

Santri in Global Society: Does English Language Proficiency Matter?

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Abstract:

This paper aims to describe the importance of English language proficiency among *Santri* in the globalization era. The study employs qualitative research and uses a library research approach. There are two research questions in this study: 1) What is English as a Global Language?, and 2) To what extent is English language proficiency among Santri crucial for enhancing their capacity to engage with global society in terms of global issues, employment and education opportunities?. The objectives of this study are to: 1) explore and describe English as a Global Language and 2) describe how English language proficiency among Santri is crucial for enhancing their capacity to engage with global society in terms of global issues, employment and education opportunities. The results of this study are as follows: English has become the most spoken language in the world and considered important. There are some sectors that cannot be separated from English: science and technology, education, employment, business, the internet, travel and tourism, and press media and entertainment. Moreover, English language proficiency among students will bring benefits in the terms of global issues, employment and education opportunities.

Keywords: English, Global Language, English Language Proficiency

Introduction

The spread and use of English as a worldwide communication tool develop in fast track. As one of the international languages, English becomes more 'powerful' since its development also comes into other dimensions of human life such as language of education or instructions. Furthermore, the important role of English covers the language of business, science, technology, and diplomacy [1]¹. It seems that there's no setting of life without the use of English. In this globalization era, being able to have English proficiency is a demand for everyone in order to participate interactively in wider circumstances including islamic scholars or students who are known as 'Santri'. The term 'santri' may be familiar and referred to islamic pupils that may tend to focus on learning Arabic and islamic knowledge. However, several modern islamic boarding schools also facilitate students by using a bilingual learning system in which English becomes another priority. Therefore, the role of English to lead 'Santri' into overseas networks can not be denied.

English plays a significant role in achieving success, especially in the global world. As Iqlima argues that having English proficiency will be a determining factor in academic and professional success. It means that being fluent in English or another foreign language is crucial for everyone, not only the current millennium generation but also for the modern era of globalization. The majority of people believe that mastering English is crucial in this era of globalization [2]². It indicates that someone with English mastery is a super special individual, moreover, he or she who is able to speak more than one international language fluently will be prioritized and given privileges such as getting a job, position, business deals,

¹ Raja. A. The Importance of English in the Globalised World. International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology. Vol. 9, Issue 11 April 2023

² Iqlima. 2022. The Importance of English in the Globalization Era.

and other sectors. Regarding the huge benefits of English proficiency, it is even inserted and integrated into the curriculum of education in the schools including Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic boarding school or known as *Pesantren* in Indonesia is also aware of the importance of English in upgrading their outcomes. It facilitates both formal and informal learning systems of English. The formal education of English in Islamic Boarding school is delivered from elementary school, high schools and even in the higher education level. While the informal learning atmosphere that Santri conveys in learning English is delivered in the form of an English Club or Program. It also can be acquired through 'halaqah' a forum in which students are gathered and discuss a topic in English. It is in line with Suardi, Emzir & Rafli (2017) who found that English acquisition and learning can be conveyed by creating language environments such as the implementation of English flag ceremonies, sports competitions and the arts that use English in extracurricular activities [3³].

Research Method

This study employs descriptive qualitative research as the purpose of this study was to describe and understand issues related to *Santri* and English language proficiency[4]⁴. The design was chosen because it offered a deeper comprehension and investigation of current real-world issues[5]⁵ "Real-world" means that the data was obtained directly from the target area of the research without involving any intervention or manipulation[6]⁶ In qualitative research, ideas, opinions, or experiences are investigated through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data (written, video, or audio, for example). It can be applied to provide novel research ideas or obtain in-depth understanding of the issues[7]⁷

In more specific terms, a library research approach was used in this research. It is one of the approaches under qualitative research design that focuses on exploring documents, such as: books, articles, journals, reports, whether they are in digital or printed forms. Those documents were studied to seek related information to answer the current issues which, in this case, were about the importance of English proficiency among *Santri* in relation to their capacity to engage with global issues and participate in the global society and the way English language proficiency improves *Santri's* chance of accessing worldwide employment and educational opportunities in today's globalized world.

