

## Bilingual Education to Improve Understanding of *Aqidah* at Salafi Islamic Boarding Schools

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to examine how bilingual education can improve students' understanding of Aqidah learning through the Arabic language Ushul Tsalatsah book. This study uses a qualitative case study approach to explore bilingual education in Aqidah learning at the Imam Syafi'iy Islamic Boarding School (pesantren) in Bima City. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model. Validity testing through triangulation of sources and techniques. The study results show that bilingual education uses the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. Learning planning depends on the experience and understanding of the ustadz (teacher) without a formal learning plan. Core activities are carried out by students reading, analysing, and discussing Arabic-Indonesian texts alternately. Students receive explanations in two languages to facilitate understanding of Arabic vocabulary. This step effectively improves students' understanding of Aqidah and Arabic language skills. The ustadz, as a facilitator, provides feedback to create dynamic and responsive learning. The CLIL method in bilingual education has successfully improved understanding of religious material and language mastery. This study's novelty lies in applying the CLIL approach in bilingual education through dynamic and responsive bilingual education. The study's limitations were due to the selection of the research location of only one Islamic boarding school and using qualitative methods so that the findings could not be generalised to other Islamic boarding schools. Further research suggests exploring the impact of digital technology in supporting bilingual education in Salafi Islamic boarding schools.*

Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti bagaimana pendidikan dwibahasa (bilingual) dapat meningkatkan pemahaman siswa tentang pembelajaran *Aqidah* melalui kitab *Ushul Tsalatsah* dalam bahasa Arab. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif untuk mengeksplorasi pendidikan bilingual dalam pembelajaran *Aqidah* di Pondok Pesantren Imam Syafi'iy di Kota Bima. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan

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dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Pengujian validitas melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan bilingual menggunakan pendekatan *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL). Perencanaan pembelajaran bergantung pada pengalaman dan pemahaman *ustadz* (guru) tanpa rencana pembelajaran formal. Kegiatan inti dilakukan oleh siswa dengan membaca, menganalisis, dan mendiskusikan teks Arab-Indonesia secara bergantian. Siswa menerima penjelasan dalam dua bahasa untuk memudahkan pemahaman kosakata Arab. Langkah ini secara efektif meningkatkan pemahaman siswa tentang Aqidah dan keterampilan bahasa Arab. *Ustadz*, sebagai fasilitator, memberikan umpan balik untuk menciptakan pembelajaran yang dinamis dan responsif. Metode CLIL dalam pendidikan bilingual telah berhasil meningkatkan pemahaman materi agama dan penguasaan bahasa. Keberhasilan studi ini terletak pada penerapan pendekatan CLIL dalam pendidikan bilingual melalui pendidikan bilingual yang dinamis dan responsif. Keterbatasan studi ini disebabkan oleh pemilihan lokasi penelitian hanya di satu pesantren Islam dan menggunakan metode kualitatif sehingga temuan tidak dapat digeneralisasi ke pesantren Islam lainnya. Penelitian lebih lanjut menyarankan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak teknologi digital dalam mendukung pendidikan bilingual di pesantren Salafi.

**Keywords:** *Bilingual Education, Aqidah Learning, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Arabic Language, Islamic Boarding School.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*Aqidah* learning teaches the basic principles of faith as the foundation of Islamic education, forming an awareness of the vertical relationship with Allah and horizontal with fellow humans (Hocini et al., 2020) (Huda, 2024; Mat Hussin et al., 2023). *Aqidah* learning, which focuses on understanding the Al-Qur'an and authentic Hadith, aims to build faith and morality through Islamic teachings (Syukri et al., 2024). Educators try to overcome the weaknesses of *Aqidah* education by instilling the value of faith from an early age through Islamic boarding schools (Holid, 2023).

The Imam Syafi'iy Islamic Boarding School (*pesantren*) in Bima City, which is Salafi, teaches three basic principles of Islam: knowing Allah, Islam, and the Prophet Muhammad. This *Pesantren* uses the book *Usul Tsalatsah* by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab At-Tamimi in Arabic to encourage direct understanding of the source text. *Aqidah* learning is implemented with bilingual education that integrates the government curriculum and the Saudi Arabian education system. This combination of Salafi and national curriculum helps students internalise Islamic teachings and adapt *Aqidah* learning to the development of the times (Pham, 2016).

