



The Dilemma of Traditional Lexicography in the Digital Era: Madrasah Teachers' Perspectives on Pedagogical Translation Challenges

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Abstract

This descriptive phenomenological study aims to document in depth the pedagogical realities of English teachers in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in West Sumatra who teach under structural constraints, namely the smartphone under Ministerial Regulation (*Permendikbud*) No. 21/2015 and limited digital access, and to formulate pedagogical mediation strategies applicable within this context. This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological design. Data sources comprised ten active English teachers in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) in West Sumatra, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source triangulation and member checking employed to ensure trustworthiness. The findings reveal three main results. First, reliance on printed dictionaries is not solely caused by the smartphone ban policy, but is further compounded by the poor quality of printed dictionaries (including widespread piracy) and the lack of teacher training in lexicographic literacy. Second, metalinguistic confusion arising from infinitive notation (*to + verb*) is consistent and cross-level, yet its impact on translation ability varies according to Gu's (2003) tetrahedral model, which positions person, task, and context as moderating variables. Third, the most promising mediation strategy combines explicit instruction on dictionary conventions through layered scaffolding, Arabic-English translanguaging drawing on Arabic morphology (*masdar*, *fi'ul madhi*, *isim-fi'il-harf*), and Islamic value-based contextualization, jointly embodying the principles of *ta'alim* and *tafaqquh fi al-din*. This study implies the need for developing teacher training modules on lexicographic literacy tailored to the madrasah context, providing quality printed dictionaries in madrasah libraries, and conducting further research combining interviews, classroom observation, and student vocabulary assessment to systematically test the effectiveness of Arabic-English translanguaging interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Islamic tradition, mastering languages including foreign tongues is vowed as an integral part of the lifelong pursuit of knowledge (*thalabul 'ilmi*) mandated by the Quran. This is echoed in Surah Al-Mujadilah verse 11, which proclaims that Allah will exalt those who believe and those who are endowed with knowledge. Within this framework, English language pedagogy in Islamic integrated schools and *madrasahs* transcends mere academic routine; it is an act of worship. Consequently, learning tools such as dictionaries are not just linguistic references, but *wasilah* essential instruments that assist students in fulfilling this sacred educational duty. The urgency of this study stems from this very principle: when a primary learning tool, such as a printed dictionary, includes cognitive confusion among students, a pedagogical dysfunction occurs one that demands immediate teacher intervention.

While dictionaries in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms have long evolved past the simple task of looking up words, they remain fundamental pedagogical tools. They facilitate linguistic comprehension, support cross-linguistic meaning making, and mediate complex translation processes (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015; Lew, 2024). In the global EFL landscape, dictionaries both print and digital play a central role in how learners develop lexical competence and translation skills (Baker, 2011). However, within the Indonesia EFL context, particularly in *madrasahs*, this role is heavily constrained by two structural realities. First, Ministerial Regulation (*Permendikbud*) No. 21/2015 bans smartphones in classrooms (Kemdikbud, 2022). Second, economic disparities leave many students without personal digital devices, rendering digital tools inaccessible (Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia, 2018). Under these conditions, teachers must rely on traditional printed bilingual dictionaries as their primary and often sole lexicographical resource.

In practice, teachers operating under these constraints face a persistent pedagogical challenge; the conventional use of the infinitive form (to + verb) in traditional bilingual dictionaries consistently bewilders students during translation tasks. This occurs because the dictionary entries do not match the actual verb forms students encounter in written or spoken English texts. This confusion is far from a mere technical glitch; rather, it exposes a deeper disconnect between print lexicographical conventions and students' actual grammatical awareness. In traditional bilingual dictionaries, verbs are actual grammatical awareness. In traditional bilingual dictionaries, verbs are actual conventionally cited in their infinitive forms (to eat, to run, to speak) to distinguish them from other parts of speech with identical spellings. For lower secondary *madrasahs* students who lack mature metalinguistic awareness, this notation creates an identity paradox: the words they look up look different from the words in their texts, which hinders translation instead of helping it (Lew, 2024).

