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## Social Identity of English Lecturers at Islamic Universities in Central Java in Sociological Discourse

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## Abstract

This study examines the social identity inherent in English teacher educator in Islamic universities in Central Java, Indonesia. This research aims to reveal the correlation between social identity and professional identity. Narrative inquiry used to provide participants experiences as teacher educator at Islamic Universities through their lifetime stories. This method focuses on the narrator's story based on his life experience. Interview and teacher teaching journal analysis used as the data collection. The results showed that social identity cannot be separated from self-identity. Self-identity can represent where a person comes from and participation in certain groups. The social identity of teacher educator can be seen in the symbols attached to themselves, such as their dress, speaking style, religious practices, and others. Teachers' educator in Islamic universities must integrate Islamic values within the teaching and learning process, research, and community service. While social identity contributes to the professional development of lecturers to create a conducive learning environment.

Keyword: islamic universities, professional identity, social identity, teacher educator

## Abstraksi

Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang identitas sosial yang melekat pada diri pengajar bahasa Inggris di perguruan tinggi Islam Jawa Tengah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap



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bagaimana korelasi antara identitas sosial dengan profesionalisme kerja. Metode penelitian yang digunakan yaitu *narrative inquiry*. Metode ini berfokus pada cerita dari narator berdasarkan pengalaman hidupnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa identitas sosial tidak dapat lepas dari identitas diri seseorang. Identitas diri dapat menjadi representasi darimana seseorang berasal dan keikutsertaan dalam kelompok tertentu. Identitas sosial pengajar terlihat pada simbol-simbol yang melekat pada diri, seperti cara berpakaian, gaya berbicara, praktik keagamaan, dan lain-lain. Pengajar bahasa Inggris di perguruan tinggi Islam diwajibkan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan pembelajaran, penelitian, dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat. Identitas sosial turut berperan pada pengembangan profesionalitas pengajar sehingga dapat menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif. Kata Kunci: universitas Islam, identitas profesional, identitas sosial, pengajar

## INTRODUCTION

A group may have traditions and language that are different from other groups. Membership in a group is important in society. Interaction between individuals with the same traditions and language can create a group identity that will lead to the same behavior (Pramudita & Susilo, 2021). The group in question here can be an ethnic group, community, organisation, or people who are joined in a certain place because of work or profession. Values in certain groups can be applied by forming norms through identity, by education and socialisation so as to form a finger of self (Fatur Rahman & Noor, 2021). This also applies to educational institutions. Usually, an educational institution has values that become a reference to fulfill targets and become an institution that is better than others. This target is usually reserved for lecturers. To achieve certain targets requires training in a short time. This is done to become a professional teacher.

A professional teacher can be seen in the way he or she teaches, manages the class, and so on. Being a good teaching professional implies that the person contributes to the construction of a certain identity for the teacher (Barkhuizen & Mendieta, 2020). In another professional concept, lecturers should reflect on their classrooms, critically consider their self-conceptualisation, negotiate the challenges and affordances of being a teacher, and generate change by engaging in research (Teng, 2020) While other concepts of professionalism reveal that the construction of teacher identity as a process of identity construction, which is formed in the context of government-supported exam-orientated education policies (Gu & Lai, 2019).

Studies related to the professional identity of English lecturers have been conducted by several researchers in the last few decades. One of them is Qoyyimah, Singh, Exleyb, Doherty, dan Agustawan (2020) who revealed that the professional identity of English lecturers is more of a person whose role is to maintain the morality of learners. Lecturers focus more on being moral guardians than English lecturers. Outside the formal education environment, lecturers face negative attitudes towards the teaching profession because language teaching to young learners is not highly valued in society (Nguyen, 2019). Other research has suggested a conflict in the reconstruction of English lecturers' identities. The findings illustrate how English lecturers' self-images are derived from dynamic interactions

within the immediate and wider context of language education policy in Iran, and how these identities can change. The analyses show that English lecturers face conflicts across their personal beliefs and external expectations (Eslamdoost et al., 2020).

