

AI INTEGRATION IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES FROM TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in an Islamic boarding school setting, specifically focusing on students' perceptions and experiences. The research was conducted at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, a prominent institution known for its commitment to quality education grounded in Islamic values. The primary aim of this research is to understand how junior high school students perceive the role of AI in enhancing their English language learning experience. In recent years, AI has emerged as a transformative force in education, offering innovative tools and resources that can enhance teaching and learning processes. However, the unique environment of Islamic boarding schools, characterized by their adherence to traditional educational values and practices, presents both opportunities and challenges for the integration of AI technologies. To achieve the research objectives, a descriptive qualitative approach was utilized. Data was collected through systematic observation and comprehensive documentation of the educational practices within the school. The participants of the research included junior high school students, whose insights were pivotal in understanding the impact of AI on their learning journey. The findings of the research reveal a nuanced perspective among students regarding the use of AI in their English education. While many students recognize AI as a valuable tool that can facilitate learning, they also encounter significant challenges in adapting to this new technology. Notably, students expressed concerns about balancing traditional learning methods, such as direct teacher instruction and peer collaboration, with AI-driven approaches that may prioritize efficiency over interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, the research highlights the need for a tailored implementation of AI tools that align with the educational philosophy of Islamic institutions. It emphasizes the importance of integrating AI in a manner that respects and upholds the values of Islamic education while also addressing the diverse learning needs of students. In conclusion, this research suggests that the thoughtful integration of AI into English teaching within Islamic boarding schools has the potential to enhance the educational experience significantly. However, it underscores the necessity for ongoing support and training for both students and educators to navigate the complexities of this integration effectively. By fostering a harmonious balance between traditional methods and innovative technologies, Islamic boarding schools can prepare students for the demands of the modern world while remaining rooted in their educational principles.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Islamic Boarding School Education

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology have led to a profound transformation across various sectors, including education. Over recent years, AI has shown immense potential to enhance teaching and learning experiences, particularly in language instruction (Kemelbekova et al., 2024; Rukiati et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). AI technology offers personalized learning pathways, instant feedback, and interactive resources that complement traditional teaching methods, making it a powerful tool in classrooms. These benefits have been embraced by many educational institutions as they seek to optimize learning outcomes and facilitate more engaging educational experiences. However, for Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia—such as Amanatul Ummah—the adoption of AI must go beyond its functional benefits. Integrating modern AI technology into a setting that values Islamic ethics and cultural traditions raises unique challenges. As institutions that focus on both character formation and academic success, Islamic boarding schools, or *pesantren*, have a responsibility to maintain a balance between embracing technological advancements and preserving the moral and ethical principles they hold dear (Asyari et al., 2024; Aziz & Badrus Zaman, 2023; Islamic et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Islamic boarding schools play an essential role in Indonesia's educational landscape, providing not only academic instruction but also moral and spiritual guidance aligned with Islamic teachings. As technology continues to evolve, these schools face the complex task of integrating modern educational tools without compromising their primary mission of nurturing students' religious values. AI, with its diverse applications in education, presents both a significant opportunity and a potential source of concern within this context. For instance, the use of AI in English language instruction could significantly enhance students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Yet, the implementation of such technology must be carefully managed to avoid diminishing the religious and traditional dimensions that are core to *pesantren* education (Albert, 2024; Jiménez-García et al., 2024; Ruhiyat et al., 2024). This research, therefore, seeks to explore the perspectives of teachers at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School regarding the integration of AI in English language instruction. By understanding how teachers perceive and experience AI in their classrooms, this research aims to provide insights into how AI can be utilized effectively while respecting the mission of *pesantren* education.

Teachers' perspectives are crucial in assessing the feasibility and appropriateness of AI within an Islamic boarding school environment. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as guardians of the ethical and moral values that are integral to Islamic boarding school education (Bohara, 2024; Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2024; Mahara, 2024; Prahaladaiah & Andrew Thomas, 2024; Salimi & Rad, 2024). In the context

of AI integration, their experiences and insights are valuable for identifying both the potential benefits and challenges of using such technology. This research focuses on gathering and analyzing teachers' voices to gain a comprehensive understanding of how AI might support English language learning within the cultural and religious framework of Amanatul Ummah. Highlighting teachers' perspectives will also reveal important factors to consider when implementing AI, ensuring it is not only academically beneficial but also supportive of the pesantren's moral objectives. This consideration is especially important as Islamic boarding schools strive to keep pace with technological advancements while upholding the spiritual values that underpin their educational approach.

