

The thematic system in the construction of Arabic Sufism communities and Islamic identity



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This research aims to investigate the thematic system (theme and rheme) of Arabic texts, especially Arabic Sufi texts related to *al-Hikam* aphorisms. Thematic structure is defined as the set of options relating to 'information structure', the linguistic representation of extralinguistic experience and how a Sufi constructs an information structure in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. In this case, the extralinguistic experience is focused on the Arabic Sufi communities (Tarekat Syadziliyah community). The first problem of this research, about thematic system in *al-Hikam* aphorism related to Arabic Sufi communities and Islamic identities, is elaborated comprehensively. The elaboration process can be classified into a number of thematic systems such as (1) unmarked topical, (2) marked topical, (3) interpersonal and (4) textual. The thematic analysis becomes the base foundation to elaborate the construction of Arabic Sufi communities and Islamic identities. A thematic model shows how language users in Arabic Sufi communities encode language from their mental picture of reality. By capturing the *al-Hikam* aphorism through the thematic system, it can be concluded that communication is pivotal in making Islamic Sufi identities.

Contribution: Contextually, this research contributes to the study of cross-language and cross-culture. Language as a reflection of a certain culture can be seen both in terms of the product and the translation process.

Keywords: thematic system; Arabic Sufi communities; social identity; *al-Hikam* aphorisms; language and identity.

Introduction

Everyone can modify the way they speak depending on whom they are talking to or in what situation (Meyerhoff 2006). Every locutor changes the way they speak depending on the interlocutor, and more importantly depending on the situation. Sociolinguistics can be understood as a comprehensive study of language, especially the elements of language (phonemes, morphemes, words and sentences) and the relationship between these elements (structure), in relation to speakers of that language as members of society. Sociolinguistics also examines the relationship and interplay between language behaviour and social behaviour (Kridalaksana 2009; Nababan 1993). Sociolinguists utilise a certain level of methods to analyse linguistic patterns and the speaker's attitudes towards language use itself. Some of the patterns can be analysed systematically by conducting an in-depth examination of several recorded speeches and schemata about the speaker's or a particular community's background (Meyerhoff 2006). This study discusses more specifically about the register of *kyai* [Islamic religious leader] in conveying the noble values contained in the Arabic book, *al-Hikam*. Studies related to sociolinguistics in Arabic have been comprehensively reviewed by Bassiouney (2020), while studies about register have been conducted by Purnanto (2020). In this study, register is understood as a variety of languages. Language variety (register, manner of discourse and keyword) itself is the variation of language according to usage, which depends on the topic being discussed, the intimacy among the locutor, the interlocutor and the person being discussed, and the medium of conversation (Kridalaksana 2009:206; Purnanto 2020:12; Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015:52). This study discusses more specifically on how the *kyai* conveys his *da'wah* [inviting others to Islam] to the *ummah*. The *da'wah* material is sourced from *al-Hikam* aphorisms. The book contains pearls of wisdom regarding the noble teachings of Islamic religious values, especially in the field of Islamic Sufism (Islamic mysticism).

Sheikh Ibn Atha'illah, a prolific Islamic scholar, was the first to collect teachings, messages, prayers and a biography of the founder of the Tarekat Syadziliyah community. In this research, *tarekat* or *ṭarīqa* is defined as a path or generic name for Sufi order (Renard 2009:276). Sheikh Ibn Atha'illah himself has produced no less than 20 written works, covering multiple fields such as

Sufism, *tafseer*, *hadith*, *aqidah*, *nahwu* and *fiqh*; however, his seminal work is the *al-Hikam*, which was written in 1259–1310 AD. This book is very popular in the Islamic world for centuries, even until today. This book is also the main reference for the study of Islamic Sufism in almost all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Fikr 2020; Pustaka 2016). This study examines the relationship between the information structure (thematic system) within *al-Hikam* aphorisms and its relation with the Sufi community (*tariqa*). The Sufi community has a distinctive character that needs to be studied. This study seeks to find the relationship between the text of *al-Hikam* aphorisms and the extralinguistic elements: how a religious leader conveys the teachings of *al-Hikam* in the midst of society or Sufi communities in Indonesia.

