Symbolic capital and the problem of navigating English language teacher practice: the case of Indonesian pesantren

Andrew Skourdoumbis
Deakin University

Ahmad Madkur
State Islamic Institute of Metro

Abstract: *English is the most widely taught and learned language in the world. Within the broader literatures on the worldwide spread and dominance of English as a key skill for 21st century education, the use of English(es) and English Language Teaching (ELT) in the context of schooling in Asian countries represent an important research direction. Our paper contributes to these debates by exploring the problem of English language teachers' beliefs about their pedagogical practices in Indonesian* pesantren *schools. The system of religious* pesantren *schools provides a unique research context to examine teacher practice in classrooms where English is not assigned the assumed de facto status of a 'global lingua franca'. In engaging a Bourdieusian lens, this paper explores teachers' perceptions of the (lack of) symbolic and linguistic capital of English language learning in* pesantren, *the emergent tensions, and how these frame teacher beliefs and practice. In so doing, this paper aims to contribute to the broader debates in the field that seek to critically analyse and reframe the hegemonic status of English as a global educational commodity of political-economic power.*

Key words: *English language teaching (ELT), Indonesia, pesantren, teacher practice, symbolic capital.*

Introduction: English language teaching in *pesantren* schools in Indonesia

This paper explores various elements connected to the notion of symbolic capital and the challenges encountered by English language teachers in Indonesian *pesantren* as they enact their teaching practice. In doing so, our study draws attention to the

tensions between the symbolic capital that English is afforded as the pre-eminent language of an advanced global capitalism characterised by the macro-structural forces of contemporary globalization and economic competitiveness, and the socio-cultural micro-contexts of *pesantren* schools, which are comprised of their own unique set of educational goals, practices and values.

Our paper is drawn from a larger study that explored the beliefs of English language teachers in *pesantren* schools located in the Lampung province of Indonesia, and how their teacher beliefs (Buehl & Beck, 2014) shaped their pedagogy and practice. In particular, the study aimed to bring to light teacher, student and broader school community perspectives around the usefulness and relevance of the English language; how its teachers and learners were positioned in this particular school context; and how EFL teachers navigated the language ideologies and discourses (see for example, Flores 2013, León, 2018) that framed these views in their everyday classroom practice.

Pesantren are Islamic boarding schools, which exist across Indonesia. Established in the 18th century (Hefner, 2016), they are overseen jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. *Pesantren* provide comprehensive full-time education through immersing their students in the social and religious life and community of the boarding institution, which comprises schools, mosques, and boarding facilities including student dormitories, canteens and common areas. Both traditional and modern *pesantren* have a strong focus on religious teachings. They are headed by an Islamic scholar (*kyai*), with authority to oversee the development and implementation of the school curriculum and the everyday management of the school, including subject selections, teaching and learning resources, pedagogical approaches and the appointment of teaching staff (Ma'arif, 2018). While traditional *pesantren* design and implement their curriculum based on classical books of Islamic teaching and traditional methods common in religious instruction (Zarkasyi, 2015), modern *pesantren* structure their curriculum around the content and learning objectives of Indonesia's national curriculum, while maintaining a strong emphasis on Islamic Studies (Maragustam, 2016). Both traditional and modern *pesantren* teach religious subjects, which include, for example, Arabic language study, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), monotheism in Islam (*tawheed*), and Islamic Sufism.

Similar to most countries in Asia and around the world, English is a mandated key learning area of the Indonesian national

curriculum and is given priority as the first additional language to be studied in schools (Sukyadi, 2015). Indonesia's status as the fourth most populous country in the world makes it one of the largest markets for English language education (Zein, 2019). There is an increasing trend in Indonesia to introduce English language instruction from kindergarten, with many (upper) middle class families considering English language proficiency as an essential skill for their children to acquire in order to be successful later in life (Dharmaputra, 2019). In recent years, *pesantren* have also responded to globalised education agendas (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009), which demand and position English language proficiency as a key skill and resource for the contemporary political economy (O'Regan, 2020). Drawing on current debates in the field around the contentions surrounding global English(es) (see Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2017; Lin & Motha, 2020) and the commodification of language in society and education (see Heller & Duchêne, 2016; Simpson & O'Regan, 2018), our paper aims to contribute to these discussions by foregrounding how these complexities are experienced and negotiated by the classroom teacher as the 'key stakeholder, who is in a prime position to report 'on-the-ground' challenges [...] [in] English language classrooms' (Rose & Montakantiwong, 2018, p. 88).

