how code-switching reflects a balance between rationality, spirituality, and social intimacy in the pesantren classroom.

Field observations further reinforce these findings. In a classroom of roughly 6 × 8 meters, the whiteboard was filled with notes in Indonesian, but on its left side always appeared brief scribbles of Qur'anic verses or Arabic terms written in hijaiyah script. Students sat in rows on pandan mats, their kitab kuning lying open beside Indonesian-language notebooks. The teacher occasionally walked among them, cracking jokes in Minangkabau that elicited laughter. This atmosphere suggests that the pesantren classroom is a vibrant multilingual arena where language is not only a medium of instruction but also a marker of ideology, identity, and affect.

This pattern can be explained using the framework of sociolinguistic repertoire as advanced by D'Onofrio (2020) and Mougeon & Rehner (2019), who argue that language choice in social interaction cannot be separated from the identity meanings it conveys. Language constitutes a social resource through which individuals negotiate position, membership, and ideological affiliation within a community. In the pesantren context, the linguistic repertoire of teachers and students is not merely a tool for communication but also a medium for reproducing religious values and reinforcing collective bonds. Arabic, for example, functions as a symbol of transcendental authority; Indonesian serves as the main channel for academic processes; while Minangkabau indexes locality and affective closeness rooted in student culture.

Students themselves appeared aware of this pattern and positioned themselves naturally within the flow of language shifts. Several admitted that when teachers used Arabic terms, they felt compelled to listen more attentively or take notes, as such terms carried high religious weight. Conversely, when Minangkabau was used, the classroom became lighter, encouraging them to ask questions or respond. Thus, code-switching mediated not only cognitive understanding but also the emotional rhythm of the class, shifting the mood from formal to relaxed, or vice versa.

aken further, these patterns suggest that code-switching in the pesantren represents broader social and ideological practices. It is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a reflection of the institution's effort to anchor students in religious identity while also situating them within national and local discourses. Within this framework, code-switching becomes part of the hidden curriculum transmitting values about who students are, what roles they occupy in society, and how they should engage with modernity without losing religious grounding.

Pedagogical Functions of Code-Switching: Integrating Knowledge and Religion

In classroom practice at Darul Ulum Pesantren, code-switching functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a pedagogical bridge uniting modern knowledge with religious values. Teachers employ language alternation as a strategy to connect academic concepts with Islamic teachings, thereby allowing students to understand that science, social knowledge, and general learning are not standalone entities but are inherently linked to higher spiritual values.

For instance, in one sociology lesson, the teacher explained social stratification in Indonesian, situating it within the context of Indonesian society. However, when emphasizing

the importance of social justice, the teacher shifted into Arabic to quote a Qur'anic verse highlighting human equality before God. He then added commentary in Minangkabau to ensure that students could relate the abstract concept to their daily community life. These transitions illustrate that code-switching does not occur mechanically but operates as a didactic device reinforcing epistemic linkages between knowledge and religion.

An interview with one teacher, F., affirmed this point. He explained that the strategy was intended to prevent students from viewing secular knowledge as contradictory to religion, but rather as complementary. According to him, inserting verses or hadiths in the midst of academic explanations imparted religious weight, assuring students that what they learned was not foreign but part of a holistic Islamic understanding. This was echoed by a student, R., who confessed to feeling more confident in studying sociology because, when linked to Islam, the subject felt legitimate and aligned with their faith. Such testimonies illustrate that the pedagogical function of code-switching extends beyond linguistic boundaries, legitimizing knowledge and building students' confidence in engaging with the national curriculum.

Field observations made this dynamic even more concrete. During a morning sociology class, the teacher described social mobility in Indonesian, illustrating upward and downward movement through employment gains or losses. To emphasize the moral dimension, however, he switched to Arabic, quoting a hadith that underscored piety as the true measure of human worth. Students who had been casually taking notes became noticeably more attentive, with some immediately transcribing the Arabic quotation. The teacher then added a lighthearted remark in Minangkabau, prompting smiles and easing the classroom atmosphere.

