

# Exploring the Islamic Culture in English for Islamic Studies (EIS) Classroom

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*Abstract. The aim of this study is to explore the Islamic culture in English for Islamic Studies (EIS) classroom. In the course of EIS, the priority should not only be given to increase international understanding by enabling the students to speak another language but also understanding the cultural values. The study conducted an exploratory approach in which data were collected through in-depth interviews with English lecturers, and a questionnaire was distributed to the Islamic education students. The findings identified Islamic education has included EIS as part of its curriculum in its current advancement. In this regards, the study showed that how EIS in Indonesia has developed, what challenges it experiences and what opportunities it possesses in the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. The implications of the study provide a number of valuable insights into the expectations of EIS classroom. It is expected that the Muslim students could both achieve the foreign language skills and, the same time, become more aware filtering the culture, which is irrelevant with theirs, contained in the foreign language they are learning. The results of this study also indicated that EIS in Indonesia needs to incorporate Islamic values and show that EIS learning put no threats and negative influences on Indonesian culture in general and Islamic religious values in particular*

*Keywords: Islamic Culture, EIS, Islamic Education.*

## Introduction

Understanding the essential pretended by English in different divisions of life, the Indonesian government makes it as the most prior foreign language to learn at schools. English establishes one of the mandatory subjects offered, not just at both junior and senior secondary schools yet in addition at the higher education, i.e. at the college level in Indonesia. In the higher education curriculum, it falls under the subject gathering of what for the most part named *Mata Kuliah Dasar Umum* (General Stipulated Basic Courses). Islamic higher education as a major aspect of the Indonesian higher education system, along these lines, offers the English subject to be taken by the majority of the students from various department and faculties.

One of the main objectives in teaching English at the Islamic higher educations, especially at the undergraduate programs primarily in order their students, mostly with multicultural background, are able to read the textbooks and articles on Islam written in English by both Muslims and non-Muslims. In general, all schools are able to realize a good English program that fulfilled some aspects in teaching learning, such as curriculum and teaching material (Makmur, 2011).

In practice, a lecturer can, for instance, assign students with meaningful tasks, for example, a case study, critical thinking approach and discovery learning, which will enable students to exhibit widespread qualities shared by different religious and ethnic groups. Likewise, the students who come from various ethnic and social backgrounds are unavoidable to bring them, as well. The different diverse cultural systems meet in school and classroom and can cause a social clash, which can only be intervened and accommodated by the

effectiveness of the instructional process that illuminates and opens the clumsy, weakness cultural boundaries.

Based on the fact above, it is assumed that Islamic higher institutions need to integrate Islamic culture in language teaching in developing students' proficiency supported by syllabus and teaching material. One of the institutions is State Islamic University-UIN SMH Banten, West Java. The crucial problem to discuss deals with the English curriculum and teaching material. It is very necessary to know previously designing curriculum and teaching material. Those two interrelated aspects function and play each role to form English language teaching.

Therefore, the main problem of this article can be formulated as follows: Exploring how to integrate Islamic culture as well as the Islamic values in English language teaching. In connection to the main problem, and more questions are: 1) how do the lecturers define the objective of English teaching that enables the students to use English as communication? 2) How do lecturers design learning activities? 3) How do the students and lecturers play their roles in English teaching that is oriented towards the development students' communicative competence? 4) How does teacher develop teaching procedures and teaching materials that are oriented towards the development of the students' communicative competence and appreciate the various different cultures?

## Review Literature

Most of Islamic higher education in Indonesia supports the idea of integrating the Islamic culture in the university curriculum not to mention the English Language curriculum. The practice of this curriculum gives more opportunities of inserting the Islamic culture

in the practice of English language teaching. This insertion of Islamic culture in the practice of English language teaching may be considered essential due to the fact that this subject is commonly believed to provide the learners having a direct contact with the foreign culture.

Language can be viewed as an inseparable component of culture. Foley (2001) as quoted by Sudartini makes reference to that: "Language is often treated theoretically as a subsystem of culture within cognitive anthropology but in practice and structure of language as revealed by modern linguistics has generally served as the paradigm for analysing other aspects of culture" (Sudartini, 2012). More detail, Sharifian and Palmer (2007:1) expressed that culture can be seen as a 'design for living', that gives meanings to ways and types of commonly accepted behaviours of a specific culture, while language can be viewed as, "a cultural activity and, at the same time, an instrument for organizing other cultural domains".

