



Constructivist Learning in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools: A Critical Discourse Analysis of English Lesson Plans

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ABSTRACT

Jean Piaget's constructivist theory emphasizes active knowledge construction, yet its application in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools (IIBS) remains limited. This phenomenological case study examines how constructivist principles are integrated into IIBS English lesson plans using a critical discourse analysis approach. Seven lesson plans from an IIBS in East Java were analyzed over six months. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed to examine power dynamics and ideological influences in classroom discourse within the lesson plans. Findings revealed that while constructivist elements such as problem-based learning, collaborative discussions, and metacognitive reflection are present, their implementation is constrained by hierarchical teacher-student relationships and religious-nationalist discourse framing. Lesson plans encourage active engagement but often reinforce predefined moral and ideological narratives, limiting opportunities for critical inquiry and independent knowledge construction. Despite this, Piagetian principles align with certain Islamic educational traditions, such as *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *shura* (consultative learning), providing potential avenues for deeper cognitive engagement. This study empirically contributes to qualitative evidence on how Piaget's constructivist theory is applied within IIBS. This study also offers a practical hybrid pedagogical approach that combines experiential learning with structured guidance, fostering critical thinking without disrupting Islamic traditions.

KEYWORDS

Constructivism; critical discourse analysis; Islamic boarding school; lesson plans.

INTRODUCTION

Education: While Jean Piaget's constructivist theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through the interaction of personal experiences and ideas, its application within the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School (IIBS) educational context reveals a significant gap between constructivist learning principles and existing educational practices (Hof, 2021; Seimears et al., 2012; Ugwuozor, 2020). On the one hand, Piaget's approach fosters independent, experience-based learning where students actively construct their understanding of the world (Devries, 1999). In contrast, traditional teaching methods at IIBS often prioritize rote memorization and strict adherence to religious traditions, which may create challenges for implementing experiential learning and critical inquiry. This divergence highlights the need to examine how constructivist principles can be integrated within IIBS educational practices, while maintaining the institution's religious and cultural values. The relationship between these methodologies suggests the importance of exploring a balanced pedagogical approach that considers both constructivist learning principles and the educational characteristics of IIBS.

The Indonesian educational system, as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the Indonesian National Education System, is a deliberate, well-planned effort to develop students' potential. It strives to equip individuals with self-control, spiritual strength, noble morals, intelligence, and skills necessary for society, the nation, and the state. This highlights the pivotal role education plays in shaping not only personal growth but also national development. In line with Jean Piaget's constructivist theory, knowledge creation occurs through the interaction between one's experiences and ideas, with education serving as the primary medium through which individuals actively construct knowledge from their surroundings (DioGuardi, 2017; Seimears et al., 2012). However, educational practices in IIBS have traditionally emphasized knowledge transmission, memorization, and adherence to religious texts, creating a notable tension between established pedagogical traditions and constructivist approaches that emphasize active engagement and reflection. Therefore, examining how constructivist principles are interpreted and incorporated within IIBS provides an opportunity to understand the relationship between contemporary learning theories and religious educational practices. The relationship between Piaget's constructivist perspective and IIBS educational practices reflects different approaches to knowledge construction. Piaget's constructivist theory posits that students learn best when they actively construct their own knowledge by engaging with and reflecting on their experiences (Harlow et al., 2007; Pass, 2007; Peterson, 2012). This difference underscores the importance of examining how active learning principles can coexist with religious educational traditions and how this integration is represented in IIBS learning practices.

Furthermore, technological progress in the digital era has transformed various sectors, including education. While these advancements offer numerous opportunities, they also pose challenges, including social and economic inequality, environmental degradation (Saifulloh et al., 2025), and ethical dilemmas (Hof, 2021; Mercer et al., 2017). Education at IIBS faces the

challenge of balancing the preservation of religious and cultural values with the need to engage with modern technological advancements. Piaget's theory emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively when students are placed in environments that challenge them to integrate new knowledge with their existing cognitive structures (Pass, 2007). In this light, the incorporation of technological resources may provide opportunities for students to build connections between religious education and modern scientific knowledge.

The comparison between traditional IIBS and modern IIBS further illustrates this contrast. Traditional IIBS focuses on classical religious texts and emphasizes religious education (Puad & Ashton, 2021), while modern IIBS integrates national curricula and contemporary subjects, reflecting a more balanced approach to education (Fuad, 2004). Piaget believes that the processes of assimilation and accommodation are crucial to learning (Peterson, 2012). From a Piagetian perspective, traditional IIBS students assimilate religious values through established methods, while modern IIBS students accommodate new ideas through formal education. This duality reflects Piaget's stages of cognitive development, where learning evolves from concrete, experience-based knowledge to more abstract, systematic thinking.

However, many IIBS students face challenges, including limited access to technology, resources, and qualified teachers (Puad & Ashton, 2021). These constraints affect the implementation of a more analytical, Piagetian approach to teaching. In Piaget's view, learning environments (Saifulloh & Anam, 2022) should challenge students to expand their thinking, encouraging them to build on prior knowledge and explore new ideas. This presents an existing limitation in the implementation of constructivist-oriented learning approaches within IIBS: without access to modern educational tools and methodologies, students may be limited in their ability to engage in the kind of reflective, interactive learning that Piaget advocates.

To critically examine the integration of Piaget's constructivist theory within IIBS, Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework is a relevant analytical approach. Fairclough (1995) argues that language, power, and ideology are interconnected within educational discourse. In the context of IIBS, where textual traditions strongly influence religious instruction, CDA helps examine how power relations, ideological influences, and linguistic choices shape the transmission and construction of knowledge. By applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA approach, including text analysis, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 1995), this study investigates how religious and cognitive pedagogies intersect within lesson plans.

CDA is particularly relevant in examining the role of language in reinforcing or challenging educational norms within IIBS (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). It enables a deeper analysis of how traditional rote-learning methodologies persist in educational discourse and how teachers and students negotiate authority, agency, and meaning-making in the classroom. This approach provides a critical lens for assessing whether constructivist principles are genuinely integrated into lesson plans or merely superficially adapted to align with existing traditions of knowledge transmission.

Addressing this gap in this study is crucial for ensuring that IIBS education remains relevant and effective in the modern world. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question:

1: How are constructivist learning practices represented in English lesson plans of Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools (IIBS)?

2: How do discursive practices, power relations, and ideological frameworks shape knowledge construction within these constructivist learning practices in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools (IIBS)?

This research offers both practical and empirical contributions to the educational landscape of IIBS. Practically, it provides a framework for integrating Jean Piaget's constructivist theory into the IIBS educational model, enabling educators to enhance experiential learning and critical thinking while maintaining the integrity of religious teachings. Empirically, the study demonstrates that applying Piaget's principles in the IIBS context bridges the gap between traditional rote memorization and modern experiential learning, offering valuable insights into improving student outcomes. Furthermore, by incorporating Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, this study enriches the discourse on power, ideology, and discourse structures in religious education, contributing to the broader field of cognitive and educational development in faith-based institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jean Piaget's Constructivist Theory: Foundations and Educational Applications

Jean Piaget's Constructivist Theory has been widely explored and applied in educational contexts, particularly focusing on how students construct their understanding of the world through active engagement and interaction with their environment. His theory, which emphasizes stages of cognitive development such as sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational, has laid a foundation for constructivist pedagogies across different cultures and disciplines (Devries, 1999; DioGuardi, 2017; Mutekwe et al., 2013). Previous studies from Western and Eastern pedagogical contexts highlighted the global and cross-disciplinary influence of Piaget's constructivist theory.