This research uses qualitative research. Meso this research is based on narrative research. In micro terms, this research is a narrative inquiry research. Narrative inquiry is a way of conducting research that centres on a person's story about their life and experiences (Barkhuizen, 2015). The stories of the participants involved in this research are a form of experience from their lives. In every experience, of course, there are hidden meanings to be revealed. Meanwhile, Clandinin (Solihah, 2006). In this study, the experiences told by the participants in terms of the management of the language course institution, as well as the experience as a teacher, will be interpreted and interpreted using certain theories. In this study, the experiences told by participants in terms of managing language course institutions, as well as experiences as lecturers will be interpreted and interpreted using certain theories. These experiences and meanings are in line to Barkhuizen (2015) and Clandinin (2006).

Social identity theory is usually used to examine the characteristics of a group's attitudes and actions. In addition, this theory is also used to explain the similar characteristics of a particular group. This theory was proposed by Henry Tajfel, approximately in the 1960s. Henry Tajfel explained that social identity is part of a person's self-concept that comes from their knowledge of membership in a social group along with the value and emotional significance of that membership (Armayati et al., 2019). Social identity can be interpreted as the insight that individuals have into a particular social group along with some values of interest and emotions in the members of the group. This makes a vague boundary between self-identity and group identity and the group makes individuals more willing to do anything for the group. The sense of solidarity arises because social identity causes individuals to be able to adapt to the values and norms that exist in their group (Khoerunisa et al., 2021).

Departing from the fact that humans are never separated from stories, this research uses narrative inquiry as a methodology to reveal the social identity of English lecturers. English lecturers certainly have stories that can be studied from various perspectives. This is also reinforced by some research in education that uses narrative inquiry as its methodology. Some of them, research conducted by Barkhuizen (2014), Clandinin & Huber (2010), and Shelley et al (2013). It can be concluded that this method can be applied to educational research or more broadly social humanities research.

## **RESEARCH SETTING**

Some previous studies that have been presented in the previous paragraphs are more about how the professional identity of English lecturers is developed. It is still very rare for previous studies to discuss the social identity of English lecturers in the context of professional development. It can be said that the study of teacher professionalism related to social identity is not too much studied by researchers. This research will make a positive

contribution to policy making related to the professional development of a teacher, especially English lecturers in Islamic universities in Central Java.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Social Identity of English Lecturers in Islamic Universities**

Clifford Geertz explains that social identity is formed in a society that, despite its differences, lives interdependently (Haan et al., 2021). Social identity emerges from meaningful and impactful activities within a community group. It signifies a willingness to share life with others. In social life, individuals are driven to achieve better living standards according to their own criteria. In a shared environment, each person plays a role and influences their surroundings positively. According to social identity theory, individuals aware of their social identity within a group will behave in line with the group's values and norms. This awareness encourages them to blend in and become part of the community. A person's self-image is shaped by the group's identity, meaning individual identity is intertwined with the collective identity. This does not imply a lack of personal freedom but indicates that awareness of social identity leads individuals to align their behavior with the group's characteristics. Therefore, awareness of social identity is crucial for maintaining group unity (Hasibuan, 2021).

Tajfel in Ellemers and Ouwerkerk (1999) there are three components to social identity. First, the Cognitive component is the self-awareness of individuals who are members of a social group. Second, Evaluative Component is everything that has positive or negative values that exist in a person as membership in a group. Third, the Emotional Component is a sense of emotional attachment that exists in individuals in a group.

The process of social identity formation occurs at three levels: Social Categorization: Individuals classify themselves within a group, which influences their self-definition, perception, and behavior according to the group's prototypes. Prototypes: These are social constructs that distinguish the in-group from the out-group. Depersonalization: This cognitive process involves individuals internalizing others as part of themselves, viewing themselves as interchangeable members of a social category rather than unique individuals (Hogg et al., 2004).

By having an identity, a person can publicise their social status in society. This identity will have an impact on how one interacts. The place of origin also affects how a person interacts. When moving to a new environment, a person must be able to adapt to their environment and interact with other individuals who have different social identities (Wibisono & Musdalifah, 2020).

