



DISCOVERING AND MITIGATING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: A CASE STUDY IN STUDENTS' RELIGION IDENTITY IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the intricate relationship between religious identity and English language learning at Indonesian Islamic boarding schools and contributes significantly to the knowledge of cultural sensitivity in teaching. Based on qualitative case study approaches in Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia, the study investigates the role of religious identity in mediating language learning as well as challenges in providing culturally sensitive education. It is grounded in Intercultural Communication Theory and Identity Negotiation Theory to examine complex interactions between Islamic beliefs of learners and language acquisition. Through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with eight participants (four teachers and four learners), the study examines the role of Islamic values in English language learning processes as well as the involvement of students in English lessons. Key research questions involved the place of religious identity in language acquisition, difficulties in culturally responsive teaching, and the structuring of pedagogical interventions that enhance language proficiency without diminishing cultural integrity. The findings emphasize the need for a more delicate approach to the teaching of languages that recognizes and respects students' religious and cultural identities. The study contributes to the overall scholarly literature in recommending a model that moves language learning as an active process of cultural negotiation and identity construction. It emphasizes the necessity of creating inclusive learning spaces that recognize students' diverse cultural experiences and enable them to grow linguistically.

Keywords: Cultural Sensitivity, Religious Identity, Language Instruction, Islamic Boarding Schools, English Language Learning, Pedagogical Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Language learning in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) is not merely the instruction of linguistic proficiency but an articulation of the intersection of cultural identity, religious belief, and pedagogical practice (Fatimah & Suhermanto, 2024; Hidayati et al., 2024). Here, religious identity impacts language acquisition, creating a unique pedagogical dynamic (Norton & Toohey, 2011). The convergence of these elements commonly brings tension to educational practice, particularly when students are required to reconcile the use of a global lingua franca such as English with deep-seated

religious doctrine (Ghufron et al., 2024). Such intricacies underscore the demand for specialized language teaching within these specific environments.

Current research in education study focuses on the necessity of incorporating cultural elements into language instruction; yet, Islamic boarding schools tend to disregard the interplay between religious identity and linguistic ability (Latif & Hafid, 2021). Within the confines of these educational institutions, students' religious tradition significantly contributes to their cognitive process of perception, interpretation, and assimilation of knowledge (Arifin, 2022). Conventional pedagogical models do not heed this dynamic interaction that not only influences language learning but also students' general learning process (Symonds, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). This oversight devalues the quality of language education because it does not take into account the impact of religious identity on how students respond to and process new knowledge.

Furthermore, current educational systems have major problems with being culturally sensitive when it comes to language teaching (Alshumaimeri, 2022). Standard lessons, usually set up to be given to many students, fail to take into consideration important cultural and religious factors that impact student learning (Hernandez, 2022). Not having an appreciation of cultural differences leads to a lack of connection between what is learned in the classroom and what students use in life. Students can find it difficult to identify with lessons or teaching methods that are not compatible with their own culture, thus becoming disinterested and learning less (Panhwar & Bell, 2023). Further, if the teachers are not aware of these differences, they risk unconsciously reinforcing stereotypes or reinforcing prejudices (Ahmad, 2021). This lack of awareness makes language teaching less effective since students are less likely to identify with lessons derived from their own lives. In order to enhance language learning, lessons must be planned to include all cultures and religions. This will make all the students feel important and understood.

A number of previous research works have focused on cultural sensitivity in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the integration of culture and language in teaching. As Hammer et al. (2003) define, cultural sensitivity is the perception, regard, and reaction to the cultures, values, and communication patterns of the learners as it relates to teaching approaches that do not deny or distort their identities. This might be as simple as modifying instructional approaches to fit students' language, or it could involve more complex sociocultural bias regard concerning technology. Aliwadang et al. (2024) delved into the issue of cultural sensitivity within the context of Philippine ELT through the exploration of language and culture such as pronunciation problems and syntactic differences. While the study espouses the need for culturally responsive teaching, it fails to offer specific pedagogical approaches and thus continues the lack of how sensitivity to culture can be applied in practice in the classroom. Equally, Romadhon (2024) concentrated on Indonesian Islamic boarding school where cultural sensitivity involves observing the Islamic principles of religion while teaching English as a modern global language. The study describes the challenges of the effects of Western language and religion to identity but does not provide empirical evidence on how this type of sensitivity is related to student performance. Chauhan et al. (2024) measured the impact of cultural sensitivity in alleviating language learning tension among Indian university students. However, it focuses primarily on university students, limiting its applicability to other educational settings. Fatahillah et al. (2023) focused on culture preservation in an Indonesian Islamic school, where sensitivity entails strengthening local culture such as the *bandongan/sorogan* methods. The study fails to address the impact of these methods on English proficiency, exemplifying a disjunction between culture preservation and language learning. Then, Mengesha et al. (2021) investigated the psychological effects of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) errors on African broadened the scope of cultural

sensitivity to include technology, documenting how African Americans are excluded from the benefits of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) systems because recognition of their speech patterns is racially biased. This focus reframes cultural sensitivity in relation to technology, addressing equity in AI design—an aspect that is usually neglected in educational discourse.