This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of explicit instruction on dictionary literacy within the Indonesian EFL curriculum. (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015) note that vocabulary instruction in Indonesia has historically oscillated between rote-memorization in the Grammar Translation tradition and communicative approaches that treat vocabulary acquisition as a purely incidental byproduct. Neither tradition systematically teaches dictionary literacy the metalinguistic ability to critically read, interpret, and utilize dictionary entries. In *madrasahs*, this situation is compounded by the fact that the Islamic education curriculum (*tarbiyah*) heavily prioritizes Arabic textual comprehension. As a result, English teachers are seldom equipped with the training needed to teach lexicographical literacy in an EFL context.

From the teacher's perspective, this challenge is structural rather than individual. (Syafitri, 2018), in her study on the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach in Solok, argued that gaps between curriculum mandates and classroom

realities often stem from a lack of conceptual understanding of the required methods, rather than a lack of teacher motivation. A similar pattern emerges in dictionary literacy: teachers are not formally prepared to instruct students on how to navigate dictionary entries. Consequently, when students question the infinitive notation, teachers often provide improvised and inconsistent explanations. In madrasahs, this underline is magnified because English teachers may not have a complete tarbiyah background, yet they also lack formal training in lexicography (Khasawneh & Shawaqfeh, 2024).

The solution to this dilemma does not lie in replacing printed dictionaries with digital tools an option rendered impossible by phone-free policies but rather in developing strategic teacher mediation that transforms the limitations of print dictionaries into metalinguistic learning opportunities. Emilia & Hamied, (2022) demonstrate that the strategic use of Indonesian as a metalinguistic medium (translanguaging) helps students build robust cross-linguistic understanding. In *madrasahs* setting, this approach can be enriched with Islamic values. For instance, teachers can draw analogies from Arabic morphology (*ilm sharaf*) to explain English root verbs. Since *madrasahs* students are generally familiar with the concept of *masdar* (the verbal noun / root form in Arabic), which functions conceptually like the English infinitive, this localized connection aligns beautifully with the principle of *ta'lim* (linking knowledge to core values) and *tafaqquh fi al'din* (deepening understanding through reflection and contextualization).

While extensive research exists on translation pedagogy, digital lexicography, and EFL vocabulary acquisition (Khasawneh & Shawaqfeh, 2024), a critical blind spot remains. Few studies explore the complex pedagogical hurdles faced by Indonesian EFL teachers in *madrasahs* who operate under rigid structural constraints namely, smartphone bans under *permendikbud* No.21/2015 and economic disparities that eliminate digital access. Consequently, these educators must rely entirely on traditional printed dictionaries. While studies like Silviyanti et al., (2022) have documented student perception of electronic dictionaries, and Natalia et al., (2023) show strong positive attitudes toward classroom technology in West Sumatera, these lines of inquiry overlook what happens pedagogically when technology is absent due to mandate or circumstance rather than choice. Similarly, while Cahyono & Widiati, (2015) offer a comprehensive historical overview of Indonesian EFL vocabulary instruction, their macro-level analysis misses the micro-level struggles such as the confusion caused by infinitive construction (to + verb) when using print dictionaries without metalinguistic support, particularly within the unique cultural and religious ecosystem of the *madrasahs*.

Based on this gap, this study is guided by three research questions: i) how does existing literature conceptualize the structural institutional, economic, and pedagogical conditions that perpetuate a reliance on printed dictionaries in Indonesian *madrasahs* EFL classrooms where digital tools are either unavailable or prohibited? ii) In what ways does the conventional infinitive notation (to + verb) in traditional bilingual dictionaries induce metalinguistic confusion among lower secondary EFL learners in *madrasahs*, and what are the documented consequences of this confusion on vocabulary acquisition and translation comprehension? iii) what evidence based pedagogical strategies, drawn from the intersection of translanguaging theory, translation pedagogy, and Islamic value-based EFL vocabulary instruction, can equip teachers to effectively mediate the limitations of print dictionaries within the structural constraints of phone-free madrasahs EFL classrooms?