Research study and methodology
Nine English language teachers (3 female, 6 male) formed the interview participants for this study. They were recruited through one of the researchers' professional networks of modern *pesantren* in three different districts – Kota Metro, Lampung Tengah and Lampung Timur – in the Lampung province of Indonesia. Teaching experience amongst participants ranged from between three to over ten years in both junior *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (Years 7-9) and senior *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (Years 10-12) school. All participants held roles as classroom teachers of English; two out of the nine teachers also had leadership or extra-curricular responsibilities as coordinators of the English language learning lab dedicated to computer-assisted language learning, and an English language club in their respective schools.

Qualitative interviews with participants were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated from Indonesian into English. Methodologically, our research engaged thematic analysis, drawing on Nowell and colleagues' (2017) six-phase approach for establishing trustworthiness. NVivo was used to generate initial

codes, followed by a three-stage method of analysis to identify overarching themes and discourses. The first stage synthesised the views that the participants articulated in relation to the conditions and challenges of teaching English in the context of Indonesian *pesantren*, and the beliefs informing their pedagogy and practice. The second stage captured the themes that emerged from the participants' interview narratives, with a third stage focusing on uncovering the discourses underpinning the participants' discussions.

This paper focuses on three episodes generated from a key theme that was developed in the analysis of the interview data: *Symbolic capital of English in pesantren and its impact on teacher practice*. We have selected to focus on this theme as it represents an important discussion within the data, capturing an alternative perspective of the discourse of English as a 'hyper-central language' (de Swaan, 2001), with far-reaching implications for teacher beliefs, pedagogy and practice. Before discussing these episodes, we trace the theoretical framing of our analysis in the section below, looking to Bourdieu's conceptualisation of cultural and linguistic capital and its symbolic power.

Symbolic capital and power

Forms of capital in the Bourdieusian sense represent the types of credit and amassed influence that agents have at their disposal as sources of exchange to carry out their functions within the social sphere of action. There are differing forms of capital, with Bourdieu framing much of his work around notions of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Depending upon circumstances, each act as a type of currency in 'fields of power'. The Bourdieusian conceptualisation of capital accepts that agents seek to maintain or enhance their interest/s within a field, which is dependent on and affected by the series of opportunities and constraints encountered in a structured and prevailing economic, political, cultural and social order. There are unequal distributions of capital and power amongst individuals and groups, which means that there is a constant struggle over resources, both actual (i.e., material) and in definition around what to value and what is being valued. Power then is representative of various structured forces acting on and between individuals and groups in the convertibility of capital.

Cultural capital, which includes a linguistic component, incorporates an 'ensemble of cultivated dispositions that are

internalized by the individual through socialization and that constitute schemes of appreciation and understanding' (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). Beginning in the home representing the time and other associated exposures afforded to the child, this extends to formal schooling, where the '...investment of inherited cultural capital returns dividends in school, rewarding those with large amounts of incorporated cultural capital and penalizing those without' (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). The reproductive effects of the cultural inculcations of stratified school systems that rely on specific language and linguistic formalization have been well documented in Bourdieusian research into schooling (see for example, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This is illustrated in the various discursive practices of schooling where the value of language is often given expression through the forms of linguistic competence that align with the codified legitimations of the schooling system.

Education systems, as systems of knowledge, represent *symbolic capital* which is in many respects the resource of '...socially recognized and approved authority' (Swartz, 2013, p. 101). It acts by way of a legitimized expression in a given field through the meanings, concepts, labels and so on by agents that act within it. The 'capacity to impose classifications and meanings as legitimate' (Swartz, 2013, p. 38) i.e., to actually be in the position to exercise authority via the exchange of social capital is *symbolic power*.