Social identity is one of the theories that can illustrate and predict the behaviour of a group based on differences in social status. This difference causes legitimacy and stability. When individuals form relationships with other individuals in society based on their knowledge and insights, that is when social identity is formed (Engracia & Perguna, 2021).

This knowledge and insight are gained from school and the community of origin. The symbols attached to individuals can show the social identity of a person or group of people. Such symbols can be seen from the vehicles owned, the way of dressing, the style of speech, and religious practices, and objects that are considered valuable or respected. By showing certain symbols and distinctive behaviour, without introducing oneself, one can already identify one's regional origin, profession and religion.

The teacher's social identity will be reflected in his attitude and actions, in fostering and guiding his students. The personality of the teacher has a very big contribution to the success of education, especially in learning activities. The existence of lecturers has a very important role in educating the nation's children, both intellectual, spiritual and emotional intelligence. Lecturers also play a role in realising goodness in society, nation and state. Lecturers tirelessly educate the nation's children to have a noble personality. Lecturers are human figures who occupy a position and play an important role in education. Lecturers are also a very dominant and important factor in formal education. For students, lecturers are often used as role models and even become teacher identification figures.

Lecturers are the spearhead of education, because they directly try to influence, foster and develop students' talents. As the spearhead, lecturers are required to have the basic abilities needed as educators, mentors and lecturers. These abilities are reflected in the competence of lecturers. The quality or not of the educational process is highly dependent on the creativity and innovation of the lecturers, and their existence becomes a figure and role model. This means that lecturers must have certain personality qualification standards that include responsibility, authority, independence and discipline.

One of the English lecturers explained that the reason for becoming a lecturer was to share knowledge about what English is and how to use it as well as encouragement from parents. In the community, lecturers have a higher social status and are considered role models. This is because there was a view that lecturers do not only transfer knowledge, but also transfer values and transfer skills.

Lecturers hold a multifaceted role that extends beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. They are responsible for imparting values and skills, deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition, to shape well-rounded individuals. This comprehensive approach aligns with the foundational philosophy of Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi. Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi is the three main responsibilities that must be carried out by universities and higher education institutions in Indonesia. The three main responsibilities are Education and Teaching, Research and Development, and Community Service. Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi serves as a reference framework for universities in Indonesia, to balance the elements of education, research, and social responsibility. Lecturers are not only tasked with delivering subject matter but are also charged with integrating Islamic values into their teaching. For English lecturers, this means embedding principles such as honesty, respect, and the pursuit of knowledge within their language instruction. In addition, in practice, lecturers provide direct advice,

relate lesson topics to Islamic teachings, introduce religious activities, and introduce Islamic values through personal experiences (Alfian et al., 2021; Rohmana, 2020; Safitri et al., 2023). This integration ensures that students receive a balanced education that harmonizes secular and religious knowledge, fostering individuals who are both intellectually competent and morally grounded. The learning process is thus enriched with a spiritual dimension, preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world while adhering to their faith.

In the realm of research, lecturers at Islamic universities are encouraged to explore topics that bridge the gap between contemporary science and Islamic teachings. The focus is on producing scholarly work that promotes tolerance, religious moderation, and the integration of science with Islam. This unique research approach not only contributes to the academic body of knowledge but also addresses pressing societal issues from an Islamic perspective. By engaging in such research, lecturers help to develop a more nuanced understanding of how Islamic values can be applied in various fields, promoting a more harmonious and inclusive society. Community service activities undertaken by lecturers in Islamic universities are deeply infused with Islamic values. These activities often involve outreach programs aimed at promoting religious moderation, fostering interfaith dialogue, and supporting community development initiatives. By participating in these efforts, lecturers apply their academic expertise to real-world challenges, demonstrating the practical relevance of their knowledge. This engagement helps to build stronger communities that are resilient, tolerant, and inclusive, reflecting the core teachings of Islam.

