

## WHEN ISLAMIC VALUES INFUSED INTO ELT

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### Abstract

Issue on integrating Islamic values in ELT in Indonesian context needs to be well addressed. The objective of the integration should be understood as the process to instill learner with Islamic teaching as a strategy to teach character education. However, the teaching of English itself should be on track that is to equip learners with needed English skills for global competition. The question of why it should be Islamic values has to be wisely responded. Besides, issues on strategy of integration and challenges encountered by the teachers in the process of integration should be taken into account. This paper is discussing some aspects related to the issue.

**Keywords:** Islamic values, education, English culture.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Recently, educational values become a necessity in our life. We are unable to face the challenges and contradict of the modern life unless we are equipped with the necessary values (Al.Qomoul, 2015). Having understanding of the values becomes the need to better understand the diversity in social life, including cultures and values since people, knowledge and ideas move and change rapidly (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009). The rapid movement of knowledge and ideas also happens in the English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia. Indeed, English is now used to communicate with native speakers from English speaking countries and non-native speakers from other countries in the world as an international language. The teaching of English as a foreign language may imply to the teaching of norms and cultures embedded within English language. Researchers believe that learning any foreign language occurs through the integration of culture and education, which helps learners to understand the target language and learn it. So teachers should not focus on learning grammar, or the acquisition of basic linguistic skills of the foreign languages without raising the issues of culture (Alzayyat, 2014). Cultures has becomes increasingly important component of English language teaching in the last three decades (Clouet, 2005). Further, Clouet (2005) explained "although culture and language are now recognized as an integral part of the language acquisition process –one cannot learn a language without learning its culture". This theory of language learning challenges teachers to be able to define to which culture(s) a teacher should expose learners to have.

Teaching English as a foreign language is not an easy task. The teaching of English in Indonesia would be differently treated because the curriculum has mandated teachers to integrate the teaching of values or characters into the teaching of subjects in any level of studies. This policy brings into consequences that teachers must be able to include the – character education - as the way to teach values and characters- in their teaching materials while helping the students to master the targeted English language skills and components (Rohmah, 2012). There must be reasons why it becomes important to integrate character education into ELT in Indonesia. Through education, it is believed that the students's intelligence and personality could be well developed. Further, Lickona and Davidson said that:

"Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good."  
—Thomas Lickona & Matthew Davidson

From what is mentioned above, it is clear that character education becomes the core ethical and performance values that should be instilled to the learners. Character education so conceived helps students to develop important human qualities such as justice, diligence, compassion, respect, and courage, and to understand why it is important to live by them.

Quality character education creates an integrated culture of character that supports and challenges students and adults to strive for excellence (character.org).

Character could be developed from understanding religion values. One of the values that is important to integrate in ELT is Islamic values. Why is Islamic values? This basic question may appear toward this issue. How to deal “the English culture” and Islamic values in ELT? How to do the integration of the Islamic values in ELT? How important is it to integrate Islamic values in ELT? These questions should be carefully responded because in fact, incorporating Islamic values is not a norm in language class, especially for English language. English is the language of Western world. Though good values may be taught in these classes but they do not normally represent the values Moslem should possess (Yusof, et.al, undated). Another issue may need to be considered when discussing about integrating Islamic values in ELT, that is the differences of Western and Islamic cultures. How would teachers present both cultures and values in their ELT. This paper would discuss some issues related to incorporating Islamic values in ELT especially in Indonesian context.

## **B. WHY IS ISLAMIC VALUES?**

There will be at least two different perspectives when discussing this issue. *First*, integrating Islamic values in ELT because it is important to engaged learners with good values, and Islamic values would be one of a fundamental value to be instilled into learners' life. *Second*, we need to incorporate Islamic values because we worry if our youngster will lose the identity, either as Indonesian and Moslem. This is a big and complex topic when talking about Islam and English. People seem to believe that if students find out about other cultures they will reject their own. It sounds like they think that people would only accept their own culture if they were ignorant of others and that seems to devalue the culture in the first place. The issue is about how English works together with Islam and as English is a language of many Islamic societies, such as Pakistan and Malaysia, and of Muslims in countries like Australia and the UK, so it is not right to think of English as a ‘non-Islamic’ language.