In Western education systems, Piaget's emphasis on active learning and developmental stages has fostered student-centered learning environments, as highlighted by studies in inquiry-based learning (Mercer et al., 2017; Pass, 2007). On the other hand, Asian countries, such as Japan and China, have integrated constructivist approaches with their traditionally hierarchical systems, balancing cognitive development with respect for authority (Hof, 2021). In Islamic educational contexts, particularly in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools, Piaget's stages of cognitive development resonate with faith-based educational principles, in which experiential learning aligns with the Islamic concept of holistic education (Nimasari et al., 2024). The theory's influence extends to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, where hands-on learning and abstract reasoning are emphasized (Clements &

Sarama, 2011), as well as to the social sciences and humanities, where critical thinking and ethical reasoning are nurtured (Devries, 1999).

A central finding in studies applying Piaget's theory is the role of active discovery in fostering higher-order thinking and learning. For example, Devries's (1999) application of Piaget's theory to character education stresses the importance of mutual respect in the classroom and the active construction of values through interpersonal interactions. This socio-moral approach contrasts with coercive teaching methods, emphasizing cooperative relationships between teachers and students that enable children to construct their own moral and intellectual understanding (Devries, 1999). Similarly, DioGuardi (2017) demonstrates that Piaget's constructivism promotes higher-level learning through creative engagement, in which students build knowledge by creating new representations, such as art or role-play, to connect abstract theoretical concepts with concrete experiences (DioGuardi, 2017).

However, despite its widespread use, Piaget's theory has faced criticism. For instance, research shows that not all students reach the formal operational stage, suggesting that, while Piaget proposed developmental readiness, not every learner automatically acquires the cognitive structures required for abstract thinking (Devries, 1999; Mutekwe et al., 2013). This poses a challenge for educators in diverse educational contexts, such as Indonesia, where cultural influences may shape how students engage with and benefit from constructivist approaches. In the Indonesian Islamic education system, particularly within Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*), the implementation of Jean Piaget's constructivist theory must account for the unique cultural and religious influences shaping students' cognitive development.

While Piaget's stages of development emphasize universal cognitive structures (Harlow et al., 2007), the progression toward formal operational thinking may be influenced by the communal and faith-based nature of learning in *Pesantren*. Here, students' learning is deeply embedded in religious rituals, moral instruction, and collective practices, which may affect their engagement with abstract reasoning. For instance, while memorization and recitation of religious texts dominate early learning experiences, students are encouraged to engage in *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *shura* (consultation), which are forms of critical thinking rooted in Islamic tradition (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Raihani, 2012; Saifulloh, 2026). This culturally embedded approach to learning may help students transition from concrete to formal operational thinking. However, not all learners may do so at the same pace due to varying levels of engagement with these practices. Therefore, educators in these contexts face the challenge of fostering both religious understanding and cognitive development, ensuring that Piaget's theory is adapted to meet the specific needs and experiences of Indonesian Islamic learners, who may approach abstract thinking through different, culturally informed pathways.

In relation to the integration of Piaget's theory into Indonesian educational practices, it can be suggested that Piaget's constructivism could be particularly powerful in shaping Indonesian students' cognitive development. The incorporation of Islamic values, along with Eastern harmonious and polite cultures, could enrich this learning process. However, the

Indonesian socio-cultural context, marked by collective values and respect for authority, might require adapting Piaget's methods to align with these cultural expectations. For instance, creating cooperative classroom environments that balance respect for tradition with opportunities for independent critical thinking could bridge Piaget's theories with local values (DioGuardi, 2017; Mutekwe et al., 2013).

The exploration of how Piaget's emphasis on active discovery and mutual respect could be tailored to Indonesian classrooms, particularly in fostering both cognitive and moral development. A potential gap lies in investigating how constructivist approaches interact with the hierarchical nature of teacher-student relationships in Indonesia, as well as how Islamic values, which emphasize ethical conduct and communal harmony, can be integrated into Piagetian frameworks (Mutekwe et al., 2013). This could yield practical strategies for enhancing cognitive development while respecting the deeply embedded cultural norms of Indonesian students (Ihsan et al., 2024).

The Indonesian Islamic Boarding School (IIBS) Educational Model: Traditional Approaches and Challenges

Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools, known as *Pesantren*, have a long-standing tradition of emphasizing moral and religious education. Students engage in memorizing religious texts, reciting daily prayers, and participating in communal activities, thereby forming a strong foundation for spiritual and moral development. However, these traditional approaches often rely on teacher-centered methodologies, with a strong emphasis on rote learning and adherence to religious authority. This poses a challenge to integrating constructivist principles, which emphasize student autonomy and active engagement in learning.

Ibrahim et al. (2024) argue that Piaget's theory can coexist with the *Pesantren* model, particularly in advanced stages of education, where students move beyond memorization toward more critical and reflective practices. For example, the practice of *ijtihad* involves independent reasoning, which aligns with Piaget's formal operational stage. However, the cultural and religious context of *Pesantren* may slow progress toward this stage, as students' early education is dominated by rote memorization and religious discipline. The study's methodology, which involved qualitative observations and interviews with *Pesantren* students and educators, provided insights into the nuanced ways in which cognitive development unfolds within religious settings. However, this qualitative approach could benefit from a more structured longitudinal study to track students' cognitive development over time, particularly their transition from concrete to formal operational thinking.

Raihani (2012) similarly highlights the importance of balancing cognitive development with moral and religious education in *Pesantren*. Their study examines how Islamic values such as communal harmony and ethical conduct influence cognitive development. The authors used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with educators and quantitative assessments of students' cognitive abilities. This methodology enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how Piaget's theory is adapted in *Pesantren*. However, the reliance on self-

reported data from educators may limit the objectivity of the findings. Moreover, the study's focus on student engagement in religious practices suggests that, while Piagetian constructivism can be applied, it must be carefully adapted to align with the moral and spiritual dimensions of the *Pesantren* curriculum.

Mutekwe et al. (2013) take a broader view, analyzing how Piaget's theory has been adapted across different cultural contexts, including Indonesia. Their research shows that many students in *Pesantren* do not reach the formal operational stage, often due to the highly structured and hierarchical nature of the teacher-student relationship (Culajara, 2016; Wael & Laurens, 2015). The authors argue that the lack of opportunities for independent problem-solving hinders cognitive development (Watkins & Cooperrider, 2000) and inquiry-based learning (Marangell & Randall, 2025) which are crucial to Piaget's later stages of cognitive growth. This study conducted a comparative analysis of Piagetian implementations across various non-Western contexts, drawing on case studies and secondary data. While the study offers valuable insights into the limitations of applying Western theories in non-Western settings, it lacks specific empirical data from Indonesian Islamic schools, which limits the generalizability of its findings.