However, it is regularly concurred that the practice of a foreign language teaching, especially English will not be viably done without explaining its culture. English educators are essentially required not only to teach the language but also at the same time are required to display the cultural context in which this specific language is utilized. Then again, the students also need to learn not only the language but also learn the culture of the society utilizing it. This marvel is especially common in the practice of a foreign language teaching owing to the fact that to be able to actively communicate using a foreign language, one needs to have not only a good proficiency of the language learning but also an exhaustive understanding of its culture.

The idea of language teaching now is that of concentration in what the students learn or need to learn instead of what is to be taught. As the classrooms get more students focused, it tends to be accepted that the attitude and the initiatives from the students' side will be more prominent. Since a person is shaped by one's culture, it can be assumed that the importance of cultural context in language teaching will grow, as learning becomes more learner-centred. It is related to this move of accentuation from teaching and towards learning, that there has appeared a growing awareness of the role played by culture in the classroom (Sowden C, 2007, p. 304). It is not only the learners, that come with their own culture in the classroom, but the teachers also bring their own culture. This is especially true if the language teacher is not from there. Sowden cautions the teacher "to be aware not only of the cultures of their students and their environment but also of the cultures that they themselves bring to the classroom" (p.305).

Subsequently, it tends to be seen, however inconclusive, that culture of both the teacher and students plays an essential role in the language learning environment and they must be tend to be for effective learning to take place. This multifaceted shared connection among language and culture might be the key to unlock the language teaching methodologies of the future. Whenever discuss about language and its use, it is

important to figure out the relation between language and Islamic culture.

Islamic Values can be divided into three gathering. These basic Values and requirement which characterize the establishment for good individual and social life, are classified into three levels, or hierarchy, namely (1) necessities (*dharuriyyat*); (2) convenience (*hajiyyat*); and (3) refinements (*kamaliyyat*). In the legal theory (*usul al fiqh*) of Islam, there is a maxim "the general aim of legislation" in Islam is to realize values through protecting and guaranteeing their necessities (*al dharuriyyat*) as well as fulfilling their importance (*al hajiyyat*) and their embellishments (*tahsiniyyat*). The human basic values consist of life (*al nafs*), reason (*al 'aql*), descent (*nasab*), property (*al mal*) and religion (*al din*). Islam ensure these essential human values, and prohibits any infringement of them (Akgunduz, 2010).

Values in one of the subjects instructed at all levels of education in Indonesia, i.e. the English language. As it is a language created by the western world, incorporating Islamic values in the teaching of English to students is not a norm even when the language is taught in the notion of values in general and then, compare them with the notion of Islamic values. Islam distinguishes itself from other religions, ideologies and worldviews by an extraordinary consciousness of norms it holds to have revealed. These norms are considered to be absolute and of universal validity, providing human thought and action an unconditional regulator. Ulema and *fuqaha* have implied certain rules of behaviour, norms, towards the followers of religion. These are universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances. These norms give lawful shields, as well as a very effective moral system (Pakeeza, S., & Chishti, A. A. (2012).

The issue of integrating Islamic values into ELT for Moslems learners has become a challenge for ELT educators in some Moslem countries since the First World Conference of Moslem Education in Mecca in 1977 which emphasized the Islamization of Knowledge (Shah, Muhamad & Ismail, 2012). Barfield and Uzarski have an exceptionally fascinating idea in regards to language integration when they opine, that regardless of whether an indigenous language is lost, which is happening at an alarming rate all over the world, through integration, it can be preserved within another language such as English. Curiously, despite the loss or future loss of an indigenous language, the "roots" of that indigenous culture can be safeguarded through the learning of another language, such as English (Barfield and Uzarski, 2009).

Some research has been conducted on this area, in 2009, one of which is the one carried out by Al-Haq & Al-Masaeid in Yarmuk University Jordan about Islam and language planning in the Arab World. The objective of the research was identifying the status and the use of Arabic and English in Jordan reveals some facts that some participants believe that the use of English in some life affairs may threaten Jordanian culture. However,

they also admit that English is needed to preach Islam through carefully prepared materials since English is no longer the language of non-Muslims, but is necessary for the development of individuals, religion, and nation (Al-Abed Al-Haq, F., & Lahad Al-Masaeid, A. 2009).

Ahmad Shah, Muhamad, and Ismail conducted a research in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 2012 about design, formulation, and Implementation of an English language curriculum from the Islamic perspective. This research shows that the design, implementation, and execution of an English language curriculum from an Islamic perspective is highly probable and viable. The adaptation of an appropriate Western curriculum development model such as Kerr's points to the fact that secular models can be Islamized and contribute to the development of an Islamic English language curriculum.

