




TEACHING ENGLISH WHILE PRESERVING ISLAMIC TRADITION: A BALANCED EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study explores a balanced educational model that integrates English language instruction with Islamic values, addressing the increasing necessity of English proficiency in Muslim societies while preserving cultural and religious identity. Drawing from a qualitative case study of an Islamic nursery, the research examines how faith-based media, bilingual storytelling, and culturally sensitive pedagogy can foster both linguistic development and moral education. Findings reveal that incorporating Islamic symbols, narratives, and ethical communication into English lessons significantly enhances student engagement, vocabulary retention, and behavioral growth, while also reinforcing spiritual identity. The research highlights that English, when framed as a tool rather than an ideology, can serve as a bridge for intellectual empowerment, global communication, and da'wah without compromising Islamic ethics. Thematic content analysis of classroom observations and teacher interviews underscores the role of culturally relevant content in reducing cultural dissonance and promoting a safe learning environment. The study also emphasizes the empowerment of teachers when instructional practices align with personal values, fostering creativity and job satisfaction. Implications suggest that Muslim educators and policymakers should invest in teacher training, bilingual curricula, and Islamic-aligned English materials to develop spiritually grounded, globally competent learners. By harmonizing English education with Tawhidi philosophy, this integrated model demonstrates that linguistic skills and religious

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identity are not mutually exclusive but can coexist to nurture well-rounded, faith-conscious individuals prepared for modern challenges.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of global interdependence, English now acts as a tool used for more than communication. It is actively transforming into a global language that promotes the accessibility of education, technology, scientific knowledge and international dialogue. English proficiency is considered highly necessary for progress for Muslim-majority countries and Islamic educational institutions. Nevertheless, the cultural implications of English language instruction create concern and the risk of potential erosion of Islamic identity exists (Al Zeera, 2001). English education and Islamic tradition should not be considered as opposing forces at all. Given that a balanced educational approach is adopted, both contexts can be harmonized effectively. It would ultimately promote global competence while religious values will be upheld accordingly.

The Importance of English in a Globalized World

English fulfills the purpose of a lingua franca in sectors as global education, business, media and diplomacy. Over 80% of academic journals have determined it as their primary language and it is used as the medium of instruction in several international universities (Crystal, 2003). As a result, someone proficient in English will find potential educational and economic opportunities available which makes Muslim students competent in a globalized economy (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Besides, English has been incorporated into the national curricula by a number of Islamic countries to make students capable of international engagement (Farah & Sumarsono, 2025). For instance, bilingual education models have been introduced by countries like Malaysia and the UAE to create an equilibrium of national identity and global competitiveness.

Challenges: Perceived Conflict Between English and Islamic Values

Conservative communities tend to feel concerned about English education in spite of its usefulness. Some people are afraid about English having a linkage with Western secularism and liberal ideologies which are likely to present cultural elements incompatible with Islamic teachings (Bin Jamil et al., 2024). Language is supposed to contain cultural values and worldviews, lifestyle and morality of the learners may be delicately affected if unchecked exposure is allowed (Phillipson, 1992). Western textbooks representing themes that are opposed to Islamic ethics greatly concern Islamic educators. They may apparently contain open-minded attitudes toward sexuality, alcohol or materialism. Therefore, English-medium education is often rejected in some madrasa systems or rural regions.

A Balanced Educational Philosophy: Tawhid and Modernity

A Tawhidi (monotheistic) framework can strongly support the philosophical foundation for combining English learning with Islamic tradition. emphasizes The

oneness of God and unity of knowledge is pointed out by the idea of *Tawhid*. According to this perspective, secular and religious knowledge are not contrasting at all. They are in fact contributing to an all-inclusive understanding of life (Nasr, 1984). Hence, English should not be introduced as an ideology. It is in fact supposed to be utilized as a tool (*wasilah*). The necessity of *Islamization of knowledge* has been pointed out by educators such as Muzaffar (1986) & Wain (2021). It supports the involvement of teaching modern sciences and languages besides confirming their consistency with Islamic ethical and spiritual principles. We should aim at avoiding complete dismissal of global knowledge. Refining and contextualizing it through an Islamic worldview should be the main objective.

