



Integrating Islamic Culture in English as A Foreign Language (Efl) Teaching: Importance and Implications

Kalayo Hasibuan¹, Fatma Insania Sakinah², Gusdiva Arieyanti³, Kartika Meilisa⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

Email: khalayohasibuan@gmail.com¹, fatmainiania3@gmail.com², divarievanti@gmail.com³,
kartikameilisa06@gmail.com⁴

ABSTRACT. This article explores the integration of Islamic culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, emphasizing its importance and implications for Muslim students. It discusses the concepts of Islamic culture, the role of culture in language learning, and practical strategies for incorporating Islamic values into EFL curricula. The findings suggest that integrating Islamic culture not only enhances language acquisition but also strengthens students' identities and moral character.

Key words: Islamic Cultural Integration, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Muslim Identity, Islamic Values,

1. INTRODUCTION

As globalization continues to shape modern education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has emerged as a crucial subject, especially within nations where the majority of the population is Muslim. Yet, the prevalence of Western cultural norms in EFL teaching materials often presents a challenge for Muslim students whose values and identities are rooted in Islamic tradition. This cultural disconnect can result in confusion, disengagement, and even internal conflict among learners. Consequently, there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of incorporating Islamic cultural principles into EFL instruction to ensure compatibility with students' ethical and religious frameworks.

Integrating Islamic culture into EFL education goes beyond simply eliminating content that may conflict with religious beliefs. It represents a meaningful educational shift that infuses language instruction with spiritual, moral, and cultural values derived from Islamic teachings. This culturally grounded approach not only enhances students' language proficiency but also fosters character development, religious consciousness, and a strong sense of identity. This article delves into the theoretical underpinnings, practical strategies, and broader implications of incorporating Islamic culture into EFL classrooms, offering guidance for teachers, curriculum planners, and education policymakers who aim to build culturally inclusive learning environments.

2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This study employed a qualitative library research method, relying on critical analysis of existing literature, including books, journal articles, and relevant studies on the integration of Islamic culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. The researchers examined

theoretical frameworks, case studies, and empirical findings from scholars such as Al-Attas (1993), Byram (1997), Kramsch (1993), and recent studies by Ali (2018), Sidqurrahman (2024), and Putri et al. (2023). These sources were analyzed to explore how Islamic values and cultural elements can be meaningfully embedded into EFL curricula and pedagogical practices. The data were interpreted through an Islamic educational lens, focusing on identity formation, moral education, and intercultural communication within Muslim-majority learning environments.

3. DISCUSSION

Concepts of Islamic Culture in EFL

Islamic culture signifies a holistic lifestyle shaped by the principles found in the Qur'an and Sunnah, which includes the values, morals, beliefs, traditions, and behaviors that define the mindset and everyday actions of Muslims. In teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), grasping Islamic culture is vital, particularly when instructing Muslim students, to ensure that language education respects their cultural and religious backgrounds.

Al-Attas (1993) states that Islamic culture is deeply embedded in the idea of *adab*, which signifies appropriate conduct and discipline that embodies both knowledge and spirituality. This notion greatly impacts how Muslims understand language, communication, and ethical behavior. Thus, integrating Islamic cultural principles into EFL instruction goes beyond merely steering clear of culturally sensitive topics; it aims to validate the students' values, enhance critical thinking, and encourage awareness of other cultures.

In the realm of EFL, Islamic culture also encompasses principles such as honoring elders, being truthful, practicing modesty, collaborating with others, and nurturing a sense of community. These themes can be woven into class discussions, reading materials, and speaking exercises. For instance, an assignment on writing personal letters might include reaching out to a friend during Ramadan, or vocabulary lessons could focus on words associated with Islamic events or concepts like *zakat* (charity) and *salah* (prayer). This contextual learning not only aids students in understanding language structures but also boosts their cultural self-assurance and identity.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2002) points out that in Islamic civilization, language is regarded as a sacred responsibility, and one's speech reflects their moral and spiritual condition. This view corresponds with the teaching philosophy that sees EFL education not just as an intellectual task but as a moral connection with the identities of the students. Consequently, EFL instructors in Islamic settings are urged to utilize culturally sensitive teaching strategies.