METHODS

Research design

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a descriptive phenomenological research design. This approach is grounded in the principle that the pedagogical realities experienced by *madrasahs* teachers are inherently contextual, subjective, and cannot be meaningfully reduced to statistical metrics. The study was conducted in various *madrasahs* across the West Sumatera province, spanning two educational levels: *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), equivalent to lower secondary school, and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA), equivalent to upper secondary school.

Informants and sampling

The informants for this study comprised 8 to 10 English teachers currently practicing in both public and private MTs dan MA institutions in West Sumatera. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique where participants are intentionally chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Anidar et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2026; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Ikhlas et al., 2025; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025; Sugiono, 2020). The inclusion criteria required that informants: i) active as an English teacher in MTs or MA in West Sumatera, ii) Possess a minimum of two years of teaching experience in a *madrasah* setting, have utilized printed bilingual dictionaries as instructional tools in their classroom, iii) teach in classrooms that strictly enforce smartphone bans in accordance with Ministerial Regulation (*Permendikbud*) No. 21/2015 or equivalent institutional policies. These rigorous criteria ensured that the informants possessed direct, rich, and firsthand experience with the phenomenon under investigation, thereby guaranteeing that the gathered data accurately genuine pedagogical realities.

Data collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. An interview guide was developed based on the three primary research questions, focusing on the following core themes: teachers' experiences utilizing printed dictionaries in *madrasah* EFL classrooms; the specific challenges encountered when students confront the infinitive notation (to + verb) in bilingual dictionaries; the strategies teachers have spontaneously employed to mitigate students' metalinguistic confusion; and teachers' perspectives on integrating Islamic values into the English vocabulary learning process.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, executed through a systematic three-stage process. The first stage involved data reduction: interview transcripts were read thoroughly, relevant data segments addressing the research questions were identified and coded, and non-essential data were discarded. The second stage was data display, where the reduced data were organized into structured, descriptive patterns that systematically captured the informants' experiences and perspectives. The third stage involved conclusion drawing and verification, during which the findings were interpreted through a theoretical framework synthesizing translanguaging theory, translation pedagogy, lexicographical literacy, and Islamic educational principles.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the data, the study employed source triangulation by comparing data across different educational levels (MTs vs. MA) and geographical locations (urban vs. rural settings in West Sumatra). Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing the preliminary interpretations with selected informants to verify that their lived experiences were accurately and authentically represented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study were drawn from in depth interviews conducted with ten English teachers working at MTs and MA in West Sumatera, consistent with target number of information (8-10) specified in the Method. To protect informant confidentially, participants are identified by code (G1-G10). Following data reduction and display, four principal themes emerged in alignment with the three research questions;

Structural Conditions Perpetuating the Use of Print Dictionaries

All informants confirmed that the smartphone ban mandated by Ministerial Regulation (*Permendikbud*) No. 21/2015 was in force at their respective madrasahs, although the strictness of its enforcement varied considerably. At some institutions the policy was applied with considerable rigour, including periodic confiscation inspections, as G5 explained:

"The rule is very strict because there are periodic inspections. If a teacher wants students to use their phone, there has to be a specific approval process and it depends on the material." (G5)

Similar enforcement was reported by G9, G10, and G7, who described smartphones as being "completely prohibited" in the classroom. G1 and G3, by contrast, reported more conditional implementation it depends on the subject teacher" (G1) indicating that policy enforcement is not uniformly consistent across institutions or even among teachers within the same madrasah.