Practical Strategies for Harmonizing English and Islamic Education

Islamic-Integrated English Curriculum

English language materials can be customized in a way so that they are consistent with Islamic values. Textbooks can actively contain biographical passages about Muslim scientists, historical Islamic civilizations or moral stories from Hadith and the Qur'an instead of having Western stories as reference (Farah & Sumarsono, 2025). Familiarity is established as a result and identity is also promoted. The life of Ibn Sina could be the central topic of an English reading comprehension passage. Both scientific achievement and moral character can be pointed out at the same time. Vocabulary can be effectively improved through this method besides supporting pride in Islamic heritage.

Culturally-Sensitive Pedagogy

Culturally competent people must be chosen as English teachers in Islamic contexts. Awareness of modesty norms, avoiding controversial cultural topics, and promoting values such as respect, honesty, and responsibility which are virtues shared by both Islam and global education contexts are all part of the quality (Halstead, 2004). Besides, gender-sensitive classroom arrangements or female instructors appear to be more compatible with the needs of female students in conservative communities. Improvement in learning outcomes and community trust can be achieved through maintaining sensitivity to such preferences.

Bilingualism as a Bridge, Not a Barrier

English should act complementary to Arabic or local languages instead of being responsible for their replacement. A strong connection to the religious texts, which are mostly in Arabic, can be achieved by the learners through bilingual education besides ensuring their access to modern resources in English (Suleiman, 2003).

This strategy teaches students to appreciate their linguistic and cultural identity. At the same time, they are provided with the tools to engage with the wider world. Both religious literacy and global literacy are benefitted from this dual expertise.

Teacher Training and Institutional Support

Both English pedagogy and Islamic values must be the focus of the training provided to the teachers. Instructors should be trained by specialized teacher education programs in such a way that they are able to deliver both linguistically effective and spiritually mindful English lessons (Sulayman, 2014). This balance can be also supported by school administrators. Organizing workshops, producing appropriate textbooks and encouraging interdepartmental cooperation between English and Islamic Studies departments are the common strategies to be utilized.

Benefits of an Integrated Model

Significant advantages are provided by an integrated English-Islamic educational model. Areas of preserving students' cultural and religious identity are especially benefited. It is easier for students to maintain connection to their faith besides learning an international language when English lessons combined with Islamic values are provided. Their self-awareness grows as a result of this strategy. The risk of cultural disorientation which is often linked with Western-centric curricula further declines. Besides, engagement and participation are improved due to the educational content consistent with students' spiritual and moral values. Academic achievement actively develops as a result. Students are more motivated to learn and contribute when they observe that the classroom materials and discussions support their beliefs.

This model functions beyond personal identity and allows global competence to be nurtured without compromising religious principles. The language skills necessary for higher education, international communication and future careers are achieved by the students. An Islamic worldview is actively maintained during the whole process. Moral development is promoted and character education is encouraged when Islamic ethics is incorporated into language instruction. Lessons on honesty, compassion and respect act as the pathway here. Gay (2010) states that student comprehension and long-term academic success are significantly influenced by culturally responsive education. Therefore, all-inclusive human development is attained by the combination of faith and language besides fulfilling educational goals.

Teaching English and preserving Islamic tradition at the same time is both possible and urgent. Muslim educators will be able to support a generation that is intellectually empowered and rooted in morality at the same time through building an educational model that respects both global realities and spiritual values. Fearing cultural loss should no longer be our concern. Building curricula and pedagogy that harmonize English language mastery with a strong Islamic identity should rather be emphasized. Through these actions, the prophetic tradition of seeking knowledge "even as far as China" is effectively pursued while following the path of faith with firmness.