Muhsinin conducted the research at IAIN Mataram in 2013. The result of his research concludes that 1) Islamic higher education can provide English for specific purposes (ESP) for the students and the suitable ESP is English for Islamic Studies (EIS) which enable the students to study English and at the same time build up their Islamic knowledge. 2) The content of the teaching materials should be taken from authentic Islamic teaching materials to make the lesson more challenging to the students.

### Method

The subjects were undergraduate students in Islamic education class in the second semester of the 2017 academic year at the State Islamic University *Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin* Banten, Indonesia. The purpose of using Islamic culture material in English subject are; the students is easier in recall their background knowledge about the topic and it relates to core subject of Islamic education. The study conducted an exploratory approach in which data collected through in-depth interviews with English lecturers, and a questionnaire was distributed to the Islamic education students. This research conducted with the main purpose of exploring what the learners and lecturers do of the EIS components embedded in the course, and to what extent EIS has motivated the min their learning process.

This article analysed the curriculum and the teaching material especially in inserting Islamic culture as well as short comings of the approach. Their views were also sought on whether they found the EIS task challenging, enjoyable, and that the EIS tasks could be adapted or improved on for use with future groups of learners.

### Results

The State Islamic University (UIN) is one of the many public higher learning institutions in Indonesia that provides various degrees from different disciplines including Islamic teacher education. The Faculty of Education of UIN offers teaching degree programs including the Bachelor of Islamic Education with the emphasis on Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

(TEFL) and Teaching of Arabic Foreign Language (TOAFL). Most students who graduated from UIN with a B.A (Ed.) will eventually be Islamic education teachers. The following programs have been initiated and established by the Islamic Education (PAI) management:

**Table 1.** Course Programs

No	Course	Level
1	English for Islamic Studies 1	Basic Level
2	English for Islamic Studies 2	Intermediate Level
3	English for Islamic Studies 3	Advanced Level

Based on an interview with lecturers and documentation analysis, the researcher found that it has been developing a syllabus and teaching for characterized by learner's need to use English for Islamic Studies. In this university, the learners have more change to use English in everyday communication activities. More details, it will be elaborated as follows:

The first thing to do before lecturers designing the materials for EIS is assessing students' needs to make sure that the students learn what they need to learn. This is a pre requisite in any ESP course because the key feature of an ESP course is, that the contents and aims of the course are oriented to the specific needs of the learners to know the students' needs, a need analysis has to be conducted by making an observation, interview, document analysis and distributing questionnaire (Paltridge and Starfield, 2013).

Based on the result of needs analysis, a syllabus has designed to portray the contents of the learning activities. The type of syllabus used is a content syllabus focusing on reading skill, which will use Islamic materials as the content of the text. The reading text are taken from authentic Islamic teaching materials containing some areas of Islamic teaching such as Islamic belief (*aqidah*), Islamic law (*syari'ah*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic history, Islamic education, etc.

The syllabus was developed based on the results of need analysis. Compared to the general type of syllabus, this ESP syllabus is also beneficial for the students where they learn the specific content of language related to their own field of study. In this context, students of Islamic education department can learn English related to Islamic education. They do not need to learn general topics that they might not need or be interested in. Thus, this enables them to develop their English and at the same time enrich their knowledge about Islamic education.

Course Profile. The format of the syllabus follows the characteristics of syllabus proposed by Penny Ur (1996) which cover: Consists of a comprehensive list of Content items (words, structure, and topics), Process items (tasks, method). 2) Ordered (easier, more essential first). 3) Has explicit objectives (usually expressed in the introduction). More detail about the course profile and curriculum will explain in Table 1, as follows:

**Table 2.** Course Profile

No	Course Profile	
1	Program	Undergraduate (Strata 1)
2	Subject	English for Islamic Studies (EIS)
3	Department	Islamic Education
4	Faculty	Education and Teacher Training
5	Credit	2 Credit Units
6	Curriculum Element Code	General Stipulated Basic Courses

Subject description: English for Islamic Studies is designed in such a simple way so as to provide the students important tools for communication, especially in English as Foreign Language Teaching and Learning.

Competency standard: Students are able to use English in different situations for different communicative purposes, and to read the textbooks and articles on Islam written in English.

Basic competencies: Basic competencies demanded by respective course contents will be provided in detail in what so called separated Lesson Plan.