Lecturers at Islamic universities play a pivotal role in advancing the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi. Through their commitment to education, research, and community service, they not only enhance their own professional development but also contribute to the broader societal good. By integrating Islamic values into all aspects of their work, they ensure that the knowledge and skills they impart are grounded in a moral and ethical framework, preparing students to be both knowledgeable professionals and conscientious citizens. This holistic approach to higher education fosters a synergy that drives both personal growth and societal progress, embodying the true spirit of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi. However, in its implementation, lecturers also encounter challenges such as limited resources, lack of teacher training, and time constraints. Effective, innovative practical strategies and methods are needed to develop comprehensive teaching materials. This can support lecturers in incorporating relevant religious values into English lessons.

The style of dress of lecturers in Islamic universities is adjusted to the Islamic values that develop in the surrounding community. For women, clothes should not show curves and wear a headscarf. For men, they usually wear shirts, *koko* shirts, and Muslim style fashion. Male and female lecturers are required to dress politely and neatly and wear shoes when the learning process is taking place.



The speaking style of Islamic university lecturers is adjusted to Islamic values. In the learning process, the language used is standard Indonesian and English. The language used is polite and courteous. Some lecturers have side jobs as translators, journal editors, religious broadcasters in the surrounding community, and others that allow for the application of knowledge to the wider community.

Teaching aids in the form of printed and electronic books that are integrated with Islamic values. The semester learning plan uses references according to scientific knowledge and certain tafsir and hadith books related to the course. Lecturers are free to choose the references used but they must be integrated with Islamic values. Integration of Islamic values through curriculum content, teaching materials, and learning activities that are in line with Islamic principles (Djamdjuri et al., 2023; Irawan, 2020; Sholeh et al., 2022). Lecturers at Islamic universities do not only integrate Islamic values through curriculum content, teaching materials, and learning activities that are in line with Islamic principles, but also with behavior and habits as Muslims. The courses provided tend to be more integrated with Islamic values. To add more specific religious knowledge, English lecturers usually collaborate with religion lecturers to have deeper religious knowledge and can be taught to students. Lecturers always open the class with Islamic greeting namely *assalamu'alaikum wr.wb*.

### **Components of Social Identity Formation in English Lecturers**

The formation of social identity in individuals goes through three processes, namely social categorization, prototype, Depersonalization. The first component of social identity formation is the Cognitive component. In this component, the lecturer begins to have self-awareness that he must master English well. This happens when joining or holding the status as a lecturer. Scientific mastery is not only at the academic level, but also the ability to communicate well in English.

The second component of social identity formation is the Evaluative Component. To become a professional lecturer, one must have self-awareness to always upgrade knowledge and insight. English lecturers can facilitate mastery of English both orally and in writing, lecturers can go to tutoring, and others. That way the group has a positive value for the individual. Islamic universities have demands for learning juxtaposed with Islamic values. For lecturers of general courses such as English. lecturers have self-awareness to be able to add insight into Islamic science, so that they can integrate it in learning, research, and community service.

The third social identity-forming component is the Emotional Component. After teaching at an Islamic university, lecturers have the motivation to be able to channel their knowledge to students. The knowledge taught and the behavior of lecturers in everyday life cannot come out of the values of Islamic teachings even though English comes from a majority non-Islamic society. Lecturers who teach in Islamic universities are required to have a mindset, speaking style, and dressing style that is in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Even when they are in the community, lecturers unconsciously still carry out and practice Islamic values.

### **Levels of Social Identity Formation of English Lecturers**

The first level of identity formation according to Michael A. Hogg (2004) is social categorization. A person's social identity can be seen from the existence of categorization (compare). Categorization is that in-group members are more likely to feel the need to put themselves into various categories, to see which group the individual is more likely to belong to. This is an important element in the approach to prejudice. English lecturers in Islamic universities are categorized that lecturers must be Muslim and practice religious laws.

The second level, prototypes, is a social construction that is adjusted to the differences between the in-group and the out-group. Society has a positive construction of lecturers. Lecturers are required to have good behavior and be a role model for the surrounding community. but over time, some people have a negative view of lecturers. Lecturers in Islamic universities have different values from lecturers in other universities. This can be seen in the learning, research and community service carried out.

