

Sociolinguistic Analysis of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Arabic Communication Among Islamic Boarding School Students

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Article History Received 29 April 2026 Revised 29 August 2026 Accepted 31 August 2026	Abstract Rapid advances in communication technology during globalization have made bilingualism and multilingualism increasingly common, and Islamic boarding schools (<i>pesantren</i>) are no exception, because Arabic serves as the primary language of daily communication alongside Indonesian and regional languages. This study therefore examines the patterns and practices of language use among students, as well as the forms, nonverbal elements, and underlying factors of code-switching and code-mixing in Arabic communication within a <i>pesantren</i>. A qualitative, descriptive phenomenological design was employed, with data gathered through passive participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving four <i>ustadzah</i> and four <i>santri</i>. The study contributes to sociolinguistic research by showing that code-switching and code-mixing serve as deliberate communicative and pedagogical resources in a multilingual <i>pesantren</i>, with implications for language policy and for the teaching of Arabic in Islamic educational settings. Abstrak Perkembangan teknologi komunikasi di era globalisasi menjadikan bilingualisme dan multilingualisme semakin lazim, termasuk di lingkungan pesantren yang menggunakan bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa utama komunikasi sehari-hari bersama bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa daerah. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji pola dan praktik penggunaan bahasa santri serta bentuk, unsur nonverbal, dan faktor penyebab alih kode dan campur kode dalam komunikasi berbahasa Arab di pesantren. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis fenomenologi deskriptif digunakan, dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipasi pasif, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan empat ustadzah dan empat santri. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian sosiolinguistik dengan menunjukkan bahwa alih kode dan campur kode berfungsi sebagai strategi komunikasi dan pembelajaran yang dikelola secara sadar, sehingga berimplikasi pada kebijakan bahasa dan pengajaran bahasa Arab di lingkungan pendidikan Islam. المخلص يشهد عصر العولمة تطوراً سريعاً في تكنولوجيا الاتصال، مما جعل ظاهرتي التعدد اللغوي والثنائية اللغوية أكثر شيوعاً، ومن ذلك بيئة المعاهد الإسلامية التي تستخدم فيها اللغة العربية لغة رئيسة في التواصل اليومي إلى جانب اللغة الإندونيسية واللهجات المحلية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أنماط وممارسات استخدام اللغة لدى الطلاب، وأشكال التحول اللغوي والمزج اللغوي والعناصر غير اللفظية والعوامل المؤثرة فيها في التواصل باللغة العربية داخل المعهد. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج النوعي بالتصميم الظاهراتي الوصفي، وجمعت البيانات من خلال الملاحظة بالمشاركة السلبية والمقابلات شبه المنظمة والتوثيق، بمشاركة أربع مدرسات وأربعة طلاب. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في الدرس السوسiolساني من خلال بيان أن التحول اللغوي والمزج اللغوي يمثلان استراتيجيات تواصلية وتعليمية تدار بوعي، الأمر الذي يحمل دلالات للسياسة اللغوية وتعليم اللغة العربية في البيئات التعليمية الإسلامية.
Keywords: Arabic communication; code mixing; code switching; multilingualism; sociolinguistics	

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Introduction

Rapid advances in communication technology during globalization have accelerated cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interaction, making bilingualism and multilingualism increasingly common. In Indonesia, people frequently use Indonesian, regional languages, Arabic, and English in daily communication. This linguistic diversity has strengthened the relevance of linguistic studies, particularly phonetics and semantics, which have been developed since the works of Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad Al-Farahidi and Ibn Taymiyyah. Their insights into the relationship between sound and meaning remain valuable for Arabic language learning, especially in improving vocabulary acquisition (Mukminin et al., 2025).

Linguistic diversity is also recognized in Islam as part of *sunnatullah*, and Surah Ar-Rum (30:22) says as much, with Ibn Kathir reading variation in speech as one of the natural facts of human life, while Ali ibn Abi Talib is reported to have treated a foreign language as a route into another people's knowledge and into contact across cultures, and Indonesian Arabic teaching carries a corresponding obligation to be open and multicultural in practice and not only in principle, depending on curriculum, institutional policy, and *pesantren* culture (Taubah et al., 2025).