Al-Hikam aphorisms is one of the most legendary books in the spiritual world of Islam. The beauty of the language and the depth of meaning of this book undoubtedly mesmerise anyone who reads it. Several studies related to *al-Hikam* aphorisms and Islamic mystical approach have been studied by experts (Abdullah 2018; Almirzanah 2020; Anis et al. 2021; Băiaş 2015; Elmi 2019; Hui 2019; Meiring 2021; Rahem 2017; Sakhok, Munandar & Ladzidzah 2019). However, these studies have not used a thematic system model, the basis for genre studies, as a part of cultural analysis. The term ‘genre’ itself, in this case, is defined as a social process, which is the realisation of cultural values and norms. The genre is still a rule that must be followed in carrying out a social process (Santosa 2011:69). Pre-existing studies are still focused on how to convey *al-Hikam* aphorisms to listeners (*jama'ah*) carried out by Islamic scholars (*ulama*, *kyai*), for example, K.H. Soleh Darat, a scholar whose role in spreading Islam was influential especially on the North Coast of Java and specifically on Semarang. There have been no previous studies that specifically examined the Sufi community altogether with a thematic system. This concern creates a big gap for future researchers. This research begins with the analysis of the *al-Hikam* aphorisms text. The analysis of the text starts from the analysis of the informational structure. This is important to do because this study elaborates the relationship between textual elements and extralinguistic elements. The extralingual element in this study is focused on studying the register of a *kyai* in conveying the moral values of Sufism of *al-Hikam* aphorisms. After being observed in detail, this study finds a similar pattern in the *al-Hikam* text with the communication strategy of a Sufi or *kyai* in conveying *al-Hikam* aphorisms to their *jama'ah*.

Methodology

The main data in this study were the clauses in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. Meanwhile, to elaborate the extralingual structure of *al-Hikam* aphorisms, the data used were the transcriptions of the Mp3 recording of *al-Hikam*'s study from Kyai Imron Jamil (Soemarsono 2004). In *al-Hikam* aphorisms, the reader can find the variant clause in Arabic language. A clause is a grammatical unit of a group of words consisting of at least a subject and a predicate with the potential of becoming a

sentence (Kridalaksana 2009). In Arabic, the term ‘clause’ is equal to the terms ‘*ibārah* [phrase], *jumlah shughrā* or *jumailah* [clause] (Baalbaki 1990).

This study was based on Halliday’s theory of functional systemic linguistics (FSL) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The main foundation of FSL is that language is ‘functional’. Language cannot be separated from context because language actually reflects attitudes, opinions, values and ideologies (Wiratno 2018:40). In FSL a clause contains three dimensions of meaning at once: textual, interpersonal and ideational meaning. In this study, the focus is on ‘textual meaning’. The dimension of textual meaning elaborates a clause as a tool to convey a message (clause as message) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). Based on this study, probably, a model for delivering the message of a Sufi as a form of representation of community identity can be found. In each clause there are four kinds of information compilers: (1) unmarked topical, (2) marked topical, (3) interpersonal and (4) textual.

Unmarked topical theme is a theme functioning as a subject in a clause, while a marked topical theme is a theme determined by the information preceding the subject in the form of circumstances surrounding the clause (Bloor & Bloor 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The interpersonal theme has two functions: (1) to determine the intimacy (closeness and formality) of interpersonal relationship between participants, especially the vocative form, and (2) to determine interpersonal transactions of giving and requesting information or giving and requesting goods or services; in this case is the form of interpersonal adjuncts (Santosa 2003). Interpersonal function is the function of language in exchanging experiences. It refers to activities carried out between the locutor and interlocutor and between the writer and the reader, which is called the communicative function of communication. Textual theme is useful for connecting one clause to another, marked by the use of conjunction. By paying attention to these types of themes (unmarked topical, marked topical, textual and interpersonal) in *al-Hikam* aphorisms, it was expected to understand the relationship between the language of Sufism and Islamic identity. The distribution of each element of information in *al-Hikam* aphorisms is presented in Table 1.

The high percentage of unmarked topical theme shows that the distribution of information on Arabic-Indonesian aphorisms is textually organised in a coherent and systematic

TABLE 1: Distribution of thematic system in *al-Hikam*.