This entails being aware of Islamic values during classroom dynamics, choosing relevant content, and shaping assessment methods. Such an approach minimizes cultural conflicts and enhances learners' enthusiasm and retention by fostering a welcoming and respectful educational atmosphere.

The Role of Culture into EFL

Culture is intricately linked to learning a new language. The relationship between language and culture is deeply intertwined. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students need to develop not just language skills but also an understanding of cultural contexts to participate in effective communication. As Brown (2000, p. 177) observes, "language is an element of culture, while culture encompasses language; the two are so closely connected that separating them would diminish the value of both aspects. "

1. Building Intercultural Communicative Skills

Byram (1997) identifies five essential elements of intercultural communicative competence: attitudes (such as curiosity and openness), knowledge (about social groups and their customs), skills for interpretation and connection, abilities to explore and interact, and a critical awareness of culture. He explains that "the goal is not just to impart knowledge about a culture but to nurture the capability to interpret, compare, and engage thoughtfully with cultural meanings" (Byram, 1997, p. 34). This competency aids learners in:

- Preventing cultural misinterpretations
- Understanding the significance of gestures, sayings, and phrases
- Thinking critically about both their own culture and the target culture

2. Boosting Motivation and Relevance

Kramsch (1993) suggests that culture gives meaning and context to language use. She states, "whenever we speak, we are engaging in a cultural act" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 24). Learning a language in isolation from its cultural context leads to a flat communication style that lacks social or emotional depth. She further points out that incorporating cultural elements into language education makes the process more captivating by tying it to students' real-life experiences and interests.

3. Cultivating Critical Cultural Awareness and Preventing Cultural Domination

Byram (1997) cautions against the uncritical adoption of prevailing Anglo-American cultural norms in language teaching. He presents the idea of "critical cultural awareness," where learners assess and reflect on cultural practices, including their own, from an ethical standpoint (p. 63). This approach helps ensure that students do not passively accept cultural

stereotypes or foreign customs, but instead develop the ability to think critically and assess cultural information.

4. Culture as a Factor in Content, Context, and Teaching Methods

There are categorizes culture in language education into three aspects:

- As content: culture is explicitly taught through lessons about traditions, customs, and more.
- As context: culture influences how communication occurs and is understood.
- As method: cultural values shape the teaching and learning process, including roles in the classroom, norms for questioning, and feedback approaches.

5. Hurdles in Merging Culture into Language Learning

Even though culture's significance is acknowledged, there are multiple practical obstacles:

- Instructors may be underprepared in cultural teaching methods (Kramsch, 1993)
 - Educational materials can often reflect a Western-oriented perspective that might clash with local beliefs (Byram, 1997)
 - There is a danger of oversimplifying culture to mere trivia or stereotypes
- Addressing these obstacles demands thoughtful consideration, suitable resources, and intercultural training for teachers.

Integrating Islamic Culture into EFL

The incorporation of Islamic culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching has become a significant educational focus, particularly in environments where students' identities are largely influenced by Islamic principles. In mainly Muslim communities, it's crucial to align language education with cultural and religious beliefs to avoid cultural conflicts, maintain student motivation, and ensure that language acquisition contributes to both linguistic skills and the development of moral character. This how Islamic culture can be woven into EFL education, for instance:

1. Classroom Practices and the Integration of Moderate Islamic Values

Ali (2018) carried out a qualitative investigation into the incorporation of moderate Islamic principles in an EFL classroom with 44 undergraduate participants at an Islamic university in Indonesia. The findings identified five key moderate Islamic values that were effectively included in the language learning process: objectivity, tolerance, inclusiveness, logical reasoning, and creativity. These principles were not mere theoretical concepts but were

actively woven into teaching methods through the teacher's examples, the design of materials, and classroom organization.