English as a Tool for Empowerment

English is considered the most prominent language in areas such as science, technology, international commerce and diplomacy on an international level (Crystal, 2003). Students are actively enabled thorough expertise in English as it allows them to gain access to a broad archive of global knowledge which contains academic journals, educational resources and professional networks (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Career prospects in multinational sectors are thus developed besides promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Muslim youth are also well-equipped in the process to actively participate in global discourse as ambassadors of their faith and heritage.

Nevertheless, language is always prejudiced in some ways. It is supposed to contain cultural assumptions incorporated within its structure. Values contrary to Islamic ethics may be unknowingly brought in when teaching English through materials that clash with Islamic principles or through unrefined exposure to Western media is practiced (Phillipson, 1992). Lack of a critical structure may cause students to retain secular ideologies, consumerism or moral relativism. As a result, their knowledge of Islamic conduct could be skewed.

Hence, teaching English as a medium to express, defend and promote Islamic values besides its utility as a linguistic skill is highly necessary. English fulfills the purpose of a tool for *da'wah* (propagation of faith), intellectual exchange and cultural representation in international aspects when it is consistent with Islamic views (Al Zeera, 2001). Muslim learners are able to view English as a bridge rather than a threat to their religious identity because of this reconceptualization.

Why Combine English Learning with Islamic Education

Identity Formation

Language provides structure to thoughts and students' identities are thus gradually affected due to recurring contact with content rich in foreign ideologies. Research demonstrates that the hidden dynamics of a culture are actively grasped by children besides vocabulary and grammar of a language (Kramsch, 1998). Muslim communities are worried Islamic worldviews existing within secular or post-colonial educational systems may be underrepresented when facing lack of disciplined English instruction (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

Identity strengthening is promoted due to the collective approach of English instruction and Islamic content. Absorption of language occurs at the same time as a strong foundation in faith is maintained when students read stories about Muslim scientists, heroes, or moral lessons in English. Confident bicultural learners are nurtured through this educational model. They are equipped with fluency in English while having a strong base in Islamic identity.

Faith-Aware Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, debate and inquiry are commonly focused on by Western models of English education. These are in fact significant intellectual instruments. However, they may give rise to skepticism or moral ambiguity if used without proper balance. An Islamic view indeed provides tribute to '*aql*' (reason), but the context of *iman* (faith) and *akhlaq* (ethics) must be maintained while its functioning (Nasr, 1984).

Learners who can question constructively without compromising their beliefs are actively supported through the combination of Islamic ethics and English lessons. For instance, students can be taught to identify foundational worldviews and make comparisons with Islamic teachings during the analytical session of global literature or media. They should also learn to express rational responses in the process which have strong foundations in faith. Our multicultural world actually demands this sort of dual literacy which actively includes both linguistic and ethical skills.

Moral Framework for Language Use

Islam increasingly prioritizes the ethics of communication. Comprehensive guidance on truthful speech is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith. They actively include teachings on avoiding slander (*ghibah*), using kind words, and listening with respect (Qur'an 49:11–12; Sahih Bukhari, Book 78). Under these circumstances, teaching English must surpass lessons on grammar and fluency and focusing on moral communication should be the priority.

Students are motivated to express themselves with honesty, modesty, and compassion when they are provided with English lessons integrated with Islamic communication values. Role-plays, essay writing and public speaking tasks can be integrated into classroom activities which will support these ethical norms. Halstead (2004) claims that moral education is found to be more effective and sustained when it is incorporated within curriculum settings.

Practical Approaches to Teach English Alongside Islamic Tradition

Strategies that support both linguistic goals and religious values must be chosen by educators to accommodate the global requirements for expertise in English with the spiritual directive of Islamic education. Faith identity is actively defended besides making learning more resonant and meaningful for Muslim students when English instruction is combined with Islamic themes (Farah & Sumarsono, 2025; Halstead, 2004)

Choose Islamic-Friendly Content

The basic strategy is selection of appropriate content. English teaching materials actively includes stories, dialogues, and poems and all of them should maintain consistency with Islamic moral and ethical contexts.

Teachers can use:

Stories of Islamic heroes

Narratives about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Caliphs, and figures like Salahuddin Ayyubi in English can be used to promote admiration and engagement (Al Zeera, 2001).