Theme type	Arabic (Source language)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarked topical	205	54.66
Marked topical	13	3.46
Interpersonal	40	10.66
Textual	117	31.2
Total	375	100

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

manner through placing the subject in front of the clause as a tool to emphasise the main issues discussed within it.

Data analysis

In *al-Hikam* aphorisms it is found that unmarked topical themes dominate compared to the other types. It can be concluded that the organisation of information in the *al-Hikam* aphorisms in Arabic – Bahasa Indonesia is well organised and systematic. Two hundred and five types of unmarked topical themes (54.6%) were found in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. Topical themes that occupy the position of the subject are also called unmarked topical themes. An example of unmarked topical theme is presented in Tables 2 and 3.

It needs to be taken into account that theme in declarative clauses is usually combined with a subject. This is in accordance with the opinion (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) that theme is conflated with subject. Themes that are in the subject position in declarative clauses are grouped under unmarked topical theme (Santosa 2003; Saragih 2007). However, there are some topics that are not subjects but are adjuncts, for example, 'after that' and 'until now'. Besides adverb of time, adverb of place and complement can also take this marked topical theme. Marked topical themes can be determined by the circumstance preceding the subject or if the theme is in the 'non-subject' form

TABLE 2: The unmarked topical theme (SVO) in *al-Hikam*.

Arabic theme	Arabic rheme
<i>Ashlu kulli ma'shiyatin wa ghaflatin wa syahwat</i>	<i>ar-riḥā 'anin-naḥsi</i> (Pustaka 2016:65)
<i>The source of every disobedience, indifference, and passion</i>	<i>is self-satisfaction</i>
Theme (old information)	Rheme (new information)
Unmarked topical (Subject) (SVO)	Rheme (Predicate)

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

SVO, subject – verb – object.

TABLE 3: The unmarked topical theme (VSO) in *al-Hikam*.

Arabic theme	Arabic rheme
<i>Ihtadā</i>	<i>ar-rāḥilūna ilaihi bianwārit-tawājuhi</i> (Pustaka 2016:57)
<i>those who are voyaging to Him</i>	<i>are guided by the lights of their orientation,</i>
<i>wal- wāshilūna</i>	<i>lahum anwāruḥ-muwājahati</i>
<i>whereas those who are united to Him</i>	<i>have the lights of face-to-face confrontation</i>
Theme (old information)	Rheme (new information)
Unmarked topical (VSO)	Rheme (Predicate)

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

VSO, verb – subject – object.

TABLE 4: The textual theme in *al-Hikam*.

Arabic theme	Arabic rheme
<i>Matā 'a'thāka</i>	<i>'asyhadaka birrahu</i> , (Pustaka 2016:94)
<i>When He (Allah) gives to you</i>	<i>He shows you His kindness</i>
<i>wa matā mana'aka</i>	<i>'asyhadaka qahrahu</i> ,
<i>and when He denies you</i>	<i>He shows you irresistible power</i>
Theme (old information)	Rheme (new information)
Textual + marked topical	Rheme (predicate)

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

(Emilia 2014). In *al-Hikam* aphorisms, this type of theme is rarely found. Thirteen types of marked topical themes (3.46%) were found in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. This further emphasises that in distributing information, Sufis attach importance to the position of the subject at the beginning of the clause as a starting point. An example of marked topical theme is presented in Table 4.

Besides marked and unmarked topical themes, textual theme is also found in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. Textual theme is useful for connecting one clause to the previous one, which is marked by the use of conjunction in front of the clause. Textual functions cover the following: (1) continuative, (2) conjunction (structural theme) and (3) conjunctive adjunct. There are 117 textual themes (31.2%) found in *al-Hikam* aphorisms. Table 5 presents examples of textual themes in *al-Hikam* aphorism.

Besides textual theme, *al-Hikam* aphorisms also contain interpersonal theme. Based on data from Table 6, it can be concluded that Arabic uses vocative and nominal sentence (*jumlah ismiyyah*). The vocative becomes the main marker of interpersonal theme. This vocative shows to the readers that there is an interaction between the people and the God. In Table 6, it is found that the theme is used to realise interpersonal meaning. Interactional matter realised in the vocative form is a call to God (*ilāhiy/* in Arabic).