Wong (2016) provides a comparative study of how traditional Asian educational systems, including Islamic settings, integrate Piaget's theory while maintaining respect for authority. The authors highlight that while inquiry-based learning is increasingly encouraged, it is often constrained by cultural norms (Sigit et al., 2024) that emphasize deference to teachers and religious leaders. This creates a tension between fostering cognitive autonomy (Gonçalves et al., 2024) and maintaining social harmony (Pratiwi et al., 2023). The study's methodology involved cross-cultural comparisons of educational practices in Asia, including interviews with educators and students in both secular and religious schools. This approach provided a broad understanding of how Piaget's theory is adapted across cultural contexts, though it did not offer specific strategies for addressing the challenges unique to *Pesantren* settings.

DioGuardi (2017) explores creative approaches to implementing Piaget's theory in diverse educational settings, including religious institutions. The study suggests that activities such as role-playing, collaborative projects, and creative expression can help students move beyond rote memorization and engage in abstract reasoning. This is particularly relevant in the *Pesantren* context, where religious texts and rituals dominate the curriculum. DioGuardi's study employed an experimental design that compared student outcomes. (Mustopa et al., 2026) in traditional versus constructivist-based classrooms (DioGuardi, 2017). The results showed that students engaged in creative activities were more likely to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, suggesting that these methods could be effectively adapted in Indonesian Islamic schools. However, the study's focus on secular educational settings limits its applicability to the unique religious and cultural dynamics of *Pesantren*.

The existing literature demonstrates significant potential to integrate Piaget's constructivist theory into the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School model, but several

methodological limitations and cultural considerations must be addressed. While qualitative methods such as interviews and observations have provided valuable insights into the religious and moral dimensions of *Pesantren* education, more robust longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to track cognitive development over time. Furthermore, existing research often relies heavily on educators' perspectives, which may not fully capture the complexities of students' learning experiences in these unique cultural settings.

The hierarchical nature of teacher-student relationships in *Pesantren*, as highlighted by Mutekwe et al. (2013) and Wong (2016), poses a challenge to implementing Piaget's emphasis on cognitive autonomy. While these studies provide a strong theoretical foundation, they do not offer sufficient empirical evidence for overcoming these cultural barriers. There is a need for research that explores specific instructional strategies, such as collaborative learning or creative engagement, that can foster cognitive development without undermining religious authority.

In terms of curriculum development, integrating Piaget's theory into the *Pesantren* model must account for the dual focus on cognitive and moral development. While Piaget's stages of cognitive development emphasize intellectual growth (Harlow et al., 2007), the religious context of *Pesantren* requires a more holistic approach that also nurtures ethical reasoning and spiritual understanding (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Future research should explore how constructivist methods can be adapted to support both cognitive and moral development in *Pesantren*, particularly through teacher training and curriculum design. While integrating Piaget's constructivist theory into the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School educational model shows promise, further research is needed to address the cultural, methodological, and practical challenges involved. By adapting Piaget's principles to fit the unique religious and moral context of *Pesantren*, educators can foster both cognitive and spiritual development in their students, paving the way for a more holistic approach to education in Indonesia. However, examining the integration of constructivist principles within IBS requires not only an understanding of learning processes but also an analysis of how educational meanings, values, and power relations are represented within learning materials.

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis for Analyzing Educational Discourse

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, provides a theoretical approach for examining how language, power, and ideology operate within educational contexts. Fairclough (1995) conceptualizes discourse through three interconnected dimensions: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. These dimensions allow researchers to examine not only the linguistic features of educational materials but also the processes through which educational knowledge is produced, interpreted, and shaped by broader social and cultural contexts.

At the textual level, CDA focuses on the analysis of linguistic choices, structures, and meanings embedded within educational texts. In the context of lesson planning, this dimension examines how learning objectives, instructional instructions, assessment criteria, and selected

learning materials represent particular values, assumptions, and understandings of knowledge. Thus, lesson plans are not viewed merely as technical teaching documents but as texts that may reflect educational priorities, moral values, and ideological positions.

The discourse practice dimension examines how educational texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted by educational actors. Within lesson planning, this dimension considers how teachers design learning activities, select knowledge sources, and position students within classroom interactions. This perspective is relevant to IIBS contexts because lesson plans may reflect the relationship between teacher authority, student agency, and established traditions of knowledge transmission.

The sociocultural practice dimension investigates how broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts influence educational discourse. In Islamic educational settings, lesson plans may represent wider religious values, cultural expectations, and national educational ideologies that shape how knowledge and learning are understood. Therefore, this dimension enables analysis of how constructivist principles are negotiated within the religious and cultural framework of IIBS.

Through these three dimensions, Fairclough's CDA provides a comprehensive framework for examining English lesson plans in IIBS as both educational documents and social practices. The framework enables this study to analyze how constructivist learning principles are represented at the textual level, enacted through educational practices, and shaped by broader religious and cultural discourses.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine the integration of Piaget's constructivist principles within English lesson plans at an Indonesian Islamic Boarding School (IIBS). The study analyzed seven lesson plans implemented over six months, supported by classroom observations and teacher discussions as contextual data. There were seven lesson plans with different topics (see Table 1), specifically designed to reflect Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Devries, 1999). They incorporated active learning principles such as scaffolding, social interaction, and experiential learning to foster critical thinking and cognitive growth in a manner aligned with the Islamic values embedded in IIBS education.

Our role was an external observer, conducting regular school visits over six months to examine how English was implemented within an Islamic-based science and technology curriculum. Observations were complemented by ongoing discussions with the English teacher, providing insights into lesson effectiveness, student engagement, and instructional challenges. These discussions helped contextualize English's role as a supporting tool rather than a standalone subject, facilitating students' access to scientific knowledge and academic discourse.

Table 1.*Primary data: The lesson plans*

Lesson plan code	Topics
1	Advanced English I
2	Let's Practice and Critical Thinking Tasks
3	What Ever Happened to So and So
4	Advanced English II
5	New Ways of Looking at Life
6	a. Seeing a New Opportunity b. A gift of a Family c. Voice your mind in a small country called a class d. Surviving in Digital Services e. How good are your critical thinking skills f. What should we dedicate to our country
7	a. Magical Adventures to Entertain You b. Who is Your Role Model? c. Get Your Adrenaline Rushing with Extreme Sport d. Pros and Cons: Are They Positive or Negative? e. Let's Boost Our Mood f. Flora and Fauna Request not to be Abhorred

Research Context

The participants of this study were from a private Islamic boarding high school located in Jombang, East Java, Indonesia. The school integrated *Pesantren*-based education with a strong emphasis on science and technology, aiming to produce students who excel in both religious knowledge and scientific inquiry. The curriculum was designed to harmonize Islamic values with modern scientific perspectives, fostering critical thinking and research-oriented learning. English was taught as a complementary subject, serving as a tool to engage with global scientific discourse. The school's pedagogical approach encouraged intellectual exploration, preparing students for higher education and professional careers in science and technology.

In this school, English was positioned as a functional language to support students' engagement with science and technology. Rather than focusing solely on linguistic proficiency, lessons emphasized reading comprehension, analytical skills, and academic communication to enable students to navigate global research materials and scientific texts. We observed how lesson plans were adapted to align with Islamic values while fostering cognitive development and critical thinking.

Beyond passive observation, we engaged in regular dialogues with the teacher to reflect on lesson implementation and the practical challenges of integrating English into a science-driven curriculum. These discussions provided deeper insights into how pedagogical strategies were modified to enhance student participation, knowledge construction, and interdisciplinary learning. By immersing ourselves in the school environment, we sought to capture the interplay

among language learning, cognitive development, and subject integration, offering a comprehensive understanding of English education in an Islamic boarding school setting.