Data was collected by reading and comparing some information from books, articles, websites to explore related information to obtain intended data. After the intended data had been successfully obtained, it was processed by using content analysis, a technique that is extensively used in the area of qualitative research. This technique focuses on examining communication that was taken from artifacts, such as: extracts from books, articles, interviews, audio and video recordings or websites[8]⁸

Results and Discussion

³ Suardi, Emzir & Rafli. 2017. Journal of Education, Teaching and Learning Volume 2 No 2 September 2017. Page Number 224-227 p-ISSN: 2477-5924 e-ISSN: 2477-4878

⁴ Jonathan Sarwono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif & Kualitatif*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2006)

⁵ Albine Moser and Irene Korstjens, "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 1: Introduction," *The European Journal of General Practice* 23, no. 1 (2017): 271–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375093>

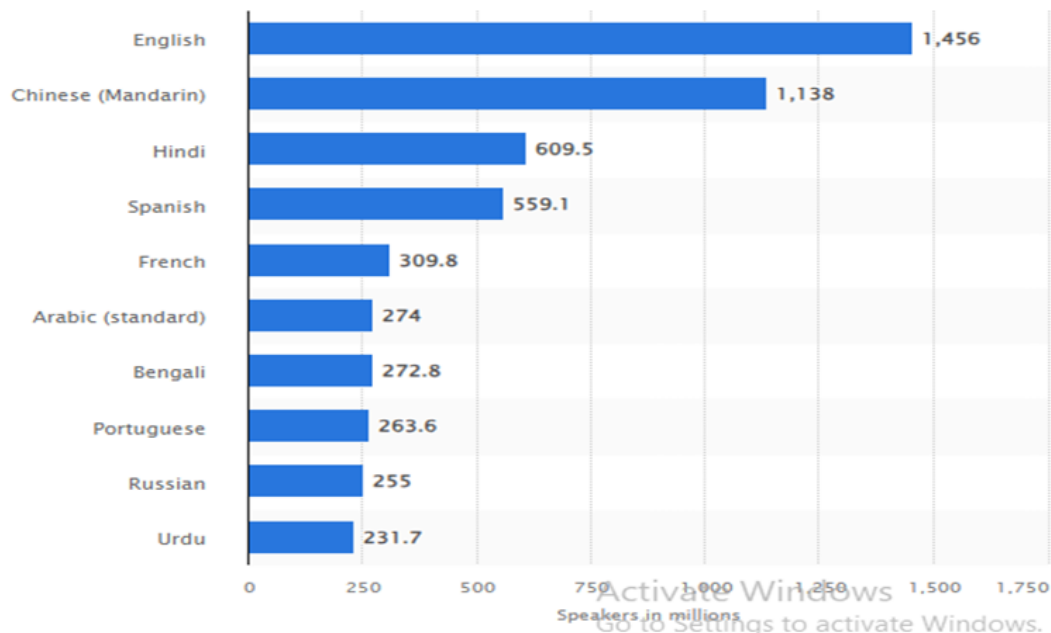
⁶ Hossein Nassaji, "Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Type versus Data Analysis," *Language Teaching Research* 19, no. 2 (March 1, 2015): 129–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815572747>.

⁷ Pritha Bhandari, "What Is Qualitative Research? | Methods & Examples," Scribbr, June 19, 2020, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>.

⁸ *Qualitative Content Analysis 101: The What, Why & How (With Examples)*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_5Isz9t8Hc.

English as a Global Language

In recent times, English has become the main language that people use to communicate across national boundaries and to facilitate international connections. Based on the statistical data below, it is clear that in 2023, English will have the biggest proportion of the most spoken languages among the other languages in the world⁹. A prediction of English as a global language was made more than 50 years ago even though it was merely a vague and uncertain projection. However, it has already proven nowadays that English has been the most powerful language in the world.



Given the significant role that English has taken on, some scholars have attempted to define the language by taking into account the different facets of English use in various contexts, such as: General English by Ahlu (1977), World Standard (Spoken) English by McArthur (1987), English as a Global Language by David Crystal (1997), English as a Lingua Franca by House (1999), Gnutzmann (2000), Seidlhofer (2001) and Jenkins (2007), English as an International Language by Windowson (1997), Modiano (1999) and Jenkins (2000) and World English by Brutt-Gliffler (2002)^[10]¹⁰

Many people consider English as an International language but, looking at the current wide role of English as a means of communication, it has a more immense role as a global language. Even though many people overlap the word “international” and “global”, however, the word has a slightly different meaning. As stated in Cambridge Dictionary, the word “international” refer to “connected with or involving two or more cities/used by people of many different countries, while the word “global” means “covering or affecting the whole word”.^[11]¹¹ From this point, it can be understood that international language is used by certain people from two or more countries. For example, Arabic and Spanish are

⁹ Einar H. Dyvik, “The Most Spoken Languages Worldwide 2023,” Statista, June 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>.