In *al-Hikam* aphorisms, the use of textual theme and interpersonal theme is far fewer compared with topical theme because interpersonal theme and textual theme are not the basis for developing the theme. Religious leaders use one of the patterns in conveying the teachings of *al-Hikam*. One of the Islamic religious leaders used in this research data is Kyai Imron Jamil. He is the caretaker of *pesantren* [boarding school] Kyai Mojo Islamic, Jombang, East Java. This *pesantren* is barely known among the people just before Kyai Imron broadcasted his recitations and sermons through Radio Mayangkara FM, Blitar, East Java. The recitations and sermons were even recorded and transcribed by Soemarsono (2004). The data in this study were taken from this transcription. One of the lectures

TABLE 5: The textual theme in *al-Hikam*.

Arabic theme	Arabic rheme	Arabic theme	Arabic rheme
<i>Al-a'mālu</i>	<i>shuwarun qāimatun,</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>arwāḥuhā</i>
<i>Actions</i>	<i>are lifeless forms</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>the presence of an inner reality of sincerity (sirr al-ikhlas) within them</i>
Unmarked topical	Rheme	Textual	Unmarked topical
			Rheme

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

TABLE 6: The interpersonal theme in *al-Hikam*.

Arabic theme	Arabic rheme
<i>Ilāhiy</i>	<i>anā</i>
<i>My Lord</i>	<i>I am</i>
Interpersonal	Unmarked topical
	Rheme

Source: Pustaka, T.W., 2016, *Al-Hikam: Kitab Rujukan Ilmu Tasawuf Edisi Lengkap 3 Bahasa*, Wali Pustaka, Jakarta.

TABLE 7: Thematic progression pattern of Kyai when explaining *Kitab al-Hikam*.

Theme	Rheme
<i>amal itu</i> (Charity is sincere)	<i>adalah ikhlas</i>
Old	New (Clause 1)
<i>ikhlas itu</i> (Sincerity is without mixture)	<i>Murni</i>
Old	New (Clause 2)
<i>Murni itu</i>	<i>tanpa campuran</i>
Old	New (Clause 3)
<i>Tanpa campuran itu</i> (No mix it means nothing interferes in its purpose and taste)	<i>artinya tidak ada yang ikut campur dalam tujuannya dan rasanya</i> (Soemarsono 2004:1)
Old	New (Clause 4)

Source: Soemarsono, 2004, *Upaya Memahami dan Mengamalkan Al-Hikam 1 Bersama Kyai Imron Djamil Radio Mayangkara FM Blitar, Yayasan Baitul Maal Sabilih-Muttaqin*.

taken as data in this research is entitled *Tanamlah Akumu di dalam Bumi Kesamaran*.

In delivering the *al-Hikam* material, Kyai Imron Jamil maintains the integrity of the theme. The integrity of theme is used by *kyai* so that the listener (*jama'ah*) can easily understand the concept of *al-Hikam*. This can be seen from the example of how Kyia Imron Jamil explains the concept of *ikhlas* as part of the material from the book *al-Hikam* (see Table 7).

From Table 7, it can be seen how Kyai Imron Jamil is able to, at the same time, explain a concept to the *jama'ah* and maintain the unity and coherence of meaning, so that the congregation (*jama'ah thariqah Syadiliyyah*) can understand well in a fairly simple logical unity. The data in Table 7 are taken from Kyai Imron Jamil's lecture explaining the relationship between charity (*amal*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*). In this case, the charity occupies the position of theme (old information), information conveyed by locutors to their interlocutors. Meanwhile, the new information from clause 1 is an explanation that charity is part of sincerity. This new information is called rheme. Then, rheme is developed by Kyai Imron Jamil to the next new clause 2 (*Sincerity is without mixture*). This pattern ultimately makes it easier for listeners (*jama'ah*) to grasp the moral message being conveyed by Kyai Imron Jamil.

