

Challenges And Opportunities For EFL Instruction With An Islamic Perspective

Kalayo Hasibuan¹, Salsabila Ramadhani², Santy Agustin³, Silvi Ramadhani⁴, Siti Maulani Delfina⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

Corresponding Author: Kalayo Hasibuan, E-Mail: khalayohasibuan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the integration of Islamic values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, emphasizing both the challenges and opportunities within Islamic educational contexts. As English serves as a global language for communication and knowledge, embedding Islamic principles into EFL teaching adds a moral and spiritual dimension to language learning. The paper draws on qualitative literature and empirical studies to propose strategies for addressing cultural, ideological, and material-related barriers. It highlights the importance of aligning language instruction with the cultural and spiritual backgrounds of Muslim learners through character education, teacher training in faith-based pedagogy, and the inclusion of Islamic content in teaching materials. Furthermore, the integration of educational technology and media such as multimodal digital content and Islamic-themed instructional tools is explored as a means to enhance both linguistic competence and moral development. This holistic approach aims to cultivate not only language skills but also critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and ethical values among learners.

Keywords: EFL instruction, Islamic education, character building, educational technology, multimodal learning, moral values

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, the dominance of English as a means of international communication offers significant potential for educational advancement, particularly in academic and professional spheres. English has become not only a tool for accessing global knowledge but also a gateway to broader career opportunities. Consequently, the mastery of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been emphasized in many educational institutions, including those in Muslim-majority countries. However, the conventional EFL instructional models often rely heavily on Western ideologies, cultural references, and teaching materials that may not align with the moral and spiritual values held by Muslim learners (Fitria, 2023).

For educational institutions rooted in Islamic traditions—such as pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic universities—the integration of Islamic values into EFL instruction is both a necessity and a challenge. While language education aims to develop students' communicative competence, it must also be responsive to the learners' cultural and religious identities. A pedagogy that disregards these aspects runs the risk of alienating students from their core values and potentially weakening their Islamic worldview. Therefore, incorporating Islamic perspectives into EFL pedagogy becomes essential to ensure that language learning contributes to the formation of morally conscious and spiritually grounded individuals.

This approach aligns with the broader goals of Islamic education, which aim to nurture insan kamil—a holistic human being who possesses intellectual excellence and strong moral character (Althafullayya & Akbar, 2024). Integrating values such as tawhid (oneness of God), adab (ethical conduct), and critical consciousness based on Islamic epistemology provides meaningful contexts that enrich language learning and foster deeper personal development (Althafullayya et al., 2024). Rather than treating English as a value-neutral skill, Islamic EFL instruction situates language learning within a framework that promotes ethical awareness, identity affirmation, and intercultural sensitivity.

Moreover, the rapid development of educational technology in the digital age presents new opportunities to facilitate this integration. EFL instruction increasingly utilizes digital platforms, multimedia resources, and real-time communication tools that can be tailored to include Islamic content and perspectives. When used thoughtfully, these tools can enhance both linguistic proficiency and moral education by exposing students to authentic language use embedded in Islamic contexts (Sidqurrahman, 2024) (Suraijiah et al., 2023). As a result, learners not only develop communication skills but also engage with content that reflects their beliefs and values.

Given these considerations, it becomes crucial to develop EFL pedagogical approaches that are contextually and culturally responsive. This article explores the integration of Islamic values into EFL instruction by addressing key challenges and proposing practical strategies for educators in Islamic settings. It aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on faith-integrated education and the development of effective, holistic language learning environments for Muslim learners.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the integration of Islamic values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction within Islamic educational contexts. The research draws upon a combination of literature analysis, curriculum review, and observation of instructional practices in various Islamic institutions, such as madrasah, pesantren, and Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Data sources include:

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings related to EFL pedagogy and Islamic education.
2. Islamic-oriented EFL teaching materials, curricula, and digital instructional media.
3. Field-based observations and case examples derived from existing reports and documentation of educational practices that integrate Islamic values into EFL learning.

The data collection process involved selecting literature and resources published between 2010 and 2024 that are relevant to the themes of value-based language education, character development, and multimodal learning with an Islamic perspective. In addition, specific case illustrations were

extracted from documented classroom practices, teacher training modules, and institutional policies in Islamic educational settings.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, where recurring themes and patterns were identified to highlight key challenges (e.g., ideological conflict, material limitations, teacher readiness) and opportunities (e.g., technology integration, curriculum contextualization, character formation) in embedding Islamic values into EFL instruction (Putri et. al 2025). The analysis aimed to synthesize practical strategies and pedagogical recommendations that can inform both educators and policymakers.