The immediate consequence of this policy is that print dictionaries have become the primary and in many cases the only lexicographic resource available in the classroom. G2 noted explicitly that the phone-free environment leads students to rely predominantly on "textbooks, worksheets, and print dictionaries as learning resources," making the print dictionary "still quite an important medium." G9 described her classroom as a space "sterile of digital devices" that compels the optimisation of print media.

Beyond the policy dimension, however, the findings reveal a structural layer that prior research has seldom addressed: the physical quality and availability of the print dictionaries themselves. G4 provided the most detailed account:

"Many of the print dictionaries students bring are pirated copies with poor paper quality and defective binding, so they fall apart easily and lose pages in class. On top of that, the content is very incomplete a great many essential words or derived forms simply are not listed." (G4)

Similar concerns were raised by G9, who noted that her school library stocks only approximately ten dictionaries, the majority of which are monolingual and in poor condition. Limited library dictionary collections were also reported by G5 and G3, both of whom depend on a borrow-and-return arrangement because not all students own a personal dictionary.

Third structural constraint is the restricted instructional time. G5 stated explicitly that having "only two contact hours per week" compels her to enforce consistent dictionary use so that students can work independently without constant reliance on the teacher. G10, who teaches in a residential pesantren environment, added that a single lesson period of only 40 minutes means that the process of looking up vocabulary in a print dictionary becomes "a race against the clock."

Finally, a consistent teacher training gap was documented across informants: nine of the ten participants reported never having received formal professional development specifically addressing dictionary literacy instruction or vocabulary teaching, although several had attended general training on the Kurikulum Merdeka or differentiated instruction (G2). Their knowledge of dictionary mediation strategies has largely been acquired through self-directed professional learning and teaching experience rather than through formal education or in-service training.

Metalinguistic Confusion over Infinitive Notation (to + verb)

Students' confusion over infinitive notation in bilingual dictionaries was reported consistently across all informants, with patterns of occurrence that were nearly identical across different madrasahs and educational levels. The most frequently cited word pairs were *ran-to run* (reported by G1, G4, G5, and G9), followed by *ate/went* (G2) and *studied/wrote* (G5), as well as the more semantically complex case of the phrasal verb *take a bath*, which students translated literally from the base meaning of *take* ("to grab" or "to take"), generating semantic confusion (G3).

Students' responses to this confusion ranged from passive bewilderment copying words "as they appear" without any modification (G1) to productive errors that appeared in written translation outputs, as exemplified by G4: "*i always to run every morning.*" This error pattern suggests that some students treat the particle *to* in dictionary entries as a lexical element to be transferred verbatim into the target sentence, rather than as a metalinguistic notation signalling word class.

Notably, the degree of impact this confusion exerted on students' translation ability was not reported uniformly across informants. G1 and G6 considered its effect relatively minor ("not particularly impactful"; "for beginners of course, but once they understand they know the words"), while G4, G5, G8, and G9 characterised it as significant and recurrent despite repeated explanations. G3 attributed this variation specifically to individual student differences: "*It depends on the student's capacity for comprehension. For those with strong comprehension, there is no real impact. Vice versa.*" This pattern suggests that confusion over infinitive notation is not a monolithic phenomenon affecting all learners uniformly, but is rather moderated by individual learner factors a finding examined further in the Discussion through Gu's (2003) *person-task-context-strategy* framework.

Several informants (G4, G9) also linked the persistence of this confusion to the physical quality of dictionaries discussed above: when dictionary entries are incomplete or the pages are damaged, students lose the reference points that would otherwise help them verify a verb's base form, so infinitive notation confusion and poor dictionary quality mutually reinforce each other.

Teacher Mediation Strategies

In responding to students' confusion over infinitive notation, nearly all informants drew on explicit verbal explanation clarifying that *to* functions as a base-form marker (infinitive marker) and is not part of the meaning to be translated. G2 elaborated this strategy in detail: she makes clear to students that *to* in a dictionary entry "does not mean it should be translated as 'to' or 'for' it is simply a marker that the word is the base form of a verb," and supplements this explanation with a verb conjugation chart on the board, a strategy also employed by G5 and G8.