¹⁰ Parupalli Srinivas Rao, “The Role of English as A Global Language,” *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)* 4, no. 1 (2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334282978_THE_ROLE_OF_ENGLISH_AS_A_GLOBAL_LANGUAGE.

¹¹ “Global Adjective - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com,” accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/global?q=global>.

international languages. People use Arabic to communicate with the Arabs particularly when they live in an Arabic country with its culture, politics and economic condition. The same thing happened with Spanish. People use the language when they visit Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. However, when the people move to other places, they will not use the languages anymore. This is different from English. People do not use English only when they meet British or American people, but also people around the world from any nationalities.

Similar to the other languages, English also becomes the first language of certain countries, such as: USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and several Caribbean countries.[12]¹² Despite that, the status of English as a global language is not based on how many countries use it as the first language but more on the large number of people from non-English speaking countries use it to communicate with others. This led to the formation of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

In ESL context, the language can be designated as the official language of a nation and utilized as a communication tool in a variety of settings, including the media, government, legal system, and schools.[13]¹³ In an ESL classroom, The pupils are either foreigners or immigrants. The majority of the pupils in the class are not from the same country, hence they do not have a common language or culture. Students have many opportunities to use English outside of the classroom, and they have a definite, practical need for it. Students are exposed to English-speaking society on a regular basis; however, their language proficiency may limit their comprehension[14]¹⁴

Meanwhile, in EFL context, English has no official status, yet adults and children are most likely to learn and acquire the language for a variety of reasons[15]¹⁵. In an EFL classroom, students share the same language and culture. It is possible that their teacher is the only person who speaks fluent English. There are extremely few opportunities for kids to use English outside of the classroom while some of them have no clear reason why they should learn English. Pupils are largely exposed to English-speaking society through, for example, music or television[16]¹⁶

In relation to ESL and EFL, Kachru proposed a model called “The Three Circles of English” to provide a clear picture of “World Englishes” which can be seen in the following diagram. There are three layers in the diagram: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle which represent the type of spread, the acquisition pattern, and the functional domains in which English language is used across cultures and languages[17]¹⁷ The inner circle represents some countries that use English as their first and primary language. The countries are the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The nations in the Outer Circle were once under British colonial

¹² David Crystal, *English as a Global Language, Second Edition*, 2nd ed. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), https://culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/pdf/research/books/nation_branding/English_As_A_Global_Language_-_David_Crystal.pdf.

¹³ Crystal.

¹⁴ Oxford University Press ELT, “How ESL and EFL Classrooms Differ,” *Teaching English with Oxford*, July 12, 2011, <https://teachingenglishwithoxford.oup.com/2011/07/12/how-esl-and-efl-classrooms-differ/>

¹⁵ Zuliati Rohmah, “ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE: ITS HISTORICAL PAST AND ITS FUTURE,” 2005.

¹⁶ ELT, “How ESL and EFL Classrooms Differ.”

¹⁷ B. Kachru, “Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: English Language in the Outer Circle,” in *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

rule, and many people in these nations speak English in social settings and in government. The majority of the nations in this circle were formerly British colonies, such as: India, Singapore and Malaysia. Lastly, the Expanding Circle covers, for example, Indonesia, Japan and China. Those countries use the language to communicate with the countries from the Inner and Outer Circles[18]¹⁸

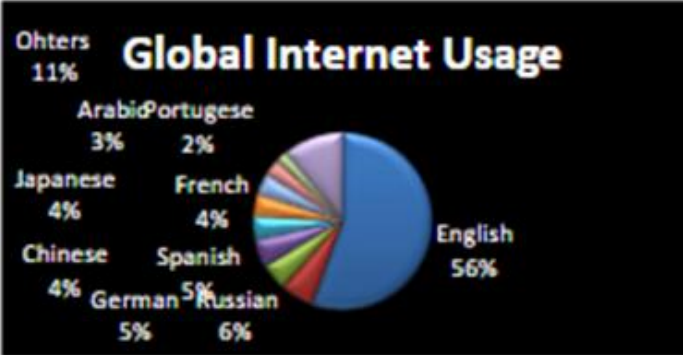
Regarding the importance of English in today's circumstances, Rao states that there are many categories in human life that cannot be separated from English: science and technology, education, employment, business, the internet, travel and tourism, press media, entertainment. The following table presents the detail use of English on each point.[19]¹⁹