In conclusion, the primary unit of analysis in this study was not individual teachers or students, but the English lesson plans developed and implemented within the IIBS context. Therefore, demographic characteristics of students and teachers were not used as analytical variables. However, contextual information was considered to support the interpretation of classroom practices. The observed classes consisted of senior high school students enrolled in the IIBS program, and the English teacher who implemented the lesson plans served as a contextual informant.

Data Collection

Data collection employed multiple qualitative methods to examine the representation and implementation of constructivist teaching approaches within IIBS educational practice. Classroom observations served as a cornerstone of the data collection process, enabling the researchers to document key interactions and activities demonstrating the application of Piaget's constructivist principles. Observers paid close attention to moments of active engagement, problem-solving, and collaboration, noting how these practices aligned with or deviated from the designed lesson plans.

In addition to observations, we reviewed lesson plans to trace students' progression in cognitive development and critical thinking. This analysis provided tangible evidence of the outcomes of the constructivist strategies implemented in the classroom. CDA, as developed by Norman Fairclough, was also employed to explore the social and cultural dynamics present in the classroom (Fairclough, 1995). This method examined how power structures, cultural norms, and religious values influenced learning interactions, shedding light on the interplay between traditional and constructivist pedagogical approaches.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis, guided by Piaget's constructivist framework. Thematic analysis began with coding the data into categories such as experiential learning, scaffolding, and social interaction (Braun et al., 2017). These categories were mapped to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, enabling the researchers to evaluate how effectively the lesson plans facilitated learning.

Triangulation of data sources, observations, discussion, and document analysis was used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Patterns and themes were cross-verified to identify consistencies and divergences in the data. This study also provided an additional dimension by exploring how cultural and religious factors influenced the enactment of constructivist teaching principles in the classroom (Fairclough, 1995).

The interpretive nature of the case study enabled the researchers to examine how constructivist principles were represented, interpreted, and negotiated within the IIBS educational context. The analysis focused on the relationship between lesson plan design, classroom practices, and the broader educational discourse surrounding religious and cultural

values (Leavy, 2023). Researchers sought to understand how these experiences were shaped by the participants' cultural and religious contexts, interpreting the data through the lens of their unique perspectives. This iterative analysis process involved continuous refinement of themes through collaborative discussions among researchers, ensuring that the findings were both comprehensive and nuanced. Ultimately, the study offered a rich understanding of how Piaget's constructivist theory could be adapted to an IBS educational model, fostering cognitive and moral development while preserving the institution's cultural and religious values.

RESULT

Constructivist Practices and Discursive Negotiations within IBS Lesson Plans

The lesson plans in *Pesantren* schools reflected a structured yet interactive approach to learning. Using Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and collaborative discussions, the curriculum aligned with Piaget's constructivist theory, emphasizing that knowledge is actively built through experience and interaction. However, when examined through Fairclough's CDA model, these lesson plans also revealed hidden power structures, ideological influences, and discursive control that shape students' perspectives. Thus, learning in this context was not merely the acquisition of neutral knowledge but a discursive process in which language, power, and knowledge interact within religious, nationalistic, and moralistic frameworks.

Table 2.

PBL in Whatever Happened to So and So lesson plan

Lesson Components	Description
Trigger Questions	Questions that stimulate critical thinking, e.g., "What do you know about Mythical Creatures?"
Preparation	Teacher conducts diagnostic assessment and groups supporting materials.
Opening Activities	Teacher opens the lesson, engages students with questions, and sets learning objectives.
Core Activities	Students collaborate in groups, analyze narratives, discuss settings, and present findings.
Closing Activities	Students reflect on what they learned and discuss key takeaways.
Reflection and Assessment	Students complete structured assignments and reflect using mind maps.

The constructivist theory emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through personal experiences and social interaction (Devries, 1999). This section analyses how the lesson plans integrate Piagetian principles. The first part of the lesson plan was active learning and PBL. The lesson plans employed PBL, a student-centered approach where learners construct knowledge through inquiry, collaboration, and problem-solving (see Table 2).

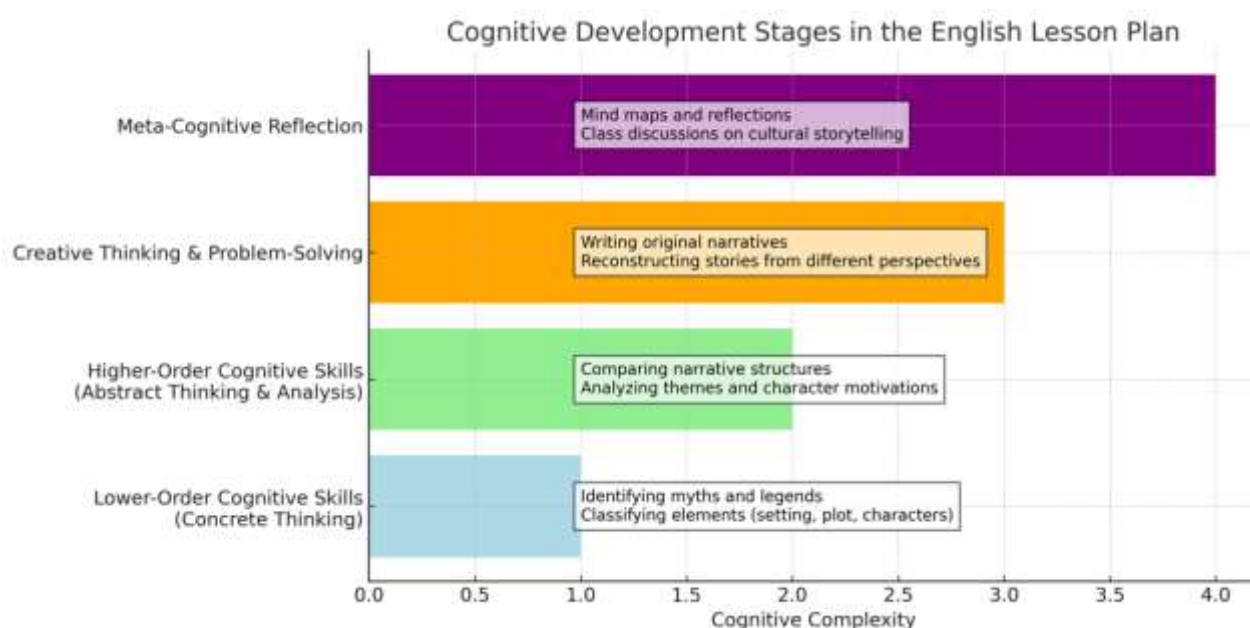
This finding aligned with Piaget's belief that knowledge was not passively received but actively built by the learner. Tasks such as analyzing myths, legends, and narrative structures engaged students in formal operational thinking, which Piaget associates with adolescence.

These tasks required abstract reasoning and the ability to evaluate multiple perspectives, fostering higher-order cognitive skills.

The second part was the cognitive developmental stage, as represented by the tasks in the lesson plan 'Whatever Happened to So and So', such as analyzing myths, legends, and narrative structures. These tasks engaged students in formal operational thinking, which Piaget associates with adolescence. These tasks required abstract reasoning and the ability to evaluate multiple perspectives, aligning with Piaget's theory of cognitive development (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1.