Second strategy is the explicit teaching of part-of-speech symbols (v., n., adj., adv.), reported by G1 and G4. G4 enriched this approach by constructing a morphological chart using Indonesian as the conceptual scaffold "*makan-memakan-dimakan-termakan-sedang makan-sudah makan-akan makan*" (eat-eating [actively]-eaten [passively]-accidentally eaten-currently eating-already eaten-will eat) before introducing English conjugation patterns.

Third strategy, reported by G5, is collaborative group learning, in which students who have brought dictionaries share them with those who have not, allowing the teacher to guide students collectively while simultaneously addressing the practical problem of students failing to bring their own dictionaries.

Fourth and particularly innovative strategy was reported by G4: the construction of a teacher-made glossary aligned with the learning modules prepared at the start of each semester, as an alternative to the incomplete coverage of commercial print dictionaries: "*The teacher produces something like a glossary tailored to the*

teaching and learning materials already designed at the beginning of the semester, so students can find all the vocabulary they need."

Fifth strategy and the one most distinctively associated with the madrasah/pesantren context is cross-linguistic analogy with Arabic morphology (*ilmu sharaf*), particularly the concepts of *masdar* and *fi'il madhi*. G5 employed this strategy explicitly and systematically: *"Just as Arabic has a base form (fi'il madhi), English also has a base form of the verb, which is marked in the dictionary with 'to'."* G10 likewise drew an analogy between English Verb 2 (the past tense form) and the Arabic *fi'il madhi*, and assessed the strategy as "highly effective" because pesantren students "understand Arabic grammar far better than English grammar." G3 and G4 also reported using Arabic grammatical terms (*isim*, *fi'il*, *harf*) to explain parts of speech, though less systematically than G5 and G10.

This Arabic-based translanguaging strategy was, however, not applied uniformly. G2, G7, G8, and G9 reported rarely or never using such analogies. G9 attributed this to her background as a literature graduate who focuses on the internal logic of English grammar; G7 and G8 indicated that they prioritised stabilising students' basic motivation to engage with dictionaries at all before introducing more complex cross-linguistic analogies.

Integration of Islamic Values into Vocabulary Instruction

This theme produced the most starkly contrasting patterns across the entire study. A subset of informants most notably G2, G3, G5, and G4 reported explicit and structured integration of Islamic values into their instructional materials. G2 consistently selects "example sentences and texts relating to the values of honesty, discipline, trustworthiness (*amanah*), respect for parents, cleanliness, and mutual assistance." G3 goes further, actively tracing relevant Quranic verses and hadith for topics such as introductions, greetings, apologies, and expressions of gratitude, while critically reflecting on how more ostensibly neutral genres such as the recount text might be connected to Islamic history. G5 integrates Islamic values by deliberately choosing translational reading texts that embed moral content, so that new vocabulary students look up in the dictionary "appears within the context of praiseworthy conduct." G4 offers a precise example of linguistic-religious specificity: using the phrase "recite Quran" rather than "read Quran" when teaching vocabulary related to daily acts of worship.

By contrast, G1, G7, and G8 openly acknowledged their inability to integrate Islamic values into vocabulary instruction. G7 stated: *"I cannot connect things to Islamic elements because I feel I lack the knowledge in that area,"* while G8 expressed a strikingly similar sentiment: *"I feel I lack the knowledge in the area of integrating the religious curriculum. My focus is still limited to the purely linguistic aspects of English."* G9 presents a more complex pattern: she strongly supports the idea of integration in principle, viewing English proficiency as an important instrument for "madrasah students to articulate Islamic values on a global stage," yet practically acknowledges that she has not yet been able to implement it because she feels she lacks the "basic intellectual capacity" to formulate such an integration.