The Prophet's request that Zaid bin Thabit learn Hebrew was practical rather than ceremonial: language is what makes communication possible and keeps people connected, an idea *pesantren* kept, since most run old and new methods together with a classical text read alongside speech practised through *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *hiwar*, *muhadatsah*, and *qira'ah*, the goal being a wide command of Arabic rather than one technique (Gumilar et al., 2025).

When speakers of different languages share one space, code-switching appears, whether by alternating between two languages or by placing a fragment of one inside the other within one sentence, and gesture usually comes with the shift. The Qur'an gives an early instance: in Ali Imran 40-41, Prophet Zakaria had lost his voice, yet signs were what he used and he was understood (Kridalaksana, 2008).

A *pesantren* gathers students whose first languages differ and expects them to work in Arabic and English, and at Darul Istiqomah, Maesan, Bondowoso, Arabic is made compulsory, though beginners break the rule without intending to, switching or mixing once their Arabic runs short in daily talk and in formal events such as *muhadharah* (Chaer & Agustina, 2010), because competence, social background, communicative intent, and the wish to be understood all push them that way.

Research on code-switching and code-mixing is now vast, and classrooms, social life, and online space are all touched by it. Teachers are shown in classroom studies to move between languages for pedagogical and sociocultural ends, and meaning is clarified and interaction managed in the process (Ataş & Sağın-Şimşek, 2021; Cahyani et al., 2018; Grant & Nguyen, 2017). Classroom practice is still shaped by reviews of first-language use (Ferguson, 2009; Shin et al., 2019). A second lens is supplied by translanguaging, which is focused on how multilingual learners draw on their whole repertoire in mainstream and higher education (Duarte, 2018; Kwon et al., 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2025; Sanders & Mashala, 2026; Yu, 2025). Outside school, mixing is found in social media (Aburqayiq et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2026; Menggo et al., 2023), in teaching materials (Gasiorek et al., 2026), and in bilingual children's talk (Zhang et al., 2024). A further thread is formed by identity and language attitudes (Matachana López, 2026; Yim & Clément, 2021).

This study draws upon sociolinguistic theory, which posits that code-switching and code-mixing are communication strategies influenced by social context. Gumperz (1982) views code-switching as a strategy for adapting to the situation, the interlocutor, and the communicative goal, including through nonverbal cues.

Holmes (2013) asserts that language choice is shaped by social factors such as topic, participants, and the level of formality. Meanwhile, Kridalaksana (2008) defines code-mixing as the insertion of elements from another language into the primary language, whereas Suwito (1983) emphasizes that both code-switching and code-mixing are influenced by the speaker, the interlocutor, situational changes, the topic of conversation, and the presence of a third party.

From an Islamic perspective, Ibn Kathir explains that linguistic diversity is a sign of Allah's greatness, while the story of the Prophet Zakaria demonstrates that communication can also occur through nonverbal gestures (Ar-Rifa'i, 1989). In line with this, Al-Khouli (1982) emphasizes that proficiency in Arabic is crucial for understanding the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic literature. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that code-switching and code-mixing in Arabic communication within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are influenced by linguistic, social, pedagogical, and religious factors, and involve both verbal and nonverbal elements in establishing effective communication.

Method

The design is qualitative, phenomenological and descriptive. We worked at Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School in Maesan, Bondowoso, and drew on three sources: passive participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documents. Through purposive sampling we recruited four female teachers (*ustadzah*) and four students (*santri*). Analysis followed Miles and Huberman, namely data condensation, then data display, then conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). To keep the account trustworthy we triangulated sources and techniques (Denzin, 2009). Such a design lets the study trace the patterns, the forms, and the causes of code-switching and code-mixing in the *pesantren*'s Arabic communication.

