ETERNAL Volume 10, Number 02 (2024)
P-ISSN 2477-4766; E-ISSN 2580-5347
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24252/Eternal.V102.2024.A6

A path to holistic Education: Integrating Islamic Principles into English Language Teaching for Indonesian University Students

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ARTICLE INFO

History:

Submitted: September 22, 2024

Revised: September 26, 2024

Accepted: November 15, 2024

Available online: December 6, 2024

How to Cite: Kaharuddin, K. (2024). A path to holistic Education: Integrating Islamic Principles into English Language Teaching for Indonesian University Students. *ETERNAL (English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal)*, *10*(02), 186=206. https://doi.org/10.24252/Eternal.V102.2024.A6

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Published by:

English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Alauddin Makassar

ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of Islamic principles into English Language Teaching (ELT) as a pathway to holistic education for Indonesian university students. In the context of Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious landscape, incorporating Islamic ethical and educational values into the ELT curriculum offers an opportunity to nurture not only linguistic competence but also moral and character development. The paper examines how Islamic teachings, derived from the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic educational philosophy, can be effectively integrated into modern ELT methodologies to promote both cognitive and ethical growth. Through a combination of literature review and qualitative research, including interviews and classroom observations, the study identifies key principles such as the pursuit of knowledge, ethical communication, mutual respect, and social responsibility. These principles are shown to enhance students' engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance. The findings suggest that an Islamic values-based approach to ELT fosters a more inclusive, compassionate, and well-rounded educational environment, preparing students for both professional success and responsible citizenship. This research highlights the potential for Islamic values to enrich English language learning and contribute to a more holistic approach to higher education in Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic principles, English Language Teaching, Holistic education, Moral and character development.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid globalization of education has prompted a rethinking of how language teaching can contribute to a more holistic, well-rounded development of students. English, as a global lingua franca, has become an essential tool for communication, especially in non-native contexts such as Indonesia (Kaharuddin et al., 2022). In the context of Indonesian higher education, English Language Teaching (ELT) is not merely a functional skill aimed at communication; it is increasingly recognized as a means to promote cultural understanding, intellectual growth, and ethical development (Arafah & Bahar, 2015). However, many traditional ELT methodologies focus predominantly on language proficiency, often overlooking the broader educational and moral

development of students (Kaharuddin & Nanning, 2014). This gap in the educational approach calls for a more comprehensive framework that combines linguistic learning with character development and ethical reasoning.

Islamic principles, rooted in the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic educational traditions, offer a holistic pedagogical framework that aligns with these broader educational goals. Islam places a strong emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, moral integrity, and the cultivation of character, all of which can contribute significantly to both personal and academic growth. In Islamic teachings, the acquisition of knowledge is not merely a means to intellectual advancement but a tool for personal and social transformation. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge as an obligation for every Muslim: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah). This principle emphasizes the need for students to engage with learning in a way that extends beyond acquiring technical skills, to include the development of moral, ethical, and social values.

In Indonesia, where Islam is the predominant religion, integrating Islamic principles into ELT can help foster an educational environment that not only improves linguistic competence but also nurtures students' moral and ethical development. While the primary aim of ELT is to teach students the skills needed to communicate in English, incorporating Islamic values can significantly enrich the learning experience by providing students with a more balanced and holistic education. Indonesia's diverse and rich cultural context requires educational approaches that address the intellectual, emotional, and ethical development of students. In higher education, particularly within English Language Teaching, there is a growing recognition that language learning should extend beyond linguistic competence (Kaharuddin, 2021). The traditional focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation fails to address the broader needs of students who must navigate a rapidly changing, globalized world (Kaharuddin, 2018). In this environment, education that encourages critical thinking, moral reflection, and social responsibility is increasingly valued. Moreover, the challenges posed by globalization and the spread of digital media require students to not only possess linguistic skills but also to understand and respect cultural diversity, engage ethically in global communication, and contribute positively to society.

Islamic principles provide a natural framework for such a holistic educational approach. Islamic educational philosophy emphasizes the development of both intellectual and moral capacities. As Al-Ghazali, one of Islam's most revered scholars, wrote, "Knowledge is not what is memorized, but what benefits." (Soleh et al., 2023). This perspective suggests that the purpose of education extends beyond the mere acquisition of facts and includes the cultivation of values that help students become responsible, ethical, and compassionate individuals. Therefore, integrating

Islamic teachings into ELT can promote a more balanced approach that nurtures students' intellectual and moral growth simultaneously.

