

ESTABLISHING THE EXPORT AGENT OF INDONESIA’S MODERATE ISLAM SINCE THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE

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Abstract: *Moderate Islam is expected to be an alternative response to the phenomenon of radical Islamic movements, which tend to eliminate the spirit of Islamic value as a blessing for the entire world. A number of Muslim groups around the world choose to practice Islam exclusively and look at themselves as the most righteous in accordance with religious law. They tend to consider those who disagree with them as enemies who must be killed. Indonesia has recently developed a moderate Islamic discourse, through government and religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, to stem right mainstream or left mainstream of Islam movement. This study was aimed to discuss the educational possibilities for preparing Indonesian cadres to speak out for Islamic moderation in the global world. This study employed a qualitative method with a library research approach, which was putting academic texts as the primary source. The study's findings were as follows: To export religious moderation to the global world, a holistic integrative strategy must be implemented starting from basic education school for establishing cadre of Indonesia’s moderate Islam voice, including 1. Learning and applying moderate Islamic values in daily life through structured programs. 2. Strengthening the Muslim intellect in various fundamental subjects, particularly English, Arabic, and mathematics enabling them to develop knowledge and skills to reach all segments of stratified mankind to spread moderate Islamic values in an applicable and inclusive manner. 3. Improving academic and popular writing skills in international languages that make their ideas more accepted by the entire global community and they have bargain among global.*

Keywords: Age, Agent, Export, Elementary School, Moderate Islam



INTRODUCTION

Wasathiyah Islam is viewed as moderate Islam, which is intended to serve as a paradigm that places Islam as a essential values that encourages its adherents to be fair, balanced, and tolerant. This paradigm arose in response to the emergence of radical and extreme Islamic models that value absolute truth in and of themselves¹. This type of Islam has the potential to sever Muslims' unity in the world and Indonesia especially. Many countries in the Arabian Peninsula were divided, and their countries were destroyed as a result of the civil war, which was a true portrait of the development of radical and extremist Islam. This pattern must be broken with the *wasathi* approach, which places justice, balanced - not liberal and unorthodox - and upholds tolerance within certain limits and corridors.

This *wasathiyah al-Islam* foundation is based on the theology developed by Abu Hasan Al Asy'ari and Abu Mansur Al-Maturudi in light of the four schools of *fiqih*, namely Maliki, Hanafi, Shafii, and Hambali. The Sufism practiced in this Islamic style is taught by Imam Ghazali, also known as Hujjatul Islam². Indonesia's Moderate Islam is not a new religion or sect in Islam, but an old style in Islam that has been packaged with a new term, as the Wahhabi group packaged itself with the term *salafi* to abstract itself with the term *salafiyah* used to call traditional *pesantren* in this country. The use of new terms is sometimes required to present the power of public magnitude and to refresh old terms that are losing favor with the larger community.

Moderate Islam is essentially Islamic values taught by previous *Salaf* scholars who consistently practice and teach *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah* values. The term moderate Islam was coined by Indonesian Muslims who have consistently adhered to the values of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah* in the Asya'ariyah style, rather than the salafi-wababi version which is claimed as Sunnis too. The Muslim community in Indonesia that upholds Sunni values is associated with *pesantren* that have scientific ties to the founders of Nahdatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah. They are very committed to practicing *Islam wasathi* in a variety of real-life situations. Because they do not interpret the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith according to their will, they do not lean to the left and thus do not become liberal. They are also not so far to the right that they become fanatics and see problems in black and white terms³.

Propaganda of the new style of Islam, which is exclusive, intolerant, and excessive, is widespread, with good branding and eye packaging to attract the attention of metropolitan Muslims. The negative impact has been demonstrated

¹ Muhammad Irfan helmy, Ahmad Darajat Jumadil Kubro, Muhamad Ali. 2021. The understanding of Islamic Moderation (*wasatiyyah al-Islam*) and the hadiths on inter-religious relations in the Javanese *pesantrens*. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, (2). 377-401 doi: 10.18326/ijims.v11i2.377-401

² Kanafi, I., Dahri, H., Susminingsih, S. & Bakhri, S., 2021, 'The contribution of Ahlussunnah Waljamaah's theology in establishing moderate Islam in Indonesia', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77(4), a6437. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6437>