Document analysis: the cognitive developmental stage in the " Whatever Happened to So and So lesson plan



Additionally, the lesson plans encouraged metacognitive reflection, which supports Piaget's view of knowledge construction through self-assessment and reflection (see Fig. 3). Metacognitive reflection activities further supported Piaget's theory, encouraging students to assess their learning, construct new knowledge, and refine their reasoning processes.

The third part within the lesson plan was the social interaction and knowledge construction. The lesson plan incorporated collaborative discussions (group discussions, debates, and storytelling activities), which, according to Piaget (see Table 4), emphasize social interaction and are essential for learning.

Furthermore, the frequent use of open-ended questions allowed students to construct their own understanding rather than passively memorizing information (DioGuardi, 2017). Hands-on and inquiry-based tasks in the lesson plans (see Table 5) involving reading, writing, and speaking activities engaged students in storytelling, critical thinking tasks, and real-world discussions. This supported Piaget's idea of learning through experience.

Table 3.*Metacognitive analysis in Magical Adventures to Entertain You lesson plan*

Metacognitive Strategy	Description	Piagetian Interpretation
Self-Assessment through Reflection	Students fill in mind maps to evaluate their understanding after lessons.	Encourages formal operational thinking through abstract reasoning.
Cognitive Conflict and Conceptual Change	Reflection questions identify learning difficulties and encourage problem-solving.	Supports equilibration by resolving cognitive conflicts for deeper learning.
Active Participation in Knowledge Construction	Collaborative discussions help students actively construct knowledge.	Promotes constructivist learning through social interaction.
Reflective Writing and Metacognitive Awareness	Students analyze their writing process to improve structure and vocabulary.	Develops self-regulated learning essential for formal operational thought.
Teacher Reflection for Continuous Improvement	Teachers reflect on lesson effectiveness and student participation.	Facilitates adaptive teaching by reflecting on student engagement.

Table 4.*Social interaction and knowledge construction analysis in the New Ways of Looking at Life lesson plan*

Collaborative Activity	Task Examples	Knowledge Construction
Group Discussions	Discussing traditional vs. modern stories, character analysis, listening reflections.	Encourages peer learning and critical thinking, supporting Vygotsky's ZPD.
Debates	Debating character roles, comparing traditional vs. modern stories, justifying opinions.	Develops reasoning and argumentation, and creates cognitive disequilibrium (Piaget).
Storytelling & Creative Writing	Rewriting classic stories from different perspectives, fantasy story creation.	Engages students in experiential learning and internalization of knowledge (Bruner).
Analyzing Advertisements & Persuasive Writing	Analyzing book ads, designing persuasive story-based posters, presenting advertisements.	Enhances media literacy, teamwork, and application of persuasive techniques.
Metacognitive Reflection & Peer Review	Group reflections on story themes, peer feedback on narrative writing.	Promotes self-regulated learning and collaborative problem-solving skills.

Lastly, activities such as identifying themes in stories, writing narrative texts, and reflecting on their understanding aligned with constructivist approaches, thereby encouraging discovery-based learning (see Table 6).

Table 5.

Inquiry-Based Discussions and Group Activities with the Hands-On & Inquiry-Based Learning Analysis in Whatever Happened to So and So, and A Gift of Family lesson plans

Activity Type	Examples from Lesson Plan	Inquiry-Based Learning Aspects
Lesson Introductions	Do you know how to start and sustain a conversation? What political issue is happening in our country lately?	Encourages critical thinking and personal reflection Promotes multiple perspectives instead of memorization
Inquiry-Based Discussions	Truth or Dare activity on real-life experiences Group discussions on short stories and moral lessons Debates on social issues	Facilitates knowledge construction through inquiry Develops argumentation skills and independent reasoning
Reflection and Writing Tasks	Mind maps on personal reflections. Writing original short stories Presenting findings on historical/social topics	Enhances metacognition and self-expression Fosters creativity and deeper engagement with learning materials
Reading Activities	Analyzing myths and legends (e.g., Perseus and Medusa, The Legend of Biwar) Comparing story elements (setting, plot, characterization) Listening to audio stories and answering comprehension questions.	Encourages active engagement rather than passive reading Develops analytical and inferential skills through discussion and questioning
Writing Activities	Writing original narratives with detailed setting, plot, and character development Transforming chronological plots into flashback structures Creating persuasive advertisements for stories.	Fosters creativity and experimentation with storytelling techniques Promotes self-reflection and iterative writing through editing and revision
Speaking Activities	Role-playing dialogues (practicing reflexive & reciprocal pronouns) Presenting story summaries and debates on plot elements Discussing ethical dilemmas in myths and legends.	Encourages self-expression and real-world language application Enhances collaborative learning through peer discussion and feedback
Critical Thinking & Real-World Discussions	Comparing storytelling techniques across cultures Debating character motivations and moral themes Analyzing advertisements and their impact on readers.	Develops higher-order thinking by prompting evaluation and synthesis Connects learning to personal experiences and real-world applications.

Table 6.*Constructivist approaches in an Advanced English lesson plan*

Activity Type	Examples from Lesson Plan	Constructivist Learning Aspects
Identifying Themes in Stories	• Reading and analyzing myths, legends, and short stories • Identifying themes, moral lessons, and character development • Comparing different narrative structures (e.g., chronological vs. flashback) • Listening to audio-visual texts and summarizing key ideas.	• Encourages active exploration rather than passive reading • Develops critical thinking through story analysis • Promotes collaborative discussions for constructing meaning together.
Writing Narrative Texts	• Writing original fantasy narratives with creative plots and characters • Rewriting existing stories with alternative endings • Applying sensory details to enhance storytelling • Transforming stories from one plot format to another.	• Encourages self-expression and creative problem-solving • Supports active learning by constructing knowledge through storytelling • Reinforces revision and self-reflection for continuous improvement.
Reflecting on Learning	• Using mind maps to connect themes and character traits • Peer review activities for critiquing and refining writing • Presenting narrative projects and explaining creative choices • Engaging in discussions about the learning process and challenges.	• Encourages metacognition and self-assessment • Supports personalized learning by connecting stories to personal experiences • Enhances social learning through peer feedback and discussions.

This approach aligns with Piaget's formal operational stage, where adolescents move from concrete thinking to abstract reasoning. However, who defines the knowledge students construct? This is where Fairclough's CDA becomes essential. The findings indicate that constructivist learning practices and discursive constraints existed simultaneously within the same lesson plans. For example, activities involving problem-solving, reflection, and discussion provided opportunities for students to construct knowledge through active interaction and experience. However, these learning processes were not completely open-ended, as the content, assessment criteria, and expected interpretations were shaped by institutional, religious, and cultural discourses. Therefore, the lesson plans represented a negotiation between learner-centered cognitive development and socially constructed boundaries of acceptable knowledge.

Power and Ideology in Classroom Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

While the same lesson plans promoted constructivist learning through active engagement and reflection, they simultaneously embedded ideological narratives that influenced how students interpreted and constructed knowledge. Fairclough's three levels of discourse analysis revealed these underlying structures. The first structure was the textual level (micro-analysis). It represented two elements: moral and nationalist framing and authority in language. Moral and nationalist framing showed that the lesson materials reinforce Islamic values and nationalist perspectives, positioning *Pancasila* ideology and moral teachings as universal truths. Meanwhile, authority in language highlighted texts that presented one-sided perspectives on history, morality, and knowledge, thereby limiting alternative interpretations (see Table 7).