Adapted Islamic texts

Classical Islamic wisdom literature, such as selections from *Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum al-Din*, can be simplified and translated to be used for practicing language.

Islamic parables

Using parables from Hadith or Qur'anic analogies presents moral reasoning besides vocabulary.

This approach allows meaningful learning to be pursued and at the same time students' religious values through familiar and deeply honoured examples are supported.

English Through Islamic Themes

Incorporating Islamic content into grammar and vocabulary teachings allows both language attainment and spiritual development to be supported. For example:

Past tense

Students can write biographies or narrate stories of Prophets and Companions (e.g., "Prophet Ibrahim built the Kaaba").

Comparatives and superlatives

These can be taught using moral polarities (e.g., "Helping others is better than ignoring them").

Vocabulary building

Provide English counterparts for Islamic rituals such as *wudu* (ablution), *sawm* (fasting), and *zakat* (charity), which ultimately develops both religious literacy and expertise in English (Bin Jamil et al., 2024).

This paired focus creates a linkage between abstract grammar and context grounded in faith which further makes learning more immersive.

Dual Language Approach

When students are motivated to express Islamic teachings in both English and their native language such as Arabic, Bengali or Malay, it creates ways to support more meaningful comprehension and strengthen bilingual skills. The significance of first-language preservation is focused upon by research in bilingual education to support cognitive development and identity formation (Cummins, 2000).

For instance, the Five Pillars of Islam may be described by the learners in both languages or Hadith concepts could be explained using bilingual flashcards. Linguistic heritage is respected by this practice and at the same time students' preparation for global communication is ensured.

Islamic Etiquette in Communication Skills

A thorough guidance on verbal and written conduct is provided by Islamic teachings. English lessons emphasizing on communication skills can integrate:

Respectful speech

Avoiding *ghibah* (backbiting), using polite tones, and speaking truthfully (Qur'an 49:11–12).

Islamic greetings

Teaching phrases like “Assalamu Alaikum” in English class establishes identity and etiquette at the same time.

Writing with humility

Students can be inspired to learn to express requests with courtesy and sincerity during producing emails, letters, or essays which are consistent with with *adab al-kalam* (manners of speech) (Halstead, 2004).

These lessons actively support ethical communication which is consistent with Islamic values. Students are effectively prepared for respectful global dialogue in the process.

Islamic Calendar in Classroom Activities

The Islamic (Hijri) calendar can be used by the teachers while presenting lessons on time-related vocabulary in English. This allows cultural relevance to be maintained for abstract concepts like dates and holidays:

- “Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.”
- “Eid al-Adha is celebrated with sacrifice and charity.”

Student participation is improved, the foundation of learning is planted in cultural reality and vocabulary is further enriched through thematic learning when Islamic occasions are effectively used in classroom discussions (Farah & Sumarsono, 2025)

Promote Islamic Role Models Who Mastered Languages

If Muslim scholars who were outstanding in multiple languages are pointed out, powerful motivation will be established. Figures like:

- Imam Al-Ghazali, who has an abundance of writings in both Arabic and Persian;
- Ibn Sina, whose works were later translated into Latin and had a great impact on Europe;
- Coexisting scholars, such as Hamza Yusuf and Tariq Ramadan, who provide Islamic teachings in English;

The harmony of linguistic proficiency and Islamic devotion is thus depicted by these role models. Muzaffar (1986) & Wain (2021) points out, both intellect and spirit are duly nurtured by authentic Islamic education. Language learning must function as a part of that legacy.

Role of Teachers: Moral and Linguistic Guides

Muslim educational context allows English teachers to serve a critical dual role. They are not merely language instructors but also ethical role models. Both professionalism in pedagogy as well as sensitivity to Islamic principles is actively claimed by this duality. Teachers are delegated with the responsibilities of forming both intellect (*'aql*) and character (*akhlaq*), while their impact is required to be rooted in the faith-language balance in classrooms (Halstead, 2004).