This study investigates the critical gap in understanding cultural sensitivity within language instruction at Islamic boarding schools. The novelty of this research lies in exploring the complex relationship between religious identity and English language learning. Informed by three key research questions, this study aims to develop a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that respects students' religious and linguistic contexts:

1. How does religious identity influence language learning?
2. What are the challenges in culturally sensitive instruction?
3. How can pedagogical interventions be used to enhance language proficiency without losing cultural integrity?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current research draws from the complex interconnection of identity negotiation theories and cultural competence. The theory focuses on how language learning can recognize and support diverse religious and cultural identities and establish inclusive learning spaces. The cultural competence theory dictates that the current research places a precedence on the many facets of culture in teaching practices with a focus on the incorporation of learners' own cultural backgrounds in teaching processes.

Identity Negotiation Theory (Swan, 1987) provides a nuanced theoretical framework for understanding how individuals construct, negotiate, and manage their cultural and religious identities within educational contexts. This perspective highlights the complex interplay between students' personal beliefs, cultural affiliations, and linguistic experiences, demonstrating that identity formation is a dynamic and fluid process rather than a fixed construct. (Swan, 1987) Identity Negotiation Theory posits that individuals continuously modify their self-concept in response to social interactions and environmental influences. In educational settings, students engage in identity negotiation as they navigate multiple cultural and linguistic expectations, seeking to maintain coherence between their personal identities and external social norms. This ongoing negotiation is particularly relevant in language learning, where learners must reconcile their native linguistic and cultural backgrounds with the target language and its associated cultural frameworks. The theory further emphasizes the role of communication competence, adaptability, and intercultural sensitivity in shaping identity, underscoring how individuals manage identity threats, affirm self-concept, and strive for validation in diverse educational environments.

Furthermore, intercultural communication theory (Wiserman, 1995) serves as a crucial framework that connects language instruction with cultural understanding, offering a critical perspective for analyzing the intricate relationship between students' religious identities and their language learning experiences. This theoretical paradigm underscores the significance of dialogic engagement and empathetic understanding in fostering an inclusive and responsive pedagogical approach that acknowledges and validates students' diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication theory, rooted in disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, examines how individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact, negotiate meaning, and construct identities through communication. It highlights the role of cultural schemas, communicative competence, and intercultural sensitivity in shaping learners' linguistic development and social integration. By recognizing that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a vehicle for expressing identity, beliefs, and values, this theory emphasizes the need for pedagogical models that integrate cultural awareness into language instruction. Consequently, educators are encouraged

to design curricula that facilitate meaningful intercultural exchanges, enabling students to navigate linguistic diversity while fostering mutual respect and understanding in multicultural learning environments.

In this respect, this conceptual model underlines the interdependence of cultural sensitivity, language instruction, and religious identity, in that they all affect each other equally. This kind of integrated framework challenges traditional models in language teaching by calling for a pedagogical approach that goes beyond linguistic competence to engagement with cultural reflexivity and contextual adjustment as intrinsic to effective instruction. In doing so, the model places emphasis on the development in learners of critical awareness of their own cultural backgrounds and the sociocultural dimensions represented in the target language. Based on sociocultural and identity negotiation theories, this model theorizes that language acquisition is not strictly a cognitive or skill-based process but rather an act of dynamic construction of identity.

Drawing on (Norton & Toohey, 2011) theory of identity and investment, the language learner is viewed as an agent constantly negotiating identities through social interaction, creating and re-creating the self in relation to the affordances and constraints of the immediate linguistic environment. Also, (Morrison & Lui, 2000) concept of linguistic capital positions language learning within structures of power that determine learners' agency, access, and participation in linguistic communities. By integrating such perspectives, the proposed framework sends a strong signal toward the imperative to consider the individual beliefs and values of the students within broader educational and cultural contexts. The latter approach makes for deeper engagement: Learners should be able to negotiate linguistic and ideological tensions in their everyday living, developing communicative competence both contextually and culturally relevant.

