

## **Integrating Academic and Entrepreneurial Skills to Strengthen Translation Learning at Baitul Kilmah Islamic Boarding School**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – This study examines the learning method of the classical Islamic book (so-called Kitab Kuning) using a translation that helps optimize the link-and-match function between the education and industry. This study rejects the common assumptions that the learning of Kitab Kuning has been seen as a phenomenon separate from the market's demands, especially in the book publishing industry.

**Design/methods/approach** – This type of research is qualitative, with a critical ethnographic approach. The data was collected through in-depth interview and documentation techniques, including insights from caregivers, administrators, teachers, and alumni.

**Findings** – This study's findings are as follows: the integration of Kitab Kuning learning with a translation method enhances the effectiveness of the government's link-and-match program. This approach aligns with the overarching vision of the Baitul Kilmah Creative Islamic Boarding School, which emphasizes literacy and economic independence. The findings of this study serve to augment extant scientific research on Kitab Kuning learning.

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## **Introduction**

The studies revealed a decline in the interest of students in learning Kitab Kuning in Islamic boarding schools (A'malia & Washil, 2024). The investigation identified numerous factors contributing to this phenomenon, including ineffective learning methods, inadequate learning time, delayed student participation, and limited vocabulary mastery (Sa'adah & Alif, 2024). In response to this decline in interest, various initiatives have been implemented to revitalize students' engagement in learning Kitab Kuning. These efforts include the development of a novel learning management model (Nahdliyah & Jamroh, 2024), the implementation of a preparatory program known as i'dad (Yasin, 2025), and the introduction of innovative learning methods (Zulfikar, 2024), providing encouragement

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and motivation (Irawan, Asril, & Hidayati, 2024), providing direct guidance (Masnawati, et al., 2025), and even by seeking more strategic leadership (Anwar, Ridwan, Wahyudin, & Budi, 2025).

A considerable number of initiatives have been undertaken to enhance students' enthusiasm for Kitab Kuning learning. One notable initiative is the link-and-match program, a government initiative that fosters a connection between the educational and professional spheres. The efficacy of this program in stimulating students' interest in learning and propelling them towards productivity, as evidenced by the production of scientific papers, has been substantiated (Syamruddin & Kamsidik, 2024). The implementation of the link-and-match program has also been found to promote the enhancement of human resources (HR) that are both insightful and possess high levels of skills and competencies (Ramdhani, 2024). Furthermore, link-and-match programs that are supported by leadership curricula have the potential to guide educational institutions towards a sustainable future (Sulfuadi, 2024). Consequently, the integration of a link-and-match program into an educational curriculum serves not only to enhance student engagement but also to elevate the caliber of human resources within academic communities and the quality of education in associated institutions. However, this critical dimension is often overlooked when students' interest in learning Kitab Kuning wanes.

This article examines the learning of Kitab Kuning at the Baitul Kilmah Kreatif Islamic Boarding School in Bantul, Yogyakarta. The school developed a link-and-match program to increase students' interest in learning Kitab Kuning. In general, Baitul Kilmah identifies itself as a creative pesantren, not a pesantren, because it emphasizes literacy education to boost students' interest in reading Kitab Kuning (Ulum, 2024). The pedagogy of Baitul Kilmah is characterized by a commitment to *jihād fī sabīli Allāh*, a concept that permeates the institution's ethos (Halim & Adhitama, 2021). The philosophy of *jihād fī sabīli Allāh* serves as a foundational principle for the autonomy of students and Islamic boarding schools. The institution fosters an entrepreneurial spirit among its students, instilling them with the values of entrepreneurship (Tafyiroh, 2023). Notably, pesantren does not levy any fees for education, a testament to its financial autonomy (Munastiwi, 2023). A pivotal element in the autonomy of Baitul Kilmah students and pesantren is the Kitab Kuning curriculum, which is characterized by its emphasis on interconnection and correlation between education and industry, link-and-match.