The data in Table 7 were taken from Kyai Imron Jamil's mp3 recording in explaining *al-Hikam* aphorisms (Soemarsono 2004). The book is entitled '*Efforts to Understand and Practice al-Hikam 1 and 2*', a book containing recitation and lectures from Kyai Imron Jamil, broadcasted live on Mayangkara FM Radio, Blitar, East Java. Soemarsono has transcribed the contents of the lecture and rewritten it in the books *al-Hikam 1* and *al-Hikam 2*, which were reproduced by the Al-Hidayah Foundation, Malang (Soemarsono 2004).

In terms of thematic progression pattern, this pattern is called linear pattern. The development of this type is characterised

by the fact that the rheme (new information) in the first sentence becomes the theme (old information) in the second sentence. The information development in this model clause is a simple 'linear' progression. Saragih (2007) defined this pattern as 'the progression from rheme to theme' as opposed to the progression pattern from theme to theme (from old information to old information), indicating that from rheme the first clause develops a number of themes in the third, fourth and so on.

In addition, Kyai uses analogy to make his lecture easier for the listener (*jama'ah*) *Jika amal tanpa ikhlas sama sekali ibaratnya seperti jasmani tanpa roh, dan seperti gambar tanpa makna* [If charity without sincerity is like a body without a spirit, and like an image without meaning] (Soemarsono 2004:1).

Data 8a (the explanation of *al-Hikam* by Kyai Imron Jamil about the Sincerity):

Inti orang yang akan sowan kepada Allah itu harus **mengenolkan diri**. Selama engkau masih muncul aku yang mempunyai kekuasaan, aku yang punya kemampuan, aku yang punya kekuatan, maka Allah masih **terhijab**. **Kamu masih terhijab** untuk mendekatkan diri kepada Allah. Apa hijabnya? Ya pengakuanmu itu sendiri. Padahal tidak ada hijab yang paling dekat, misalkan **klilip** yang paling rapat menutup mata hati. Karena kalau sudah menjadi kepentingan aku itu apa bisa mengelak (Indonesian – Javanese). (Soemarsono 2004:3)

[One has to show zeroness of their heart first before coming to Allah. As long as the ego is there, their eyes are still covered to see Allah. You are still veiled to get closer to the God. What kind of veil? It's your own selfness, which covers your very own heart.]

Data 8b (the explanation of *al-Hikam* by Kyai Imron Jamil):

Mudahnya bicara hanya dua **jengkingan** atau empat **ubengan**. Tetapi mengapa menjadi terasa berat? Yang berat bukan soal bentuknya, tetapi karena sulitnya meninggalkan kepentingan aku yang mengantuk dan ingin tidur. Disuruh meninggalkan ngantuk, meninggalkan tidur, meninggalkan bantal, meninggalkan kesenangannya, hanya perlu untuk **menjalankan rong jengkingan** itu. Itu yang menyebabkan berat (Indonesian – Javanese). (Soemarsono 2004:3)

[It's easy to say that fajr prayer is just doing bowing twice or four rounds. But why is it still heavy to do? The problem is that one cannot resist their sleepiness and their mindset that why should I leave my sleep, my bed, my pillow; just for bowing and kneeling. Those make things difficult.]

In data 8a and data 8b, there is a phrase 'mengenolkan diri', which is non-standard in Indonesian grammar. The word 'nol' (zero) is a number symbolised by 0. The phrase 'mengenolkan diri' can be categorised into the group of grammatical interference. Kyai Imron Jamil tries to make a new word by making the word 'nol' as a verb 'meng-enolkan'. Likewise, the word 'hijab', which was originally a noun, is modified into /terhijab/. In data 9, it is also found that the code mixing must be performed by the Kyai because they have to explain certain concepts in Islamic Sufism. The code

mixing in the form of words and phrases comes from the Javanese language, such as *Jengkingan* = *menungging* (bowing). *Ubengan* = *putaran* (round) (*menjalankan rong jengkingan*).