Language is central 'to the exercise of symbolic power' (Swartz, 2013, p. 86) because it provides the platform for its expression in terms of categorizing and differentiating the social. In the field of education, English dominates as the medium of communication and instruction, through which the accepted definitions and conceptualisations of internationalisation, i.e., the accepted understandings of the new globalised world order of the knowledge economy emanate. In Asia, many countries are navigating tensions that may emerge from taking a 'proactive [stance] in appropriating English for their national interests, while paying attention to associated national cultural identity issues' (Ha, 2013, p. 160). More specifically, English language teaching and learning is regarded as key in education policy and curriculum objectives for the internationalisation of education, and for successful participation and competitiveness in the global economy (Ha, 2013). The dominant utilitarian tropes of the new knowledge economy, i.e., flexibility, innovation and the utilisation of intellectual capital for the development of globally minded and

globally mobile '21st century citizens', drives and shapes educational reforms and policy-making in Asia and internationally. Such a positioning of the role of education as supporting the production of a portfolio of strategic capabilities has particular implications for the curricularisation, pedagogy and practice of English language education. Reflected in 'the seemingly taken-for-granted Western superiority mentality' (Ha, 2013, p. 163), English is in many respects the hegemonic communicative force that has contributed to a construction of 'languages study as being about the accumulation of commodified workplace skills…[whereby] multilingualism is reduced to a strategic resource that can be mobilised for society and the public good in communities, educational settings, families and workplaces' (Arber, Weinmann & Blackmore, 2020, p. 1).

Pesantren are no different in this regard in that policy-making pressure in Indonesia as a response to the demands of globalization have encouraged the incorporation of English into the *pesantren* curriculum. While historically the teaching of English in *pesantren* was contentious because of the perception of English as a language of colonialism and a language widely spoken by *kafir* (non-believers) (Rasyid, 2012), there have been significant shifts since the Indonesian government's educational reforms which made English a mandatory curriculum discipline in all secondary schools. The majority of Indonesian Muslim scholars and stake-holders in *pesantren* emphasise that in the current times, one of the most important skills for Indonesian students is the mastery of languages, especially English, as a tool to communicate with a wider global population (Hidayat, 2017). Drawing on the fact that Islam actually encourages its believers to learn foreign languages (Irwansyah, 2018), modern *pesantren* provide students with the opportunity to study both English and Arabic in addition to the national language Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages and dialects (Tahir, 2017).

Tensions nonetheless exist in the intersection between the long-established mandate of the provision of Islamic teachings in *pesantren*, for which Arabic is the medium of study and communication, and English language provision as mandated in the national Indonesian curriculum. Research to date has highlighted that ELT in *pesantren* can engender a cultural conflict with English seen as representative of 'Western' values that are regarded as counter to Islamic values articulated in *pesantren* education (Fahrudin, 2012). The symbolic power and dominance

of English within the *pesantren* schooling context is meant to exert control and effect some form of action or change. Domination generally occurs by way of 'master narratives' (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh & Martin, 2017, p. 256) centred on the importance of student achievement for the purposes of skill development linked to effective engagement in a new global economic order, which can have negative effects on teachers and students when ignoring local contexts. So, whilst the pressure of policy expectation connected to globalization and internationalisation (see Marginson, 1999) is ever-present with the need to learn English as an economic production factor, teachers and students nonetheless often try and adapt to these dominant external reforms by focusing on what they believe is important to them.

Episodes

The following section of this paper considers three distinctive episodes connected to the teaching of English in *pesantren*, which are representative of the key challenges experienced by teachers and students. Episode one is illustrative of the pragmatic challenges experienced by teachers and students in *pesantren*, whilst episode two details the utilitarian value attached to Arabic in contrast to English by students. Episode three reflects on the way English language teachers in *pesantren* negotiate their way through the teaching of English by co-opting the symbolic power of Arabic as a way of re-framing their teaching practice.

Episode 1: The pragmatic challenges of ELT in *pesantren* schools

The interviews in this study opened by asking teachers to describe their everyday practice of ELT in *pesantren*, and what they regarded as the unique challenges for ELT in their context. All participants agreed that *pesantren* schools' focus on the teaching of two curricula – Indonesia's national curriculum and the Islamic

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[1] Naming traditions in Indonesia differ depending on the region. It is not unusual for Indonesians to have only one name by which they are both formally and casually addressed. The use of surnames is not as established as in other countries; another naming convention is to have two or more names without adopting a family name. In this paper, we have adopted the use of an Indonesian first name (pseudonym), preceded by the polite form of address Pak ('Mr.') or Bu ('Ms.'), when referring to our participants. This reflects a common way of addressing or referring to others in a professional context in Indonesia.