This pattern reveals a clear gap between normative belief and pedagogical capacity: virtually all informants who were asked directly (question E1) expressed confidence that English language learning and Islamic values "can go hand in hand," yet the practical ability to operationalise that conviction in the classroom appears to correlate with educational background. Those with an English Education degree from an Islamic university (G3, G5) or those teaching in an intensive pesantren environment (G10) reported more explicit and structured integration, while those with a literature or general education background (G9) or whose pedagogical attention is consumed by the challenge of managing low student motivation (G7, G8) reported a wider capacity gap.

Addressing Research Question 1: Structural Conditions

The findings reported in section A.1 both confirm and extend the structural argument developed in the Introduction. While the smartphone ban under Permendikbud No. 21/2015 is indeed the primary institutional factor perpetuating dependence on print dictionaries, the teacher-level variability in its enforcement ("it depends on the subject teacher," G1) demonstrates that the structural conditions are not monolithic a nuance that prior studies on smartphone policies in Indonesian schools have seldom captured (Education & of Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

A key contribution of this study lies in identifying the material quality and quantity of print dictionaries as an independent structural factor that has received scant attention in prior literature. Natalia et al., (2023); Silviyanti et al., (2022), as noted in the Introduction, focus on learner perceptions of electronic dictionaries and attitudinal orientations toward technology; the dimension of *physical quality and coverage* in conventional print dictionaries including the prevalence of pirated copies with defective binding and incomplete entries (G4, G9) emerges here as a discrete source of lexicographic confusion, independent of the infinitive notation problem. This finding aligns with Gu, (2003) observation that the effectiveness of dictionary strategies depends critically on "features of learning tasks" dictionary quality and completeness are part of the *task affordance* structure that determines how useful student strategies can be, and are not reducible to a binary question of digital versus print access.

Addressing Research Question 2: Infinitive Notation Confusion and Its Effects

The findings reported in section A.2 confirm Lew, (2024) central argument that the infinitive citation form in bilingual dictionaries creates a lexical "identity paradox" for learners who have not yet developed adequate metalinguistic awareness. The concrete error patterns documented by informants literal transfer of the particle *to* into target-language sentences (G4) constitute direct empirical evidence of a phenomenon that had previously been discussed only at a theoretical level in the Introduction.

The variation in reported impact across informants (G1, G6 versus G4, G5, G8, G9), however, requires a more nuanced explanatory framework than the simple claim that "infinitive notation is confusing." Gu's (2003) *person-task-context-strategy* tetrahedral model a central theoretical reference in the *English Language Learning Strategies* (ELLS) course material, which offers a comprehensive account of dictionary strategies in L2 vocabulary learning provides precisely this framework. According to Gu (2003), the effectiveness of dictionary strategies cannot be understood generically; it is always the outcome of an interaction among learner characteristics (*person* e.g., students' differing comprehension capacity (G3) or the low motivation that pervades the accounts of G7 and G8), task characteristics (*task* reading comprehension versus productive written translation), and the learning context (*context* limited contact hours, no-phone policy). The variation in reported impact from "not particularly impactful" (G1) to "very significantly impactful" (G4) therefore represents not a contradiction between findings but a confirmation of Gu's (2003) foundational premise that the effect of dictionary confusion is always moderated by individual learner factors.

These findings also resonate with Neubach & Cohen, (1988) study of EFL dictionary use among university students in Jerusalem: advanced students had relatively little need to consult dictionaries, while low-proficiency students did not use dictionaries effectively and some simply stopped using them altogether. This pattern closely mirrors G3's account of low-comprehension students who frequently turn to peers or the teacher rather than completing a dictionary search independently,

and G8's report of low-motivation students who become "passive" or "rely on the student next to them" when asked to open their dictionaries.