In the Indonesian context, this approach is particularly relevant due to the country's strong Muslim majority and the growing interest in integrating religious values into the academic curriculum. Many universities in Indonesia have begun to recognize the importance of aligning academic learning with students' religious and ethical values. For example, the inclusion of Islamic character education in Indonesian schools has been encouraged as part of a broader effort to strengthen students' moral foundation (Subaidi, 2020). This push for character development in education aligns with Islamic teachings that view the nurturing of character as essential to personal and societal success.

The principles of Islamic education are deeply rooted in the belief that knowledge should not be pursued in isolation but as part of an integrated approach to life that balances intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. The Quran and Hadith provide comprehensive guidance for all aspects of life, including education. One of the core teachings in Islam is the concept of knowledge (ilm), which is viewed not just as an intellectual pursuit but as a means to achieve greater spiritual awareness and to serve the community. The Quran states, "And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'" (Quran Surah Thaha, 20:114). This prayer reflects the Islamic emphasis on the continuous, lifelong pursuit of knowledge, which is central to Islamic education.

Another key principle in Islamic education is the development of adab (moral conduct). In Islamic tradition, knowledge is not meant to be a tool for self-aggrandizement or personal benefit but is intended to be used for the greater good of society. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of ethical behavior when acquiring and using knowledge. He is reported to have said, "The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." (Sahih al-Bukhari 5027). This teaching underscores the moral responsibility that comes with the pursuit of knowledge, suggesting that knowledge should be used for ethical purposes and to contribute to the welfare of others.

Incorporating these Islamic principles into ELT in Indonesia offers an opportunity to not only improve students' language skills but also to guide them toward becoming morally responsible and socially engaged individuals. By emphasizing the ethical use of language and the pursuit of knowledge in the service of others, Islamic principles can help shape well-rounded students who are not only proficient in English but also possess the character and values necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world. English language education in Indonesia is primarily aimed at improving students' ability to communicate in an increasingly interconnected world. However, the emphasis on technical language skills often overlooks the moral and ethical dimensions of

language use. Language is not merely a means of communication but also a reflection of one's values, worldview, and character. As such, teaching English should not only focus on grammar and vocabulary but also on the ethical implications of language use.

Islamic principles can be seamlessly integrated into ELT to promote ethical communication and social responsibility. For example, the concept of good character (akhlaq) can be woven into language lessons through discussions on topics such as respect, kindness, and honesty. Students can be encouraged to use English in ways that reflect these values, both in their written and spoken communication. Additionally, the Islamic value of unity (tawhid) can be integrated into language learning by promoting inclusivity, respect for diversity, and global citizenship. One of the key benefits of integrating Islamic principles into ELT is that it allows students to see the relevance of language learning in their personal and social lives. Language becomes more than just a tool for communication; it becomes a means of building character, fostering ethical behavior, and contributing to a greater good. For Indonesian students, this approach to ELT aligns with both their academic goals and their religious and cultural values, making the learning process more meaningful and enriching.

This study aims to explore the integration of Islamic principles into ELT for Indonesian university students, examining how these principles can contribute to a more holistic educational experience. By integrating Islamic values into the ELT curriculum, educators can promote both linguistic competence and moral development, fostering well-rounded individuals who are not only proficient in English but also grounded in ethical principles. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on Islamic education and language teaching, providing insights into how Islamic principles can be effectively incorporated into modern ELT methodologies. This approach will not only benefit students' academic performance but also help shape their character, preparing them to become responsible, ethical global citizens.

Literature Review

The integration of Islamic principles into English Language Teaching (ELT) has not been extensively explored in academic research, particularly in the context of Indonesian higher education. However, several strands of literature, including Islamic educational philosophy, the relationship between language and morality, and the role of ethics in education, offer insights into the potential benefits of such an integration. This literature review examines relevant studies in three main areas: Islamic educational philosophy, the role of character development in language learning, and previous research on Islamic values in education.