No.	Categories	Description
1.	Science and Technology	English is used extensively in the area of science and technology. The international scientific community has seen a significant transformation since the mid-1900s. In some non-English speaking nations, like France, Spain, and Germany, English is now the most widely spoken language with its ratio 40:1.[20] ²⁰ Scientists and researchers who want to produce internationally renowned work must submit by using English because they need to exchange and advance their knowledge with scientists worldwide through participation in numerous international conferences, seminars, and workshops. Moreover, they also need to read English-language papers, and participate in English-language discussions.
2.	Education	English is the primary language used in all fields of education and the only language used for information stored in books and journals in both printed and electronic form, thus, it is widely used by students, teachers, and researchers worldwide. Furthermore, many leading universities open wide opportunities for Indonesian people to study abroad by providing them with a variety of scholarships. However, again, one of the requirements is they have to pass a certain level of English test.
3.	Employment	One of the advantages in mastering English is the opportunity to get a job. Nowadays, almost all job providers require job seekers to be able to use English as communication. Many of the job seekers fail at the interview section because the interviewee asks them in English even though they have an excellent academic report in their field.

¹⁸ Mohammad A. Al-Mutairi, "Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model of English Language: An Overview of Criticism & the Place of Kuwait in It," *English Language Teaching* 13, no. 1 (December 13, 2019): 85, <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n1p85>.

¹⁹ Rao, "The Role of English as A Global Language."

²⁰ Rao

4.	Business	Today, English serves as the bridge for multinational companies to connect with other ones. As a result, emails, phones, and meetings are conducted by using English.																						
5.	The Internet	<p>In this era of globalization, the widespread use of English as a global language and the development of the internet as a quick, borderless communication route are both driving new trends and profound changes. People connect with each other mostly by using English. The following chart prevails that more than half internet users use English[21]²¹</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Global Internet Usage</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Language</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>English</td> <td>56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Russian</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spanish</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>German</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Japanese</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>French</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arabic</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Portuguese</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Language	Percentage	English	56%	Others	11%	Russian	6%	Spanish	6%	German	5%	Chinese	4%	Japanese	4%	French	4%	Arabic	3%	Portuguese	2%
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6.	Travel and Tourism	Travel and tourism cover national and international activities that need a bridge to communicate with the locals. For example: a tour guide in Indonesia must be able to communicate in English every time they guide foreign travelers. On the other hand, Indonesian tourists must be able to use English when they want to visit some countries abroad.																						
7.	Press Media and Entertainment	English is used by the world's leading newspapers (such as: The New York Times, Los Angeles Times), magazines (such as: Forbes, National Geographic). Besides, many popular television, music and movies industries were produced by Hollywood, situated in the USA. They also use English to convey the message.																						

English Language Proficiency among Santri in Global Society

Globalization cannot be avoided by any *Santri* in Indonesia; it does not matter how sooner or later they will be a part of global society. Thus, they need to prepare themselves in facing any opportunities and challenges that are possibly brought by the era. *Santri* along with *Pesantren*, a place where they study, are necessary to be able to participate actively in competitions worldwide and possibly even win[22]²²

²¹ Rao

²² Sofira Sofira, Abdullah Idi, and Yuliha Tri Samiha, "Pesantren and Globalization," *As-Shuffah: Jurnal of Islamic Studies*, accessed February 9, 2024, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUK-EwjHj7GK-pyEAXVS1zgGHTrMDb4QFn0ECA4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjurnal.radenfatah.ac.id%2Findex.php%2FAs->

Globalization indeed has advantages for human life. As mentioned by Ermawan, there are at least three positive sides of globalization: changes in values and attitudes have led to a society that was previously irrational becoming logical, the advancement of science and technology has made activities more convenient for the community, and more sophisticated thinking and a higher standard of living[23]²³. However, globalization also brings negative ones that can potentially be threats to existing values in human life. Alongside digital technology, cybercrime, cyber bullying, pornography, foreign fashion and cultures and propaganda of *Divide et Impera* are issues that are considered the impact of globalization[24]²⁴. Moreover, issues on Islam and terrorism as the impact of 9/11 incidents still goes on today.