Addressing Research Question 3: Mediation Strategies and the Integration of Islamic Values

Mediation as a Vygotskian process. The mediation strategies reported in section A.3 explicit verbal explanation, morphological charts, collaborative group learning can be understood as concrete instantiations of what Vygotsky termed mediated learning, whereby learners develop self-regulation through the mediation of a "more capable other" in this case the teacher (Piaget & Vygotsky, 2008). Within this framework, effective mediation should guide students through three stages of internalisation: social speech (dialogue with the teacher), egocentric speech (partially self-directed verbalisation), and ultimately inner speech or full self-regulation (Piaget & Vygotsky, 2008; Webb & Wadud, 2000). G5's report, however that even senior secondary (MA) students, who are relatively older, are described as still confused every time they open a dictionary and routinely calling the teacher over for help indicates that this internalisation process has not proceeded optimally in many of the classrooms studied. Students appear to remain at the social speech stage and have not yet achieved the learner autonomy that (Oxford, 2013) identifies as the core of the Strategic Self-Regulation (S²R) Model, describing self-directedness as the "soul of learning strategies" (Oxford, 2013), encompassing agency, autonomy, and self-efficacy. This finding adds empirical texture to the Introduction's argument that teachers need to transform print dictionary limitations into opportunities for metalinguistic learning: the field data suggest that such transformation has only been partially achieved, and structural dependence on the teacher as sole mediator remains dominant.

The importance of strategy contextualisation. The most promising strategies to emerge from the data the teacher-made glossary aligned with the semester module (G4), and the deliberate selection of morally grounded texts as contexts for new vocabulary (G5) align with the arguments of Nyikos & Fan, (2007) both also discussed in the ELLS course material, that *contextualised* vocabulary learning strategies (those linked to authentic tasks and real meaning) are substantially more effective than *decontextualised* strategies such as rote memorisation of words in isolation. Exclusive reliance on a generic print dictionary without contextual scaffolding risks constituting a decontextualised strategy of limited effectiveness, as evidenced by the high confusion rates reported in classrooms that use dictionaries without any additional modification (G7, G8).

Arabic–English translanguaging as an Islam-values-based strategy. The *masdar/fi'il madhi* analogy employed by G5 and G10 constitutes empirical evidence for the Islamic values-based translanguaging proposal advanced in the Introduction, and aligns with Emilia & Hamied, (2022) translanguaging framework. The strategy can also be read through the lens of *word-formation strategies* discussed in the ELLS material: morphology-based word knowledge (affixation, base forms) is the domain of lexicographers and etymologists, and students' unfamiliarity with English morphological conventions can be structurally bridged through their more developed knowledge of morphology in another language in the madrasah context, Arabic *ilmu sharaf*. Yet the distribution of this strategy across informants is uneven, and it is consistently less used by those without a full Islamic educational background (G9: "a literature graduate") or those still focused on stabilising students' basic motivation to engage with the dictionary at all (G7, G8). This pattern confirms Syafitri's (2016) finding that gaps in pedagogical implementation are more often attributable to teachers' limited conceptual understanding than to a lack of motivation, and is consistent with Khasawneh & Shawaqfeh, (2024) concern about the scarcity of specialised lexicographic literacy training for madrasah teachers.

The gap between normative belief and the capacity to integrate Islamic values. The findings in section A.4 provide a nuanced answer to the third research question. Nearly all informants hold the normative belief that English language learning and Islamic values "can go hand in hand" consistent with the theological premises of *thalabul 'ilmi* and *wasilah* developed in the Introduction yet the pedagogical capacity to operationalise that belief is clearly unequal. The explicit admissions by G7, G8, and (more implicitly) G9 of "lacking the knowledge" to integrate religious curriculum with English vocabulary instruction are concrete illustrations of the Introduction's argument that madrasah English teachers "frequently lack adequate preparation" to bridge these two domains (Khasawneh & Shawaqfeh, 2024). Conversely, the explicit strategies of G2, G3, and G5 demonstrate that when such capacity is available typically correlating with an English Education degree from an Islamic university or intensive teaching experience in a pesantren environment (G10) the principles of *ta'alim* and *tafaqquh fi al-din* can be realised concretely in classroom practice rather than remaining at the level of normative aspiration.