The third level of Depersonalization is the cognitive process of individuals in internalizing other individuals as part of themselves or seeing themselves as examples of social categories that can be exchanged rather than unique individuals (Hogg et al., 2004). At this level, English lecturers who are members of Islamic universities have self-awareness to be able to integrate science with Islamic values. Lecturers must be able to adjust their dressing style and speaking style to the rules and values adopted by the college. Lecturers have self-awareness not to hurt others, share selflessly, create peace and tranquility wherever they are, do not trigger conflict or contravention.

Based on the three points described above, we can see how social identity relates to a person. First, individuals are encouraged to be able to maintain a positive self-concept. Lifestyles such as activities, interests, and individual opinions are adjusted to the social identity they have and tend to show positive things. Second, the self-identity in question is partly derived from group identity. Positive things are shown for self-representation of certain groups. Third, individuals will compare in groups and out groups. Comparisons are made to classify themselves into certain groups.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that social identity has an important role in the existence of individuals in society. The process of forming social identity is not easy and takes place over a long period of time. Social identity cannot be separated from self-identity. Self-identity is a representation of the identity carried by the group. Self-identity makes it easier for people to see which group a person comes from, be it workplace, ethnicity, country, and others. A person's identity will provide a key to society whether the individual gets good treatment or vice versa.



## The Role of Social Identity in Creating a Conducive Learning Environment

In the learning process, there are demands to conduct learning in accordance with the vision and mission of the university. In the research and community service process, there is an obligation to be adjusted to the roadmap of the study program that refers to the university, so that the implementation of the tridharma of higher education cannot be separated from Islamic teachings. Students in Islamic universities are partly from pesantren, this makes it easier for lecturers in the process of integrating science with Islamic teachings. Lecture materials cannot be separated from the values of religious moderation, namely tolerance, national commitment, anti-violence, accommodating local culture.

One of them is the English for Islamic Studies course. This course examines Islamic texts in English. Students learn to practice teaching English by designing lesson plans based on the need analysis of the Islamic studies theme. The students are expected to maximize the utilization of English gambits or expressions, Islamic-based English text and English vocabulary during the teaching activities. The lecturer explains about the introduction to Islamic science using English, one of which is about the introduction to banking and finance. One of the references can use the book case studies in Islamic banking and finance which discusses *ijara* contracts, *musharaka* contracts, and others (Kettell, 2011).

Learning is more about grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. References can be in the form of studies of English texts that discuss Islamic figures and values. One of them is the orientalist William Montgomery Watt who studied the Prophet Muhammad. Some of his works include Muhammad Prophet and Tasteman and others. By studying the book, students can find out the views of Western figures about the Prophet Muhammad (Dzikri & Solihah, 2022). Indirectly, lecturers provide knowledge about the importance of tolerance starting from respecting and understanding each other.

Another course is Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) in Islamic Settings. This course examines how to teach English to young learners in an Islamic environment. It aims to connect English learning theory with Islamic studies. The course is both theoretical and practical. Learning for the younger generation can be done through English songs that contain Islamic content. This method is used to train English pronunciation and vocabulary properly and correctly. With this course, students are guided to be able to create a conducive educational environment so that learning can be carried out effectively and interestingly.

One of the Islamic values applied by English lecturers is loving one another. This can be seen if there is a coworker or student who is sick or affected by a disaster, the lecturer prays, visits, and helps in the form of goods or services. This activity can encourage emotional closeness between lecturers and coworkers and students to create social harmony and can improve professionalism.

By referring to Islamic values, lecturers can provide effective classes. An effective classroom can create conducive learning and encourage students to be actively involved in the application of knowledge to social life. Learning prioritizes tolerance, non-violence,

nationalism, and accommodates local culture.

### **The Role of Social Identity in Construct Professionalism**

Universities also play a role in developing the professionalism of lecturers, which usually takes the form of training. TOEFL and IELTS training is carried out to hone lecturers' English skills through writing and speaking. Factors that build the professional identity of lecturers are interactions with colleagues and professional associations. Interactions that occur with colleagues in a professional association are important in the formation of professional identity. This is certain to happen because there are many activities such as training, workshops, or discussion forums that lecturers can participate in. There are also *Pelatihan Teknik Instruksional (PEKERTI)* and program *Peningkatan Dosen Pemula (PKDP)* to hone teaching skills and RELO USA (Regional English Language Office) to train proficiency in English. Training to improve lecturer competence from the private sector includes IALF, British Council UK, and others.