Table 7.

Aspect	Key Elements	Framing Approach
<i>Profil Pelajar Pancasila</i> (Five principles of students' profile)	Encourages 'Critical Thinking, faith in God, noble character'. Embeds Pancasila ideology.	Pancasila and Islamic values positioned as universal truths.
Lesson Structure and Moral Reinforcement	Starts with Islamic greetings and prayer. Promotes moral character development.	Islamic values normalized in educational rituals.
Selection of Topics in Learning Materials	Topics like 'Who is Your Role Model?' and 'Magical Adventures' may embed moral and cultural narratives.	Stories and role models reinforce moral and cultural identity.
Integration of Nationalist Themes	Projects explicitly reinforce Pancasila values. Lessons emphasize Indonesian identity.	National identity framed as integral to English learning.
Moral and Religious Framing in Learning Interactions	Structured discussions on ethics, emotions, and experiences reinforce Islamic and nationalist moral frameworks.	Encourages moral reflection within a nationalist-religious lens.

Moral and nationalist framing in the Magical Adventures to Entertain You lesson plan

The second structure involved discourse practice (meso-analysis). This analysis showed that the teacher stood as a knowledge gatekeeper. Despite using PBL, the curriculum still positioned the teacher as the primary authority (see Table 8), thereby restricting students' autonomy in constructing knowledge (Wong, 2016). Moreover, the discourse practice underlined the framing of critical thinking. While critical thinking was encouraged, it was often confined within pre-approved moral boundaries, preventing students from questioning deeper social or political structures.

At the sociocultural level (macro-analysis), the third structure in the power and ideology of classroom discourse included Islamic and nationalist narratives, as well as the exclusion of

alternative perspectives. Islamic and nationalist narratives reflected religious and state ideologies, shaping students' worldviews within a structured moral discourse. At the same time, the exclusion of alternative perspectives underscored the lesson plans' focus on historical and moral lessons. This often-excluded Western critical perspectives on discourse, media, and power structures (see Table 9, see Appendix). Thus, while students actively constructed knowledge, they did so within a structured discursive field that limited ideological challenges.

Table 8.

The teacher is the primary authority in a Family lesson plan

Aspect	Key Indicators	Impact
Teacher as Knowledge Gatekeeper	Teacher directs discussions and controls responses.	Students follow teacher-led discourse.
Restricted Student Autonomy	Structured tasks limit independent exploration.	Limited space for critical thinking.
PBL vs. Teacher Authority	PBL is guided, with minimal student-led discovery.	Teacher remains central in the learning process.
Assessment & Reflection	Evaluations align with teacher-set objectives.	Students adapt to the teacher's framing of knowledge.
Curriculum Control	Predefined content restricts knowledge negotiation.	Learning remains hierarchical, not student-driven.

Merging Constructivism and CDA: A Framework for Critical Learning

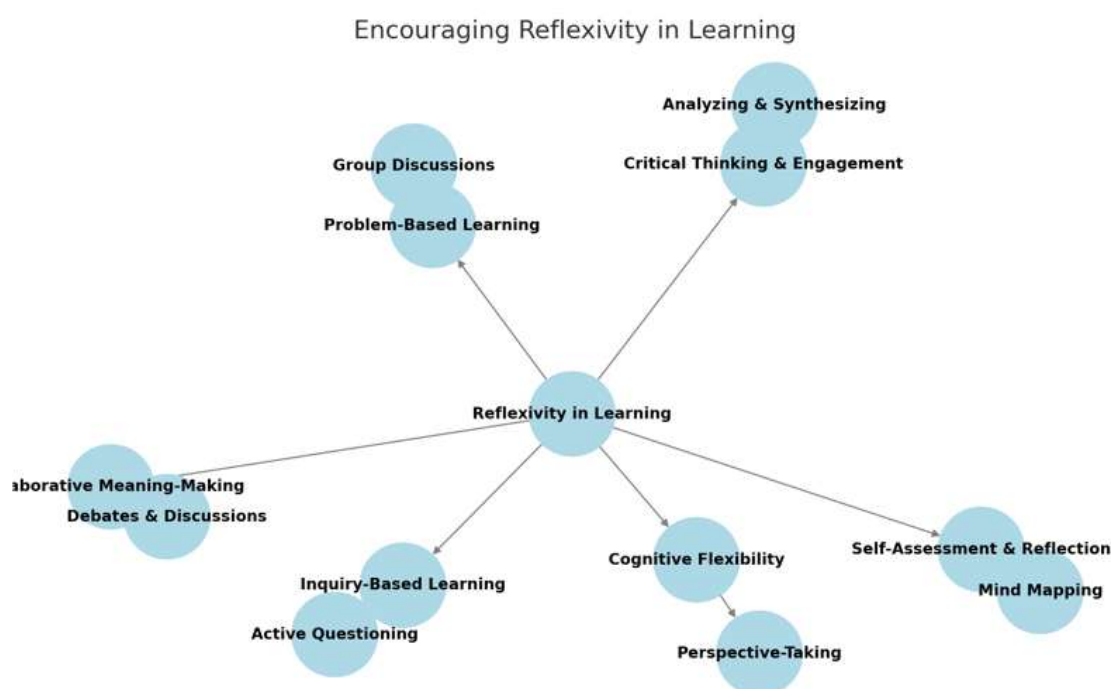
The integration of Jean Piaget's constructivist theory with Norman Fairclough's CDA within the context of IIBS represented a dynamic yet complex approach to fostering both cognitive and critical discourse awareness. The lesson plans were analyzed across various English language modules. They were found to exhibit elements of constructivist learning, particularly through student-centered activities such as narrative analysis, PBL, and collaborative inquiry. However, a deeper critical evaluation revealed underlying constraints in the structure, transmission, and internalization of knowledge within the institution's religious and cultural framework.

A fundamental constructivist principle was the encouragement of reflexivity in learning, in which students actively constructed meaning rather than passively absorbing information. The lesson plans provided structured opportunities for students to analyze myths and legends from different perspectives, thereby promoting cognitive flexibility and higher-order thinking (see Table 10). For example, one of the activities involved rewriting the story of *Malin Kundang* from the mother's point of view, encouraging students to question the dominant moral narrative and explore alternative interpretations of the text.

This task aligned with Piaget's view that cognitive development occurred through engagement with new ideas that challenge existing schemas (Devries, 1999). Despite such activities, the curriculum remained largely prescriptive, with predefined moral conclusions guiding students' reflections (see Fig. 2). This raised concerns about whether the constructivist approach was being fully realized or constrained by ideological boundaries.