This methodological approach allows the article to offer a holistic understanding that is grounded in both theoretical insights and practical realities, thereby supporting the development of culturally and spiritually relevant EFL instruction in Islamic educational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overcoming Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Islamic Values in EFL Instruction

The integration of Islamic values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has emerged as a pressing issue in Muslim-majority countries, particularly in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasah, pesantren, and Islamic universities. While English is widely recognized as the global language of science, diplomacy, and international communication, its teaching often comes with pedagogical and cultural models rooted in Western secular paradigms. This presents both a necessity and a challenge for educators aiming to align language instruction with Islamic worldviews.

One of the major challenges is ideological tension between Islamic values and the Western ideologies that are often embedded within EFL content. Many English textbooks used in classrooms are developed in Western countries where secularism, individualism, and liberal values are dominant. These values, though not always explicitly stated, are often reflected in topics, narratives, and role models presented in teaching materials. For example, discussions on lifestyle, gender roles, and moral choices may contradict Islamic teachings. As Nizam (2024) and Khoiriyah et al. (2022) point out, values such as tawhid, adab, and akhlaq are rarely, if ever, represented in conventional EFL resources. This disconnection risks alienating Muslim learners and potentially diminishing the spiritual essence of their education.

In addition, there is a lack of culturally and religiously relevant materials that support Islamic moral development through language learning. According to Maesaroh et al. (2022), most available EFL resources are either imported or loosely translated from Western sources. These materials often fail to reflect the lived realities, religious norms, and cultural expressions of Muslim learners. As a result, students may struggle to find meaning and identity in their language learning experience. Without

localized and faith-sensitive content, EFL classes risk becoming purely mechanical exercises, disconnected from the learners' spiritual and moral development (Maesaroh et al., 2022).

Teacher preparedness is another pressing concern. Many EFL teachers, even those working in Islamic institutions, lack formal training on how to integrate Islamic perspectives into their language teaching (Hasibuan, et.al 2024). This issue is not merely about content knowledge but also pedagogical skills. Teachers need to be equipped with approaches that blend communicative language teaching with character education rooted in Islamic principles. Without this competence, even the most well-intentioned efforts may fall short or lead to superficial integration. It is crucial that teacher education programs incorporate modules on Islamic pedagogy and language teaching that are contextually grounded.

A more subtle but equally important challenge lies in the perception of English itself. In some conservative educational environments, English is seen as a symbol of Westernization or even a threat to local religious values (Muhsinin, N., & Assapari, 2023). This creates resistance, both among educators and parents, who may fear that learning English equates to adopting foreign values and lifestyles. This misconception needs to be addressed through public awareness and curriculum design that present English not as a cultural invader, but as a linguistic tool that can serve the Islamic mission *dakwah*, intellectual advancement, and global engagement.

Despite these challenges, numerous opportunities exist to enrich EFL instruction through the integration of Islamic values. One of the most significant is its alignment with the vision of holistic Islamic education, which emphasizes the formation of *Insan Kamil* a complete human being who embodies spiritual, moral, and intellectual excellence (Rohmah, 2012). When language learning is situated within this framework, it becomes more than just acquiring grammar and vocabulary; it becomes a means to develop identity, character, and purpose.

In the digital era, technology presents promising avenues for integration. Islamic-themed digital resources—such as animated Qur'anic stories, Islamic podcasts, or virtual reality experiences of Muslim cultures—can be incorporated into EFL classrooms to make learning both engaging and value-laden (Djamdjuri et al., 2021). These multimodal resources support various learning styles and provide authentic contexts where language and values intersect. For instance, learners can practice listening skills through Islamic lectures in English or improve writing skills by composing reflective essays on *hadith* or moral stories.

Several Islamic schools have also demonstrated innovative practices in contextualizing EFL within their curriculum. Programs such as vocabulary memorization (*mufrodat*), Islamic public speaking in English, or daily conversation drills using religious expressions are gaining popularity in *pesantren* and *madrasah* (Fitria, 2023). These practices help learners become confident English users without detaching from their religious identity.

Moreover, the use of EFL to build character is an opportunity that remains underexplored. By integrating moral dilemmas, role-plays based on Islamic values, or stories of the Prophets, teachers can design lessons that not only teach language but also cultivate virtues such as honesty, humility, and patience (Hasibuan, et.al 2024). For instance, a speaking task can involve discussing the value of sabar (patience) in dealing with daily problems, or a reading comprehension text could narrate the story of Prophet Yusuf and highlight lessons on integrity and faith.

To address these issues and maximize the integration of Islamic values, several strategies can be adopted. First, there is a need to develop Islamic-based EFL materials that are contextually relevant and linguistically appropriate. This can involve collaboration between Islamic scholars, language teachers, and curriculum developers. Second, teacher training programs must include specific modules on value-based language teaching, supported by continuous professional development. Third, collaborative curriculum design should be encouraged, allowing EFL and Islamic studies teachers to co-create learning experiences. Fourth, multimodal tools—from printed media to digital platforms—should be leveraged to enhance engagement and contextualization. Lastly, reflective practices, such as student journals, peer discussions, and spiritual reflections in English, can help internalize both the language and the values taught.