In this discussion, I would emphasis the discussion on the first perspectives that is integrating Islamic values for the sake of character building. Indonesia is recognized as the biggest Moslem coutry in the world with 85 % of the population is Moslem. It is unquestionable that Islamic values become the core values in most of the life practices of Indonesian people. As an Islamic country, most of the daily practices of Indonesian people are based on Islamic teaching and values, however, social changes are unavoidable. The economic, politic and social dynamics influence the social acts and attitude of the Indoensian people. Issues on violence, bullying, crimes, vandalism, and humanitarian crimes are significantly raising and becoming more serious issues. Educators and parents figured out that these sosial phenomenons happened because of the weakening of religious education both at school and at home. This condition encourages government to emphasise the integration of characters values-including Islamic values –in any subjects by hoping that learners would learn more values and get more opportunities to behave better.

Islamic values could be understood as as values that are set out in the Qur'an and the practice of Prophet Muhamhd (pbuh), and they can be considered as the cultural values or the way of life of Moslem. Since the time allotted for religion teaching in public schools is limited- only 2 hours/week- it becomes not sufficient to supply learners with Islamic values. That is why, incorporating Islamic values in ELT or other teaching is expected effective to maintain learners' good behaviours and prevent them from unfavourable actions. On the other hand, there seems to be difficulties regarding teaching English language culture since each Indonesian EFL learner and teacher have their own culture that disparate from those of the English- speaking communities. Issue on different cultures and habits need to be well treated, in order to avoid excessive cultural adaptation and imitation of bad habits by our learners. Although, not all cultures that exist in the English language is bad, but it becomes important for teachers to provide appropriate and relevant explanation on how to respond to the culture from Islamic point of view.

## **C. HOW TO INCORPORATE THE ENGLISH CULTURE AND ISLAMIC VALUES IN ELT**

Learning culture in any foreign language class is considered a prominent issue as language and culture are inseparable. Learning English language means that learners should learn its culture. Although conflict or discord between Islamic values and some of the Western

values as conveyed through English may emerge, it is considered desirable, to learn other languages, to know and appreciate the differences among various communities and cultures. Further, Rohmah (2012) also emphasized that the culture of the target language is different and sometimes in conflict with the culture of the English learners. To resolve the conflict between these two cultures, it would require a good knowledge of the teacher as well as the ability to bridge these differences, so that it can be a good cultural knowledge for students. However, Kirkpatrick & Prescott, 1995 (in Rohmah, 2012) figured out that in the Indonesian context, similar to many other Asian countries, the practical importance of English is recognized but the learning of Western values is not desired. This condition creates challenge for the English teachers in presenting their teaching English and cultures to their learners. Teachers should be able to instill the understanding that Western culture does not necessarily mean negative culture. We can learn English but not copy the 'Western' way of life. English should be seen as an important language to be acquired- not a language that threatened values and cultures- because it is a major language through which we acquire much of modern-day knowledge (Ratnawati, 2009).

There are some strategies could be implemented in incorporating Islamic values in ELT as they are proposed by some scholars (Rohmah, 2012; Al Qomoul, 2015):

1. Writing and using English course-book containing Islamic messages
2. Using authentic materials containing Islamic messages
3. Providing the EFL textbooks with more Islamic values, especially, those related to faith, worship and morals to help building up and developing the Muslim youths' personality
4. Selecting universal language texts, which do not contradict with Islamic values and include information as well as input about the positiveness of human nature.
5. The values included in the textbooks should be explained in terms of rationality and logic.
6. The values should be established by presenting tips that would help students to think of the current world issues positively and preparing them for creativity.
7. The values should be presented in different ways in the style of description, modeling and then demonstration.
8. Confirming the importance of objectives, individual differences and characteristics of the learners throughout reviewing the course material
9. Giving the chance to the teachers who teach Islamic Education in the primary education to participate actively in authoring the textbooks of Islamic Education which is planned for that educational phase.
10. Carrying out educational studies that reveal the orientations of students toward the textbooks of Islamic Education in other educational phases.

In fact, the strategies mentioned above proposed with any possibilities for other strategies to be implemented. The most important factor that teachers need to take into account is presenting English as an important language to learn and to create joyful learning atmosphere for their learners. Making comparison –without emphasizing on justifying the good and the bad- is when introducing cultural differences would be something interesting for the learners. Learners need to know the reasons behind the differences, why some of the Western cultures do not fit their culture, and how they response and behave toward the differences.