The educational approach employed at Baitul Kilmah places a strong emphasis on the practical application of knowledge, particularly in the context of translation and publishing. One of the translated works of Baitul Kilmah students is *Tafsīr Al-Jailānī*, which was launched in 2022 and received appreciation from Prof. Dr. Muhammad Fadhil Al-Hasani Al-Husaini Al-Jailani, a descendant of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani, and from the Regent of Bantul Abdul Halim Muslih. In his remarks, Abdul Halim Muslih expressed his congratulations on the launch of *Tafsīr Al-Jailānī* by Baitul Kilmah students, expressing his hope that the book by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani would bring blessings. Abdul Halim Muslih also asserted that the translation of *Tafsīr Al-Jailānī* facilitates the acquisition of religious knowledge for individuals, ensuring clarity in the transmission of the text ([bantulkab.go.id](http://bantulkab.go.id),

2022). Graduates of Islamic boarding schools who have completed literacy education and translation training will contribute to the community, enter the workforce, and provide public education, particularly to students. This phenomenon is exemplified by Fuad Bawazir, who has the publication and mobilization of Islamic boarding school literacy (Izzati, 2022).

The term Kitab Kuning translation refers to the process of translating from Arabic as the source language to Indonesia as the target one. The target language can be both Indonesian as the national language (Bustomi, Rahman, Kosim, & Azhar, 2024) or local, such as Javanese, Maduranese, Sundanese (Kholis, 2022). The nature of translation can be both literal (Hadi, 2024) or free translation (Luay, 2023). The traditional translation method that has been developed in pesantren is called *bandongan* and *sorogan*, where a teacher translates word perword of the text, while the students follow it. This such method of translating is the initial stage for beginner students. For seniors, the method used is a discussion to encourage students to think critically in reading and translating (Rohmah & Muklas, 2018).

In addition to literal and free translation, another style is communicative dimmability, which conveys the substance of the text to the audience. The communicative translation has also been shown to improve the audience's understanding of the content of the text (Romdani, 2024). The translation styles of Kitab Kuning has proven to be successful in increasing the students' enthusiasm in learning. The heightened engagement of students in the learning process, as evidenced by their serious approach, has been identified as a contributing factor to the efficacy of the educational experience (Shobaruddin, 2019).

The translation of Kitab Kuning has a long historical trajectory, with significant developments occurring throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. During this period, Arabic translations dominated, particularly in book titles, a practice that persisted until the mid-20th century. However, scholars began to adapt Arabic letters to align with Malay or Javanese pronunciations, leading to the emergence of a unique literary form known as Pegon. The 20th century witnessed a surge in translation activity, particularly in the early decades. Since the 1950s, the translation of Kitab Kuning has entered the industrial world (Munip, 2006).

The translation of Kitab Kuning into Indonesian for industrial purposes has garnered significant attention, yet it is rife with challenges. Kholisin (2015) has noted that industry-oriented translation is rife with deficiencies in learning. Among the disadvantages are the inappropriateness of the theory taught, the uncertainty of publishing the work of novice translators, the ambiguity of public facilities, the inadequacy of human resources of translators which affects the quality of translation, the absence of a publishing program related to translation programs, the lack of explanation that translation is a prospective business world in the future, the insufficiency of learning hours, and the absence of obligation to publish translated books. Kholisin's analysis delineates the myriad weaknesses inherent in the practice of publishing-oriented translation within the context of higher education students (Kholisin, 2015).

## Method

This research was conducted at Baitul Kilmah Creative Islamic Boarding School, Kayen 04, Sendangsari, Pajangan, Bantul, Special Region Yogyakarta. The research's style used is qualitative (Glesne, 2016), to understand the practice of translation for link-and-match purposes. The approach used is critical ethnography (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005), to critically look at academic culture, policies, and social engagement to introduce the translation of classical Islamic books in Baitul Kilmah.

Data collection in ethnographic research, according to Adler-Nissen and Drieschova, was conducted through interview, documentation, and participatory observation methods (Aktinson & Hammersley, 1998). This allows the researcher to inquire, evidence, and understand the practices, materials, curriculum, methods, and learning goals of translation program in more detail with a link-and-match orientation.