In this environment, the educator served as a crucial moral guide by displaying respectful actions, promoting discussions, and embracing diversity. For example, students were invited to express Islamic perspectives on contemporary issues in English, which enabled them to enhance their language skills while contemplating their ethical and cultural viewpoints. The teacher also made use of Edmodo, a learning management platform, to foster online conversations related to Islamic themes, which further reinforced values such as integrity and compassion in digital learning settings.

Additionally, genuine resources, such as online articles concerning Islamic teachings, were included in reading and comprehension exercises. These resources not only broadened students' vocabulary and critical analysis but also strengthened their ethical identities. Ali (2018) noted that when students connected language lessons with their religious beliefs, their involvement and sense of purpose significantly improved. This connection between faith and education appeared to lessen resistance to unfamiliar content, particularly when traditional Western cultural influences were regarded as conflicting with Islamic values.

2. Curriculum and Methodology: A Systematic Framework

In an extensive systematic review, Sidqurrahman (2024) looked into how Islamic viewpoints are included in EFL teaching across various studies, aiming to create a teaching framework rooted in faith-based education. His review highlights that moral education, cultural awareness, and value-centered learning are fundamental aspects of an Islamic EFL curriculum rather than just additional components.

Sidqurrahman (2024), the incorporation of Islamic culture fulfills several educational purposes: it fosters ethical understanding, encourages respect for different cultures, and helps students navigate both local and international contexts while preserving their religious identity. This is particularly important because, although English is a global language, it often carries cultural nuances that may not resonate with Islamic teachings.

One significant aspect of this review is uncovering educational conflicts. For example, the challenge lies in harmonizing religious themes with global educational goals. While integrating Islamic principles can enhance students' confidence and moral reasoning capabilities, it is essential to implement this without compromising the impartiality and inclusivity of language teaching. Sidqurrahman recommends that educational training initiatives and policy developments empower teachers to manage these complexities in a thoughtful and inclusive manner. Moreover, he stresses that incorporating Islamic principles

into language teaching does not imply that every content aspect needs to reflect Islam; instead, it should focus on integrating ethical reasoning, cultural sensitivity, and spiritual awareness into lesson design and execution. Educators are encouraged to critically assess external resources and modify them from an Islamic perspective, promoting not just language skills but also value-driven introspection.

3. Textbook Content and Cultural Representation in Islamic Schools

The third contribution is presented by Putri et al. (2023), who examined the degree to which local EFL textbooks used in Indonesian Islamic junior high schools embody Islamic cultural principles. Utilizing critical discourse analysis and engaging with teachers through interviews, the researchers discovered that cultural values like respectfulness, familial honor, and community unity were deeply rooted in the instructional materials. The content within these textbooks included culturally significant scenarios, such as greeting seniors, conversing with family members, and taking part in religious practices, all of which reflect Islamic social norms.

Educators involved in the research commended the textbooks for aligning with the ethical and spiritual guidelines expected in Islamic educational settings. The incorporation of values such as teamwork, integrity, and modesty made language education more relatable and reinforced behavioral standards consistent with Islamic philosophies. Furthermore, the textbooks included collaborative activities that encouraged group discussions, ethical decision-making, and storytelling based on Islamic customs.

Putri et al. (2023) contend that when EFL material resonates with the real-life experiences and moral standards of students, it bolsters both language learning and cultural identity. The research emphasizes the significance of customizing language education, especially in environments where religious identity is central to the student experience. It further supports the idea that incorporating Islamic values does not have to hinder language skills. Instead, it can enhance linguistic expression by adding contextual and emotional significance.

4. Implications for Teachers, Curriculum Designers, and Policy Makers

The insights from these three studies suggest several crucial implications. To begin with, educators should receive training that encompasses both linguistic and cultural pedagogical aspects, enabling them to approach cultural-religious integration with sensitivity and effectiveness. They should not simply imitate Western EFL frameworks but should modify and reshape them to fit Islamic educational contexts.