Developing Opportunities to Improve the Quality of EFL Instruction with an Islamic Perspective

Language is inherently tied to culture, identity, and worldview. For Muslim learners, engaging with English learning materials that are devoid of their cultural and religious context can lead to disconnection, reduced motivation, and limited engagement. As Rassool (2010) argues, culturally responsive pedagogy plays a key role in strengthening learner identity and enhancing educational outcomes. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), integrating Islamic values and perspectives is not only a means to improve language acquisition, but also to make learning more meaningful, holistic, and transformative.

One significant opportunity lies in curriculum development. Designing EFL curricula that incorporate Islamic narratives such as stories from the Qur'an, hadith (Prophetic traditions), and moral teaching can foster critical thinking while simultaneously nurturing the soul. Al Zeera (2001) supports the idea of a spiritually holistic curriculum that balances cognitive development with spiritual growth. For example, learners can explore English vocabulary through Islamic holidays, write reflective essays on stories of the prophets, or engage in reading comprehension activities that include ethical dilemmas based on Islamic values. These methods not only teach language skills but also embed moral reasoning (Zeera, 2001).

Moreover, the EFL classroom serves as an ideal space for character education. Islamic virtues like *sidq* (honesty), *sabr* (patience), and *ihtiram* (respect) can be naturally incorporated into language learning activities. Role plays, storytelling, and vocabulary tasks rooted in these values allow learners to connect linguistic knowledge with moral lessons. As Sahin (2013) explains, character formation is a foundational goal of Islamic education, and English instruction can serve as a conduit for this formation when guided intentionally (Sahin, 2013).

Another essential component is teacher training. Many EFL educators may not be familiar with how to integrate Islamic perspectives into language teaching or may lack pedagogical tools that align with Islamic educational philosophy. Rahman (1982) emphasizes the need for intellectual reform that harmonizes Islamic thought with contemporary disciplines. Therefore, teacher education programs should provide professional development that equips teachers with strategies to design value-based lessons, select culturally appropriate materials, and manage classrooms in ways that uphold Islamic ethics and foster spiritual development (Rahman, 1982).

Technology and media also offer vast potential for value-based language learning. Islamic-themed videos, podcasts, mobile apps, and digital books allow learners to access authentic language materials within familiar cultural and spiritual contexts. Mahboob (2010) notes that digital Islamic resources enhance learner engagement while supporting the acquisition of 21st-century skills. For instance, learners can create English-language podcasts about Islamic teachings, or practice vocabulary through Islamic storytelling apps, allowing them to use the target language in meaningful ways while reinforcing their religious identity (Mahboob, 2010).

Community and parental involvement further enhances the integration process. According to Hashim (2005), education is most effective when formal schooling aligns with the values taught at home and in the community. Schools can invite parents and community leaders to participate in EFL projects, such as collaborative storytelling sessions, English Islamic speech contests, or service-learning activities. These initiatives reinforce classroom values and create continuity between formal and informal learning environments (Hashim, 2005).

Nevertheless, several challenges must be considered. Teachers must ensure that the integration of Islamic content does not result in dogmatism or exclusion of diverse perspectives. Instruction must remain academically rigorous, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate. Moreover, without adequate training or collaboration, there is a risk of tokenism where Islamic elements are inserted superficially without meaningful contextualization. To prevent this, curriculum design should involve interdisciplinary collaboration between language experts, Islamic scholars, and instructional designers.

Using Technology and Media to Support EFL Instruction with an Islamic Perspective

The advancement of technology has significantly reshaped English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, providing educators with powerful tools to enhance language learning experiences. Multimodal learning—utilizing audio, visual, textual, and interactive components—caters to diverse learning preferences and increases student motivation and engagement (Djamdjuri et al., 2021). Online platforms such as Google Classroom and Edmodo facilitate flexible, asynchronous learning, while interactive applications like Kahoot, Padlet, and Canva allow students to collaboratively engage with English language content in creative and meaningful ways (Babaii, 2021). These tools not only support the acquisition of linguistic skills but also foster the development of 21st-century competencies, including communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking—skills that are aligned with the *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly in preserving intellect (*‘aql*) and lineage (*nasl*).

One particularly promising innovation in EFL is the incorporation of Islamic-themed digital content through media formats such as storytelling videos, podcasts, and video-based assignments. These formats encourage students to actively engage with language, especially in the domains of speaking and writing. As noted by Djamdjuri et al. (2021), Islamic-themed English materials presented through multimedia formats not only enhance comprehension but also increase students' emotional and spiritual connection with the subject matter. Moreover, by grounding language practice in familiar religious contexts, learners are more likely to see the relevance of English to their identity and values (Djamdjuri et al., 2021).