Islamic Educational Philosophy and Knowledge

Islamic educational philosophy provides a rich framework that emphasizes the acquisition of both intellectual knowledge and moral character. Central to this philosophy is the idea that knowledge (ilm) is not merely for personal gain but is a means to benefit society and foster moral and spiritual growth. The Quran and Hadith frequently emphasize the importance of learning and seeking knowledge, urging Muslims to pursue knowledge in all aspects of life. In the Quran, it is stated, "And He taught Adam the names - all of them" (Quran Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:31), which signifies the importance of knowledge as a tool for human development and progress. According to Islamic scholars, the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong endeavor and an essential duty for every Muslim (Nordin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Islamic educational philosophy stresses the integration of intellectual and ethical development. For instance, Al-Ghazali discusses the notion of adab, which refers to proper conduct, manners, and ethics that should accompany the pursuit of knowledge. In his seminal work Ihya' Ulum al-Din or Revival of the Religious Sciences, Al-Ghazali argues that learning should not be merely about accumulating facts but should contribute to the moral development of the learner (Abd Rahman et al., 2022). The moral character of the learner is of equal importance to intellectual achievement, as knowledge without ethics is considered incomplete and even harmful. This philosophy aligns well with the goals of holistic education, where both cognitive and ethical dimensions are developed simultaneously. In the context of ELT, the principles of Islamic educational philosophy can encourage an approach that goes beyond linguistic competence, promoting a balanced educational experience that fosters intellectual growth while also cultivating moral responsibility. By integrating Islamic principles into language education, students not only gain proficiency in English but also develop their character, responsibility, and social awareness, which are crucial in the globalized world.

Character Development in Education

The importance of character development in education is a central theme in both Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary pedagogical theories. Character education, which emphasizes the cultivation of virtues such as respect, honesty, responsibility, and empathy, plays a crucial role in shaping students into morally responsible individuals. In Islamic thought, moral conduct (akhlaq) is viewed as the key to personal and social success. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is regarded as the ideal role model of good character, and his teachings emphasize kindness, integrity, and respect for others (Santoso, 2024). In the context of ELT, the integration of Islamic principles related to character development can enhance not only students' language

skills but also their ability to communicate ethically and responsibly. For example, language is a powerful tool for shaping social interactions, and teaching students to use language with integrity, respect, and empathy is an essential aspect of their development. Studies have shown that when character education is integrated into language teaching, students demonstrate higher levels of cooperation, respect for diversity, and better interpersonal communication (Fathani & Daulay, 2025).

Islamic values such as manners (adab), sincerity (ikhlas), and unity (tawhid) are highly relevant to language teaching. Adab encourages students to engage with language in ways that reflect ethical behavior, such as using words that promote peace, respect, and understanding. Ikhlas emphasizes sincerity in communication, while tawhid encourages an understanding of unity and harmony in interactions. These values can enrich language learning by helping students develop not only linguistic proficiency but also an ethical approach to communication. Moreover, research by Cohen (2006) on character education in schools suggests that students who are taught to link their academic skills with moral development tend to perform better in terms of academic achievement, social behavior, and emotional well-being. These findings highlight the potential for integrating Islamic values into ELT to enhance both the academic and moral development of students.

Islamic Values in Education

The integration of Islamic values into various educational settings has been studied in several contexts, including primary and secondary education, as well as higher education. While the application of Islamic principles in ELT specifically has not been widely explored, studies on Islamic education more broadly suggest that such integration can have a positive impact on students' overall development. For example, studies by Abuzar (2024) demonstrate that incorporating Islamic values into the curriculum of Islamic schools can foster greater moral responsibility, ethical behavior, and social consciousness among students. In a similar vein, studies by Aziz et al., (2025) highlight the positive impact of Islamic ethics on classroom management and teacher-student interactions. These studies suggest that Islamic values can contribute to a more respectful, cooperative, and inclusive learning environment.

In the Indonesian context, where the majority of the population practices Islam, incorporating Islamic principles into the curriculum is seen as a way to strengthen students' moral and ethical foundations. Research by Suyadi et al., (2021) highlights the importance of character education in Indonesian higher education, which aligns with Islamic values of responsibility, respect, and integrity. According to these researchers, integrating Islamic ethics into academic learning helps students become more socially responsible and morally grounded. In addition to

character education, the integration of Islamic principles can help students navigate the complexities of intercultural communication. Islamic teachings emphasize respect for diversity, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence, all of which are essential in today's multicultural world. By incorporating these values into ELT, educators can help students not only communicate more effectively in English but also understand and appreciate cultural differences, thus fostering global citizenship.

The Role of Language in Islamic Pedagogy

Language holds a central role in Islamic pedagogy, with the Quran regarded as the ultimate source of knowledge, and reading and reciting it seen as essential for spiritual and intellectual growth. This perspective aligns with the findings of Gumelar and Jubaedah, (2025), who emphasized that Islamic education integrates language learning with moral and spiritual development, encouraging learners to view language as a medium for ethical and personal growth. Similarly, Sidqurrahman, (2024) noted that integrating Quranic principles into language teaching helps students develop both linguistic proficiency and ethical awareness, promoting responsible communication. The Quranic verse, "And speak to people good words" (Quran Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:83), underscores the importance of using language ethically. Applying this principle to English Language Teaching (ELT) encourages students not only to use language effectively but also to use it responsibly, fostering values such as respect, empathy, and cooperation (Rahmatika & Izzah, 2024). Teaching English through the lens of Islamic ethics, therefore, supports students in developing interpersonal skills and social responsibility, aligning language learning with moral and spiritual growth.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach chosen for this study is qualitative, as it is considered the most appropriate method for capturing the complexities of integrating Islamic principles into ELT. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore the perspectives of both educators and students, offering a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic ethical values influence language learning. The methodology emphasizes in-depth exploration, focusing on the experiences and reflections of participants rather than quantifiable data, making it ideal for this context.