Results

Patterns and Practices of Language Use in Students' Communication

Daily Communication Patterns at Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School

At Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School, communication involves the *kiai*, *ustadzah*, students, and staff, and it takes several forms: lectures, discussions, classroom lessons, and *halaqah*. Arabic comes first. Indonesian and local languages are used when needed. The format varies with the activity. *Khuṭbatul Iftitah* and *Khuṭbatul Ta'aruf* are one-way. Discussion is two-way. Classroom learning runs in several directions. *Halaqah* is where discipline, responsibility, knowledge, and character are formed. U1 to U4 and S1 to S4 describe the daily scene in similar terms: polite, orderly, and tied to study and character.

The Obligation to Use Arabic in Daily Communication

The Qur'an, the hadith, and the classical texts are in Arabic, which is why it is compulsory at Darul Istiqomah, and a Grade 4 Tarbiyatul Muallimat Al Islamiyah class showed the imbalance: Arabic dominated, especially during explanation and quotation of religious sources, while Indonesian appeared only for clarification. For U1, Arabic is the direct route to Islamic sources, while U2, U3, and U4 point to *turats* and to academic and religious benefit, and S1 to S4 describe a slower gain in confidence and proficiency that grows with practice.

Languages Used in Students' Daily Interactions and the Position of Arabic Among Other Languages

Arabic carries most communication and learning at Darul Istiqomah, while Indonesian and regional languages are kept for informal moments and for helping newcomers, and observation confirmed the split between formal lessons in Arabic and informal settings leaning on Indonesian, with U1 to U4 reading the routine as a slow confidence-builder and S1 to S4 agreeing that Arabic stays their main language even though other languages fill parts of the day.

The Phenomena of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Arabic Communication

Forms of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Switching and mixing at Darul Istiqomah run from single words to whole sentences in formal and informal talk alike, which is what a multilingual *pesantren* looks like, and U1 gives one instance: "Anti sudah murojaah belum untuk imtihan besok?", an Arabic-Indonesian sentence, while fixed Arabic phrasings such as Man jadda wajada and Lan tarji'a al-ayyām allati madhat recur in daily speech that S1 to S4 treat as ordinary *pesantren* life and U1 to U4 say enriches language use and keeps Arabic learning tied to context.

The Use of Code-Switching in Nonverbal Communication

Speech is not the only channel at Darul Istiqomah, where bodies are read through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and sounds that carry a message or hold order, and before congregational prayer silence was kept while gestures did the talking. Two small lunch scenes stand out: one student raised two fingers for two pieces of fried tempeh, another refused chili sauce by touching throat and stomach, and a finger on the lips with "sssst" restores order, U1 says, without the lesson stopping, with S1 to S4 confirming how often these cues appear and U1 to U4 seeing them as an economical way to keep the room conducive.

Situations in Which Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Occur

Code-switching and code-mixing at Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School occur in classroom learning, daily Arabic habituation, and character-building activities. Teachers adjust their language to students' understanding by combining Arabic and Indonesian. As U1 states, "I usually begin lessons in Arabic, especially when quoting verses or hadith, then switch to Indonesian so that students can better understand." Students also confirm this practice. As S2 and S3 explain, "Arabic is prioritized in daily communication, but when we have difficulty, we switch to Indonesian or our regional language." These findings show that code-switching and code-mixing serve as practical communication and learning strategies in the multilingual environment of the *pesantren*.

Participants Involved in Code-Switching Interactions

Code-switching and code-mixing at Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School involve *kiai*, *ustadzah*, students, dormitory supervisors, and staff in classroom learning, daily Arabic habituation, and other *pesantren* activities. As U1 explains, "Those involved in code-switching include students with *ustadzah*, students with dormitory supervisors, and students with fellow students." S2 and S3 describe the same pattern from the other side: Arabic leads each day, but Indonesian or a regional language steps in when something needs clarifying. Our observations confirmed it. Teachers moved between Arabic and Indonesian while explaining material, and students switched during group work, question-and-answer sessions, and dormitory conversation. Nothing about this felt forced. In a multilingual *pesantren*, switching is simply how people talk.