This research framework concludes with a paradigm shift in the concept of language learning, where the traditional instruction of linguistics is taken one step further by adding advanced theoretical perspectives on the concepts of identity, culture, and communication. The study embeds Identity Negotiation Theory, Intercultural Communication Theory, and sociocultural perspectives into the dynamic process of identity construction and cultural negotiation-redefining language learning. This approach repositions the process of language acquisition from a cognitive skill into a nuanced journey of personal and cultural transformation, with learners cast as active agents who are constantly negotiating their identities through linguistic and cultural contact. The pedagogical implication of this model would be for educators to establish learning environments supportive of a diversity of cultural backgrounds, intercultural contact, and views of language as complex means of self-representation. In this regard, the framework is theoretically illustrative that language learning is far beyond linguistic competence; it is a deep process of self-discovery and cultural comprehension.

METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative research is thus an appropriate design for this study, given that the central purpose is to gain a deep and thorough understanding of the issue at hand in all possible detail (Jones et al., 2021). The nature of qualitative research is quite befitting when the studies involve unraveling complex perspectives, experiences, and meanings that cannot easily be pre-defined or quantified. This approach, therefore, helping the study to capture depth and richness of data for more detailed analysis of participants' views and contextual influences. Besides, qualitative research, on this study, can investigate underlying motivations, attitudes, and behaviors important in developing a comprehensive interpretation of the research issue. This is particularly helpful within areas where subjective experiences and contextual issues form a big part of the outcomes. Qualitative research also highlights

flexibility within the collection and analysis of data regarding emerging findings. This study was, therefore, trying to construct the holistic understanding of the research problem through interviews, observations, and document analysis in order to make sure that credibility and rigor in interpreting results are assured.

The kind of approach in this study is a case study, in which the research focuses on a specific case that happens to an Islamic boarding school in Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia. This design exposed the phenomenon in depth within its real-life context. A case study approach allows an in-depth analysis of various factors affecting the issue, enabling the researchers to analyze the complexities and dynamics involved. This method is especially suitable for studies that try to find underlying patterns, perspectives, and experiences of individuals within a given setting. This study will employ qualitative techniques, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, to produce highly detailed and nuanced results. Furthermore, in the case study, it is possible to embrace a comprehensive interpretation of social, cultural, and educational perspectives within the institution that would be studied. This can offer valuable inputs for broader academic literature on how an Islamic boarding school can influence students with regard to their improvement in terms of education and their personal growth. Thus, a case study approach enhances validity and depth to this research.

Data Source and Settings

This research was conducted in an Islamic boarding school and an Islamic-based school in Pasuruan Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The participants in this study consisted of eight people: four students from the senior high school level and four English language teachers from both educational institutions. The participants have been selected on the basis of their insight into the specific context of Islamic education in the region with regard to teaching and learning the English language. This study explored students' perspectives regarding the inclusion of Islamic values within the curriculum of teaching English and how those values influence the way they relate to learning the language. This study identifies, through interviews and observations, the important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of teaching English language in such Islamic settings and how the cultural and religious context shapes both the method of teaching and the students' approaches towards the subject.

Table 1. Students as participants' Background

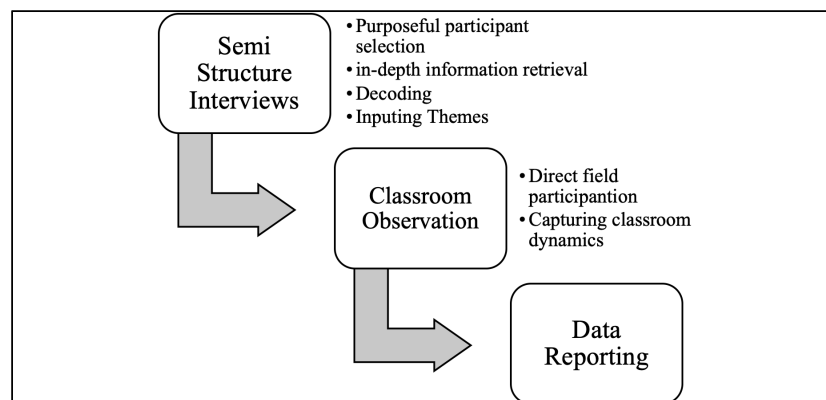
Code	Gender	Institution	Grade
ST1	Male	MA	12
ST2	Female	SMA	11