Understanding Arabic is very important in studying Islamic Religious education literature because most scholars wrote their works in Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, and *Aqidah* using this language (Andriani, 2015). The complexity of Arabic requires in-depth understanding, especially in the choice of words that affect the meaning of the text

(Ritonga et al., 2021). Mastery of Arabic allows students to access knowledge from sources, while those who do not master it only rely on translations. Therefore, Arabic is the key to understanding Islamic teachings in depth.

Grade X students at the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* in Bima City face challenges in bilingual education on *Aqidah* material. Group B2, who come from public schools, have difficulty understanding the material and reading the *Ushul Tsalatsah* book due to limited Arabic vocabulary, which hinders the achievement of learning objectives. In contrast, group B1, the majority of whom are alumni of Integrated Islamic Junior High School (SMP IT) Imam Syafi'iy, find it easier to understand the material. The teacher stated that bilingual education in grade X experiences significant obstacles due to differences in the students' educational backgrounds. Many students have difficulty reading the Qur'an and Arabic books, have limited vocabulary, and do not understand the rules of *nahwu*. The speed of delivering the material is also a challenge, so students have difficulty understanding the contents of the lesson. Teachers use Indonesian more often to overcome this, provide additional exercises, and explain grammar rules. However, a more adaptive and inclusive approach is still very much needed. The difference in Arabic language ability between the two groups creates a gap in understanding *Aqidah* learning (Mukmin, 2019).

Bilingual education combines the mother tongue with Arabic as a foreign language through presentation, practice, and production stages, encouraging effective interaction between teachers and students (Mustofa, 2021; Putri et al., 2023). Implementing this bilingual education can potentially overcome the gap in understanding Arabic (Feng, 2024; Hurajova, 2019). The Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* in Bima City implements bilingual education in teaching *Aqidah*, which is thought to be able to improve the ability to read, write, understand, think critically, and develop students' cognition in understanding the *Ushul Tsalatsah* book as a source of learning *Aqidah*.

Bilingual education in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory includes various approaches, such as behaviourism, interactionism, sociocultural, and comprehension theory, which explain how individuals acquire and master a language other than their mother tongue. Errors in learning, both systematic and non-systematic, affect the development of language skills, while appropriate feedback helps to correct them. First-language interference can positively or negatively impact target language acquisition, while comprehensible input, interactive communication, and social interaction enrich linguistic competence. Understanding the differences between language learning and acquisition and between a foreign language and a second language determines a practical approach to language teaching and learning (Almohawes, 2024).

Interlanguage (IL) theory explains SLA by emphasising that learners actively form rules based on the data they encounter. IL supports communicative teaching and considers errors as part of the learning process. However, this theory has been criticised for its difficulty in predicting learners' linguistic stages, identifying IL processes, and addressing fossilisation. In addition, learners' positions between the native and target languages are difficult to determine, and some learners stop at certain stages due to brain changes or fossilisation (Al-khresheh, 2015).

In the context of Large-Scale Innovative Projects (LSIP), IL theory emphasises the importance of "interlanguage creation" for coordinating extreme and interdisciplinary tasks. LSIP integrates various disciplines through interlanguages formed from linguistic interactions, management tools, and material representations, with five critical

developmental phases (Lenfle & Söderlund, 2019). In learning *Aqidah* in *Pesantren Salafi*, bilingual education is thought to help students understand the Arabic *Usul Tsalatsah* book as a source of learning *Aqidah*. However, IL faces challenges in predicting linguistic stages (Al-khresheh, 2015).

Several previous studies have examined aspects of bilingual education in various contexts. Mukminin found that bilingual private SMP students in Jambi used more memory strategies in learning English, with no significant differences between genders (Mukminin et al., 2018). Grenfell & Harris showed that bilingual students in London had higher listening test scores and used oral or aural strategies that developed from the home environment (Grenfell & Harris, 2015). Bai & Zang found a positive correlation between motivation and engagement in learning Mandarin and English in China (Bai & Zang, 2025). Noge found a significant increase in student learning activities and achievement with the E-Flashcard-based Bilingual Preview-Review model (Noge, 2019). Sari showed that parental, environmental, and educational factors influence children's language development at Al Azhar Kindergarten, Medan (Sari, 2020). Eviatar found that bilingual children performed better on a fast mapping task than monolingual children, with the influence of language experience on their memory and metalinguistic abilities (Eviatar et al., 2018).