Synthesis and Study Limitations

Taken together, the findings of this study provide layered answers to all three research questions. First, the structural conditions perpetuating dependence on print dictionaries are multi-dimensional, comprising the smartphone ban, restricted instructional time, and as a distinctive finding of this study the physical quality and completeness of the dictionaries themselves. Second, infinitive notation consistently generates metalinguistic confusion that is patterned and cross-level, but whose impact on translation competence is moderated by individual learner characteristics, consistent with Gu, (2003) person–task–context–strategy model. Third, the most promising teacher mediation strategies are those that are contextualised and in the madrasah context specifically enriched through Arabic morphological analogy and Islamically grounded instructional materials, although their deployment remains contingent on individual teachers' educational background and professional capacity.

Several limitations of the study warrant acknowledgement. First, the number of informants (ten) and the descriptive phenomenological design constrain statistical generalisation; the findings are best understood as a contextually rich portrait of pedagogical experience in West Sumatra rather than a broadly representative survey. Second, the incomplete data from G10 mean that interpretation on the theme of Islamic value integration for that informant is tentative. Third, the study relies on teacher self-report without direct classroom observation or student-side data triangulation, so assessments of the "impact" of infinitive notation confusion reflect teacher perceptions rather than direct measurement of learning outcomes. Future research is encouraged to combine teacher interviews with classroom observation and direct student vocabulary assessments, and to test more systematically the effectiveness of the Arabic–English translanguaging strategies identified here as promising but uneven practices.

CONCLUSION

This descriptive phenomenological study has documented in depth the pedagogical realities faced by English teachers in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra, who teach under structural constraints including mobile phone bans and limited digital access. Based on ten in-depth interviews, three main findings can be drawn. First, reliance on printed dictionaries in madrasah EFL classrooms is not solely caused by the mobile phone prohibition policy under Permendikbud No. 21/2015, but is further compounded by two underexplored factors: the quality and completeness of printed dictionaries available to students including the prevalence of pirated dictionaries and the lack of specialized training in lexicographic literacy for English teachers in madrasahs. This dual gap creates a

condition in which teachers are expected to mediate the limitations of tools that are themselves inadequate in quality, without the relevant professional preparation to do so.

Second, metalinguistic confusion arising from infinitive notation (to + verb) is a consistent, recurring, and cross-level phenomenon spanning both MTs and MA, yet its impact on students' text translation ability is not homogeneous. This variation in impact can be adequately explained through Gu's (2003) tetrahedral model, which positions person (learning capacity, motivation), task (productive vs. receptive task types), and context (time allocation, classroom policy) as moderating variables that determine the effectiveness or failure of dictionary strategies. Accordingly, efforts to improve lexicographic literacy in madrasahs cannot be limited to reforming dictionary notation conventions alone they must also take into account learner context and individual characteristics in an integrated manner.

Third, the most promising mediation strategies in the madrasah context are those that simultaneously combine three elements: (a) explicit instruction in dictionary conventions through layered scaffolding verbal explanations, morphological charts, and teacher-made glossaries; (b) Arabic-English translanguaging that draws on students' knowledge of Arabic morphology (masdar, fi'il madhi, isim-fi'il-harf) as a conceptual bridge toward English lexicographic notation; and (c) Islamic value-based contextualization in vocabulary material selection. Together, these three elements function not merely as technical pedagogical remediation, but also embody the principle of ta'alim which emphasizes the integration of knowledge and values as well as the principle of tafaquh fi al-din, which promotes deep understanding through contextualization. Based on these findings, this study recommends the development of teacher training modules on lexicographic literacy tailored to the madrasah context, the provision of quality printed dictionaries in madrasah libraries, and future research combining teacher interviews with direct classroom observation, student vocabulary assessments, and more systematic testing of Arabic-English translanguaging interventions as a strategy that has shown promise but remains unevenly implemented in classroom practice.

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