Additionally, curriculum designers need to integrate faith-based principles when creating syllabi and choosing teaching materials. This includes finding or producing texts that embody

Islamic values while still allowing learners to engage with global conversations. Practical approaches may include bilingual or culturally adapted reading materials, storytelling tasks rooted in Islamic history, and writing assignments addressing ethical challenges from an Islamic viewpoint.

Third, education policy should acknowledge the two objectives of Islamic EFL: fostering international communication skills and developing moral character. Strategies that support culturally aware teaching methods, facilitate cooperation between language and religious experts, and provide financial resources for creating textbooks that are culturally informative will be vital to maintain this integration.

Importance of Integrating Islamic Culture

Integration of Islamic Culture in English Language Teaching (EFL): Shaping Muslim Character and Identity in the Global Era Amidst the waves of globalization that bring numerous changes to the education sector, a significant challenge arises for the Muslim community, particularly in preserving Islamic values within schools. One of these challenges manifests in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), which is frequently linked to Western culture. However, this is where the significance of Islamic cultural integration comes into play. This approach not only aids students in mastering a foreign language but also strengthens their identity and character as Muslims.

1. Enhancing Spiritual and Ethical Dimensions in Learning

As stated by Abdul Kodir (2023), one effective method to incorporate Islamic culture into education is by integrating hadith into the curriculum. He elaborates that by including hadith in lessons, students are not merely engaged in academic learning; they also grasp moral and spiritual values relevant to their daily lives. For instance, while studying grammar or reading, learners can dissect texts that contain hadith quotes or stories reflecting Prophet Muhammad's ethics. This makes the educational experience more meaningful and applicable.

Nonetheless, this process cannot be arbitrary. The selection of hadith must be contextually relevant and linked to the subjects being taught. Additionally, educators need to convey Islamic values while adhering to modern pedagogical principles. This requires teachers to possess a solid grasp of the English language as well as a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings.

2. Islamic Education and Contemporary Social Challenges

In an article from GlobalSadaqah. com (2024), it is emphasized that Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that is not only academically proficient but also morally and socially robust. When Islamic teachings are infused into the modern curriculum,

including EFL classes, students acquire values that guide them through the complexities of global life. This is particularly important, given that many contemporary Muslim youth face identity crises when confronted with global cultures that diverge from Islamic values. For example, during speaking or writing exercises, students could be assigned to write opinions or deliver presentations on topics such as “Islamic Values in Modern Society” or “What Defines a Good Muslim Leader.” Such themes not only enhance language skills but also encourage students to think critically and reflectively about the realities they encounter.

3. Practical Strategies for Integrating Islamic Values in EFL Classes

Incorporating Islamic values into EFL instruction is manageable when employing the right strategies. Some strategies that can be effectively implemented include:

- Utilizing reading materials that reflect Islamic values, like the stories of the Prophet's companions or inspiring tales focusing on honesty and patience.
- Encouraging students to engage in reflective discussions about the moral lessons derived from texts or scenarios within the textbooks.
- Creating learning projects centered around “Islamic Culture Around the World” to allow students to explore how Islamic values manifest in various global contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

Integrating Islamic culture into EFL teaching is not merely a cultural adjustment but a pedagogical necessity in Muslim educational settings. The findings indicate that this integration supports both linguistic proficiency and the development of students’ moral and spiritual identity. Embedding Islamic values—such as honesty, modesty, cooperation, and critical reflection—into language instruction fosters deeper engagement, enhances motivation, and helps learners navigate the challenges of globalization without compromising their faith-based identity.

Successful implementation requires collaborative efforts among educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Teachers must be equipped with intercultural competence and pedagogical skills to create culturally relevant learning environments. Curriculum developers should incorporate Islamic values into lesson content while maintaining international communicative relevance. Policy support is also crucial to fund culturally appropriate materials and teacher training.

Ultimately, a balanced and thoughtful integration of Islamic culture in EFL not only enriches the language learning experience but also contributes to shaping morally responsible, confident, and globally aware Muslim individuals

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