Various studies have revealed the benefits of bilingual education in English, French, and Mandarin (Bai & Zang, 2025; Grenfell & Harris, 2015; Mukminin et al., 2018; Noge, 2019), as well as the application of the bilingual model in early childhood education (Eviatar et al., 2018; Sari, 2020). Previous studies have not explained how bilingual education helps *Pesantren* students understand the Arabic *Usul Tsalatsah* book as a source of learning *Aqidah*. This study presents a novelty by examining bilingual education in learning *Aqidah* in Salafi Islamic boarding schools, which has rarely been studied before. This study reveals how bilingual education improves students' understanding of Arabic *Aqidah* learning resources in *Pesantren*.

This study examines bilingual education in *Aqidah* in *Pesantren Salafi*, which has rarely been studied before. Unlike studies focusing on language learning strategies in formal education, this study highlights bilingual education to address the gap in Arabic language comprehension in *Pesantren*. This approach is explored in helping students understand Arabic *Aqidah* materials, thereby improving their comprehension.

This study examines bilingual education in understanding the learning sources of *Ushul Tsalatsah* books in *Aqidah* learning in *Pesantren Salafi*. The focus of this study is to investigate how bilingual education improves the understanding of *Aqidah* material for students who have difficulty in Arabic. By adapting the findings of previous studies, this study will likely contribute to the development of more effective learning models or methods in Islamic boarding schools, especially in Islamic religious learning that uses Arabic references.

## II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a field study design (Creswell, 2015). Researchers use a constructivist paradigm to deeply understand the phenomena that occur in a particular social and cultural context. The type of research conducted is a case study to explore the phenomenon of *Aqidah* learning at the Imam Syafi'iy Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) in Bima City.

This study examines the implementation of bilingual education in *Aqidah* learning at the *Pesantren Salafi*, focusing on its impact on the students' understanding. The study subjects included *santri* (students), *ustadz* (teachers), and the head of the *Pesantren* as the primary informants.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to observe the use of Arabic and Indonesian in teaching, interactions between students and *ustadz*, and student's understanding of the concept of *Aqidah*. In-depth interviews with *ustadz*, students, and *pesantren* leaders explored information about bilingual education, the obstacles faced, and its impact on Arabic language skills. Documentation includes the *Ushul Tsalatsah* book, curriculum, policies, and teaching records that show the implementation of bilingual education.

Data validity tests are conducted using triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the accuracy of information. Data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and verification to ensure the validity of the research results (Sugiyono, 2017).

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Bilingual Education to Improve Students' Understanding of Faith

##### *Planning*

In the planning of *Aqidah* learning, educators do not prepare formal lesson plans but directly refer to Arabic literature. This method relies on the experience and understanding of the *ustadz* without a planned structure that is tailored to the needs of students. The absence of lesson plans can reduce learning effectiveness, especially in providing systematic guidance for implementing the bilingual method.

"At the planning stage of *Aqidah* learning, I did not prepare a formal Lesson Plan (*RPP: Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran*). I usually refer directly to Arabic literature as the main reference. This process relies more on my experience and understanding of the material without a planned structure to suit students' needs. The absence of *RPP* sometimes makes learning less effective because I do not have a systematic guide to determine the appropriate learning stages and methods, especially in implementing bilingual education." (*Ustadz*, personal communication, 2024).

##### *Implementation*

"I start the opening activity by saying hello and delivering the introduction in Arabic and Indonesian. I asked about the previous lesson and how to connect it to the new material. This bilingual education trains students to understand Arabic while still getting explanations in Indonesian. In the core activity, students read Arabic texts in turns together to practice pronunciation. I divide them into groups to analyse and translate the text and provide bilingual explanations so Arabic vocabulary is easier to understand. I close the activity by concluding the material and ensuring they understand the core of the learning through a bilingual review of important points" (*Ustadz*, personal communication, 2024).

##### a. Opening Activities

*Ustadz* started the opening activity by greeting and delivering the introduction in bilingual (Arabic and Indonesian). He connected the material with the previous

lesson through questions, creating continuity of learning. This bilingual education helps students get used to Arabic while understanding the context through Indonesian.

b. Core Activities

In core learning, the *ustadz* appoints students in turns to read Arabic texts while guiding intonation, pronunciation, and tajwid. After that, all students read together to strengthen pronunciation and self-confidence. Students are then divided into small groups to analyse and discuss the meaning of the text in Indonesian, then present the translation results in front of the class to be corrected by the *ustadz*.