³ Ahmad Syafi'i Mufid. 2013. Paham Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah dan Tantangan Kontemporer dalam Pemikiran dan Gerakan Islam di Indonesia. *Harmoni*, 12(3), 8–18



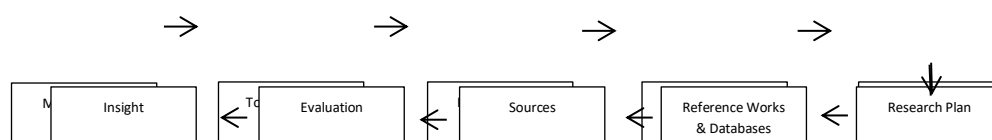
by dividing brotherhood and destroying countries such as Syria and Afghanistan. These two facts should serve as a motivation for us to continue promoting moderate Islam, which has succeeded in uniting the archipelago up to this present. The purity of this teaching must be spread to the outside community and foreign countries in order to spread friendly Islam that promotes brotherhood and justice for all groups and it is free of intimidation from certain parties. To entice the public to look at moderate Islam, it must be delivered in novel and appealing ways. They should use modern channels because they are constantly using YouTube and the similar ones to spread their teachings.

This necessitates the creation of a cadre from individuals who have capability of bringing the values of Indonesia’s moderate Islam to the global stage. We need to develop a unique formula for preparing cadres who has capability of promoting moderate Islam to the international community, so that international global hub understand that terrorist is not the essence of Islamic values. The pattern of the *Wali Songo* movement in Islamizing the archipelago people must be raised to the international stage through various modern channels, such as semi-formal studies like *halaqah* and virtual studies, or through the promotion of academic pulpits. These cadres must be prepared to demonstrate substantial competence as well as communication skills. To be able to stem the attacks of one-sided groups, the cadres must have complete control over the substance of moderate Islamic teachings. Communication skills include verbal and nonverbal communication in international languages using easily accessible digital platforms and academic channels to be accepted by the scientific community.

The formation of a cadre who can act as export agents for Indonesia’s moderate Islam cannot be accomplished overnight, but must be done gradually and from an early age. They must be prepared beginning in elementary school so that the moderate the discourse becomes ingrained in them as a pattern of thought and a pattern of life. The elementary school age is ideal for instilling basic life values through guided habituation in order to form a personality pattern that will last into adulthood. This age is critical for cadres spreading Indonesian moderate Islamic values in order to receive the appropriate intervention related to the program for preparing Indonesian moderate Islamic exporter agents.

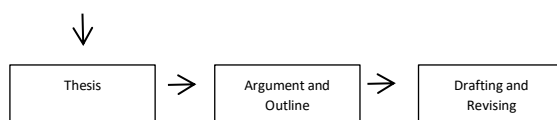
METHOD

In this study, qualitative methods was used with a literature study approach, with the text serving as the primary source. This research aims to provide the concept of a cadre of Indonesia’s moderate Islam ambassadors that can be carried out beginning in elementary school. The following was the research plan that was used here⁴:



⁴ Mary W. George, 2008. *The Elements of Library Research What Every Student Need to Know*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press). 66





FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following are some of the study's findings, which will be discussed in more detail later.

Learning and Applying Moderate Islamic Values

Since elementary school, Indonesia's moderate Muslims should receive an adequate portion of their education. To develop a deep understanding of Indonesia's moderate Islam and its implementation, a moderate Islamic education curriculum must be designed as well as possible by involving scholars who are experts in this field. Spreading Indonesia's moderate Islam is a vision and a massive undertaking that necessitates a structured and systematic effort and the participation of people with expertise and competence in this field. In order for Muslims to have a high level of trust, charismatic *kiai* who are not political and *habaib* who are not pragmatic must be involved. So far, the Government has echoed moderate Islam through the Ministry of Religion and the BNPT (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme - National Counter-Terrorism Board). Fundamental Islamic groups that are anti-government or puritan doctrinal Muslims will be difficult to accept it.