Interviews were conducted with caregivers, teachers, and alumni who involve in translation program to find out the big vision of. Documentation is mainly conducted to find empirical evidence of students' translated works that have been published. Observation was carried out to understand, record and find common threads in the relationship between translation program and the industrial interest, as well as the positive and negative outcomes.

## Result

### *Translation for Economic Independence*

Dr. KH. Aguk Irawan, Lc., M.A., Caregiver and Founder of Baitul Kilmah, has asserted that students are equipped with the skills necessary to live, shape their destinies, and become independent. The pedagogy of literacy at Baitul Kilmah is not ostentatious; rather, it is designed to confer tangible benefits on its participants (IAINKudus, 2024). Aguk Irawan is a reputable translator who established a pesantren focused on literacy for individuals seeking to develop their writing and translation skills (Mojok, 2022).

Aguk Irawan further elaborated that the Baitul Kilmah ini 2009 emerged as a continuation of the Arabic Translation Group in 2005. The literacy education at the Baitul Kilmah represents a progression from the Arabic Translation Group. Concurrent with the Arabic Translation Group's rapid growth, Aguk Irawan established the Baitul Kilmah Creative Islamic Boarding School, which shares the same fundamental mission: the translation of Arabic. The Kitab Kuning translation learning paradigm is designed to nurture a generation that is both beneficial to society and independent (Irawan A. , 2025).

Under his administration, students are empowered to select translation or literary composition, including short stories, poems, and novels. Literacy is posited as a potential solution for young individuals from underprivileged backgrounds (JPNN, 2015). As time has passed, the spirit of translation at Baitul Kilmah has evolved beyond a mere manifestation of literacy education to encompass scientific research. Halim and Adhitama (2021) further emphasize that Baitul Kilmah serves as a paradigm of a pesantren that places significant emphasis on academic research, translation of classical manuscripts, publishing, and the composition of books and articles in scientific journals. The assertion that pesantren can function as a research-based educational institution signifies the fulfillment of a crucial aspect of its role in higher education (Halim & Adhitama, 2021).

Anas S. Malo, a member of the teaching staff at Madrasah Aliyah Baitul Kilmah, stated that in commemoration of National Santri Day, Baitul Kilmah launched a significant number of books authored by students, including both joint and individual works. Notable among the joint works are *Jāmi' Karāmāt Al-Awliyā'* in four volumes and *Tafsīr Munīr* in ten volumes (Malo, 2023).

To qualify for the role of translator, students at Baitul Kilmah must successfully complete a designated translation program, which is specifically designed for new students of Arabic language studies. The process of becoming a student translator and acquiring a translation work entails a period of learning and engagement in programs administered. This study was conducted on Monday evening. The curriculum encompasses the rudiments of nahwu and sharaf science, with the objective of cultivating the capacity to comprehend and translate turast texts into Indonesian. The pedagogy employed emphasizes the direct instruction of fundamental tools by Kang Aziz, a senior student of Baitul Kilmah and an alumnus of the al-Anwar Sarang Islamic Boarding School.

The teaching staff are not only graduates of Islamic boarding schools within the country but also foreign scholars affiliated with institutions such as Al-Azhar. The quality of the translated works produced by the translation students who are linked with this industry is assured. On Tuesday evenings, for instance, the curriculum was further enriched by the incorporation of practical approaches, which were facilitated by Kang Zain, an alumnus of Al-Azhar Cairo.

Following the completion of the theoretical briefing, the translation students established a distinct team. This team was formally assigned the responsibility of handling the translation projects. A new manuscript is to be translated or an existing manuscript is to be revised, for instances, are domain task typically delegated to that team (Mumtaz, 2019). The composition of this group includes students, translators, and prolific writers from Baitul Kilmah, as reported by KH. Imam Jazuli, including Imam Nawawi, Muhammad Muhibuddin, A. Zainuddin, Wildan Nurrohmadlon, Moh. Irfan, Ahmad Rozi, John Afifi, Ja'far Musadad, Ali Adhim, Fuad Bawazir, Ahmad Sobirin, Abdul Aziz and others (Jazuli, 2020).