The participants in this study consist of 10 English language teachers and 30 university students from various higher education institutions in Makassar, Indonesia. The selection process ensured a diversity of perspectives by including participants from both Islamic and secular universities with a significant Muslim student population. Teachers with at least two years of experience integrating Islamic principles into their teaching were chosen, and students were

selected based on their Muslim identity and active participation in the English language program. The diversity in backgrounds and experiences among the participants provides valuable insights into the integration of Islamic values in ELT across different teaching contexts.

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and student feedback. The interviews were conducted with teachers to gain detailed insights into their methods of integrating Islamic principles into ELT, the challenges they face, and the impact on students. Classroom observations were used to observe firsthand how Islamic values are enacted in teaching practices, focusing on ethical communication, character development, and student engagement. Additionally, student feedback through surveys and focus group discussions helped capture students' perceptions of how Islamic values influence their language learning and personal growth. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to Islamic principles in ELT, with an emphasis on pedagogical approaches, challenges, and their effects on student engagement and character development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal key insights into the integration of Islamic principles into English Language Teaching (ELT) for Indonesian university students. Data collected from teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student surveys provide a comprehensive view of how Islamic values are incorporated into ELT practices, the challenges faced by educators, and the perceived impact on students' language proficiency and character development.

1. Integration of Islamic Principles into ELT

The teachers involved in this study reported that they incorporate various Islamic principles into their English language lessons in different ways. Common Islamic values integrated into ELT included honesty (sidq), respect for others (ihsan), cooperation (ta'awun), patience (sabr), and the ethical use of language. These values were embedded into classroom activities, discussions, and language tasks as indicated in table 1 and 2 as follows.

Table 1. *Teachers' responses on integration of Islamic principles*

Teacher	Islamic Value Integrated	Example of Integration
Teacher 1, 2, 6	Honesty (Sidq) = 30 %	"I integrate Quranic verses on honesty during speaking exercises."
Teacher 3, 4, 8	Respect (Ihsan) = 30 %	"We discuss respect in group work, helping students understand cooperation through ta'awun."
Teacher 7, 9	Patience (Sabr) = 20 %	"I use Islamic history stories to teach reading comprehension and patience in adversity."

Table 2. *Classroom observations on integration of Islamic principles*

Observation Area	Frequency	Details
Ethical language use	6 out of 10 classrooms (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 = 60 %)	Students read Quranic stories and reflected on character traits like respect and honesty
Group Activities	7 out of 10 teachers (1,2,3,4,5,6,7) 70 %	Emphasis on cooperation (ta'awun) during peer reviews, group discussion, and projects

Integration of Islamic Values: Teachers integrated Islamic values (honesty, respect, cooperation, and patience) into ELT, with 80% incorporating these principles into their teaching strategies.

2. Student Engagement and Motivation

The integration of Islamic principles appeared to significantly affect student engagement and motivation. According to survey results, 85% of students indicated that lessons incorporating Islamic values motivated them to participate more actively in class. The information can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. *Survey results on students' engagement and motivation*

Questions N=30	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Do you feel that learning English through Islamic principles helps you better understanding the language?	40 %	33%	20%	7%	0%
How do Islamic values, such as honesty and respect, play a role in your language learning?	47%	37%	16%	0%	0%
How does learning English with Islamic values influence your motivation to participate in class?	35%	50%	13%	2%	0%

Student Engagement: A large percentage (85%) of students reported increased motivation and engagement due to the incorporation of Islamic principles in lessons.

3. Ethical Language Use

The emphasis on ethical language use, which was a central component of the integration of Islamic principles, showed significant results in both teacher reports and student behaviors. The data are shown in the following tables:

Table 4. *Teachers' responses on Ethical language use*

Teachers	Ethical language use example
Teacher 5	"I remind students to speak kindly to one another and use Hadith to emphasize respect in speech."
Teacher 8	"Students self-correct and remind each other about polite language based on Islamic teachings."