Integrating Islamic perspectives into EFL instruction addresses the broader goals of Islamic education, which prioritize the acquisition of beneficial knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-nafi’*) and the cultivation of ethical behavior. Instructional content that includes Qur’anic verses, hadith, and historical narratives of Islamic figures can support moral development while enriching language skills (Halstead, 2004). For instance, vocabulary lessons can be designed around Islamic celebrations, while listening comprehension activities can use *nasheed* or *khutbah* clips with English subtitles. This not only diversifies materials but also promotes dual literacy—students become proficient in English while deepening their understanding of religious teachings (Sidqurrahman, 2024). Such integration also aligns with traditional Islamic pedagogy, which balances *tarbiyah* (education as nurturing) and *ta’dib* (disciplining the self) to ensure learners grow intellectually and ethically.

In practice, several multimodal and media-based strategies have been developed to achieve this integration. These include the use of card games with Islamic themes, educational comics, animations, and mobile learning applications that contain religious content. Research by Hasibuan et al. (2024) indicates that Islamic-themed card games not only improve vocabulary retention but also boost student motivation. Similarly, Suraijiah et al. (2023) highlight how digital media in Islamic Religious Education fosters student-centered, interactive learning that can be adapted to various proficiency levels. Such

media-based approaches allow teachers to personalize instruction while maintaining a consistent Islamic framework, making it easier to harmonize modern educational practices with traditional values (Suraijiah et al., 2023) (Rassool, 2010).

Nevertheless, these innovations are not without challenges. One of the most significant barriers is the limited availability of EFL instructional materials that are rooted in Islamic values. Existing resources often lack contextual sensitivity or fail to reflect learners' religious and cultural identities. In addition, many teachers are not adequately trained to integrate Islamic content into language instruction or to utilize educational technology effectively (Sidqurrahman, 2024). This skills gap can lead to superficial integration or even resistance from educators who fear indoctrination or the dilution of language learning objectives.

A further challenge is the risk of tokenism, where Islamic elements are merely added as decoration without being meaningfully embedded into the learning process. To ensure genuine integration, curriculum development must be collaborative and interdisciplinary, involving not only EFL educators but also Islamic scholars and instructional designers. By doing so, the materials produced will be pedagogically sound and theologically appropriate.

To address these challenges and maximize the potential of technology in Islamic-based EFL instruction, several key recommendations can be proposed (Rohmana, 2020). First, it is vital to develop open-access digital resources that incorporate Islamic perspectives into language learning. These resources should be culturally and linguistically appropriate for diverse Muslim learners. Second, interdisciplinary teams comprising experts in Islamic studies, pedagogy, and educational technology should be formed to design, test, and refine integrated instructional materials (Putra et al., 2024). Third, teacher training programs should include modules on values-based digital pedagogy, equipping educators with both technological skills and an understanding of how to embed Islamic ethics into their teaching practices. Finally, classroom-based action research should be encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of integrated approaches, ensuring continuous improvement based on empirical evidence.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of Islamic values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction presents both challenges and transformative opportunities. While issues such as the dominance of Western ideologies, lack of culturally relevant materials, and limited teacher preparedness persist, these challenges can be effectively addressed through thoughtful curriculum planning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and continuous professional development. When implemented intentionally, EFL instruction in Islamic contexts serves not only as a means of linguistic competence but also as a platform for character building and moral development.

Incorporating Islamic perspectives into EFL pedagogy aligns with the broader goals of holistic Islamic education, which seeks to produce *insan kamil*—individuals who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded, and ethically guided. Embedding faith-based values into language learning enhances learners' identity, fosters a sense of purpose, and contextualizes language in meaningful moral frameworks. The strategic use of technology and media further enriches this approach by offering multimodal resources and engaging platforms that support active learning, critical thinking, and spiritual reflection.

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of this integrative model, future initiatives should prioritize the following: (1) the development of open-access, Islamic-oriented EFL digital resources; (2) the formation of interdisciplinary teams involving experts in Islamic studies, language pedagogy, and instructional design; (3) the provision of teacher training in values-based and digitally supported instruction; and (4) the implementation of classroom-based action research to evaluate the impact of integrated materials on students' linguistic and moral outcomes.

Ultimately, the integration of Islamic values into EFL instruction, especially when supported by technology and innovative media, positions education not merely as a tool for functional communication, but as a transformative process that nurtures both worldly success and spiritual excellence. This dual purpose equips Muslim learners to engage confidently in a globalized world while remaining rooted in their ethical and religious identity.

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