The participation of national *dai* that have been proven to be accepted by all groups, such as Abdu Shomad, Gus Baha' and Adi Hidayat or local *kiais* who have highly care and motivation to nurture it will make that moderate Islam more accepted by all circles, particularly among *hijrah* Muslims who study Islam instantly through YouTube channels or modern *liqo'*. In Indonesia, moderate Islam is openly expressed in order to be accepted by Muslims who are trapped in the *akhi-ukhti* paradigm of Islam, which is a product of *salafi-wababi* and the similar. The best way to preach moderate Islam to them is through the figures they idolize, because whatever they say will be accepted easily and without strife.

They educate people by teaching them knowledge and educating them from the purity of a sincere heart. Hasyim Asy'ari proposed several criteria: First, they purify their intentions in every learning activity for the sole purpose of spreading knowledge and reviving syar'ie civilization. Second, they treat their students as if they were themselves, treating them with kindness and compassion as if they would like to be treated well by others. Good teachers always prioritize etiquette and make the lesson easier to understand for their students. They make the best use of their abilities so that their students can master the material being taught.



They position themselves as friends as well as mentors, always listening to their students' complaints and assisting in the resolution of all problems they face⁵.

Internalization of Indonesia’s moderate Islam requires structured guidance from trusted teachers and *kiai* who are accepted by the general public beginning at a young age. Religious teachers in schools must have a scientific genealogy that extends back to the Prophet Muhammad as the founder of Islamic values that revitalize the spiritual and physical sides of humans. Internalization of moderate Islamic values can only be accomplished by studying Islam *wasathi* concepts traced back to the last Prophet. This is done to ensure that the teachings are pure Sunni values, as Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'ah says. Indonesia’s moderate Islam must be taught by *habaib* and middle eastern *azatidz* alumni in order for it to be easily accepted by the general public, particularly those from shocked Muslim groups. Generally, the public has failed to recognize that the current middle eastern scientific tradition is not the same as what happened when Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari's and Kiai Ahmad Dahlan studied Islam in the middle east, where the Sunni school of thought ruled Saudi Arabia before being overthrown by the Wahhabism until now.

Insights of moderate Islam should be taught to children from a young age, instilling in them a deep understanding of Islamic values that respect differences, uphold the value of justice, and do not consider themselves to be the most correct ones. Children should be thoroughly educated on the concept of moderate Islam⁶. It is not a new style of Islam that offers a new way of thinking and sharia, but rather a Sunni teaching based on the Salaf scholars' *ijtihad*, to which the four schools of fiqh, Asya'ari - Maturudi theology, and Sufism Junaid Al-Baghdadi adhere. The inability to defend one's commitment to the moderate Islamic *manhaj* is due to a lack of mastery of the basic principles of building this *manhaj*. Thus, they are open to Wahhabi movements that are packaged in an appealing and trendy manner.

Strong desire to carry out Islamic Sharia perfectly as adults but weak in mastering religious knowledge, urban people become easy targets for transnational Islamic movements. They are easily swayed by the words and propaganda of *takfiri* groups that despise other people. Exclusive Muslim groups use virtual-based lectures and studies as a means to openly spread their teachings. YouTube channels, Whatsapp groups, and other digital platforms are used to spread their version of Islamic understanding. They recognized that urban Muslims have a tendency to want everything in a short period of time, including religious knowledge. Especially in times of covid pandemic, the steps they take are virtual. They use a variety of digital-based lecture sources, and it turns out that the majority provider of religious content is a member of that group.

This phenomenon should serve as a reminder to moderate Islamic activists that the best cadres must be prepared, with in-depth knowledge of sources of

⁵ Hasyim Asy'ari. *Adab al-'alim wa al-muta'allim*. Jombang: PP Tebuereng

⁶ Sartika, Dani. 2021. Islam Moderat antara Konsep dan Praksis di Indonesia. *Tsamratul Fikri | Jurnal Studi Islam*, 14, (2), 183-198. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36667/tf.v14i2.532>.



literature that can be accounted for and whose scientific genealogy can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad via a clear scientific chain. They are then able to consistently communicate the values of moderate Islam to the public via various digital media. Moderate Islamic propaganda necessitates perseverance and is not seasonal, responding to actual issues, but rather takes the form of learning patterns that are repeated on a regular basis. This method will balance the invitations of intolerant Islam, but it is frequently used as a reference because it is always available⁷.