The classroom space itself embodied this integration. The whiteboard simultaneously displayed a diagram of social stratification in Indonesian and a Qur'anic quotation in Arabic script. The kitab kuning lay open beside national curriculum sociology textbooks, creating a hybrid learning environment. This dual presence underscores that code-switching was not limited to speech but extended into textual representation. The pesantren classroom thus emerged as a pedagogical bridge, uniting two domains of knowledge often treated as separate, modern science and religious teaching.

Theoretically, this practice aligns with Canagarajah (2020) and Wirtz & Pfenninger (2024), who argue that multilingual pedagogies do not merely facilitate communication but also create new epistemic spaces where knowledge can be negotiated, integrated, and transformed. Teachers who move between Indonesian, Arabic, and Minangkabau are orchestrating semiotic resources to produce holistic understanding, rather than merely mixing languages.

Students interpreted these practices as making learning more meaningful. Some explained that when academic content was linked with Qur'anic verses or hadiths, knowledge resonated beyond rational comprehension into the spiritual realm. One student, A., admitted that religious quotations enhanced memory retention, since recalling a verse inevitably triggered recollection of the academic explanation. This indicates the strengthening of

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learning through religious dimensions, an effect unattainable if instruction relied solely on Indonesian.

Furthermore, the pedagogical function of code-switching shaped students' worldview on the relationship between science and religion. Unlike in secular education systems where the two are often separated or opposed, the pesantren presented them as mutually reinforcing. This integration was not only cognitively significant but also ideologically powerful, embedding the message that to be a modern Muslim is to master knowledge without relinquishing faith. In this sense, the pedagogical role of code-switching is transformative, shaping students' identity as individuals firmly rooted in religion while also equipped for broader academic and social participation.

Code-Switching as Ideological Practice: Constructing Religious Identity

In the learning dynamics of Darul Ulum Pesantren, code-switching emerges not merely as a pedagogical strategy but also as an ideological practice central to the construction of students' religious identity. Each time teachers switch into Arabic to cite Qur'anic verses, hadiths, or religious terms, the act carries an authoritative weight beyond academic clarification. Arabic functions as a language of authority, positioning teachers not only as conveyors of knowledge but also as religious figures with the legitimacy to interpret sacred texts. Thus, Arabic use is never neutral, it consistently conveys ideological meaning by situating students as Muslims bound to revelation and Islamic tradition.

One teacher, H., admitted in an interview that he felt "more authoritative" when citing verses or hadiths in Arabic, even though he would later explain them in Indonesian. According to him, the original Arabic sound carries a sacred resonance that translation cannot replace. Students' reactions affirmed this: they consistently paid closer attention when Arabic was spoken. One student, M., confessed that hearing Qur'anic verses in Arabic during sociology or history lessons felt akin to being in an act of worship. This illustrates that Arabic fosters a unifying identity, linking students to the global Muslim ummah and reinforcing their transnational religious identity.

Field observations revealed similar dynamics. In one history lesson, the teacher explained Dutch colonialism in Indonesian. However, when discussing its impact on religious life, he switched into Arabic, invoking terms such as jihad, ummah, and prayers of resistance. The classroom atmosphere immediately shifted: students who had been casually note-taking grew attentive, some adjusting their posture. The space felt transformed from an academic environment into a more sacred setting. This small moment illustrates how Arabic code-switching constructs ideological space that reaffirms students' identity as Muslims compelled to connect history and social realities with Islamic values.

Yet code-switching also affirmed local cultural identity. Minangkabau, which teachers occasionally interspersed, underscored another layer of identity, the cultural-local dimension. Teachers often used Minangkabau to relate lessons to students' lived experiences. In one observation, a teacher explaining social mobility invoked Minangkabau expressions such as "rising to the rumah gadang" or "losing honor" in adat contexts. The class atmosphere lightened, with students smiling and eagerly noting down examples. Minangkabau here

functioned not merely as humor but as a reminder of their embeddedness in local culture. Thus, code-switching cultivated a dual sense of belonging: as Muslims in a global ummah and as Minangkabau children tied to adat.