#### **D. CHALLENGE IN INTEGRATING ISLAMIC VALUES IN ELT**

There should be a comprehensive understanding for language teachers that teaching cultures of other languages is important, however, they have always been criticized for their inadequate treatment of culture in their classrooms. Language teachers should be able to involve students' culture and other countries' cultures in the learning process; in consequence, language teachers should have sufficient knowledge about it. Regarding with the integration of Islamic values in ELT, there are some conditions that might be challenging for teachers in the teaching and learning process:

1. Teacher's lack of knowledge about the Islamic values  
Having sufficient knowledge about Islamic values will help teachers to instill the values in ELT through appropriate activities and explanation. Teachers will also play important roles providing relevant sources for learners to learn about English as well



as Islamic values. When teachers are lack of knowledge about Islamic values, it would impact on the way they integrate the values in their teaching materials and learner's activities.

2. Teacher's lack of knowledge about the target language cultures and values  
As it is mentioned above that teaching language is inseparable with teaching culture or values, language teachers should have relevant and sufficient knowledge about the target language cultures and values. That English is identically defined as the Western language; I think we have agreed about it and this impact on the attachment of the Western cultures or values in English language. To be able to give explanation, making comparison and communicating the differences between values of each culture, teachers need to know the target language culture, and very often teachers' negligence about the importance of knowing other language culture limit their knowledge.
3. Conflict with the teacher's teaching objectives or target  
For some teachers, learners' achievement is above all. That is why; they focus their teaching on material. Teaching culture might be considered as somewhat time consuming. Their concerns about the 'unfinished' material influence their perception about teaching the culture. In addition, their experience about living other' language culture might be limited.
4. Require more teaching preparation in which sometimes it is not desirable for teachers to do  
When teacher are planning to teach language and Islamic values as well, they need to make much preparation because they have to convince themselves that the material they are going to present is relevant for the learners, on the other hand, they also know and master the material well.
5. Teachers' beliefs which may not in accordance with this concept of integration  
Studies have revealed that teachers' beliefs impact on their classroom decision making. It means that when teachers believe that integrating Islamic values in ELT is important, they will do the teaching as they are supposed to do, and vice versa. Johnson (as cited in Abdullah, 2014) identifies three basic assumptions about teacher's beliefs. First, teachers' beliefs have an effect on what teachers do in the classroom because beliefs affect perception and judgment. Second, teachers' beliefs are fundamental in learning to teach, because teachers are the end user and propagator of any theoretical or practical advancement in language learning and teaching. Third, understanding teachers' beliefs has an important role to play in improving teachers' education.
6. Teachers' lack of linguistic competence which may cause difficulties for teachers to give explanation  
Having good linguistic competence will support teachers to explain the matters and issues well. Some teachers prefer to skip the material and stop giving explanation because they do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to give brief and logical explanation.

In conclusion, for some reasons and some teachers the teaching English itself is challenging, moreover, when they have to teach ELT and integrating Islamic values in it, it will invite more challenges for the teachers. The lack of teachers; knowledge including pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge influence in the way they present and perform their teaching. There should be a collaborative work between government, teachers, schools to create a curriculum of English which is rich with Islamic values in order the curriculum is becoming viable and probable.

## E. CONCLUSION

Teaching English as a foreign or second language involves more than a mere knowledge of teaching approaches and pedagogy. It requires, among other things, that teachers be aware of the value, as this aspect may shape their attitudes towards the language. Issue on integrating Islamic values in ELT in Indonesian context needs to be well addressed. The objective of the integration should be understood as the process to instill learner with Islamic teaching which could be intended as a strategy to teach character education. However, the teaching of English

itself should be on track that is to equip learners with needed English skills for global competition. The question of why it should be Islamic values has to be wisely responded. In addition, the process of integration should be well designed through the language curriculum which is in line with the concept of linking cultural aspects with English language teaching, focusing on cultural topics as well as other English language skills. However, cultural understanding and values must be presented in various ways, so that students are prepared to live more harmoniously in the target – language community.

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