Ahmad Ali Azim (2019) stated that the students achieved their learning objectives in Baitul Kilmah are evidenced by numerous articles and books published by prominent media or publishers. Among the notable publications are *Encyclopedia of Ulama Nusantara*, spanning nine volumes, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Science*, also comprising nine volumes, *Encyclopedia of Thematic Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, with nine volumes, and *Encyclopedia of Knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith*, which encompasses seven volumes. It is noteworthy that these encyclopedias were collectively authored.

In addition to these collective works, individual contributions include the biographies of prominent figures such as Ustadz Abdul Somad, Tuan Guru Bajang Zainul Madji, Gus Maksum from Lirboyo, etc. These students' works has garnered appreciation from various quarters, including the students' parents, bookstores that carry their publications, and the community at large (Azim, *Tradisi Literasi Pesantren (Manajemen Pendidikan Literasi di Pesantren Kreatif Baitul Kilmah Yogyakarta)*, 2019).

Aqib Muhammad (2025), the coordinator of the translation program, stated that not all students' translated works are commissioned by prominent publishers such as Kamil Pustaka, Jakarta. The most recent work entitled *Jāmi' Karāmāt Al-Awliyā'* was published by Pustaka Baitul Kilmah, an independent publisher. The decision to publish independently offers students several advantages, including the opportunity to develop their own marketing skills, a departure from the traditional model of relying on publishers or publishers' orders. However, as Muhammad Aqib (2025) notes, the decision to publish independently with Pustaka Baitul Kilmah itself poses its own challenges to students' independence (Muhammad, 2025).

In a related discussion, Ahmad Ali Azim (2025) highlights that students' independence is further curtailed when they manage their own professional publications. It must be noted that professional publishing management is a far more intricate process than that of indie publishing. Azim provided the example of Dawuh Guru, a publishing house and digital media entity. Dawuh Guru has demonstrated a heightened level of professionalism, characterized by the consistent and periodic publication of books. However, it is important to acknowledge that this pursuit necessitates a substantial financial investment and entails a meticulous analysis of the book market's potential and opportunities. With respect to the potential market for translated books, Dawuh Guru is undertaking translations of Al-Ghazali's books on the science of Jadal/Debate and Ibn Sina's Sermons/Orations (Azim, 2025).

## Diskusi

### *Kitab Kuning Translation Program for Otimizing Link-and-Match Function of Education*

The learning of Kitab Kuning in Baitul Kilmah utilizes the translation as a link connecting education and publishing industry, given the recognized correlation between students' translation outcomes and their subsequent success in that industry. The leaders of Baitul Kilmah translate the vision into concrete activities of translation, guided by the principles of independence and *jihād fī sabīli Allāh*. The efficacy of this approach is evidenced by its success in producing students' independence, creativity, and the capacity to establish their own enterprises, with some even entering the professional publishing industry. The educational method employed at Baitul Kilmah aligns with the government's link-and-match program, which aims to ensure optimal integration of graduates into the industrial sector. However, the practice of link-and-match in Baitul Kilmah has been in effect since the institution's inception in 2009, with values that have been instilled since 2005.

The translation program at Baitul Kilmah is as expected, has shown positive results in terms of enhancing students' reading and comprehension skills (Arif, Nasir, & Ma'arif, 2025). However, the expertise and proficiency are more practically oriented, leading to the production of tangible written works and potential for publication by both professional and independent publishers, thus reaching a broader audience. Furthermore, the translation practice demands a high level of professionalism from both teaching staff and participants, as their products will bear responsibility at the publishing level.

Professionalism is a crucial element in enhancing learning quality (Rifky, Paling, Arifudin, & Narayanti, 2024).