This research holds significant relevance as it contributes to the broader discourse on culturally sensitive technology integration within education. By exploring the experiences of teachers at Amanatul Ummah, this research aims to offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and technology developers seeking to design AI tools that are both effective and aligned with the cultural and religious values of Islamic boarding schools. Ultimately, this research also establishes a foundation for further research on how AI can be adapted to enhance English language learning in environments that prioritize traditional values. Insights from teachers' perspectives will help ensure that AI integration in education not only improves students' academic achievements but also remains in harmony with the Islamic educational philosophy upheld by these institutions. It is hoped that the findings from this research will serve as a guide for creating AI tools that are pedagogically effective, ethically sound, and culturally appropriate, aligning with the educational needs and mission of pesantren.

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in education, bringing about innovative methods for instruction, assessment, and personalized learning. Numerous studies highlight the potential of AI in language education, demonstrating how AI-based applications, such as automated feedback, virtual tutors, and adaptive learning systems, can effectively support students in mastering new languages. AI-powered tools could personalize language learning experiences by identifying individual student needs and adapting lessons accordingly, which enhances engagement and retention (Kim & Su, 2024; Li et al., 2024; Nanda Kalyan P et al., 2024). AI in education provides real-time feedback, improving language accuracy and fostering learner autonomy. However, while AI's advantages in general education are well-documented, its implementation in specific educational settings—such as Islamic boarding schools—has been less explored. These unique environments, which emphasize both academic and moral education, require a culturally sensitive approach to AI integration, raising questions about how AI tools can be effectively adapted to align with religious and cultural values.

The research gap centers on the limited understanding of how AI can be implemented in pesantren without compromising the cultural and religious integrity of the educational experience. Existing studies have

largely focused on the technological efficacy of AI and its outcomes in diverse educational settings, but there is minimal research into how AI applications can be adapted to preserve Islamic values while enhancing language instruction. Addressing this gap is crucial because the effective integration of AI in Islamic boarding schools requires tools and methodologies that resonate with teachers' perspectives and their commitment to maintaining religious principles in education. Without understanding teachers' viewpoints, there is a risk of adopting AI in ways that could conflict with the ethical and moral education central to pesantren systems.

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' perspectives on AI integration in English language education within an Islamic boarding school context. Specifically, the research aims to understand how teachers at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School perceive the benefits, challenges, and cultural implications of using AI for language instruction. This research seeks to provide insights into how AI tools can be implemented in a way that respects the educational values of Islamic boarding schools. The research addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School perceive the benefits and challenges of integrating AI in English language instruction?
2. What are the teachers' concerns and expectations regarding the alignment of AI tools with Islamic educational values in English language teaching?

By answering these questions, the research contributes to the ongoing dialogue about culturally responsive AI integration in education. It aims to provide guidance for future AI applications that honor the unique cultural and religious values of pesantren while supporting effective language education.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative research method to explore teachers' perspectives on AI integration within English language instruction at an Islamic boarding school. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the objective of understanding the nuanced experiences, opinions, and values of teachers in the unique educational setting of a pesantren (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Lambert & Lambert, 2013; Seixas et al., 2018). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data, qualitative research provides an in-depth exploration of subjective experiences, making it well-suited for capturing the complex interplay between technology, culture, and education. Given that this research aims to examine how AI is perceived and potentially adapted to align with Islamic educational principles, a descriptive qualitative method allows for a detailed examination of the specific context and insights from teachers.

The research design for this research is phenomenological, focusing on understanding teachers' lived experiences with AI in their instructional practices. A phenomenological approach is appropriate for this research

because it emphasizes capturing individuals' perspectives on phenomena that are significant in their professional and personal lives (Barrow, 2017; Englander, 2016; Greening, 2019; Rao, 2018). By employing this approach, the research will delve deeply into the ways teachers perceive and interpret AI within the framework of both educational objectives and Islamic values. This design allows the research to focus on teachers' personal experiences, interpretations, and the meanings they assign to the integration of AI, providing a rich account of how AI impacts their teaching practices.