Table 10.*Reflexivity in learning in the Let's Practice and Critical Thinking Tasks lesson plan*

Aspect	Description	Example Activities
Inquiry-Based Learning	Uses thought-provoking questions to activate prior knowledge and self-reflection.	Trigger questions on myths and story settings
Embraced-Based Learning	Encourages students to analyze myths and legends through discussions and text analysis.	Group discussions on differences between myths and legends
Cognitive Flexibility	Promotes understanding by allowing students to reconstruct narratives from different perspectives.	Rewriting stories using different plot structures
Self-Assessment & Reflection	Integrates structured reflection through self-assessment, mind mapping, and teacher feedback.	Mind-mapping exercises and self-reflection prompts
Collaborative Meaning-Making	Facilitates group discussions and peer debates to construct collective meaning.	Debates on myth interpretations and character motivations
Critical Thinking & Engagement	Encourages higher-order thinking by synthesizing and evaluating different narratives.	Analyzing text structure, synthesizing narrative elements

Figure 2.*Reflexivity in Learning is implemented in the lesson plans*

Beyond textual analysis, a critical component of CDA was the exposure of hidden power structures in language. The lesson materials included some media analysis, in which students compared news articles and advertisements to identify biases and framing devices. The learning

objectives emphasized structured knowledge transmission, with terms such as: "*Memahami dan menganalisis berbagai informasi dalam teks eksposisi lisan*" (understanding and analyzing various information in oral expository texts); and "*Mengidentifikasi gagasan, informasi, dan tujuan pengarang dalam bentuk teks audiovisual*" (identifying ideas, information, and the author's intent in audiovisual texts). These positioned teachers as authoritative holders of knowledge, while students acted as recipients of structured analysis. However, some inquiry-based activities (e.g., comparing advertisements) allowed students to question narratives.

The lesson plan included media comparison tasks, such as "*Membandingkan berbagai macam iklan dan mengidentifikasi struktur teks iklan*" (comparing different advertisements and identifying text structures) and "*Menganalisis dan mengidentifikasi ciri kebahasaan yang digunakan dalam iklan*" (analyzing and identifying linguistic features in advertisements). Thus, it raised a potential issue: Who selected the news sources? If sources came from a single ideological spectrum, students might develop one-sided criticality. The lack of alternative narratives could reinforce dominant media discourse rather than deconstruct it. Students should be encouraged to critique media from diverse perspectives, including those of corporations, governments, and independent sources.

The curriculum included some degree of student agency, such as "*Merancang teks diskusi berdasarkan pedoman menulis, fungsi sosial, organisasi teks, dan ciri kebahasaan*" (designing discussion texts based on writing guidelines) and "*Menyajikan produk diskusi dengan menggunakan mode presentasi yang berbeda untuk disesuaikan dengan audiens yang berbeda*" (presenting discussion products using different presentation modes to suit different audiences). However, assessment criteria might constrain full autonomy. Students were guided by preset rubrics that determined what constituted "valid" analysis. There was limited space for alternative or radical critiques outside structured discourse.

The lesson plan focused on linguistic features in media texts, such as: "*Mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis kata-kata dan frasa lembut yang digunakan dalam berbagai jenis teks eksposisi lisan*" (identifying and analyzing soft language and phrases in various expository texts). This highlighted euphemisms, persuasive rhetoric, and ideological framing in the media. However, there was no explicit mention of analyzing power structures in language. Critical questions missing: Who benefited from this framing? Whose voices were omitted? How did power dynamics influence word choice? Without these, students might analyze language passively rather than exposing power asymmetries.

Perhaps the most significant challenge to implementing a fully constructivist-CDA approach was the continued dominance of teacher-centered discourse. While lesson plans incorporated inquiry-based activities, such as class discussions and debates, the teacher remained the primary gatekeeper of knowledge (see Table 11). This was evident in how critical thinking was encouraged yet remained confined to culturally accepted moral frameworks. For example, students might be prompted to reflect on social issues, but were not necessarily given the freedom to critique institutional power, religious interpretations, or state ideologies. This

echoed Freire and Macedo's (2014) concern that education often functioned as a tool of social reproduction rather than a means of empowerment. The challenge, then, was to shift from a teacher-centered model to a student-driven inquiry process, in which students generated their own critical questions and engaged in independent knowledge construction without predefined ideological constraints.

Table 11.

Teacher-centered learning still prevails in the New Ways of Looking at Life lesson plan

Aspect	Evidence of Teacher Dominance	Impact
Knowledge Delivery	The teacher sets the lesson objectives, leads discussions, and controls the content.	Limits student-driven inquiry.
Student Participation	Students engage in discussions but follow pre-set formats.	Constrains independent exploration.
Content Selection	Heavy reliance on textbooks and structured exercises.	Reduces exposure to diverse perspectives.
Assessment	Structured evaluation with rubrics and guided reflections.	Limits open-ended, critical exploration.

Despite these limitations, the potential to integrate constructivist-CDA frameworks into IIBS remained significant. To enhance student autonomy and critical literacy, lesson plans should incorporate authentic discourse analysis where students could engage with real-world texts, including contemporary media, political speeches, and social media discourse; critical inquiry beyond moral lessons where students were allowed to explore and question cultural, religious, and political ideologies rather than reinforcing pre-approved interpretations; and decentralized knowledge construction, allowing student-led discussions where learners formulated their own critical inquiries, moving beyond passive knowledge reception.

While the lesson plans in *Pesantren* schools demonstrated strengths in fostering constructivist learning and critical thinking, several weaknesses emerged when evaluated through the lens of critical constructivism. This approach integrates Piaget's constructivist theory with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Mahrudin et al., 2023; Rogers, 2011). The key weaknesses concern the limited use of authentic materials. The lesson plans relied heavily on textbook-based materials (e.g., "Pathway to English"), which lacked real-world authenticity (see Fig. 12). These texts were predesigned for structured learning rather than engaging students in real-world language use (e.g., media, political rhetoric, pop culture).

Secondly, the lesson plans, for example, those in the Let's Practice and Critical Thinking Tasks, were limited to critical engagement with activities. Many classroom activities emphasized rote learning, comprehension, and structured responses rather than critical engagement (e.g., "Peserta didik membaca teks dan menjawab pertanyaan yang terdapat dalam buku." Students read texts and answer questions from the textbook: "Peserta didik menjodohkan kolom A dan kolom B sesuai dialog yang diberikan." Students match statements and responses. These activities focused on identifying themes and main ideas but did not encourage deep questioning

of biases, power, or ideology; instead, they required students to respond within predefined moral or religious boundaries rather than construct multiple interpretations. These promoted teacher-centered assessment rather than allowing students to challenge existing discourses.

Lastly, overly prescriptive language and ideological framing showed that the lesson plans, for example, represented in the *A Gift of a Family* lesson plan, used highly structured, moralistic, and nationalist discourse that framed discussions within religious/nationalist values without presenting alternative perspectives. The lesson plan framed discussions within religious and nationalist values, as seen in: "*Profil Pelajar Pancasila: Critical Thinking, have faith, fear of God Almighty, and have noble character.*" "*What should we dedicate to our country?*" These elements suggested an implicit expectation that students aligned with a predetermined moral and nationalistic stance. Discussions did not encourage alternative viewpoints on civic duty, identity, or ethical dilemmas. It reinforced national identity but limited exploration of diverse perspectives on citizenship, ethics, and identity.

The lesson plan used formal, academic English that did not reflect natural language use in global settings; it avoided politically sensitive or controversial topics, thereby reducing students' ability to engage in critical global conversations. For example: "*Peserta didik dapat berkomunikasi dengan menggunakan ekspresi untuk mengungkapkan fakta.*" Students can communicate using expressions to state facts: "*Peserta didik memahami penggunaan counterargument phrases dan mengaplikasikannya dalam konteks situasi.*" - Students understand counterargument phrases and apply them in context (lesson plan code 6: *Seeing a new opportunity*). It developed students' academic English skills but did not prepare them for informal, real-world language use.