Only respectful and ethical communication should be represented by teachers and controversial or culturally insensitive topics should be avoided at all costs. They should also strive to promote an environment where students perceive safety while expressing both their linguistic abilities and religious identities. When greetings like “Assalamu Alaikum” are demonstrated, polite dialogues are motivated and Qur’anic verses or Hadith are integrated—such as the verse “*Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant*” (Qur’an 2:222) is used to teach present continuous tense, it enables learners to comprehend both grammar and values at the same time (Al Zeera, 2001).

This kind of integration actively promotes the more extensive concept of *tarbiyah*. It upholds the Islamic vision of all-inclusive education that supports spiritual, moral and intellectual progress.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Solution
Westernized textbooks with non-Islamic values	Use culturally customized or Islamic-themed English resources (Bin Jamil et al., 2024)
Students copying foreign lifestyles	Teach analytical cultural literacy with Islamic alternatives (Kramsch, 1998)
Lack of trained teachers with dual-specialization	Provide training to teachers on Islamic-oriented English teaching (Farah & Sumarsono, 2025)

The use of foreign-authored textbooks is a major issue as it includes themes that contradict with Islamic beliefs. Unintentional value disagreements can be prevented by schools if they take initiatives to replace or supplement these contents with Islamic-oriented resources. Besides, establishing cultural literacy can be a strategy used by educators to mediate when students tend to accept foreign customs without any critique. Students are thus enabled to decode, assess and respond to global media through an Islamic perspective.

Curriculum development can be used to handle the insufficiency of properly trained teachers who are both English-proficient and Islamically literate at the same time. Specialized teacher training programs can also be utilized to tackle the issue.

Combining Islamic pedagogy with English language methods should be the center of these programs which will prepare educators to fulfill the complex requirements of this balanced strategy (Sulayman, 2014)

METHODOLOGY

It is highly necessary to maintain religious values besides modern language instruction when education is provided in early childhood within Muslim communities. This report records the way English teaching is combined with Islamic cultural content by an English teacher at a local Islamic nursery using various interactive resources. YouTube Islamic cartoons, Nasheed channels, Qur'anic recitation, and religious symbols (e.g., hijab, mosque images, prayer mats) are actively involved in the process. The objective is to observe and record the teaching methods used to combine English language learning with Islamic values in the context of a nursery. Analysis of the positive effects of using digital Islamic media in classroom instruction is also to be accomplished.

Data Collection Methodology

- **Type of Study:** Qualitative case study
- **Participant:** One nursery English teacher in an Islamic school
- **Tools Used:**
 - Direct classroom observation
 - Informal teacher interview
 - Visual media collection (classroom posters, symbols, student activities)
 - Video content review (Islamic YouTube channels like *Omar & Hana, Zaky, IQRA Cartoon*)

Type of Data Collected

Visual Data

Photographs of Islamic symbols used in the classroom (e.g., Kaaba model, crescent moon and star, Arabic alphabet wall charts)

Digital Media Sources

Screenshots and content logs from Islamic YouTube channels utilized for storytelling, moral education and vocabulary building

Field Notes

Classroom behavior observations and instructional activities

Teacher Narratives

Responses on how and why certain methods or content are chosen

Type of Data Analysis

This type of analysis is called **Thematic Content Analysis**, a qualitative approach where collected data (visuals, observations, verbal inputs) are grouped into themes to identify patterns and educational outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Key themes Identified

Theme	Examples Observed
Islamic Visual Reinforcement	Posters of Hijab, Masjid, Bismillah, and animal names in English with Arabic script
Faith-Based Media Integration	YouTube videos like “ <i>Omar & Hana: Thank You Allah</i> ” for vocabulary and moral instruction
Dual Language Development	“Wudu means washing before prayer” — taught in both English and Arabic
Moral Storytelling	Stories from Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) life used to teach adjectives, verbs, and sentence structure
Prayer Routine English Practice	Students say “I pray five times a day” during daily routines
Ethical Communication Training	Children taught to say “please,” “thank you,” and “Assalamu Alaikum” with Islamic manners

FINDINGS**Positive Engagement**

Significantly higher levels of student enthusiasm and participation was observed when the combination of Islamic characters and narratives was introduced especially through animated YouTube content such as Omar & Hana and Zaky. Lessons including digital Islamic storytelling captured the attention of the children more effectively compared to traditional textbook activities. This indicates that cognitive engagement is improved as well as learning is coordinated with students' emotional and spiritual comfort zones through culturally relevant media. Fewer behavioral interruptions and greater willingness among students to respond in English was reported by teachers when the lesson reflected familiar Islamic contexts.