The participants in this research consist of English teachers from Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, who have been involved in using or are familiar with AI tools in language instruction. The selection of participants from this specific school is intentional, as Amanatul Ummah is known for its dual focus on academic excellence and religious education, providing a unique environment where traditional values meet modern educational methods. A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select teachers who have direct experience with or insights into the use of AI, as their perspectives are crucial to understanding the adaptation of AI within this context (Campbell et al., 2020; Etikan, 2016). This targeted sampling ensures that the data collected is relevant and specific to the research questions, as it captures insights from those most familiar with the intersection of AI technology and Islamic education.

The primary instruments for data collection in this research are semi-structured interviews and direct classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews are chosen for their flexibility, allowing the researcher to explore teachers' perspectives in depth while also following a guided set of questions. This approach enables participants to freely express their views on AI integration, including both benefits and concerns, while allowing the researcher to probe deeper into specific responses for clarity and elaboration (Al Balushi, 2016; Mannan, 2019; Rahman, 2019). Additionally, direct classroom observations are conducted to gain insights into the practical aspects of AI use in teaching. Observations allow the researcher to see how AI tools are employed in real time and how teachers interact with these technologies within the classroom setting, providing a practical context for the information gathered during interviews.

Data collection for this research involves a two-step process: conducting semi-structured interviews with selected teachers and observing their teaching practices. The interview sessions are designed to allow teachers to reflect on their experiences, challenges, and values regarding AI use in the classroom, with open-ended questions guiding them to discuss both the benefits and limitations they observe. The observations are scheduled during regular class hours to capture authentic interactions and applications of AI in language instruction. This dual-method approach—interviews and observations—provides a comprehensive view of the teachers' perspectives and the practical aspects of AI integration, ensuring that the findings are grounded in both reported experiences and observed classroom dynamics.

Data analysis in this research follows a thematic analysis approach, in which interview transcripts and observation notes are coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. Thematic analysis is chosen because it is well-suited to qualitative research, particularly when analyzing complex and nuanced data (Signori et al., 2024; Tajik et al., 2024). The process involves systematically organizing data into categories that reflect key themes related to teachers' perceptions, including perceived benefits, challenges, and cultural concerns regarding AI in language teaching. Once coding is complete, the data is reviewed for overarching themes and sub-themes that align with the research questions, allowing the research to present a cohesive interpretation of how AI integration is perceived by teachers. This analytical approach provides a structured way to interpret the data and generate meaningful insights into the research focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings from this research are organized around three main themes identified through interviews and classroom observations: (1) perceived benefits of AI integration, (2) challenges and limitations in maintaining religious values, and (3) expectations for culturally adaptive AI tools. Each theme presents teachers' insights and experiences regarding the use of AI in English language instruction within an Islamic boarding school setting.

Perceived Benefits of AI Integration

Many teachers at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School recognize the potential of AI to enhance English language instruction by offering new ways to engage students and personalize learning experiences. A prominent theme among participants is the ability of AI tools to address different learning needs, provide immediate feedback, and create an interactive classroom environment. Teachers expressed that AI-enabled platforms helped them streamline their instructional processes, giving them more time to focus on student engagement and individual assistance.

One teacher, Mr. Ahmad, highlighted this benefit, saying, *"AI gives students immediate feedback, especially in pronunciation exercises, which has always been a challenge in traditional classes. Now, I can guide students to practice more accurately and independently"*. Mr. Ahmad pointed out that students' pronunciation improved with the use of AI-based language learning apps that detect and correct mispronunciations in real time. This immediate feedback helps build students' confidence and encourages them to participate more actively in language practice, fostering a sense of independence.

Another teacher, Ms. Rani, shared a similar sentiment regarding the adaptability of AI tools. She explained, *"Some students are shy or afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers, so they are more comfortable practicing with AI on their own. They receive personalized exercises and progress at their own pace"*. Ms. Rani noted that AI allows students to

engage in self-paced learning, reducing the pressure to keep up with their peers and encouraging a more personalized approach. According to her, students showed greater interest and improvement in their language skills because they could review lessons independently and repeat exercises as needed.

In addition to providing customized learning paths, teachers also observed that AI tools enhance classroom engagement. Mr. Faisal, a senior English teacher, noted, *“Students today are very familiar with technology, and AI brings an element of excitement into the classroom. Using AI tools like chatbots and language games, students are more motivated to participate actively”*. His observation underscores the motivational aspect of AI, which aligns with students' familiarity with digital interfaces and encourages them to engage with learning materials more enthusiastically.