Factors Causing Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Four forces drive switching and mixing at Darul Istiqomah, namely a communicative goal, unequal proficiency, the listener, and the school's Arabic-and-English policy, and U3, S1, and S4 all describe switching as a way to make an explanation clearer or to bridge an Arabic expression that will not come, a pattern observation confirmed among teachers and students alike.

Discussion

Patterns and Practices of Language Use in Students' Communication

Daily Communication Patterns at Darul Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School

The question behind the study was how students at Darul Istiqomah actually use language. What we found is a mixture of one-way, two-way, and group communication. Gumperz (1982) described the same

arrangement in multilingual communities. There, talk does more than pass along information; it also builds the relationships that hold a community together.

The lecture is the classic one-way form in a *pesantren*, while discussion and *halaqah* pull students in and group work aims at character, and a rival reading deserves a hearing since heavy reliance on one-way teaching may reflect hierarchy more than pedagogy, especially where a school mandates a single language while its classrooms remain multilingual, exactly the gap between written policy and daily practice that comparable studies report (Bernstein et al., 2018; Maseko, 2021).

The Obligation to Use Arabic in Daily Communication

The daily Arabic requirement at Darul Istiqomah amounts to a language-education strategy aimed at competence, and Al-Khouli (1982) supplies the logic that Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an and hadith, opens Islamic teaching to whoever masters it. Islam adds a further layer, since for Ibn Kathir language is one of Allah's blessings, given so that people can interact and accumulate knowledge.

Habituation is the mechanism: make Arabic the everyday language and it settles in, rather than being studied from outside. Earlier work on Arabic in *pesantren* agrees, tying habituation inside an educational setting to better communication and a firmer hold on Islamic texts (Mukminin et al., 2025; Taubah et al., 2025).

Languages Used in the Interactions of Students, Ustadzah, Administrators, and Caretakers

Arabic dominates at Darul Istiqomah by deliberate design, the aim being an environment for intensive learning, and Al-Khouli (1982) supplies the rationale in holding that Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an and the source of Islamic teaching, is mastered as the means of entry.

Ibn Kathir reads Surah Ar-Rum (30:22) as evidence that variety in language is a sign of Allah's power (Ar-Rifa'i, 1989), so Arabic in the *pesantren* works on two fronts of communication and of religiosity and a scholarly Islamic identity, and earlier studies support the second front in finding that *pesantren* environments tend to require Arabic for learning both the language and the classical texts (Mukminin et al., 2025), while one complication deserves naming in that Arabic here spans the formal register of religious texts and the colloquial register of everyday speech, a diglossia that explains a good deal about when and why speakers switch (Taha Thomure et al., 2025).

The Phenomena of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Arabic Communication

Forms of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Language use among students and *ustadzah* exposes the multilingual character of the setting. Gumperz (1982) supplies the frame, treating switching as a strategy for fitting language to social context, topic, and listener. Kridalaksana (2008) accounts for the complementary operation: mixing places Arabic elements inside an Indonesian sentence, or vice versa.

A linguistically mixed space is what the *pesantren* comes out as, one in which students work across more than one language. Earlier research on switching in educational and social settings finds the same. Meaning can be clarified, and talk kept moving, by alternating languages (Aburqayiq et al., 2025; Menggo et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Not uniformly positive is the picture, though. Some accounts warn that constant switching may thin a learner's exposure to the target language. Its value, they add, turns on the ideologies and power relations around the languages involved (Hamman-Ortiz et al., 2025; Wei, 2021). Something narrower is suggested by our evidence. Switching pays off when it is used with intent.

The Use of Code-Switching in Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal language at Darul Istiqomah shows that communication does not rest on speech alone, since weight is carried by symbols and particular gestures that Gumperz (1982) called contextualization cues, and

what a message means can be settled by intonation, a facial expression, or a shift of the body, though how often such cues occur is hard to judge here because the observation concentrated on a few routine activities.

Gesture also appears in Islamic teaching as a substitute for speech, since Ibn Kathir's account of Prophet Zakaria describes a message delivered while speech was impossible (Ar-Rifa'i, 1989), and real weight in social life can be carried by nonverbal communication, as education research agrees that symbols and gestures in teaching help hold a classroom together and reinforce what the teacher says (Wei, 2002).