The data collection methods in this research are interviews, with a semi-structured interview technique. This is so because the researcher was able to retrieve information that is in-depth about the research issue (Adams, 2015). The researcher uses classroom observation, whereby direct participation in the field is necessary for observing the dynamics within the setting of an English lesson in an Islamic-based school setting. It would provide firsthand information about the environment and interaction among students and teachers in the classroom. These observations are secondary resources that complement the primary data from interviews. These methods put together allow for a full understanding of the subject matter, as it captures both qualitative and contextual aspects of the research. The semi-structured interviews were also allowing the freedom to probe areas of interest for richness and diversity in the data. By triangulating both primary and secondary sources, a researcher provides reliability and validity to the data and thereby is able to arrive at an overall finer-tuned and heavier-duty analysis of the research questions.

Data Collection

The data collection methods in this research are interviews, with a semi-structured interview technique (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This is so because the researchers were able to retrieve information that is in-depth about the research issue. The researcher uses classroom observation (Cao et al., 2023), whereby direct participation in the field is necessary for observing the dynamics within the setting of an English lesson in an Islamic-based school setting. It would provide firsthand information about the environment and interaction among students and teachers in the classroom. These observations are secondary resources that complement the primary data from interviews. These methods put together allow for a full understanding of the subject matter, as it captures both qualitative and contextual aspects of the research. The semi-structured interviews also allow the freedom to probe areas of interest for richness and diversity in the data. By triangulating both primary and secondary sources, a researcher provides reliability and validity to the data and thereby is able to arrive at an overall finer-tuned and heavier-duty analysis of the research questions.

Table 2. Data Collection Process



In the process of data collection, the researcher utilizes qualitative approaches, specifically by way of carrying out interviews. This is initiated by the purposeful selection of individuals who have knowledge and experience related to the research problem. The researcher takes care to frame the questions in the interview in a way that would draw elaborate and significant responses, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the topic. Prior to the conduct of interviews, ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, are taken into consideration to maintain the integrity of the study. The interviews are then conducted in a semi-structured format, which allows for flexibility while ensuring coverage of key themes. Information is recorded systematically, following which transcription and thematic analysis are conducted to identify patterns and insights

Table 3. Interview's Questions Guideline

No	Questions Interviews'	Sub-Themes	Themes
1	a. Do you think your religion is talked about in your English classes?	Cultural Representation	
	b. Can you share an example of when your beliefs were mentioned in class?		
2	a. Do you feel comfortable talking about your religion in class? Why or why not?	Classroom Environment	Experience in Language Instruction
	b. How do your classmates react to your religious beliefs?		
3	a. What does be culturally sensitive mean to you in school?	Understanding Sensitivity	Perception of Cultural Sensitivity
	b. Have you seen teachers do things that show cultural sensitivity?		
4	a. How does your religion affect how you participate in English class?	Learning Experience	Impact on Learning
	b. Do you think cultural sensitivity helps you learn better? How?		

While data collection is done, the researcher makes direct field trips to the areas of the participants. This process allows direct observations and interactions and thus augments the completeness and accuracy of data gathered. The data gathering process involves interviewing and discussions conducted in Indonesian in a bid to ensure effective interaction between the participants and the researcher. Using the participants' mother tongue ensures that they fully understand the questions asked and can express their responses clearly, without the barriers of language. Additionally, face-to-face interaction enables the researcher to see contextual factors, such as non-verbal cues and situational effects, which add to the overall meaning of the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in the present study is a qualitative approach to data gathering (Denzin & Lincoln, 2022), focusing on exploring how cultural sensitivity interacts with religious identity and language learning. Data collection involves in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis as an effort to closely examine the students' religious influence on engaging with English instruction. Researchers transcribe interviews verbatim, take field notes copiously, and identify themes pertaining to cultural sensitivity, religious identity, and instructional challenges. Thematic analysis was performed to outline patterns which repeatedly occurred in the perceptions, experiences, and reactions of students towards culturally sensitive material included in English instruction.

Triangulation can also help in assuring validity and reliability through comparing data from different sources like students, teachers, and instructional materials (Carter et al., 2014). Coding techniques were used to categorize the data into key themes, including comfort levels about specific instructional methods students would consider, students' responses to culturally diverse content, and conflicts between religious values and language learning materials. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, critical reflection is interspersed in the data analysis to ensure neutrality and ethical consideration in interpreting students' perceptions. The iterative nature of qualitative analysis permits an in-depth exploration into the ways cultural and religious issues inform and are given shape in their experiences. Additionally, findings contextualize into the broader theoretical discussion of cultural sensitivity and identity issues in education. This paper thus adopts a rigorous and reflective analytic approach to further develop inclusive and culturally responsive English instruction, which would allow for a more nurturing environment for students of different culture backgrounds.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher categorizes participants' findings into three main themes: students' language experiences, students' perceptions of cultural sensitivity, and impact and learning.