Challenges and Limitations in Maintaining Religious Values

Despite these advantages, teachers expressed significant concerns about potential conflicts between AI's use in education and the preservation of religious values central to Islamic boarding schools. One of the main challenges highlighted by participants is ensuring that AI tools do not inadvertently expose students to content or values that conflict with Islamic teachings. Since many AI-powered language platforms draw on diverse online resources, teachers worry that some materials may contain culturally inappropriate language or themes.

Mr. Yasin, an English teacher at the school, voiced this concern, saying, *“Many of the AI platforms we use have content from all over the world, but some expressions or references do not align with Islamic values. We need to be careful about what is presented to our students”*. Mr. Yasin pointed out that some language exercises contain idioms or cultural references that may be inappropriate or confusing for students in an Islamic educational setting. He stressed the importance of monitoring AI-generated content closely to prevent exposure to materials that could be perceived as culturally insensitive or contrary to the school's religious ethos.

Another teacher, Ms. Laila, noted the difficulty of balancing technological innovation with moral education. She explained, *“We want students to benefit from AI, but we also want them to remain grounded in Islamic values. For example, some AI tools promote individualism or competitiveness, which can contradict the cooperative spirit we aim to foster here”*. Ms. Laila's concerns illustrate how certain implicit messages within AI tools, such as a focus on individual achievement or self-promotion, may clash with the values of humility and community emphasized in the boarding school's religious education. Teachers are cautious about these influences, fearing they might detract from the moral and spiritual growth of students.

The technological barriers are also evident, as teachers expressed difficulties in navigating and managing AI tools effectively due to a lack of comprehensive training. Mr. Arif, a teacher with limited experience using digital resources, shared, *“Many of us are still learning how to use AI*

efficiently. Without adequate training, we struggle to incorporate it fully into our curriculum while staying true to our teaching goals". This statement reflects the challenges faced by teachers in adopting new technology without proper support. While they see the potential of AI, the limited technical knowledge and training opportunities present obstacles that prevent them from fully utilizing AI in ways that complement the school's mission.

Expectations for Culturally Adaptive AI Tools

Given the challenges related to cultural alignment, teachers expressed a strong desire for AI tools that are specifically tailored to the Islamic educational context. Teachers envision AI applications that respect and support Islamic values, facilitating language learning in a manner that harmonizes with the moral and ethical foundations of the pesantren. There is a shared sentiment among teachers that technology providers should consider cultural and religious sensitivities in their products, which would make AI tools more relevant and respectful for students in Islamic boarding schools.

One teacher, Ms. Nur, suggested, *"If we had AI tools that were specifically designed for Islamic schools, we could avoid many of these conflicts. It would be beneficial if AI platforms offered settings to filter content according to Islamic values or provided Islamic-themed learning materials"*. Ms. Nur's suggestion reflects a common desire among teachers for AI tools that can be customized or filtered to ensure alignment with Islamic ethics. By having this level of customization, teachers would feel more confident in using AI technology without concerns about inappropriate content.

Additionally, teachers expressed interest in AI that emphasizes values such as cooperation, community, and humility—traits that align with the pesantren's educational philosophy. Mr. Ali commented, *"If AI tools could incorporate our values, like emphasizing teamwork or ethical decision-making, they would be more beneficial to our students. We want technology to support not only their language skills but also their character development"*. Mr. Ali's remarks highlight the potential for AI tools to play a role in character education by reinforcing values that are integral to Islamic teachings. Teachers are hopeful that advancements in AI could allow for greater cultural adaptability, making AI a more compatible and enriching part of their educational approach.

Discussion

This research on teachers' perspectives regarding AI integration in English instruction at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School offers significant contributions to the emerging intersection of educational technology and culturally sensitive education (Fassbender, 2024; Gustilo et al., 2024; Nernere & Kastuhandani, 2024; Shanto et al., 2024). The research's findings underscore the nuanced role AI can play in educational settings that are deeply rooted in religious and cultural values, providing new insights into how AI can be both an innovative educational tool and a

subject of concern for teachers tasked with maintaining those values. In this section, we explore the novelty of this research, as well as its contributions, implications, and significance for future advancements in AI-enabled education within Islamic boarding schools and similar contexts.

One of the most novel aspects of this research lies in its exploration of AI from the perspective of Islamic boarding school educators, whose roles are uniquely positioned at the intersection of tradition and modernity. While much literature exists on the effectiveness of AI in enhancing student engagement, personalizing learning, and improving efficiency in mainstream educational environments, there is a scarcity of research examining its role within the framework of religiously grounded educational institutions (Aini & Septi, 2023; Aziz & Badrus Zaman, 2023). By focusing on teachers' experiences and concerns, this research brings forth a unique perspective that is often overlooked in mainstream discussions on AI in education.