The lesson structure was highly prescriptive, dictating how students should respond: "*Peserta didik membaca teks dan menjawab pertanyaan yang diberikan.*" - Students read texts and answer pre-set questions; "*Peserta didik mengidentifikasi kosa kata dalam konteks tertentu.*" - Students identify vocabulary in a given context. There were no opportunities for students to challenge or reinterpret materials from alternative viewpoints. This ensured structured comprehension, but it did not allow students to challenge dominant discourse or explore alternative arguments. These aspects reduced learner autonomy, restricted exposure to diverse perspectives, and reinforced dominant ideologies, thereby contradicting the core principles of critical constructivism.

While the *Pesantren* lesson plans incorporated some constructivist methods, they failed to fully realize the critical constructivist potential due to limited exposure to real-world discourse (overreliance on structured textbooks), restrictive student agency (activities that reinforce moral narratives), and controlled language framing (avoiding ideological challenges). To empower students as independent thinkers, learning must shift from passive knowledge absorption to active construction of discourse. By integrating authentic texts, inquiry-based learning, and critical discourse analysis, students could challenge dominant ideologies,

negotiate meaning across diverse worldviews, and develop critical, global, and socially aware literacy.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore how integrating Jean Piaget's constructivist theory into IIBS's educational model shapes students' cognitive development. The findings revealed a significant tension between traditional Islamic pedagogical approaches, which emphasized rote memorization and adherence to religious doctrine, and Piaget's constructivist principles, which advocated active learning, critical thinking, and cognitive development through experiential engagement. While the IIBS system excels at instilling moral and ethical values, its reliance on teacher-centered instruction may limit opportunities for students to develop higher-order cognitive skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Freire & Macedo, 2014).

The data from the analyzed lesson plans indicated that although some constructivist elements, such as collaborative learning and discussion-based activities, were present, they remained constrained by the teacher's overarching authoritative role. This aligns with research on educational models in hierarchical societies, where respect for authority often limits the extent to which students can engage in self-directed learning (Mutekwe et al., 2013; Nimasari et al., 2022; Shumba, 2011). Piaget emphasizes that students learn best when they actively construct knowledge through interaction and reflection (Devries, 1999). However, the IIBS model predominantly follows a transmissive pedagogy, in which knowledge is viewed as absolute and delivered through a one-way flow from teacher to student, potentially impeding the cognitive flexibility necessary for critical thinking and problem-solving (Seimears et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, the findings also highlighted points of convergence between Islamic education and constructivist learning. Practices such as *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *shura* (consultative decision-making) provided natural spaces for critical thinking, aligning with Piaget's formal operational stage, where students develop the ability to think abstractly and critically. While early Islamic education often prioritizes memorization, students are encouraged to transition to analytical reasoning as they advance in their studies, particularly in subjects such as *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *tafsir* (interpretation of religious texts) (Ihsan et al., 2024). However, studies suggest that not all students reach the formal operational stage, with some remaining at the concrete operational stage where learning is still tied to tangible experiences (DioGuardi, 2017; Mutekwe et al., 2013). This presents a key pedagogical challenge: How can IIBS educators foster cognitive development without disrupting the traditional structure of religious education?

Comparing these findings with global applications of Piaget's theory provides further insights into how constructivism can be adapted to the Indonesian Islamic educational context. Western education models emphasize inquiry-based learning, in which students take an active role in questioning and investigating (Hof, 2021; Watkins & Cooperrider, 2000). Meanwhile,

Asian educational systems, such as those in China and Japan, have integrated constructivist approaches while maintaining hierarchical classroom structures (Shumba, 2011; Cooper & Geoff, 1987). Research suggests that a hybrid model, blending Piagetian principles with structured teacher guidance, may be particularly effective in cultures where education is tied to deep-seated respect for authority and tradition (Dijk, 2015; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010).

The study also identified technology as a key enabler of constructivist learning within IIBS. Digital tools (Mills, 2015) such as interactive learning platforms, virtual discussions, and AI-based assessments could provide students with opportunities for experiential learning while still aligning with religious educational values (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). However, digital inequality remains a significant barrier, with many *Pesantren* lacking access to modern educational technologies. Future research should explore how low-cost, scalable technological interventions can be implemented to facilitate constructivist learning while addressing IIBS's resource constraints.

The study aligned with Fairclough's argument that discourse was inherently ideological, shaping perceptions of reality in subtle yet profound ways (Fairclough, 1995). However, the materials used in the lessons were often drawn from structured textbooks, such as *Pathway to English*, which may lack authentic, real-world discourse. This reliance on predetermined texts restricted students' engagement with contemporary media and political discourse, thereby limiting their exposure to alternative perspectives that challenge dominant narratives. If CDA were fully integrated, students must be encouraged to engage critically with a broader range of texts, including digital media, political rhetoric, and global news sources (Dijk, 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating Piaget's constructivist theory into IIBS fosters cognitive development while maintaining religious integrity. The findings reveal that while traditional IIBS emphasize rote learning, practices such as *ijtihad* and *shura* align with constructivist principles, thereby enabling critical thinking. A hybrid pedagogical approach that combines student-centered learning with structured teacher guidance is recommended. This research empirically contributes to qualitative evidence on how Piaget's constructivist theory is applied within IIBS. This study also offers a practical hybrid pedagogical approach that combines experiential learning with structured guidance, fostering critical thinking without disrupting Islamic traditions. Future studies should explore teacher training, digital integration, and longitudinal cognitive assessments to enhance constructivist learning in IIBS, ensuring that students are equipped to meet both religious and modern intellectual challenges.

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APPENDIX

Table 9.

Islamic and nationalist narratives alongside Western critical perspectives on discourse, media, and power structures

Aspect	Key Indicators	Implications on Student Worldview
Religious Framing	Use of Islamic greetings and prayers in lesson openings; moral values emphasized.	Shapes a worldview rooted in Islamic moral teachings.
Nationalist Framing	References to Pancasila values and Indonesian identity through learning activities.	Strengthens national identity within the educational framework.
Moral Discourse	Stories and character analysis reinforce noble character and moral righteousness.	Encourages acceptance of moral narratives as universal truths.
Structured Worldview	Narratives are structured to align with religious and state ideologies.	Limits alternative perspectives by embedding structured ideological discourse.
Embedded Ideologies	Students engage with texts and discussions that subtly reinforce ideological viewpoints.	Promotes alignment with religious and national values as default frameworks for understanding stories.
Discourse and Power	Teacher controls discourse, shaping student interactions within predefined narratives.	Restricts alternative viewpoints; maintains structured power dynamics in learning.
Media Representation	Limited exposure to diverse media perspectives; curriculum favors traditional texts.	Reduces exposure to critical media literacy, limiting engagement with global discourses.
Knowledge Construction	Knowledge is transmitted rather than constructed, reinforcing hierarchical authority.	Minimizes student agency in interpreting and questioning knowledge structures.
Ideological Framing	Stories align with moral and nationalistic narratives, reinforcing dominant ideologies.	Frames certain ideologies as 'neutral' while marginalizing alternative viewpoints.
Critical Engagement	Students analyze texts, but within controlled frameworks that limit subversive critique.	Encourages critical analysis but only within accepted ideological boundaries.