The *ustadz* explains the text bilingually, starting with Arabic and then followed by an explanation in Indonesian, helping students understand Arabic vocabulary. In the Q&A session, the cleric asks open-ended questions to test the students' understanding. They are asked to answer in Arabic to the best of their ability and continue in Indonesian if necessary.

Learning is linked to everyday life through examples of relevant Quranic verses, while students are encouraged to share experiences in reflective discussions. They also note new vocabulary, create simple sentences, and translate sections of the book as independent exercises.

The *ustadz* provides direct feedback on the students' pronunciation, translation, and understanding. If understanding is lacking, *ustadz* repeats the explanation using a different method, such as an analogy or diagram, to clarify the concept.

c. Closing Activities

The closing activity involves the *ustadz* and students concluding the material bilingually. Students are asked to explain their understanding. The *ustadz's* review reinforces this explanation to ensure that all students understand the core of the learning, regardless of their language ability.

In class X of Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren*, bilingual education is implemented using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method. *Ustadz* teaches *Aqidah* material in Arabic and explains it in Indonesian. This approach facilitates students' understanding of *Aqidah* content while improving their Arabic language skills. Learning activities include reading, translating, discussing, and analysing texts in two languages, using alternate reading methods, group analysis, and active discussions. The closing activity summarises the material in two languages to ensure students' understanding.

The CLIL method has proven effective because it integrates content teaching (*Aqidah*) with Arabic, allowing students to master both simultaneously. In Europe, CLIL is applied to subjects such as Mathematics and Science to improve foreign language proficiency and academic content (Hurajová, 2015). In *Pesantren*, this method is adapted for religious education, strengthening Arabic language proficiency and understanding of *Aqidah*. Although the main challenge lies in teaching two languages, applying CLIL in the context of religion and Islamic values provides advantages in learning.

*Ustadz* at the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* applies a bilingual educational approach in *Aqidah* with the principle of constructivism, relying on personal experience without a formal lesson plan structure. Learning focuses on the active involvement of students through reading Arabic texts, group discussions, and text analysis, which build

understanding through social interaction. Students are allowed to answer in Arabic or Indonesian and share experiences. The material is connected to everyday life using verses from the Qur'an. Direct feedback helps improve students' understanding, creating dynamic and responsive learning, with the *ustadz* acting as a facilitator.

Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* has successfully implemented a bilingual education approach that creates a learning environment based on the principles of constructivism. Learning that emphasises social interaction, collaboration, and personal reflection allows students to build a deep and applicable understanding of the *Aqidah* material (Deng, 2024). The *ustadz* is a facilitator who provides direct feedback and encourages active student involvement, creating dynamic learning responsive to students' needs and experiences (Lascsakova, 2024). This approach develops students' cognitive, critical, and reflective skills in in-depth analysis.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of blended instruction in bilingual *ustadz* training programs, which emphasise straightforward curriculum design, effective interaction, and interactive learning. Positive responses from training participants confirmed the success of integrating subject knowledge and language teaching, which aligns with the *pesantren* approach that emphasises active and collaborative interaction. Both studies highlight the importance of interactive approaches to improving language comprehension and skills in bilingual education (Tsou & Tsai, 2022).

The bilingual education strategy in *Aqidah* uses code-switching, which is the change between Arabic and Indonesian at each stage of learning. The *ustadz* explains Arabic material and Indonesian vocabulary to suit the student's abilities. In group discussions, students use Indonesian to understand Arabic texts. In question and answer sessions, students answer in Arabic according to their abilities, then continue with Indonesian if necessary. This strategy ensures flexibility and in-depth understanding without reducing the authenticity of the Arabic language being taught.

In line with Tian & Lau's research, translanguaging (TL) pedagogy creates an inclusive language space to support bilinguals' in-depth understanding and subjectivity (Tian & Lau, 2023). While CLIL emphasises formal structures and a primary content focus, TL is more flexible, integrating students' communicative repertoires to decolonise language ideologies. Both approaches support critical learning, enhance language skills, and adapt strategies to context.

Kechichian Khanji's research in Lebanon revealed the cognitive challenges of bilingual learning, primarily related to Executive Functions (EF) in spelling skills of languages with complex orthographies, such as Arabic and French (Kechichian Khanji, 2024). This study highlights the importance of bilingualism, in contrast to current research focusing more on the practical integration of content and language. Both studies agree that bilingual education improves linguistic skills, but the previous study highlighted the cognitive challenges, while the current study highlights the pedagogical and collaborative aspects.

The Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory with the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach explains bilingual education in the context of *Aqidah* learning. SLA emphasises using a second language (Arabic) in a meaningful context, while CLIL integrates content and language, using Arabic for materials and Indonesian for explanations. This approach allows students to develop Arabic language skills and an in-depth understanding of content. This finding aligns with Almohawes'

research, emphasising the importance of effective teaching strategies in second language acquisition (Almohawes, 2024).

Research on bilingual education methods with CLIL at the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* illustrates the application of SLA theory and sociocultural theory (SCT). This approach combines Arabic and Indonesian to support understanding *Aqidah* and language acquisition. With the constructivist method, *ustadzs* provide experience-based learning, and students actively read, discuss, and analyse texts. The code-switching strategy supports flexibility and facilitates understanding. Within the SCT framework, mediation by *ustadz's* and peer interactions create scaffolding that supports learning. This approach aligns with the principles of data-driven learning (DDL), which aims to increase lexical awareness and language patterns and provide meaningful experiences in developing language knowledge through contextual use (O'Keeffe, 2021).

According to Interlanguage (IL) theory, students actively form second language rules in bilingual learning based on the data they encounter. Code-switching supports this transition, helping students overcome the language gap. Although IL faces challenges, such as the prediction of linguistic development stages that are not always linear, this approach allows students to go through interlanguage phases dynamically, in line with constructivist learning in teaching *Aqidah* (Al-khresheh, 2015; Lenfle & Söderlund, 2019).

### ***Evaluation***

The *ustadz* conducts an informal evaluation in each meeting by asking the students oral questions. "We use bilingual education to ensure that all students understand the material, although the use of Arabic in class X B2 is still low," he explained. "Formative evaluation takes place throughout the learning process. We often repeat the material, especially in class X B2, because the students' understanding is rather slow. We re-read the book or provide additional explanations," he continued. "Summative evaluation is carried out at the end of the semester with bilingual-based questions, prioritising Indonesian but still involving Arabic," he added (*Ustadz*, personal communication, 2024).

#### **a. Face to Face Evaluation**

The *ustadz* conducts informal evaluations at each meeting with oral questions to test the students' understanding of the material. This technique uses bilingual education, so all students can participate in learning, even though the Arabic language skills in class X B2 are lower. This evaluation is based on the principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, emphasising the importance of understandable input (Brown & Seibert Hanson, 2019). Bilingual education ensures understanding of the material even though the students' Arabic language skills are not yet optimal, according to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Lasmawan & Budiarta, 2020). Using the interaction hypothesis, oral evaluation also improves language skills through direct interaction, which improves language skills through feedback and negotiation of meaning (Reeves et al., 2019). From the perspective of Interlanguage theory, the use of Indonesian shows that students are still in the second language development phase, which helps them correct mistakes through direct feedback (Verspoor & de Bot, 2022).

b. Formative Evaluation

Teachers conduct formative evaluations throughout the learning process by repeating the material, especially in class X B2, where students' understanding is slower. This approach prioritises re-delivering material students have not mastered through re-reading the book or additional explanations. This formative evaluation reflects the principles of Constructivist Theory, which views learning as an active process of building new understanding (Yang, 2023). Repetition of the material strengthens students' input intake, increases noticing of the target language structure, and helps correct systematic errors in interlanguage development.

c. Summative Evaluation

The teacher designed the end-of-semester evaluation with test questions that combined Indonesian as the dominant language and some used Arabic. This evaluation consistently implemented bilingual education, testing students in two languages to ensure mastery of the material and Arabic language skills. The summative evaluation assessed the final learning outcomes but still prioritised understanding with a more significant portion of Indonesian. This bilingual-based test reflects the SLA principle of dual language processing and tests students' Arabic language skills, which aligns with interlanguage theory (Gruca et al., 2016). Using dominant Indonesian reflects the teacher's understanding of the students' developing Arabic language skills. This test also supports the interlanguage system's transition from first to second language. According to constructivist theory, this evaluation focuses on students by accommodating their language limitations while challenging their linguistic abilities, providing a meaningful learning experience.