Table 5. *Classrooms observations on Ethical language use*

Observation Area	Frequency	Details
Respectful language	8 out of 10 classrooms	Students used respectful language, referencing honesty and sincerity in debates and discussions.
Cooperation and support	9 out of 10 students	Students proactively helped each other during group work and peer reviews, reflecting ta'awun.

Ethical Language Use: Teachers noted improvements in students' respectful language use, with most classrooms demonstrating better cooperation and communication.

4. Challenges in Integrating Islamic Principles

Despite the positive impacts of integrating Islamic principles into ELT, some challenges were identified by both teachers and students. The data are shown in table 6 and 7 as follows:

Table 6. *Teachers' responses on Challenges in integrating Islamic principles*

Teacher	Challenges
Teacher 2, 5, 3,7,9 (5 out of 10 =50%)	"Some secular students find it hard to connect Islamic values with language learning."
Teacher 4, 8, 10 3 out of 10 =30%)	"Balancing language skills with ethical lessons can be difficult as there's pressure to focus more on grammar."
Teacher 1, 6 2 out of 10 =20%)	"There are limited resources available that link Islamic principles directly with ELT."

Table 7. *Classroom observation on Challenges in integrating Islamic principles*

Observation Area	Frequency	Details
Resistance from secular students	3 out of 10 classrooms	Some students appeared disengaged when religious discussions overtook language skills lessons

Challenges: Some resistance from secular students and the need to balance ethical content with language skills posed challenges to integration.

5. Impact on Character Development

The integration of Islamic principles had a clear positive impact on students' character development, as reflected in both survey responses and observational data.

Table 8. *Survey results on Impact on character development*

Questions N=30	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
How has learning English with Islamic principles influenced your personal values and behavior?	43%	33%	17%	7%	0%
Have you noticed any changes in your behavior or interactions with others since integrating Islamic values into your English lessons?	40%	30%	23%	7%	0%

Character Development: Students reported positive changes in their behavior (76%), with increased empathy, cooperation, and self-regulation (70%).

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant potential of integrating Islamic principles into English Language Teaching (ELT) for Indonesian university students. By embedding ethical values, such as honesty, respect, cooperation, and patience, into language lessons, both teachers and students reported improvements in language proficiency as well as character development. This discussion will explore how these results align with previous studies in the field, provide further insight into the challenges faced by educators, and examine the broader implications of integrating Islamic values into ELT.

Integration of Islamic Principles into ELT

The integration of Islamic principles into ELT was a key focus of this study, and the findings indicate that such an approach positively impacted both the intellectual and moral development of students. Teachers reported utilizing Islamic teachings such as Quranic verses, Hadith, and stories from Islamic history to guide students' language learning. This approach is consistent with the Islamic educational philosophy that knowledge acquisition is not only an intellectual exercise but a tool for moral and spiritual development (Yasin & Jani, 2013). The Quran emphasizes that knowledge should lead to self-improvement and benefit to others, a teaching that resonates with the goals of ELT.

Islamic educational philosophy advocates for a balanced approach to learning, integrating intellectual and ethical development, and the results of this study align with that perspective. A majority of the teachers (8 out of 10 or 80%) emphasized the importance of using English as a tool for ethical communication. Teachers encouraged students to use language honestly, avoiding lies and deceit, which aligns with the Islamic teaching that "And speak to people good (words)" (Quran, 2:83). In this regard, teachers highlighted how students were taught to respect each other during discussions, maintaining decorum and ensuring that their language was respectful, whether in written assignments or during group interactions. This teaching strategy directly aligns with Al-Abubakar's (2024) research on integration moral and ethics in education, which suggests that ethical values such as honesty, sincerity, and respect can be directly incorporated into language tasks, enhancing both students' language proficiency and their moral development. By encouraging students to engage with language ethically, teachers were able to simultaneously teach linguistic skills and help students internalize Islamic values.

In addition, Islamic teachings are also incorporated into Language Tasks in which 6 out of 10 teachers (60 %) reported using Islamic stories, Quranic verses, and Hadith in lessons to teach both English language skills and moral lessons in their classrooms. For example, one teacher integrated a reading activity in which students read a short story from Islamic history, then discussed the moral lessons from the story and reflected on how those lessons applied to everyday life. This practice not only improved students' reading comprehension skills but also reinforced Islamic teachings on ethics and social responsibility. In addition to language proficiency, teachers incorporated character-building exercises in their lessons (7 out of 10 teachers or 70 %). For instance, group discussions on ethical dilemmas were framed within Islamic values, encouraging students to think critically about how to use language responsibly in situations that required moral judgment.