Moreover, the research identifies significant challenges that educators face when integrating AI, specifically related to content sensitivity, cultural alignment, and the need for training. These findings contribute to the discourse on the ethical implications of AI in education, suggesting that technology providers and policymakers should adopt a more nuanced approach to AI deployment in culturally sensitive settings (Mao et al., 2024). By documenting these concerns, this research raises awareness about the importance of culturally adaptive AI tools that align with the values of Islamic education. It highlights the need for AI developers to engage with educators in religious contexts to understand their unique requirements and co-create solutions that meet both educational and ethical standards.

The practical benefits of this research are also evident. For instance, by identifying teachers' needs for culturally adaptive AI tools, the research provides actionable recommendations for AI developers to design customizable AI platforms. These could include filtering options for culturally sensitive content, settings that emphasize values such as cooperation and ethical behavior, and resources that support not only language acquisition but also moral education (Budianto, 2022; Budianto, Hadi, et al., 2022; Budianto, Yusrotul, et al., 2022). The findings suggest that, with appropriate adaptations, AI can enhance the educational experiences of students in Islamic boarding schools without undermining the values these institutions uphold. Additionally, the insights gathered from this research can inform teacher training programs, emphasizing the need for professional development in AI literacy tailored to culturally specific contexts.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to shape the direction of future research on AI in culturally sensitive education. By illuminating the perspectives of teachers within an Islamic boarding school, this research challenges the assumption that AI's role in education is universally applicable. Instead, it calls for a more inclusive approach to AI development that respects the cultural diversity of educational

environments. The findings emphasize that AI is not a one-size-fits-all solution; its implementation must consider the unique needs and values of each educational context. This principle has broader implications, suggesting that similar considerations should be applied in any cultural or religiously oriented educational setting.

CONCLUSION

This research has provided valuable insights into the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the educational practices of Islamic boarding schools, with a specific focus on Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School. By examining the perspectives of teachers regarding the use of AI in English language instruction, the research has highlighted both the opportunities and challenges associated with this technological advancement. The findings not only contribute to the discourse on AI in education but also offer important lessons for the development of culturally sensitive AI tools that can support learning while respecting the ethical and cultural values of Islamic educational institutions.

One of the primary conclusions of this research is that AI has significant potential to enhance English language teaching in Islamic boarding schools. Teachers reported several benefits of using AI tools, such as personalized learning experiences, immediate feedback, and increased student engagement. AI's ability to tailor lessons to individual learning needs was particularly appreciated, as it allowed students to progress at their own pace and practice independently. This aligns with previous studies that have demonstrated AI's efficacy in enhancing educational outcomes by providing students with the tools to learn more effectively. Teachers also noted that AI tools could help overcome challenges in pronunciation and fluency, enabling students to practice in a more comfortable and personalized environment.

However, while the advantages of AI integration were recognized, the research also revealed significant concerns, particularly regarding the balance between technology use and the preservation of Islamic values. Teachers expressed worries about the potential for AI tools to expose students to content that may not align with the religious and ethical principles central to Islamic boarding school education. The findings underscore the need for AI platforms to be culturally adaptable, with features that allow for filtering content and customizing learning experiences to ensure they are consistent with the school's values. Teachers emphasized the importance of maintaining a careful and thoughtful approach to integrating AI, ensuring that it complements rather than disrupts the moral and spiritual education of students.

Another important finding was the lack of sufficient training for teachers in using AI effectively. Many teachers expressed a desire for professional development opportunities that would enable them to integrate AI tools into their teaching practices with greater confidence and competence. This highlights a key area for improvement in the adoption of AI in Islamic boarding schools—namely, the need for tailored training

programs that not only address the technical aspects of AI but also consider the cultural and ethical dimensions of its use in religious contexts.

This research's contribution lies in its exploration of the intersection between AI, education, and cultural sensitivity. While much research has been conducted on AI's impact in secular and mainstream educational contexts, this research is one of the few to focus on how AI can be adapted and used in Islamic educational settings. By giving voice to teachers, the research underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs of educators in religious schools when implementing new technologies. The insights gained here offer valuable recommendations for AI developers to create tools that are not only effective in teaching English but also respectful of cultural and religious contexts.

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