Evaluations show that a holistic approach integrating SLA, Interlanguage, and Constructivist theories effectively supports second language acquisition. Bilingual education and repetition of materials accelerate the learning process, while summative assessments promote mastery of the target language. These strategies reflect the teachers' understanding of the diverse needs of their students and the importance of creating an optimal learning environment for language development.

### **The Impact of Bilingual Education in Improving Students' Understanding of Aqidah**

One of the *Aqidah* teachers said, "Bilingual education in *Aqidah* learning has a significant impact, especially for students in class X B1. They understand the *Aqidah* material more deeply, enrich their Arabic vocabulary, and improve their ability to read books." The teacher also added, "Students in class X B1 can connect the teachings of *Aqidah* with their daily lives. However, different challenges are found in class X B2, where non-alumni students have difficulty understanding Arabic texts due to limited ability to read the Qur'an and Arabic vocabulary, so their understanding of *Aqidah* is not optimal." (*Ustadz*, personal communication, 2024).

The bilingual education approach in the subject of *Aqidah* significantly affects the mastery of the material, especially in class X B1, by the Second Language Acquisition theory. This theory states that the consistent use of the target language, in this case Arabic, in learning helps students enrich their vocabulary and improve their understanding of the book's text. Students in class X B1, who have a better Arabic background, can build a deeper understanding of *Aqidah* and strengthen their Arabic language skills. Integrating Arabic and Indonesian is an effective learning medium,

allowing students to understand abstract concepts more concretely through translation and elaboration in the language they master.

The students stated, "Learning in this class is very useful. For example, when learning Arabic, we also study *Aqidah* in depth. It is easier for us to understand the contents of the Qur'an because our Arabic vocabulary is increasing. In addition, *Aqidah* lessons help us be more confident in religious teachings and motivate us to think more critically about the religious concepts taught. This integration of learning makes us learn theory and understand religion more thoroughly." (*Santri*, personal communication, 2024).

Bilingual education improves students' cognitive understanding of *Aqidah* material. The use of Arabic and Indonesian helps them understand the teachings of *Aqidah* more clearly, especially for students in class X B1 who have a better Arabic background. Improving reading skills and Arabic vocabulary strengthens the understanding of religious texts. However, non-alumni students in class X B2 experience difficulties due to limited Arabic, which impacts the overall understanding of *Aqidah*.

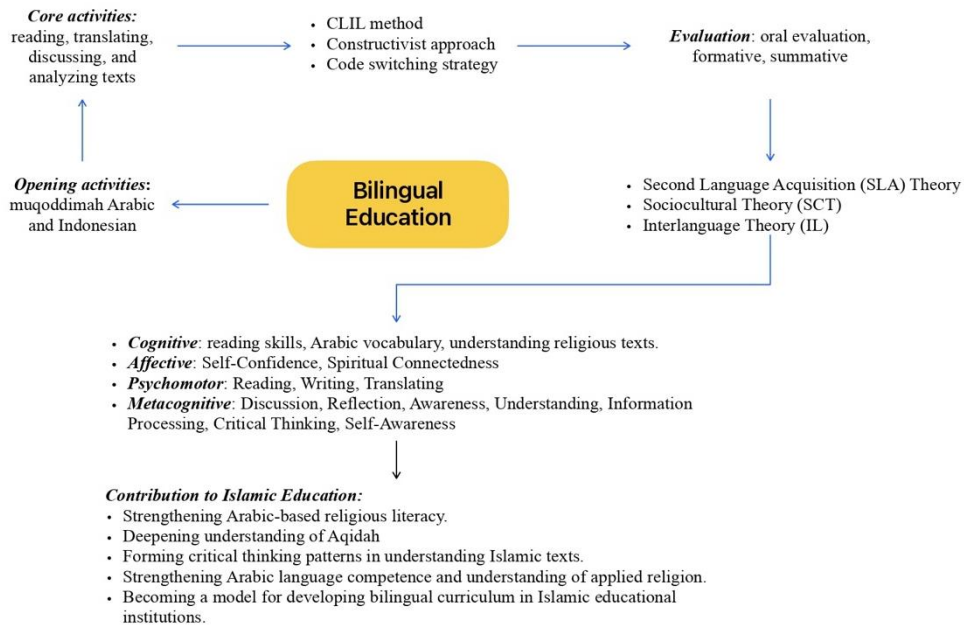
This learning also impacts students' affective aspects, increasing their self-confidence and belief in religious teachings. Integrating Arabic and *Aqidah* makes them more connected to religious teachings, more confident in the concepts taught, and more motivated to learn and think critically about religious values. In the psychomotor aspect, reading and translating Arabic texts into Indonesian train students' fine motor skills. Although Arabic language proficiency varies, they are active in reading, writing, and discussion activities.