Students' Language Experiences

In the Indonesian secondary schools diversified educational system, students navigate intricate discussions regarding religion in English language classes. Two students—ST1, who is from a Madrasah Aliyah (MA), and ST2 from a Senior High School (SMA)—present contrasting views on discussing religion in a learning process.

ST1, a 12th-grade male student, has a sophisticated interaction with religious issues in the course of his study of English. Religious issues do not form the primary subject of the course of study but appear at times within cross-cultural discussions and dialogues. He shares a specific example of how a lesson promoted cross-cultural dialogue and provided an opportunity for the inclusion of Islamic perspectives and the realization of a meaningful and profound application of religious insight within language acquisition.

Sometimes I find materials that discuss non-Islamic cultures such as hortatory texts that discuss foreign cultures. I think it's fun... (ST1)

The discussions allow the students to place perspectives within larger linguistic and cultural contexts and enhance not just their communicative skills but also analytical and critical skills.

In a similar situation, the 11th-grader known as ST2 has discussions regarding religion that exhibit both tentativeness and openness.

There was a time when the teacher gave material about explanatory text. And at that time the material contained religious moderation in Indonesia. Of course, the material used discusses the introduction of other religious cultures. And I think it's interesting to discuss but difficult to understand... (ST2)

She displays a feeling of unease regarding the chance that her own beliefs might be incorrectly stated. Yet her participation in a presentation regarding the issue of diversity allowed her the chance to state her religious traditions. This situation underscores the complex balance that students need to keep when talking about particular religions within a teaching environment. This also underscores the need to allow dialogue within the teaching environment to enhance self-representation and respect varied views within schools.

Both students demonstrate a typical example of religious discourse marked by mutual respect within bounds. The answers of the students' fellow students demonstrate a passive attitude and a tolerant posture that testify to a profound respect for the pluralistic culture embedded in religious pluralism. The English language room becomes a space that goes beyond the usual status of a place of language acquisition and instead becomes a site of cross-religious understanding and cross-cultural encounter. The narratives of ST1 and ST2 demonstrate a defining aspect of Indonesia's educational culture: while religious discourse does not take a dominating position explicitly, it does not completely stay away either. Instead, it comes through the lens of detailed and judicious discussions that demonstrate the complex religious dynamics of the Indonesian social fabric. The stories portray a mature engagement with religious issues—defined through respect, contextual sensitivity, and self-intellectualization.

The experiences of such individuals illustrate a larger pedagogical system that prioritizes dialogue, critical exchange, and mutual respect. Within the English language classroom, discussions of religion take place in a non-confrontational and non-prescriptive manner and emerge organically through discussions of culture, communication, and shared humanity. Even if the scope of such discussions is limited, the fact that they take place at all constitutes an opportunity of great significance for students to advance their abilities at intercultural communication (Wang et al., 2023), articulate individual views in an educated and reflective manner (Moslimany et al., 2024), and create an environment that seeks mutual comprehension (Berlian & Huda, 2022). Within this conceptual framework, the use of the English language goes beyond the realms of plain communication; it becomes a gateway toward the attainment of intercultural competences. Through the use of structured and exploratory discussions within the teaching environment of the classroom, students traverse complex socio-religious contexts and at the same time enhance linguistic skills (Saud et al., 2023). The inclusion of religious perspectives within language teaching underscores the effectiveness of the use of teaching English in the development of critical analytical skills and sensitivities toward compassion and cross-cultural forces. The discussions allow students' dialogue skills beyond religious and ethnic boundaries and therefore emphasize the need for inclusive and contemplative teaching methods within the modern teaching environment of Indonesia.

Students' Perceptions of Cultural Sensitivity

In a detailed discussion of cultural sensitivity within the school environment, two participants provided their views. ST1 clarified in his excerpt:

Cultural sensitivity involves respecting diversity by refraining from jokes or remarks that may offend others. It requires awareness of different backgrounds, beliefs, and values to foster inclusivity. By avoiding stereotypes and insensitive language, we create a more welcoming environment. (ST1)

ST1 went on to clarify that the term entails valuing the richness of dialects, customs, and cultures. Conversely, ST2 considers cultural sensitivity as the ability to accept and value differences. She stresses that one has to be receptive towards peers who are from diverse ethnic, religious, and geographic groups while actively avoiding discrimination and forming cliques.