It is *Santri* that carries the responsibility to answer those challenges. As an agent who carries the message of *Islam Rahmatan lilalamin*, *Santri* must be able to spread the true message of Islam to the entire world that Islam is a religion of peace. Thus, it is indisputable that *Santri* nowadays is required to be proficient in English in order to improve their ability to interact with the outside world. English is the universal language of worldwide trade, communication, and culture in today's linked world. Being able to communicate in English allows *Santri* to interact with people from different cultures, access a multitude of information, and take part in international projects, all of which help them become engaged global citizens and agents of positive change.

One key aspect of English language proficiency is its role in facilitating access to information and resources available in the global society. In an era dominated by digital communication platforms, proficiency in English enables *Santri* to navigate online content, engage with international news, and connect with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds on social media platforms. Whether following global developments, participating in online forums, or collaborating on cross-cultural projects, English proficiency empowers *Santri* to broaden their understanding of global issues and give contribution to informed global discourse.

Additionally, being able to communicate and work together by using English as a medium of communication is beneficial in a variety of international settings, including diplomatic assignments, and humanitarian endeavors. English-speaking *Santri* are able to interact, exchange ideas and viewpoints, and establish relationships with people and institutions from many cultural backgrounds. English proficiency helps *Santri* to engage meaningfully with the global community and contribute to activities aimed at tackling serious global concerns, whether they are volunteering for global initiatives, attending international conferences, or advocating for social causes.

In term of employment opportunities, *Santri* with good English language proficiency has more flexibility in seeking certain jobs, allowing them to pursue employment opportunities both domestically and internationally[25]²⁵. Employers throughout the world are starting to recognize that being able to communicate, collaborate, and participate in the global marketplace effectively, all depend on having a solid command of the English language. English is used by employees of multinational firms from a variety of linguistic and

Shuffah%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F17486%2F5693%2F&cusg=AOvVaw07Z1NA_mBOwJP3dbdo56tU&opi=89978449.

²³ Donny Ermawan, "Pengaruh Globalisasi terhadap Eksistensi Kebudayaan Daerah di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kajian LEMHANNAS* RI, 2017, https://www.lemhannas.go.id/images/Publikasi_Humas/Jurnal/Jurnal_Edisi_32_Desember_2017.pdf.

²⁴ Danang Satriyo Priyono, "Santri Dalam Arus Modernitas Dan Globalisasi," *MTs. Miftahul Ulum 2* (blog), October 22, 2021, <https://mtsmu2bakid.sch.id/santri-dalam-arus-modernitas-dan-globalisasi/>.

²⁵ Su-Hie Ting et al., "EMPLOYERS' VIEWS ON IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND COMMUNICATION SKILL FOR EMPLOYABILITY IN MALAYSIA," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 7, no. 2 (September 30, 2017): 77, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i2.8132>.

cultural backgrounds as a common language of communication, facilitating smooth coordination and collaboration between global teams and offices. English language proficiency increases an employee's efficacy and productivity at work by enabling them to take part in meetings, presentations, and negotiations with stakeholders, clients, and coworkers from around the globe.

In educational context, proficiency in English can potentially give more opportunities for *Santri* to pursue their next level education not only in universities in Indonesia but also those abroad. Being proficient in English makes it easier to apply for international scholarships, study abroad programs, and research grants, allowing people to further their education outside of their own countries. Applicants must demonstrate their English language ability through written essays, interviews, presentations, and standardized exams like the TOEFL or IELTS for many scholarship programs and financial options. English language proficiency makes *Santri* more competitive for these opportunities and raises their chances of getting funding to follow their career and academic ambitions.

Conclusion

The present study describes that in this globalization era, English has become widely used as a means of communication among people in the world, no matter what their backgrounds are. It has impacts on several aspects in human life at least in the seven categories, namely: science and technology, education, employment, business, the internet, travel and tourism, and press media and entertainment. Thus, it is necessary for *Santri* to learn English because it is necessary for them to interact smoothly not only with people in Indonesia but also other people for any countries in the world to spread the message of Islam as a global society. Furthermore, by mastering English, the opportunity of pursuing higher education and occupation nationally or internationally can be achieved.

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