Improved Vocabulary Retention

Improved memory retention and application in following activities were observed among students when English vocabulary was directly connected to Islamic concepts (e.g., “Zakat = charity,” “Salah = prayer,” “Wudu = ablution”),. Observations demonstrate children’s tendency to integrate these terms in sentences, role-plays and songs. Long-term retention of English vocabulary is apparently supported by this cross-contextual approach which involves utilizing faith-based familiarity to teach language. Functional application of English vocabulary is also actively promoted by this strategy. This is consistent with dual-coding theory which proposes that meaningful connections help in the development of memory (Paivio, 1986).

Cultural Familiarity

A safe and culturally consistent learning environment was established when religious symbols such as the crescent moon, prayer mats, hijab illustrations, and Arabic alphabet charts were presented in the English classroom. Students were perceived as naturally relaxed and confident and significantly more trust in the school's curriculum was presented by the parents. Students' spiritual identity was actively supported by the learning environment as Islamic visual cues were incorporated into the physical and instructional platform. Cultural dissonance also demonstrated a decline which is actually a commonly neglected factor in early childhood language learning among minority or faith-based groups.

Behavioral Development

Recurring contact with Islamic values during English lessons such as kindness, honesty, gratitude and respectful speech enabled learners to demonstrate developed social behaviors. For instance, polite phrases such as "thank you," "sorry," and "please," as well as Islamic greetings like "Assalamu Alaikum" were regularly used by students. Peer interactions showed higher cooperation and Islamic *adab* (etiquette) was observed in classroom routines. Fewer incidents of conflict and improved peer empathy were reported by the teachers. It indicates that emotional and behavioral development at the preschool level are positively impacted by language lessons combined with moral guidance.

Teacher Empowerment

A greater impression of confidence and motivation was reported by the participating teacher when English was taught through an Islamic-oriented approach. Her personal values were perceived by her as consistent with her instructional practices. As a result, more creativity and authenticity in lesson planning was empowered. The capacity to use Islamic content actively supports students' learning, uplifting the teacher's own sense of purpose and job satisfaction at the same time. Besides, the digital Islamic resources were identified as effective tools by the teacher for scaffolding both moral and linguistic instruction. It is especially effective in a culturally sensitive context.

CONCLUSION

This case demonstrates the effectiveness of English teaching at the nursery level in supporting the development of both language acquisition and moral education when enriched with Islamic cultural values and digital Islamic resources. Young students become able to associate their identity with new language skills meaningfully through visuals, faith-based media and bilingual storytelling.

"Faith-Integrated Language Instruction"—a pedagogical approach gaining recognition in Islamic education research can effectively classify this strategy (Al Zeera, 2001; Halstead, 2004).

Moral compromise should never be done for the sake of modernization. Teaching English should be considered more than a technical subject in Muslim societies. It should be treated as a moral responsibility. English in fact functions as more than a communication tool through thoughtful application, creating a platform to express Islamic values in a global context (Muzaffar, 1986; Wain, 2021).

Students are able to maintain fluency in English as well as faith in their Islamic identity effectively through balanced curricula and morally grounded educators. The incorporation of Islamic content into language instruction is also an important prerequisite. Engagement with the modern world while maintaining the view of their spiritual compass is thus easily accessible to them.

The necessity of English as a medium for *dawah*, intellectual engagement and global citizenship is re-established by this model of education. Well-informed participation rather than imitation is supposed to promote the process.

Let English be the tool, and Islam be the light that guides how we use it.

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