Indicators: Indicators of mastering every aspect, cognitive, affective as well as psycho motoric domains, of the course content are also will be explained in detail in the separated relevant lesson plan.

Course Contents. Being Muslim educators, lecturers feel that it is important to make an effort to inculcate Islamic cultures in all subjects taught at every educational level. They believe that instilling Islamic culture and values could help students (both Muslims and non-Muslims) to better conduct themselves in this world.

Culture in one of the subjects taught at all levels of education in Indonesia, i.e. the English language. As it is a language developed by the western world, incorporating Islamic culture in the teaching of English to students is not a norm even when the language is taught in the notion of values in general and then, compare them with the notion of Islamic values. Later, it will highlight some techniques in adapting teaching approaches and learning materials used in the classroom.

Cultures are those concepts and ideas, which move individual and collective behaviour of man in the transactions of life. Islamic culture is next to the nature of man and is complementary to his moral and spiritual evolution.

More detail about the course contents will explain as follows:

**Table 3.** Course Contents

No	Topics	Notes
1	The Qur'an and the Prophet	
2	The Muslim World Today	
3	Religion and Culture	culture
4	The Responsibility of <i>Ummah</i>	
5	The Five Pillars of Islam	
6	Islam culture and Society	culture
7	The Religious Stimulus to Learning	
8	Education in Medieval Islam	
9	Education and Leadership	
10	Islam and Education Reforms	
11	Islam and Multicultural	culture
12	The Groundwork of Islamic Civilization	culture
13	Islamic Civilization	culture
14	Some Remarks on Indonesia	

Course Evaluation. The current practice of English language teaching has been focused on preparing the students to be able to communicate effectively by using the language and understand the culture. English lecturers have done their exceptionally well in propelling their students to learn and use the English language. They generally attempt to use various interesting activities to present the context of the given language items being discussed. Some of them even give the explanation on certain language items accompanied by the context of the culture in which those items used. According to the regulation at the university, the students will have assessment during proses of learning, midterm test and final test. This reality is extremely basic in the practice of foreign language classrooms. What might turn into the main concern is on whether the presence of this foreign culture is accompanied by the explanation of our own culture.

What the lecturers usually do in their teaching is merely attempts to fulfil the target of the teaching and learning objectives as expressed in the current curriculum. Most lecturers are busy with finding suitable and relevant materials without having the critical analysis of the cultural biases that may be covered within the source materials. What usually come in their minds is finding the materials, which are best, fitted the goals of the teaching and learning activities as mentioned in the curriculum, including the assessment.

It is for the most part concurred so far that the practice of English language teaching will not be viable without discussing its culture. Most lecturers will agree that teaching the English language will be impossible without teaching the culture. Each sentence, word, expression needs to be put in the context of a culture of the language.

### Conclusion

The success or the failure of any teaching English as a foreign language in the context of integrating Islamic culture, specifically English for Islamic Studies is influenced by many factors. One of the important factors is the availability of the appropriate syllabus and material designs. Lecturers must modify their method of instruction by inserting culture in conjunction with language learning, and not as an adjunct. Teaching materials which are produced must enable the students to gain exposure to selected reading in English and authentic data from the real time interaction.

This article has assumed certain improvement in the English language based on current global trends. It has expected that English is quick turning into a global language and it will become more in the future. Considering these base assumptions, the article has provided insight into understanding the importance of English language and equal importance of using Islamic culture while teaching English.

In conclusion, we can reaffirm the essence of the whole discussion in the following manner: first, we need to understand that we use English as a method of communication and this language is fast becoming a global language. Because we use it in our communication, the language cannot be excluded from Islamic culture because they are what we are likely to be communicating about. There may be differences in opinions regarding how or if Islamic cultures should be used in teaching English, but it is essential that we integrate Islamic cultural aspects. Second, the use of Islamic culture in teaching English will depend on the nature of the teaching and learning setting. Some system may not be applicable in all communities. Therefore, how the integration is to be done should be tailored to suit the needs of a particular community or a university.

Third, the use of Islamic culture can be done following a procedural format where culture can be given more priority in the earlier stages of learning the English language. Islamic culture has the potential to equip students with the skills needed to interact with others from different faiths, ethnicities, races, cultures. However, without a deeper and sound understanding of it and political commitment to support its implementation, we are just trivializing its goal -- the transformation of society via education. Final remarks, learning of the Islamic culture and context of the target language is to be achieved for more comprehensive understanding.

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