Both respondents gave specific instances of how their teachers show cultural sensitivity. ST1 shared an incident where a Civics teacher specifically taught about Indonesia's diversity, with a focus on tolerance and directly confronting culturally insensitive acts. In contrast, ST2 pointed out that, in his school, teachers often conduct activities that promote cross-cultural interaction, like sharing traditional food and cultural stories during important celebrations.

These scenarios demonstrate that cultural sensitivity in schools is more than a theoretical concept but also a real practice that requires awareness, respect, and openness from all members of the school community. ST1 and ST2 concur that learning and appreciating diversity is most important in establishing an inclusive and empathetic learning community. A broader analysis of cultural sensitivity in schools identifies its crucial contribution to students' social and academic development. Evidence shows that the encouragement of an inclusive environment enhances students' cognitive and interpersonal skills, enabling them to adapt better to multicultural societies. Teachers play a critical role, as their teaching style is crucial in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, the use of culturally responsive teaching practices has been proven to improve student motivation and academic performance (Naz

et al., 2024). Schools that deliberately integrate multicultural education through inclusive curricula, extracurricular activities, and open discussions encourage students to value diverse perspectives. This practice not only reduces instances of cultural bias but also promotes empathy and cross-cultural awareness. The role of peer interaction in cultural awareness within students should not be underestimated. Encouraging cooperative learning among students from diverse backgrounds facilitates authentic interactions, leading to respect and minimizing stereotypes. Further, establishing explicit standards on respectful communication can reinforce an inclusive culture and prevent cultural difference-related conflicts.

Impact and Learning

The discussion also elaborated further on the issue of how religious background has a direct influence on the acquisition of English. ST1 conveyed that his religion plays a core role in his language learning attitude. He re-emphasized that his religious background gives him the awareness to use language, making him thoroughly filter material and uphold dignified communication. By doing so, it turns language learning into an affair that is not merely intellectual but rather an endeavor of careful and reflective processing, wherein moral discernments dictate linguistic choices.

Similarly, ST2 provided a complementary view. She acknowledged that while her religious background does not impose direct restrictions on her engagement with language learning, it promotes a sensitive consciousness of linguistic and cultural meanings. Her practice is characterized by a critical interrogation of meanings and a fervent desire to understand the contextual meanings of words and phrases. By asking questions cautiously, she ensures that her learning process is aligned with both linguistic appropriateness and cultural acceptability.

The two students agreed that cultural sensitivity is an integral part of effective language learning. ST1 described cultural sensitivity as an enlightening sieve which adds depth to language learning, extending it from the mere memorization of grammatical rules and words. To him, learning culture results in a better grasp of communication, respect for diversity in viewpoints, and receptivity to various linguistic experiences. Expounding on this concept, ST2 likened cultural sensitivity to a bridge that brings language learners to the deeper meanings of discourse. She stressed understanding the cultural history of words, asserting that doing so renders language learning more meaningful and engaging. She also argued that learning a language is not a simple process of direct translation but involves the understanding of emotional, historical, and social nuances inherent in communication.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research underscore the pervasive influence of religious identity on English language learning and highlight the intricate dynamics among cultural, linguistic, and religious dimensions in learning settings. Religious identity plays a considerable role in changing the cognitive process, motivation, and involvement of learners in English learning, presenting pedagogical issues and challenges as well as challenges and opportunities for creativity. The study identifies some of the biggest challenges of culturally responsive teaching, including reconciling universal linguistic conventions and religious orthodoxy, and avoiding cultural stereotyping. To address these needs, the research suggests the development of culturally responsive pedagogical strategies to identify and verify students' cultural identity, enable inclusive learning environments, and empower learners as active agents in building their identities. The study concludes that language learning is more than the acquisition of linguistic competence, a complex process of personal and cultural transformation. Subsequent studies should work toward widening the research field, developing more effective methodological practices, designing actionable pedagogical interventions,

testing technological developments in cultural learning, and investigating the psychological and sociological foundations of culturally responsive language pedagogy. As a whole, this research requires a shift in the paradigm of language pedagogy, reconfiguring it as a process of intersubjective realization and intercultural knowing that affirms students' complex, diverse identities in a variety of learning contexts.

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