Incorporating Islamic teachings into English language instruction has been shown to have a positive impact on both students' language proficiency and their moral development. Studies, such as those by Rahmatika and Izzah (2024), found that integrating Islamic stories into language learning helps improve reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. This approach not only makes learning more enjoyable but also enables students to apply the moral lessons from these stories to their everyday lives. Similarly, Astuti et al., (2023) highlighted how teachers use Quranic verses and Hadith in English lessons to enrich students' learning experiences, connecting academic content with Islamic teachings. This approach helps students understand and practice English better while also reinforcing ethical values. Furthermore, integrating Islamic values into language instruction plays a significant role in character development. Saepudin et al., (2023) emphasized that teachers, as role models, guide students to develop spiritually and morally, instilling important Islamic principles in their daily actions. The use of Quranic teachings and Hadith in the classroom encourages students to reflect on their ethical responsibilities, which can be observed in practices like group discussions on moral dilemmas framed within Islamic values. Additionally, a study by Setiawan et al., (2025) showed that character development through Islamic values led to improvements in students' social responsibility and ethical behavior. This holistic approach supports students in both their academic and moral growth, fostering well-rounded individuals.

Student Engagement and Motivation

One of the most striking outcomes of this study is the increase in student engagement and motivation resulting from the integration of Islamic principles into English language lessons. According to the survey data, 85% of students felt more motivated to participate in class when Islamic values were incorporated into their lessons. This fact has increased their interest in Learning. One student stated, "When the lessons relate to Islamic values, I feel more motivated to learn because it's not just about the language it's about improving myself as a person." This suggests that the integration of Islamic principles helped make English lessons more meaningful for students, as they saw the value of language learning not only for academic achievement but also for personal growth. This finding supports the work of Tinto, (1997), who found that students involved in character education were more engaged in learning because they saw a direct connection between their academic work and personal development.

In this study, students reported that connecting language learning with their religious and ethical values made the lessons more relevant to their lives. This enhanced motivation can be attributed to the fact that the lessons were perceived as more meaningful. Observations also revealed that students were more active in discussions and group work when lessons included

Islamic values. In classes where the ethical use of language was emphasized, students were more respectful in their interactions and were more likely to engage in collaborative learning tasks. This is consistent with findings by Battistich (2005), who observed that character education promotes greater student involvement and cooperation in academic activities. When students saw the relevance of language learning to their values and personal growth, their motivation was enhanced. According to Nirmala et al., (2024), when students engage in learning that is ethically grounded, they develop a stronger sense of purpose, which boosts motivation and academic performance. For Indonesian Muslim students, the integration of Islamic principles offers a personal connection to the material, reinforcing the idea that education is a tool for both academic achievement and moral development.

Furthermore, this connection between language learning and moral development enhances students' sense of responsibility. Students reported feeling more compelled to use language not just for communication but as a means of promoting social responsibility. In classes that incorporated Islamic teachings about social responsibility, students expressed a greater sense of duty to use their language skills for the betterment of society. One student shared, "I believe English is not just a skill, but a way to help others. The lessons that tie Islamic values with language learning inspire me to use what I learn to do good in the world." The notion of tawhid (unity) in Islamic thought teaches that all knowledge, including language, should be used for the betterment of society. By linking language learning with the broader purpose of contributing to the common good, teachers foster an environment where students see the value of language not only as a skill but also as a moral and ethical tool. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Hudson and Brandenberger, (2023), who noted that character education increases students' sense of social responsibility and engagement.

Ethical Language Use

Another key finding from this study is the improvement in ethical language use among students. Teachers emphasized the ethical dimension of language by using Islamic principles to guide students' interactions, which led to more respectful and thoughtful communication. Teachers' reports indicated that students became more conscious of their words and used language in more responsible and empathetic ways, not only in formal assignments but also in casual conversations. They were more likely to avoid gossip, slander, and negative speech, as Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of avoiding backbiting (ghibah) and lying (kidhb). Observations alo showed that students who were regularly taught the ethical use of language exhibited greater empathy and kindness in their interactions, both within the classroom and outside

of it. This outcome reflects the teachings of the Quran, which stresses that language should be used as a tool for good, not harm (Quran, 2:83). The Hadith, which states that "A good word is charity" (Sahih Bukhari), further reinforces the idea that the language we use has moral significance and should reflect positive, ethical intentions. These findings align with previous studies that suggest that ethical language use, when explicitly taught, becomes a habit that students carry into their daily lives. Pala, (2011) argued that character education improves students' interpersonal skills, including their ability to use language responsibly. In this study, students demonstrated increased politeness, respect, and empathy in their communication, which is a direct result of the ethical teachings integrated into the curriculum. This finding supports Feng's, (2019) assertion that language can be a powerful tool for teaching moral values and improving social behavior when ethical principles are embedded in the educational process.