Students also internalized this dual positioning. One student, R., admitted pride when teachers used Minangkabau in class. For him, it was not only about easier comprehension but also about recognition of local identity. He said the language reminded him of "home," strengthening his cultural roots even within the pesantren. Such reflections indicate that code-switching shapes identity beyond academics, preserving emotional and cultural bonds.

This practice can be explained using identity positioning theory, which emphasizes that language use plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' identity positions within a community (Heyd & Schneider, 2019; Tseng & Hinrichs, 2021; Wirtz et al., 2024). Code-switching in the pesantren is not simply a matter of alternating between Indonesian, Arabic, and Minangkabau, it is about positioning students simultaneously within religious and cultural identities. Arabic situates them within the global Muslim community, while Minangkabau roots them in local cultural belonging.

Thus, the pesantren classroom emerges as a site where religious and cultural ideologies are negotiated simultaneously. Teachers play a key role in orchestrating when Arabic should reinforce religious authority and when Minangkabau should foster cultural closeness. Students, through their responses, demonstrate internalization of these layered ideologies. Code-switching therefore cannot be reduced to pragmatic communication; it must be understood as a process of collective identity construction imbued with meaning and values.

Crucially, these dual identities, religious-transnational and cultural-local, are not contradictory but complementary. Darul Ulum Pesantren students grow with the awareness that they are part of the broader Muslim ummah while also deeply connected to Minangkabau adat and community. Code-switching thus becomes an ideological practice rich in significance, capable of bridging these two identity spheres within a single learning environment. Religious identity provides spiritual legitimacy and universality, while local identity provides roots and cultural belonging.

Code-Switching as a Medium of Critical Pedagogy

In the modern pesantren classroom, code-switching is not merely a linguistic strategy that facilitates communication, but rather evolves into a medium of critical pedagogy rooted in religious values. Teachers, in their role, do not simply deliver lessons in Indonesian as the main language of instruction, but also intersperse Arabic, and occasionally the local language, to provide depth of meaning and open spaces for critical reflection among students. In this way, language becomes an entry point that bridges modern social knowledge with Islamic values, while simultaneously teaching that understanding the world cannot be separated from a moral-religious framework. Code-switching here is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but is part of a process of critical education that aligns with Greene's (2023) notion of Critical Language Pedagogy, which emphasizes the role of language in critiquing power relations and dismantling dominant discourses.

In one field observation, it was seen how a sociology teacher discussed the concept of social injustice in Indonesian, then switched to Arabic when quoting the verse inna Allāha ya'muru bil-'adli wal-ihsān, which affirms God's command regarding justice and kindness. The code-switching not only added religious weight but also encouraged students to interpret social inequality not merely as a structural issue but as a moral challenge that must be addressed through Islamic conduct. At that moment, the classroom fell silent; students bowed their heads, some wrote quickly, while others nodded slowly as if recognizing the connection between sociological theory and a broader spiritual message. The presence of Arabic within the scientific explanation transformed the classroom into a space of critical dialogue, where language functioned as a bridge between reality and transcendence.

An informant, Fd, noted that teachers often used Qur'anic verses or hadiths in the midst of academic explanations to reinforce the relevance of concepts to religious life. According to him, this made students feel that the lessons did not stop at worldly knowledge but always bore a connection to Islamic teachings that guide daily behavior. In other words, code-switching instills the awareness that social science is not a foreign entity but can be reinterpreted through the lens of faith. From this perspective, the practice functions not only as information transfer but as a process of shaping a worldview that is simultaneously critical and religious.