Situations in Which Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Occur

With respect to the situations in which code-switching and code-mixing occur, the findings suggest that these phenomena arise primarily during the learning process, the delivery of advice, and the habituation of Arabic use outside the classroom. This would appear to be consistent with Gumperz's (1982) account of code-switching as a communication strategy, according to which language shifts are employed by speakers to adjust messages to the social context and to the level of understanding of their interlocutors.

From the perspective of language in Islam, Arabic holds an important position as the language of revelation and the primary source of Islamic teachings. Therefore, the habituation of Arabic in the *pesantren* serves two ends: competence, and a deeper reading of Islamic texts. Ataş and Sağın-Şimşek (2021) and Grant and Nguyen (2017) report something comparable, with switching helping students follow instructional material. In the *pesantren*, then, switching is at once a way to communicate and a workable teaching method.

Participants Involved in Code-Switching Interactions

Many people take part in switching at the *pesantren*, among them the *kiai* (religious leaders), *ustadzah* (female teachers), students, dormitory supervisors, and educational staff. This phenomenon demonstrates that communication in the *pesantren* takes place within a multilingual community, allowing language shifts to occur naturally. According to Holmes (2013), code-switching is a common phenomenon in bilingual or multilingual societies, where speakers shift languages to adapt to their interlocutors, situations, and communicative purposes.

How easily the listener follows is what good communication in Islam turns on. The principle is named by Arabic linguistics as *balāghah*, and clarity and precision are what it prizes. Read in that light, no lapse is involved in using several languages in the *pesantren*. The message is ensured to land. A comparable conclusion is reached by Aburqayiq et al. (2025) and Menggo et al. (2023), who find that switching and mixing in social and digital settings usually grow out of contact between people with different linguistic backgrounds.

Factors Causing Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Several factors sit behind switching and mixing in this *pesantren*: the speakers and their listeners, the need for a clear message, social proximity, and the situation. One more is added by the Arabic-and-English policy. The mechanism is given by Gumperz (1982), and it is pragmatic. Language is fit to context, or meaning made plain, by speakers who switch. The same pedagogical function is reported in earlier research on multilingual classrooms, where understanding is eased, hard concepts unpacked, the room managed, and the atmosphere kept supportive by switching (Cahyani et al., 2018).

Match the language to the situation, and to what the listener can grasp: this is what Islamic linguistics is blunt about. It is added by Lin (2013) that more than competence is answered by classroom language choices, since institutional policy and social context shape them too. A related case is made by King and Chetty (2014), who treat switching as a pedagogical resource that crosses language boundaries and aids comprehension.

Yim and Clément (2021) and Shin et al. (2019) identify the same social, situational, and linguistic drivers behind switching, but this study rests on one institution and a small group, so only comparable settings may be covered and scaling may not hold, and whether similar patterns appear in *pesantren* with different language policies is an open question that larger samples are needed to answer. The patterns described are

indicative, not settled, though the study earns its place by showing that switching and mixing in the *pesantren* do communicative, pedagogical, and religious work at once, and are better treated as resources to manage than as faults to remove (Duarte, 2018; Lin, 2013).

Conclusion

The central point is brief: at Darul Istiqomah, switching and mixing in Arabic communication are not faults to be corrected but deliberate resources, for communication and teaching, shaped at once by linguistic, social, pedagogical, and religious factors and enacted through words and gesture alike.

Some limits warrant acknowledgement, since the data come from a single *pesantren*, a small number of participants, and a narrow set of observed activities, which makes the findings indicative rather than generalizable; nor did the study measure how these practices affect students' Arabic over time.

Several recommendations follow. *Pesantren* administrators could treat the language policy as a two-way arrangement, one that balances the required use of Arabic against an open, deliberate place for students' other languages, rather than an outright ban. Teachers would do well to plan switching rather than let it happen at random, so that it supports comprehension without crowding out exposure to Arabic. Finally, research should use longitudinal, multi-site designs with measures of language attainment, to see how far these practices shape Arabic competence across different *pesantren* contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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