This necessitates the implementation of serious and structured education to assist children in learning about moderate Islam. *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah's* thoughts based on Asy'ari and Maturudi versions must be taught in depth so that they do not stutter when confronted with theological discourse. Recently, the proportion of theological studies has been lower than the proportion of *fiqh* studies, resulting in a shallow understanding of *aqidah*. This pattern must be broken so that the child's mindset and belief in the *aqidah* are firm and not easily shaken. Religious instruction should not only be given to children in school, especially in public schools where time is limited but also it must be enlightened through informal learning and teaching. Learning *aqidah* for our children must be done intensively and with a measurable goal set, rather than simply being a formal learning activity to meet the demands of the educational curriculum. Teachers of this material must be verified for quality and *sanad* of knowledge must be connected to the prophet Muhammad Because this involves *aqidah* as the estuary of everyone's faith and practice.

Teachers who teach *aqidah* material must be proficient not only in conceptual theory but also in real application. Islamic religious knowledge is not merely theoretical; it is intended to be practiced in daily life. A religious teacher who can only teach conceptual theories and not necessarily practice them is unfit to teach Islamic religious knowledge. In reality, many religious teachers nowadays are only able to teach religious knowledge and are unable to educate children about its practice and appreciation. These teachers are only competent in scientific reasoning and cognitive domains, but they lack experience. This has the potential to lower the quality of Islamic religious learning output, students' understanding of moderate Islamic values and doctrines is very shallow and does not translate well in real life.

It is critical that we develop a program to deepen theology, law, and moderate Islamic Sufism by bringing experts to educate and guide children in its practice. This conditioning is important because newcomers are waging a full-fledged assault on moderate Islam. Elementary school children must gain experience in order to truly live moderate Islam by being exposed to different points of view and beliefs. This is intended to broaden their understanding that the truth they

⁷ Wldan Hefni. 2020. Religious Moderation in The Digital Space: Case Study of Mainstreaming Religious Moderation among Islamic Higher Education Institutions. *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13 (1). 1-22.



believe is absolute for themselves and their group, but becomes relative when confronted with groups of different understandings or beliefs. Their beliefs are absolute truths that must be maintained, preserved, and practiced consistently and passed down to their ancestors, but they are positioned as inclusive things for the outsider context so that they are not forced to be accepted by everyone.

Children should be taught how to live with differences in an inclusive way so that they can accept differences as they develop. One way to accomplish this is through a camping program that is open to people of all faiths or sects. This program should be implemented for those who have already mastered the theory and practice of Asya'ari and Maturidi theological insights. Cross-religious cultural exchange activities are harmful to children who lack a depth of knowledge and practice of religion and have the potential to shape them as liberal human beings who equate all religions. They occasionally fall into a pattern of excessive tolerance and cross the boundaries of Islam. In many ways, all religions are thought to have something in common that can only be distinguished by their respective beliefs in their hearts.

Strengthening the Muslim Intellect

Experts in moderate Islam frequently live in isolation and lack the ability to enter urban Muslim communities, which tend to be in the middle social and economic strata. They work in various office professions or appear to be executives because they are well-dressed and have regular working hours. They are very proud of their work and earn more than enough money as a result. Their occupations, such as lecturers, architects, bankers, and state apparatus, are classified as belonging to the upper-middle social class, even though the nature of the work includes members of the labours. On the other hand, farming, gardening, or raising livestock on their own land and conducting business independently, this work is very independent and not subject to superior pressure⁸.