Field observations also demonstrated that teachers' use of code-switching was not rigid but fluid, adapting to classroom dynamics. For example, when discussing the concept of domination in Marxist theory, the teacher deliberately used Arabic to highlight the term dhulm (oppression), then continued in Indonesian to explain concrete examples of economic inequality. Students were then invited to discuss whether corruption in Indonesia could be understood as a form of dhulm from an Islamic perspective. The lively discussion revealed how code-switching opened space for participation, as students were not merely memorizing concepts but were invited to connect critical theory with an ethical-religious framework. At this point, code-switching functioned as a strategy of religiously grounded critical pedagogy that not only facilitated cognitive understanding but also nurtured moral and social sensitivity.

Critical Language Pedagogy theory explains that language in education cannot be regarded as neutral, as it always carries certain ideologies, values, and power. Thus, code-switching in the pesantren can be understood as an ideological strategy that positions Arabic as a symbol of religious authority, while Indonesian as the national language emphasizes the connection to a broader social context. This movement across languages enables the creation of new epistemic spaces where students learn to critique social realities based on Islamic values (Kaiser, 2022; Nassif & Al Masaeed, 2022). In this framework, code-switching is not merely a linguistic practice but a pedagogical act that cultivates both critical and religious consciousness.

Interestingly, in interviews, a student, A., admitted that the use of Arabic in lessons made him feel closer to the sources of Islamic teachings, even when the context involved Western social theory. He felt that the teacher was affirming that studying sociology did not

conflict with faith but rather complemented it. This demonstrates that code-switching also has an affective effect, constructing students' identity as Muslims who think critically without feeling uprooted from their religious foundation. This aligns with Canagarajah (2021) and Hymes' (2020) concept of identity positioning theory, which posits that language practices position individuals within particular identity frames. Through code-switching, students are positioned as Muslims as well as global citizens, capable of interpreting reality through dual lenses: the social-critical and the religious.

The observed classrooms reflected this dynamic vibrancy. The modest room with long wooden desks, walls filled with Qur'anic and hadith quotations, and a blackboard crowded with sociological terms provided the backdrop that reinforced the hybrid learning experience. Students often responded with a mixture of Indonesian and Arabic phrases, suggesting that code-switching itself permeated their modes of discussion. This serves as evidence that the teachers' strategy did not stop at the level of teaching but shaped students' linguistic practices, thereby reinforcing the process of constructing critical-religious identities.

Repositioning Code-Switching Studies: From Pragmatic to Ideological-Pedagogical

Studies of code-switching have often been situated within a pragmatic framework, where researchers emphasize its communicative functions: clarifying meaning, marking topics, or signaling shifts in interactional domains. Lanza (2021) and Wigdorowitz et al. (2022) underline that code-switching is an interactional strategy that enables speakers to adapt to social contexts and interlocutors. Similarly, Kerfoot & Kuteeva (2024) and Solé (2022) highlight the pragmatic dimensions of code-switching as a linguistic practice responsive to communicative situations. However, field findings in modern pesantren reveal something more complex: code-switching no longer functions merely to negotiate meaning but also carries significant ideological and pedagogical weight.

In one sociology class observation, the teacher explained social stratification in Indonesian. Yet, when addressing the moral dimension of injustice, he switched to Arabic, quoting the verse inna Allāha ya'muru bil-'adli wal-ihsān as an ethical foundation. The language shift was not merely to reinforce meaning but to introduce a source of religious authority into the social discussion. Through this code-switching, students were guided not only to understand stratification as a social category but also to reinterpret inequality through an Islamic moral framework. Code-switching became an instrument that united scientific knowledge with religious values, a practice that, within translanguaging pedagogy, is understood as a way of creating new epistemic spaces where diverse knowledge systems converge in a single learning landscape (Ding & Chee, 2023; Pupynina & Aralova, 2021).