Concomitant with the evolution of digital technology, the method of teaching Kitab Kuning has undergone significant transformation (Risiana, Ramadhan, & Nawawi, 2020). Each Islamic boarding school has endeavored to adapt to the digital technology advancement by employing a variety of strategies to facilitate the learning process (Mutamimah, Iva, Maulida, & Chala, 2025). Baitul Kilmah, however, has only minimally incorporated digital technology into its learning process, focusing instead on its application post-learning, such as in creating coverbooks, designing layout, and marketing initiatives (Ushfur, 2025).

Once a book has been translated, printed, and ready to be marketed, the role of learning Kitab Kuning shifts from the preservation of classical Islamic intellectual heritage to more pragmatic aspects (Alfinur, 2024). The translation of Kitab Kuning is not merely a means of enhancing religious literacy (Daulay, Siregar, & Panggabean, 2024) or fostering the spirituality of students (Anam, Listiana, & Itsbat, 2024) but also of maintaining equilibrium among the three dimensions of santri that are spirituality, science, and professionalism. Concurrently, Baitul Kilmah cultivated these dimensions by fortifying science through mastery of the translated works.

The majority of Islamic boarding schools have devised empowering programs through entrepreneurship. Some has been known to develop practical skills in agribusiness and aquaculture (Pebriana, Dudung, & Heryadi, 2024), or to establish a Limited Liability Company (PT) engaged in the retail, drinking water, sharia business service assistance, and business consultants (Setiawati & Tantriana, 2024). These strategies create an indirect relation between the various types of entrepreneurship and Kitab Kuning. Baitul Kilmah shows its differences that create a direct one through translated works dan publishing industry.

Ustad Muhammad Aqib, a coordinator of the translation program, further elaborated that translation learning in Baitul Kilmah has indeed entered the industrial world from a very early age. The translated works of students are published by indie publishers with small-scale or medium-scale prints or by professional publishers with large-scale prints. The only challenge, Aqib asserts, is to increase the quantity of student translation works. However, these challenges have been drastically reduced with the entry of artificial intelligence (AI) technology into the pesantren environment, especially translation technology. Many companies offer translation technology from Arabic sources. This development has effectively addressed the issue of the limited availability of translated works (Aqib, 2025).

The integration between the translation technology and the manual method of translation does enhance the link-and-match and signify a pivotal shift in the intellectual landscape of Islamic boarding school, especially in translation discourse. This development aligns with emerging industry trends, which are increasingly recognizing the potential of translation technology as a viable business prospect in the future (Sánchez-Castany, 2024). The same assertion was stated by Muhammad Aqib that the development of artificial

intelligence (AI) technology has become a significant challenge for students of Islamic boarding school who are still translating manually (Aqib, 2025).

A similar trend has been observed in the Arab world. The demand for computer-aided translation skills and Arabic localization software has grown. Consequently, there has been a steady increase in the number of courses related to translation technology. Training programs have been effective in maintaining their competitive edge by offering courses that meet the current and future market demands. The development of computer-aided translator training courses or programs is expected to meet the needs of the growing market (Al-Batineh & Al-Tenaijy, 2024).

The utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, particularly within the domain of translation services, is no longer a controversial subject. Instead, there is an anticipated proliferation of training programs and courses, with the objective of catering to the evolving demands of the expanding market. In this context, Baitul Kilmah has established a foundation that facilitates learning with translation methods in the industrial world. The advent of the artificial intelligence (AI) has led to a proliferation of students' opportunities to translate works in greater quantities and to meet market demands.

## Conclusion

The innovative learning of Kitab Kuning at the Baitul Kilmah underscores the translation, as it aligns with the prevailing market and publishing industry demands. The impact of this approach is twofold: first, it optimizes the link-and-match program initiated by the government, and second, it fosters student autonomy while upholding religious principles, spirituality, and professional integrity.

The findings of this study are of particular significance, as they propose a novel and creative approach to learning Kitab Kuning, with the objective of enhancing the link-and-match program. To achieve this objective, the implementation of a translation program oriented towards book publishing is recommended. This approach enables translation students to align with market demands and meet client/publisher objectives.

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