To enter the world of urban Muslims, moderate Islamic cadres must have expertise in fields related to professional work. The spread of modern Islam throughout the world is essentially a *da'wah* activity that need direct interaction with the target community⁹. Delivering moderate Islamic *da'wah* with an approach and brotherhood without distance is more easily accepted by them because it is delivered by people who are close to them and have a direct understanding of their character and habits. It is not enough for preachers or other religious leaders who lack closeness and intimacy with the community to spread this understanding. This method can only be used to introduce people to the paradigm, not to force them to follow it. Teaching moderate Islam in such a way that it is believed and

⁸ Alfinnas, S. 2018. Membangun Academic Self-Concept Mahasantri Pesantren Nawesea. *Education and Human Development Journal*, 3(2), 191-198. <https://doi.org/10.33086/ehdj.v3i2.59>

⁹ Shulhan. 2021. Designing New Trend Of Pesantren For Santri Enhancement In Response To Golden Indonesia Vision 2045. *Reflektika*, 16 (2), 225-248 doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.28944/reflektika.v16i2.575>.



practiced as a way of life must be done in a variety of ways, such as formally in study activities or informally in daily conversation.

This pattern generally requires dual competence in order for moderate Islamic cadres to carry out their duties properly and successfully. The first competency is expertise in the field of professional work, so that it can be well received by the community and carry out professional duties in accordance with established procedures. This will cause the cadre to occupy a strategic position in the workplace, giving them power and policies that can influence a large number of people. The second skill is knowledge of moderate Islamic materials and the art of presenting them to the general public. A person in a respectable position who is deeply committed to spreading the Islamic insight of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah* will be readily accepted by the community in his surroundings because he is a leader who is always followed by others.

Today's society is so reliant on technology, mastery of the use and utilization of the digital world, as well as development, is essential for every moderate Islamic cadre. People in various parts of the world today rely on digital devices to meet their needs, including the need for religious knowledge. They have digital tools and data packages to find information about Islamic studies and the internet instantly because it saves energy and time. They then take whatever information provided digitally without making any effort to validate or sort it. The system will send information channels that are similar to the previously searched. The general public will consider continuous repetition of information without verification to be correct¹⁰.

Improving Academic and Popular Writing Skills

Indonesian moderate Islamic cadres need the ability to express their ideas in writing. This is intended that the spread of religious moderation can be accessed by various generations because the thoughts that are institutionalized in written form can last for all time. The written idea can be strengthened by conveying it in the form of verbal narratives in the form of YouTube videos which are also not easily damaged or lost.

If ideas are documented in written and video form, they are easily accessible by the larger community if they are disseminated openly digitally. If these ideas and works are positive, they will become enlightenment material for the general public, and this must be undertaken seriously given that the digital world, both written and audio-visual, is filled with transnational Islamic content. The presence of friendly Islamic materials and the upholding of human values is critical in order to stem and balance the Wahhabi propaganda that is freely spreading in cyberspace. We must fulfill the digital space by moderate Islam's voice in order to

¹⁰ Alfinnas, S. 2018. Arah Baru Pendidikan Islam di Era Digital. *FIKROTUNA*, 7(1), 803–817.
<https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v7i1.3186>



provide large numbers of people with open access to the true perspective of Islam and Muslim beliefs.

Islamic insight and public understanding of the nature of Islam are largely superficial, particularly among urban Muslims. They frequently fail to distinguish between Islam and Islamic religiosity with the potential to Islamize various regions in Indonesia. They are trapped in the styles of contemporary preachers, who tend to be Arab culture and preach Islam that is contrary to what the Prophet and his companions taught. Because of the shallowness of their knowledge, they can only see what appears on the surface and immediately accept the particular *da'wah*. They appear to accept what they hear and see without first correcting and validating it.

Writing the idea, in addition to serving as a media for the author to express some of his views, is useful for speeding up the message conveyed to the larger community. People will improve their literacy and critical thinking skills if they have open access to written media. Writers find it easier to persuade the public to follow their ideas because it allows anyone to understand them without having to meet them personally. We can transfer ideas to others by utilizing digital technology to make people more accessible and in touch with what we are concerned about¹¹.

People who are tasked with conveying important ideas about moderate Islam must be fluent in English. In order for the vision of importing moderate Islamic ideas to be realized, the importing agents must be fluent in both written and spoken English. This is useful for making it easier for world citizens to understand what is contained in it by reading or listening to it. A good idea will not be properly communicated to the public if it is not communicated in the language of the audience, so it will not provide broad benefits. The purpose of discussing moderate Islam is to educate the wider community, particularly those who have never received a *pesantren* education, then they understand that one of the strengths of Islamic society's harmony in Indonesia is the strong practice of religious moderation.