The use of ethical language tasks, such as discussing moral dilemmas or engaging in debates framed by Islamic teachings, appears to have led to more respectful and cooperative behaviors in the classroom. These tasks not only enhanced students' language skills but also encouraged them to reflect on the ethical implications of their speech, fostering a learning environment in which language is seen as a means to promote social good rather than simply a tool for communication. In group work, students were more inclined to communicate with respect and to listen attentively to others. This was particularly evident in tasks that encouraged students to collaborate on projects or debates, where they demonstrated higher levels of mutual respect and consideration, aligning with the Islamic value of doing good (ihsan) in communication. In this regard, integrating ethical language tasks, such as discussing moral dilemmas or engaging in debates framed by Islamic teachings, has been shown to foster respectful and cooperative behaviors in the classroom. Research by Muriati et al. (2024) on the Ethics-Based Learning method in Islamic education highlighted that case discussions and moral reflections, grounded in Islamic values, effectively developed students' honesty, patience, and care. These activities not only enhanced students' understanding of ethical principles but also encouraged them to apply these values in their daily lives, promoting a respectful and responsible classroom environment.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values into language instruction has been found to improve students' moral sensitivity and communication skills. A study by Taufiqi and Purwanto, (2024) demonstrated that meaning-based learning, which incorporates Islamic values into science education, significantly increased students' moral sensitivity. This approach helped students interpret scientific concepts through the lens of Islamic teachings, fostering a deeper understanding of ethical implications and promoting respectful communication. Similarly, research by Rafikov, et al., (2021) emphasized the importance of applying moral values through

creative methods in 21st-century education, which can be adapted to language tasks to encourage ethical reflection and respectful discourse among students.

Challenges in Integrating Islamic Principles

Despite the positive impact of integrating Islamic principles into ELT, several challenges were identified, particularly in balancing religious values with secular academic demands. Teachers (5 out of 10 =50%) reported difficulties in making space for Islamic teachings while also meeting the requirements of the secular curriculum, especially in universities that do not explicitly promote religious education. This study showed that balancing secular and religious education is one of challenges. Teachers in non-religious universities faced additional pressure to align their teaching with the broader secular curriculum, which often prioritized technical language skills over ethical development. This conflict sometimes led to tension between pedagogical approaches, as teachers attempted to meet both academic and ethical goals, as discussed by Zembylas & McGlynn, (2012). In the Indonesian context, where secular and religious educational frameworks often coexist, this tension can make it challenging for educators to strike the right balance between academic skills and ethical instruction.

Moreover, the resistance from some students, particularly those focused on acquiring language skills, highlights the need for more explicit connections between Islamic values and language proficiency (3 out of 10=30%). Therefore, some students expressed resistance to the integration of Islamic principles into English lessons, particularly those who were more focused on acquiring practical language skills. One student mentioned, "I like learning English, but sometimes I don't understand how the Islamic teachings fit into language learning. I just want to focus on speaking and writing well." This suggests that while many students embraced the integration of values, others struggled to see the connection between language skills and ethical principles. This finding indicates that while many students embraced the integration of Islamic principles, others found it difficult to understand how religious teachings could enhance their practical language learning. This echoes findings by Horwitz, (2021), who noted that some students may view religious teachings as secondary to their academic goals, making it essential for teachers to clearly articulate how ethical principles complement language acquisition.

Additionally, the lack of resources specifically tailored to integrating Islamic principles into ELT was another challenge identified by teachers. Although many teachers created their own materials, the absence of standardized resources that bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and ELT meant that teachers had to invest significant time and effort into developing their own content. This challenge is consistent with Zhao's et al., (2024) observation that teachers often lack

adequate resources to integrate ethical values into education, highlighting the need for institutional support in this area. This limitation was particularly felt in secular universities where Islamic teachings were not typically embedded into the mainstream educational framework.

Impact on Character Development

The integration of Islamic principles into ELT also had a significant impact on students' character development. Students reported that the lessons helped them reflect on their own behavior and interactions, leading to improved social relationships and a greater sense of social responsibility. Many students (76%) reported feeling a greater sense of responsibility toward their peers and communities. They expressed an increased awareness of the ethical implications of their actions, particularly in terms of how they used language to engage with others. One student shared, "I now understand that language can either help or hurt others. Learning English with Islamic principles makes me more careful in how I speak and act." This result aligns with the findings of Marshall et al., (2011), who emphasized that character education leads to improvements in students' social behaviors and moral reasoning. In the current study, students demonstrated increased empathy, cooperation, and ethical decision-making, reflecting the influence of Islamic teachings on their personal growth. The positive impact on character development also aligns with the work of Yasin and Jani, (2013), who argued that the ultimate goal of education in Islam is the development of both intellectual and moral virtues. By incorporating Islamic principles into ELT, teachers were able to foster an environment where students not only learned English but also grew into ethically responsible individuals, which is a key goal of holistic education. The students in this study reported a heightened sense of responsibility in their relationships with others, suggesting that ethical language use, grounded in Islamic values, contributes to the development of a more compassionate and responsible society.