In this study, more specifically, it will be discussed regarding how the domains of the *kyai* convey their *da'wah* material. The *da'wah* material is sourced from the *al-Hikam* aphorisms. The book contains pearls of wisdom regarding the noble teachings of Islamic religious values, especially in the field of Islamic Sufism (Islamic mysticism). *Kyai Imron Djamil* conveys the teachings of *al-Hikam* aphorisms using special words (Arabic loanwords) that are only understood by speakers and listeners within the community. The community is often referred to as the 'congregation of the tarekat', which is a group of people who specifically have special rituals and deeds to get closer to Allah SWT. These special words are the use of *abror* and *muqarrabin*. The word *al-abrār* comes from Arabic, which is equivalent to /those who do good/. The word has basically been borrowed by Bahasa Indonesia into /*abrar*/, which means 'pious' (a lot of good deeds).

Furthermore, it is also found that a loanword comes from Arabic, namely /*muqorrobin*/ which means 'people who are close' (to Allah SWT). From data 10 it can be concluded that *Kyai* uses several loanwords from Arabic in their sermon as a strategy to grasp and aspire the *jama'ah* to become an *abrar* [a pious person] and belong to *muqorrobin* [people who are close to Allah SWT]. It can be concluded that in delivering the material from *al-Hikam* aphorisms, *Kyai* had been used code mixing between Bahasa Indonesia and Arabic to introduce the Arab Sufism tradition to the Indonesian people, known as foreignisation. In addition, from data 1, it is also found that there is phonetic interference in the word *hakekat* [verily] and the word *ruh* [soul]. In standard language rules, the word *hakekat* is pronounced as /*hakikat*/. The word *ruh* is pronounced as /*roh*/ in Bahasa Indonesia. However, *kyai* sometimes pronounces /*ruh*/ and sometimes /*roh*/ inconsistently. This happens because the speaker spontaneously utters it in an oral lecture. The delivery of this *al-Hikam* recitation can be said to use non-standard language, so that a close relationship can be established between the *Kyai* and his *jama'ah*. Standard variety refers to benchmarks that apply to quantity and quality and which are applied based on agreement (Sumarsono 2010:27). Interference of one language's vocabulary into another language can occur in various ways and it has the dominant form of Arabic vocabulary interference, as shown in the following data:

Itu salah satu bentuk penyakitnya orang yang ingin **wusul** kepada Allah. (Soemarsono 2004:4)

That's one of the forms of illness for people who want to reach Allah (*wusul*).

From the word *wusul* above, it is found that there is an interference use of the word *wusul* in Arabic, which comes from the verb /*wa-sha-la*/, which means 'until'. *Wusul to Allah* means 'reaching Allah SWT'. The verb /*wa-sha-la*/ undergoes an inflectional form so that it becomes /*wushūl*/ with a long vowel /*u*/, which lexically means 'access',

'achievements', 'arrival', and 'reaching', but *Kyai* pronounces the word /*wushūl*/ with a short vowel /*u*/ into /*wusul*/; this happens because neither Indonesian nor Javanese can find long vowels as in Arabic.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and findings of this study, it can be concluded that *al-Hikam* aphorisms has various forms of themes: marked topical theme, unmarked topical theme, interpersonal theme and textual theme. Each of these types carries out their respective roles in a text, especially aphorism genre. By looking at the number of unmarked topical themes that are quite dominant, it can be concluded that the Sufis construct self-identity by making the subject of the clause as the starting point of an utterance. Then the topical theme is developed in a certain pattern, one of them is linear theme. This pattern is used by the *kyai* to explain about the values of Sufism in *al-Hikam* aphorisms to their *jama'ah*. In addition, to form an identity for the Sufi community, the *kyai* uses an analogy to explain the values of Sufism.

The domain register of *kyai* in conveying noble values uses Arabic-originated loanwords, where the vocabulary can only be understood by a certain community (*jama'ah tarekat*). This study clarifies that textual equivalence has a fairly important role, especially when a religious leader (*kyai - lama'*) conveys Arabic texts to the *jama'ah*. The textual equivalence must be elaborated based on the structure of the information and the thematic progression pattern (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The structure of this information should be determined so that the messages in Arabic texts can be easily received by the *jama'ah* in foreign languages (especially Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese).

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The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

M.Y.A. made a substantial contribution to the conception and design of the study and acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data. M.Y.A. also drafted the manuscript and critically revised it for important intellectual content and approved the final version to be published. M.N., R.S. and M.M. were involved in the supervision of this article.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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