It is critical to provide English language learning for children at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, both through formal education and through community-based activities. English is regarded as a difficult subject for madrasa students, particularly those who live in remote areas, because it is not directly practiced and there are no skilled teachers in this field. This is because all English is thought to have no direct correlation with religion, so the villagers ignore it and dismiss it as unimportant. They frequently prioritize religious knowledge in a narrow sense. Parents have been unable to properly map out the priority scale and follow up in the appropriate stages of education.

¹¹ Blanka Frydrychova Klimova, 2013. The Importance of Writing, *PARIPEX - Indian Journal Of Research 2* (1), 9-11 DOI: 10.15373/22501991/JAN2013/4



Around 750 million people worldwide speak English when they interact each others¹². This means that ideas and examples of moderate Islam practiced in Indonesia can only be exported in English then the global world can understand them. In addition, you can deliver moderate Islamic material in Mandarin, which has a large user base. In an era of polarization and the spread of radical and extreme Islamic ideas, it is critical to promote moderate Islamic propaganda by people with expertise in the field of Islam, specifically alumni of *pesantren*.

Cadres who spread moderate Islamic values should receive intensive training in order to be fluent in English. They must be consistently trained to express themselves in the form of popular and scientific writings in English. They should also be trained to deliver important messages about the importance of practicing moderate Islam in the form of video lectures that can be distributed via the YouTube channel. They can publish ideas in various online and print newspapers using popular writing. For cadres who prefer to write in the form of academic articles, they can express moderate Islam through publications in reputable journals.

Habituation, similar to how children master their mother tongue through direct practice, can be used to help children become proficient in English. They do not regard English as a science, but rather as a skill that can be honed through consistent practice. There should be a greater emphasis on mastering patterns and agility. For years, the santries community or madrasah students have been learning English ineffectively. Our children learn English from elementary school to college but unable to communicate effectively. They get an English class in less than ten years, but getting a TOEFL score of 500 is extremely difficult.

The main issue is that English is regarded as a science rather than a skill. We have a tendency to focus on learning things that do not directly hone language skills, such as tenses, grammar, and vocabulary, without practice over time. There is no systematic and structured conditioning, and learning English is unfocused. Meanwhile, language acquisition occurs through conditioning and active participation of learners in direct linguistic activities such as interacting in English on a daily basis. It is not enough to simply teach the language in class; it must also be practiced in real life. It takes good environmental conditioning to form the habit and obtain the nature of the language.

Natural-based mother tongue learning directly in the environment is required for English learning forms to the non native. Learning must be done with focus to make it not distracted, such as studying language skills for six months without interruption. Following the acquisition of these language skills, other lessons are learned by continuing to use English even when interacting with peers who also

¹² Devy Angga Gunantar, 2016, The Impact of English as an International Language on English Language Teaching in Indonesia, *LANGUAGE CIRCLE: Journal of Language and Literature X* (1), 141-151



speak English. This will enable everyone to become an active English speaker capable of conveying ideas clearly and easily.

Imitating other people's pronunciations and expressions of ideas and thoughts is the best way to learn the language. Children should begin honing their English skills through listening activities, instead of reading, memorizing vocabulary, and exploring tenses and grammar. Although these methods are not incorrect, they are ineffective and often biased. Everyone will naturally perceive and imitate pronunciation, emphasis, and expressions by listening. This cannot be obtained simply by reading. Listening gradually encourages a person to imitate and respond to the other person through simple and limping expressions, allowing them to eventually become proficient.

CONCLUSION

To export Indonesia’s moderate Islam to the global world, a holistic integrative strategy beginning with basic education school must be implemented to establish a cadre of Indonesia's moderate Islam voice, including 1. Learning and applying moderate Islamic values in daily life through structured programs. 2. Strengthening the Muslim intellect in various fundamental subjects, particularly English, Arabic, and mathematics, allowing them to develop knowledge and skills to reach all strata of humanity in order to spread moderate Islamic values in a relevant and inclusive manner. 3. Improving academic and popular writing skills in international languages, which increases the acceptance of their ideas by the entire global community and allows them to bargain among global.

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