*Pekerti* is one of the lecturer professional development training programs. *Pekerti* is usually carried out for days and carried out online or face-to-face. The training material is in the form of preparing semester learning plans (RPS) including analysis of learning outcomes, process evaluation, and others. In addition, this training material is learning models and methods, basic teaching skills, adult education, teaching simulations, and others. In this training, lecturers are taught how to formulate good learning outcomes that are tailored to the abilities of students and the culture of the local community.

RELO USA is one of the institutions from abroad that collaborates with government agencies to support and improve the professionalism of English lecturers throughout Indonesia. This institution focuses on improving communication skills in English both in learning and everyday life. The programs that RELO USA has for the professionalism of English lecturers are the Online Professional English Network (OPEN) Program, the OPEN Online Courses (GOCs) Program, the OPEN Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) program (Kedutaan Besar AS Jakarta, n.d.)

Professionalism in teaching can be developed through the tridharma of higher education. Learning helps lecturers to be able to practice the knowledge they have and as a place to continue to hone their skills in the field of teaching. Research, helps lecturers to be able to find the latest phenomena in society and can be studied by students for learning and training critical thinking. Community service, can provide experience to lecturers for the application of science in everyday life.

One of the studies conducted by Islamic university lecturers with the title *Developing Speaking Material Using Islamic contents in MA Salafiyah Kajen*. This research examines the development of Islamic content textbooks for English speaking (Nikmah, 2018). Through this research, the lecturer developed English learning materials for speaking skills in tenth grade students by using textbooks that contain Islamic contents and values. The research is

in line with the vision, mission and goals of Islamic universities in Central Java.

One of the community services organized by English lecturers in Islamic universities is Developing English Literacy of Muslim Millennials to Promote Moderate Islam Through English for Islamic Studies Workshop. This activity trains students to be able to develop English literacy by promoting Moderate Islam through English workshops based on Islamic studies. This training aims to train the younger generation to produce Islamic content using English. Lecturers collaborate with social activists who work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This activity can help lecturers to be able to continue to develop knowledge insights on English based on Islamic studies and can create interesting learning content tailored to the times.

### **The Role of Social Identity in Teaching Methods and Strategies**

Every educational institution has a certain vision, mission and goals in learning. These three things become the basis for lecturers to develop materials and develop teaching methods and strategies. Islamic universities prioritize science that is integrated with Islamic values. Study programs in several Islamic universities have the name Tadris Bahasa Inggris which has the same meaning as English education. The word tadris comes from Arabic which is a characteristic that the study program comes from Islamic universities.

By assuming a social identity as an English lecturer in an Islamic university, the lecturer consciously uses certain methods, techniques and approaches. This is done to make learning more effective and meaningful. In addition, lecturers are also required to be able to integrate science with everyday life. Science that is integrated with everyday life can motivate students to learn something, because it is considered that the knowledge can be applied and is not abstract.

The teaching methods and strategies used are tailored to the courses taught. Learning is not only classical, but emphasizes two-way communication between students and lecturers. The approach usually used is communicative approach with communicative language teaching method, collaborative approach, and others. The strategies that lecturers usually use vary, depending on the course. Strategies that are usually used are role play, simulation, jigsaw, and others. In addition, learning can also be problem-based, practical, and case studies. In addition to teaching theories, lecturers in Islamic universities are required to be able to develop character values in each student.

### **CONCLUSION**

A person's self-identity refers to how the surrounding environment or group then develops into a social identity. English lecturers in Islamic universities get social identity based on the work environment and the groups they join. Lecturers are required to be able to apply Islamic values in the college environment both in the learning process, research, and community service and the community environment. The tridharma process of higher

education cannot be separated from Islamic values such as religious moderation, mutual respect, fairness, and others. Social identity plays a role in improving the professionalism of English lecturers at Islamic universities in Central Java. With the increasing professionalism of lecturers, it can provide a conducive learning environment so that learning can be carried out effectively and interestingly.

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