One informant, M., explained that he found it easier to grasp abstract concepts when the teacher added Qur'anic verses or hadiths, because these provided clearer meaning and felt closer to his life as a Muslim. This shows that code-switching is not merely about communication but about how language shapes students' horizons of understanding. This marks a fundamental difference from pragmatic frameworks that emphasize technical functions, whereas in classroom practice code-switching contains ideological transformative power.

Further classroom observations reinforced this impression. A class adorned with posters of hadiths, a blackboard noting Western social theories on one side, and Qur'anic translations on the other, visually represented a translanguaging practice that unified two systems of knowledge. Students sat in groups, some with slim religious texts on their laps, occasionally opening them when the teacher mentioned Arabic terms. During discussions, small interjections such as "so, that's like 'adl, right?" were heard, indicating how Arabic functioned as a conceptual framework rather than a mere ornament. This atmosphere clearly demonstrated that code-switching not only facilitated communication but also bridged two epistemic domains: modern social science and religious texts.

This conceptualization demands a repositioning in code-switching studies. The present research shows that in the context of Islamic education, code-switching is no longer merely a pragmatic communicative strategy but an ideological and pedagogical instrument. It shapes students' identities as Muslims and as critical citizens capable of interpreting social realities through a religious lens. This aligns with identity positioning theory, which stresses that language practices always position individuals within certain identity frames (Lexander & Androutsopoulos, 2021; Rodriguez-Ordoñez et al., 2022). By introducing Arabic into academic discourse, students are positioned within a religious-transnational identity as part of the ummah, while remaining grounded in the local context through Indonesian and, occasionally, Minangkabau.

The distinction from earlier studies is clear. While previous research understood code-switching as a strategy to overcome lexical limitations or to mark shifts in interactional domains, this study offers a new perspective: code-switching as religiously grounded critical pedagogy. In other words, code-switching is not merely a tool for delivering knowledge but also a medium for cultivating critical consciousness grounded in religious values. For example, when a teacher explained Marx's theory of class domination, he linked the concept with the Arabic term dhulm. Students were then invited into dialogue about whether corruption in Indonesia could be categorized as dhulm. This linguistic shift fostered a critical dialogue that positioned students as active subjects in interpreting social realities.

The implications of this repositioning extend across disciplines. In sociolinguistics, this study enriches the understanding that code-switching is not merely a pragmatic phenomenon but an ideologically charged practice. In education, code-switching presents a model of integrative pedagogy, where the national curriculum does not stand apart from religious frameworks but is unified through language as an epistemic bridge. In socio-political studies, the findings demonstrate how religion and language jointly shape young citizens' consciousness. Students accustomed to hearing critical explanations within religious frames not only internalize moral values but also develop social sensitivity that can influence their civic participation.

Another informant, R., stated that learning through code-switching made him feel more confident as a Muslim amid globalization. He felt that the modern knowledge he studied did not conflict with religion, as teachers consistently showed points of convergence between the two. This reveals that code-switching functions as an ideological instrument that

simultaneously constructs religious identity and critical literacy. Religious identity is reinforced through Arabic, which invokes the authority of sacred texts, while critical literacy is nurtured through discussions that connect social theory with the Islamic value of justice.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that code-switching practices in pesantren classrooms, particularly at Darul Ulum Pesantren in West Sumatra, function far beyond communicative strategies; they serve as pedagogical and ideological instruments enabling the integration of Islamic values with academic material. Through the alternation of Indonesian, Arabic, and Minangkabau, teachers not only clarify concepts but also build bridges between the national curriculum and students' religious identity, thereby cultivating their critical literacy within a religious framework. Thus, code-switching in this context introduces a new dimension to sociolinguistic and critical pedagogy studies, namely, that language can serve as a space of negotiation between modern knowledge, local values, and spiritual belief. The novelty of this study lies in its recognition that code-switching is not merely pragmatic but represents a form of critical pedagogy grounded in religiosity, offering a fresh perspective for the development of language education, sociolinguistics, and literacy studies in faith-based classrooms.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

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