This bilingual education also has a positive impact on the metacognitive development of students. By discussing and connecting the teachings of *Aqidah* with everyday life, they can monitor and regulate the learning process. Using two languages increases their awareness in understanding and processing information, strengthening critical thinking skills and self-awareness of language development and religious understanding.

According to the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory, consistent use of Arabic helps students enrich their vocabulary and improve their reading skills (Almohawes, 2024). Bilingual education has proven effective in class X B1, where students with a better Arabic background can understand the *Aqidah* material more deeply. Integrating Indonesian in learning also makes it easier to understand abstract concepts and helps them understand Arabic texts more concretely.

Interlanguage (IL) theory explains that second language acquisition involves a transition phase, where students who are more skilled in Arabic find it easier to understand the *Aqidah* text (Lenfle & Söderlund, 2019)(Al-khresheh, 2015). In class X B1, good Arabic language skills support more optimal understanding. On the other hand, students in class X B2, who are less proficient in Arabic, face difficulties understanding the *Aqidah* text, so their understanding of the material becomes limited.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) emphasises the importance of social interaction in learning. Bilingual education encourages students to interact in the language they master through group discussions or text translation (O'Keeffe, 2021). This process enriches their understanding and cognitive skills, increases self-confidence, and deepens their appreciation of religious teachings. Interacting in two languages encourages students to think critically and connect religious teachings with everyday life.



**Figure 1.** Bilingual Education to Improve Understanding of Aqidah at Pesantren Salafi

Figure 1 illustrates that bilingual education in *Aqidah* learning at the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* has significant theoretical implications, especially in the application of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Interlanguage (IL), and Sociocultural (SCT) Theory. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)-based learning allows students to master Arabic while understanding *Aqidah* material more deeply. Interlanguage (IL) Theory explains how students build Arabic language skills through the transition phase, while Sociocultural Theory (SCT) highlights the role of social interaction in improving religious and language understanding.

The bilingual method with a code-switching strategy between Arabic and Indonesian helps students understand abstract concepts and apply religious values in everyday life. The teacher acts as a facilitator who provides scaffolding through discussion, text analysis, and reflection so students can learn actively. In addition, using constructivist learning methods allows students to connect *Aqidah's* theory with real experiences, increasing their motivation and involvement in learning.

Contribution to Islamic education lies in strengthening Arabic-based religious literacy, which improves students' understanding of *Aqidah* and forms a critical mindset in understanding Islamic texts. By implementing bilingual education, *Pesantren* can produce graduates with strong Arabic language competencies and contextual and applicable religious understanding. In addition, this strategy can be a model for other Islamic educational institutions to develop an effective bilingual curriculum to support a deeper understanding of religion.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Bilingual education helps students understand the *Aqidah* material from the *Usul Tsalatsah* book through the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principle. In class X of the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren*, the *ustadz* teaches the *Aqidah* material in Arabic and explains it in Indonesian, making it easier for students to

understand. Learning includes reading, translating, discussing, and analysing texts in two languages and applying code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian to adjust students' language abilities. Informal and formative evaluations improve understanding and support the development of a second language through the theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Sociocultural Theory (SCT), and Constructivist Theory, ensuring a deep understanding of the material and improving students' Arabic language abilities. Theoretical implications are that bilingual education in learning *Aqidah* at the Imam Syafi'iy *Pesantren* supports the application of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Interlanguage (IL), and Sociocultural (SCT) Theory. CLIL helps students master Arabic and understand *Aqidah* material more deeply, with Interlanguage explaining the transition phase in language skills and SCT emphasising the role of social interaction in improving religious and language understanding. Practical implications are that bilingual education with code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian helps students understand abstract concepts and apply religious values in everyday life. Teachers act as facilitators through discussion and reflection, while constructivist learning increases students' motivation and involvement. The contribution of the research is that bilingual education strengthens Arabic-based religious literacy, improves understanding of *Aqidah*, and forms critical thinking patterns towards Islamic texts. This produces graduates with strong Arabic language competence and applicable religious understanding and becomes a model for the development of bilingual curricula in other Islamic educational institutions.

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