Religious Studies curriculum unique to *pesantren* – contributed to a dense timetable that is required to address the demands of both. The number of subjects taught in *pesantren* is usually more than twice the number of subjects offered in regular Indonesian schools, as Pak Adi[1] points out: *Commonly, students in junior secondary school study about 13-15 subjects. In comparison, there are about 35 subjects in my pesantren* (Pak Adi). This is usually managed by shorter lesson times for each subject, which was seen as having a significant impact on the teaching and learning of English, as teachers stated that contact time was of particular importance in foreign language learning:

> The duration of English lessons is short, only 30-35 minutes per lesson. This is less than in non-*pesantren* schools, where English is allocated about 45-50 minutes per lesson. This is because *pesantren* have their own academic activities called diniyyah [learning sessions provided exclusively for the teaching of Islamic subjects], which are not taught in non-*pesantren* schools. (Pak Budi)

Teachers were aware that the 'double burden' of managing two curricula did not only have implications for their practice but also for their students' learning. In the following quote, Pak Mifa comments on the demands that long school days put on students, which are necessary to accommodate all of the different subject areas:

> Due to a full-day schedule they have in *pesantren*, I often find my students sleepy while I am delivering my lessons. I understand that this is because they go to bed at 10pm, and then they wake up early in the morning at 4am to start studying the Qur'an. This situation challenges me to manage my classes more effectively so I can keep the students engaged with my teaching materials. (Pak Mifa)

Concerns around a demanding timetable were reiterated by Pak Tono, who also pointed to the little leisure time that students had at their disposal as a result:

> My students find it difficult to stay focused during class because they are tired...They have very limited leisure time for hobbies or playing games like other young people...*Pesantren* do not allow students to use mobile phones. (Pak Tono)

Overall, all teachers interviewed for our study agreed that the particular curriculum requirements in *pesantren* generated

additional demands for both teachers and students. As the quotes above highlight, teachers understood the need of carefully planned lessons in order to maintain student engagement, and to support the learning of their students, whose cognitive resources are often stretched because of the lack of substantive free-time that would allow them to pursue an interest outside of school, or the absence of even short-term distractions like playing a game on their mobile phone. While participants acknowledged that these challenges were not limited to English language classes in *pesantren*, but also experienced by other curriculum disciplines, they all commented that ELT faced specific constraints that were unique to English compared to other subjects. One such challenge that teachers of English unanimously identified was the central position of the Arabic language in *pesantren*, which will be explored in more detail in the episode below.

Episode 2: Symbolic capital in *pesantren* and its impact on ELT practices

Among a number of languages taught and learnt in Indonesian schools, English and Arabic (Nailufar, 2018) represent the two main languages. Both have a different status in the national curriculum, and engage different pedagogies depending on school context. As a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, English is taught in all public and private secondary schools (Lauder, 2008). As a subject of localised relevance, schools can decide whether to provide Arabic language instruction. In *pesantren*, Arabic holds a key role in the *pesantren* curriculum as the language used in Islamic religious studies (Aladdin, 2010), which has implications for the study of other languages, including English, and how it is being positioned in *pesantren* schools. Pak Adi notes that his students are:

> ...more enthusiastic to learn Arabic because it is used to learn religious subjects, where they can learn Qur'anic skills and memorise the Holy Book. To me, this is actually understandable because they come to *pesantren* to focus more on religious subjects than English or other subjects. But I can say that it affects the effectiveness of my class because most of my students are not sufficiently motivated to learn English. (Pak Adi)

Pak Adi's comment draws attention to the fact that the study and use of Arabic is integrated into other curriculum disciplines,

and students see its immediate application to and relevance for their overall learning. They recognise that Arabic is a linguistic resource that allows them to work towards improving their knowledge and understanding of religious subjects, which, as Pak Adi points out, is a key reason for the students and their families giving preference to *pesantren* education over other types of schools. In turn, the central position of Arabic in the school curriculum and the implications for the teaching of English is elaborated on further by Bu Wati:

> The majority of students in my *pesantren* do not like or are not familiar with English, because they think they will not use it in their daily lives. This is in contrast to Arabic, which is very familiar to them since the textbooks used to study religion are written in Arabic. Arabic is taught comprehensively through many skills-based lessons such as Arabic grammar, its pronunciation, morphology and so on. (Bu Wati)

Bu Wati adds to Pak Adi's observation that students are more *enthusiastic* to study Arabic because they perceive it as more relevant to their *daily lives*. She points out that a stronger *familiarity* with the language plays an important role in engaging with language study not only for educational reasons, but also on an affective level. In her view, a higher level of exposure to the language, and a more comprehensive approach to second language teaching contributes to students having a positive impression of the subject. While research on non-*pesantren* secondary schools suggests that most students in Indonesia have positive learner attitudes toward English (Afdian & Wahyuni, 2020; Kharismawan, 2018; Yosintha, 2020), Bu Wati's comments above indicates that the opposite may be the case among *pesantren* students. This is despite the recognition *pesantren* teachers give to the broader value of English as an important language to learn in an era of advanced hyper-globalization.