Through activities such as group discussions, ethical dilemmas, and the use of Islamic stories and examples, students were able to reflect on their personal values and how they applied in their daily lives (Moral Reflection and Self-Improvement). This study revealed that students were also found to reflect more on their personal behavior and actions. Activities that included discussions about honesty, respect, and social responsibility helped students evaluate their own behavior and made them more self-aware. This aligns with the Islamic teaching that knowledge should lead to personal transformation. A study by Ibrahim et al., (2024) found that students who engaged in ethical and moral discussions reflecting on Islamic values, including manners (adab), morality (akhlaq), and teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith, demonstrated increased self-awareness and a deeper understanding of how these values applied to their daily lives. This reflective practice

encouraged students to evaluate their behavior and align their actions with Islamic ethical principles, fostering personal growth and moral development. Furthermore, the incorporation of Islamic moral stories in education has been identified as an effective strategy for enhancing students' religious character. Research by Amina and Kaggwa, (2021) highlighted that storytelling, particularly narratives from the lives of prophets and companions, serves as a powerful tool to instill Islamic values in students. These stories provide relatable examples of virtues such as honesty, patience, and social responsibility, prompting students to reflect on their own behaviors and aspire to emulate these qualities in their interactions with others. By engaging with these narratives, students not only improve their language skills but also cultivate a sense of moral responsibility, aligning with the Islamic teaching that knowledge should lead to personal transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that integrating Islamic principles into English Language Teaching (ELT) for Indonesian university students enhances both language proficiency and character development. By incorporating values like honesty, respect, cooperation, and patience, educators create a learning environment that fosters moral and ethical growth. The findings suggest that students' motivation increases when they see the relevance of language learning to their personal and spiritual development. Ethical tasks reflecting Islamic teachings positively impact students' social behavior, promoting respect, empathy, and responsibility. Despite challenges in balancing religious and secular content, the integration of Islamic values offers a promising approach to developing well-rounded individuals. This study highlights the benefits of incorporating Islamic principles in ELT, aligning academic learning with moral development and producing responsible global citizens. However, more support for teachers is needed to effectively integrate these values into the curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author sincerely extends deep gratitude to all individuals and institutions who have contributed to the completion of this study entitled "A Path to Holistic Education: Integrating Islamic Principles into English Language Teaching for Indonesian University Students." Special appreciation is conveyed to the English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar, for their continuous academic and institutional support throughout the research process. The author also wishes to thank the participating lecturers and university students who willingly shared their insights and classroom experiences, which provided valuable data for the analysis. Gratitude is also expressed to colleagues

and reviewers for their constructive feedback, encouragement, and scholarly discussions that have enriched the depth and clarity of this research. This work is dedicated to all educators committed to integrating faith, ethics, and knowledge into English Language Teaching (ELT), thereby fostering holistic and value-based education in Indonesia.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical research standards set by Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar and guided by the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were informed about the objectives, scope, and procedures of the study before their involvement. Informed consent either written or verbal was obtained from each participant. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and all collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

The author affirms that no element of coercion or harm occurred during the research process and that participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Alauddin Makassar. The study upholds the principles of academic integrity, respect for human dignity, and responsible scholarship, contributing to the development of ethical and holistic English language education.

CRediT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

- **Kaharuddin:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing, Original Draft, Review & Editing, Supervision, Project Administration.

The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception, data interpretation, and preparation of the final manuscript. All stages of research and writing were conducted independently and approved by the author prior to submission for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. There are no known financial, personal, or institutional relationships that could have influenced the objectivity or integrity of the research. The study was carried out independently, without external funding or commercial influence, and the conclusions reflect the author's professional judgment and academic perspective.

DATA AVAILABILITY

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included within the published article. To protect participant confidentiality and institutional privacy, raw or identifiable data are not made publicly available. However, anonymized transcripts, interview guidelines, and observation protocols used in the study may be accessed upon reasonable request for academic and non-commercial purposes by contacting the corresponding author at andi.kaharuddin@uin-alauddin.ac.id.

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