> This is a general fact that we cannot deny the emergence of globalization where foreign language skill is important, including English. My *pesantren* attempts to be bilingual *pesantren* where students here are expected to be able to use two languages, Arabic and English. It is even stated in the vision of *pesantren*. I think most of *pesantren* today have moved forward to be modern institutions and one of the ways to show that they are modern is by teaching foreign languages to students. (Pak Adi)

English, which is usually taught in as little as two lessons per week, and not used in daily *pesantren* activities, cannot provide students with the same sense of familiarity and relevance compared to Arabic, which results in many students *not lik[ing]* English. This may be exacerbated by the pedagogical decisions teachers consider as necessary to implement in order to navigate their students' limited proficiency in English to support learning and achievement outcomes. As Pak Udin points out, English language teachers feel that they cannot use English as the language of instruction in their classes:

> To be honest, [I use English] only about 30% of the time...it is still very hard for my students if I speak more English in class. In reading activities, I also translate most parts of the English text they are reading into Indonesian to help them get the point of the text. (Pak Udin)

The teaching and learning in the English language classroom as described by Pak Udin above portrays English as a decontextualised, classroom based activity requiring a significant amount of teacher intervention. This sits in contrast to the teaching, learning and daily use of Arabic as the language of Islamic education (Ekawati, 2019), of worship (Wekke, 2015), and of lived experience for the students, their families and communities, as expressed in Islamic heritage. In the context of *pesantren* religious subjects the Arabic language can be seen as a form of symbolic power (Wacquant & Akçaoğlu, 2017) in that it supports the capacity of agents to create, maintain or change the world they inhabit by shaping and spreading symbolic frames, including the collective apparatuses of the cognitive construction of reality. In the context of *pesantren*, the more a student is able to improve their proficiency in religious subjects and the Arabic language, the more symbolic power they are being attributed to navigate their way through the Islamic world.

Episode 3: English language teachers' response to the challenges of ELT in *pesantren* – Adjusting linguistic and pedagogical practice for engagement in English language learning

As illustrated in the first two episodes, English language teachers in *pesantren* acknowledge and understand the reasons for English not having the same symbolic power in the field of *pesantren* schools. As the direction of our interviews shifted to exploring

how teachers navigate the challenges they described, participants were interested in discussing how they had adjusted their pedagogy and practice in response. All participants in the study emphasised that teachers' own proficiency in English was not sufficient in itself to generate and maintain student engagement. This made teachers reflect on what other skills they could draw on to connect with their students, to complement their pedagogy and ELT expertise:

> I think, in general, mastery of the discipline area and teaching competence are the most important skills. However, if you are teaching in a *pesantren* school, you should have some knowledge of Islam and know a few Arabic words because this language is more familiar to the students due to its use in the religious textbooks they learn from in *pesantren*. So, by being able to speak few words in Arabic, your students will respect you more and be more inclined to follow your lesson. (Pak Mifa)

These responses imply that two additional skills – proficiency in the Arabic language and Islamic understandings – are required to implement effective English language teaching in *pesantren*. While upskilling in those areas *was not a formally written rule* (Pak Asnawi), teachers agreed that there was a tacit agreement that *unlike other schools, pesantren want to see your religious competencies first before your English teaching ability* (Pak Budi).

The teachers' responses above align with the practices of piety or religiosity being the most desirable objectives of academic activities across all subjects in *pesantren* (Nilan, 2009). The role of religious beliefs in language teaching in Indonesia (Wicking, 2012) has been explored in various studies, including teachers' receptiveness to religious topics being included in lessons (Foye, 2014), teachers' reflection on communicating their religious views in classrooms (Mambu, 2017), and how decision makers and practitioners view the integration of religious topics in ELT (Irwansyah, 2018). Among the participants in this study, Arabic was seen as the shared linguistic and cultural conduit that could bridge students' reluctance towards English:

> If I directly say to students that English is as important as Arabic, this would not work. Therefore, what I am doing is teaching English as simply as possible to counter their [the students'] perception that English is difficult to learn. Also, I learn Arabic and then try to relate English to Arabic by telling students similar terms used in English and Arabic. For example, when I teach English pronous, I tell students that

pronoun is similar to isim dlomir [Arabic pronoun], and even easier. By doing this, I am trying to tell students that English is not removed from their lives, and not that difficult to learn. (Bu Wati)

Bu Wati's approach to a multilingual pedagogy that draws on both Arabic and English is an example of how the struggles and tensions involved in a field of power can contain a sense of contestation that is active within it (Martin, 2003). Following Bourdieu and using the concept of 'game' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66) as an analogy, teachers' practice of integrating Arabic and religious knowledge in their pedagogy in the English language classroom can be seen as a way of increasing their capital for playing the 'game' of teaching and learning successfully in the *pesantren* education system. The teachers' negotiations highlight the competitiveness of this social field, where the teachers as players constantly strategise to obtain better positions and more developed skills in the game (Nolan & Walshaw, 2012). In this sense, even though Arabic language skills and religious knowledge are not officially mandated, teachers decide to acquire and utilise them, because in order to 'win' in the game, a contestant needs to follow its official and 'unofficial' rules (Bathmaker, 2015). Their willingness to make these adjustments to their teaching is ultimately underpinned by the belief that the game of teaching and learning in the era of advanced globalisation is worth playing, and that mastery of the 'rules of the game' can help increase student engagement, and generate a more positive perspective of English language learning.

Concluding comments

In summary, this paper has sought to engage with some of the challenges encountered by English language teachers employed in Indonesian *pesantren* with regard to the symbolic capital and power of English as a dominating global economic and political resource in contemporary times. Our analysis has shown that significant tensions and contradictions exist in the taken for granted perception of English as the pre-eminent language of internationalisation and globalization, which bonds with commercial imperatives, and the value and relevance of learning English for the successful enactment of Islamic life, which is the key education goal of *pesantren* education. Teachers in our study

have indicated that students in *pesantren* seemingly value Arabic over English with concomitant effects in *pesantren* classrooms. This is indicative of the symbolic power attached to local custom and beliefs where the symbolic and discursive capital attached to a language such as Arabic usurps the globalised policy hold maintained by English across fields of power including education.

While we do not want to make general claims, taking into consideration the small sample size of the interview data, our in-depth interviewing has provided an effective methodology to bring to light some of the tensions and contradictions linked to the symbolic capital and power of English, as they play out in everyday classroom interactions. Our study illustrates that the assumed 'power' of English as the global lingua franca is more complex and context-dependent than the policy rhetoric of the universality of English may articulate. As illustrated in the stories that our participants shared about their practice, teachers engage in multi-layered professional reflection to find effective ways to respond to the pedagogical challenges emerging from the discursive tensions of language ideologies encountered in the classroom (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2012).

Developing a better understanding of these 'entanglements' of English in 'everyday, simultaneous activities and material encounters,...[that] may concern not only political economy but also assemblages of linguistic resources, identifications, artefacts and places' (Pennycook, 2020, p. 232) seems to be of particular importance in the current times which are characterised by a refocusing on national identity, geopolitical tensions and the geopolitics of language. The perspectives of teachers as 'policymakers' (Menken & García 2010) and grass-roots leaders of pedagogical practice and change are key for the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of English language teaching and learning in international education systems, which may share an overarching neoliberal agenda. Our study has sought to illustrate that different local practises informed by complex field-specific cultural and linguistic inter-relationships influence the practical choices of teachers and students as agents as they seek to optimise opportunities.

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Dr. Andrew Skourdoumbis is an Associate Professor in Education at Deakin University, Australia. His research engages with matters of curriculum theory encompassing policy analysis, teacher practice and educational performance. He investigates global reform efforts in education that impact teacher practice and the way that exacting statistical methods of research govern school education policy and teacher performance. Skourdoumbis is currently writing a book entitled *The Epistemological Development of Education: Considering Bourdieu, Foucault and Dewey.*

andrew.skourdoumbis@deakin.edu.au

Ahmad Madkur is a PhD candidate in the School of Education at Deakin University Australia. His doctoral research investigates teacher beliefs of English language educators in Indonesian *pesantren*, and how their beliefs and institutional contexts shape their pedagogical practices. Madkur has extensive previous teaching experience as an English language teacher and curriculum leader in the *pesantren* education system. Madkur is currently a teaching staff in State Islamic Institute of Metro, Lampung, Indonesia.

amadkur@deakin.edu.au