

The Revolution of Islamic Character in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learning for Millennial Muslim Generation

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ABSTRAK

The purpose of this study is to examine the integration of Islamic values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching methods and to analyze students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English. This study employs a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the implementation of Islamic character values, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and social awareness, not only enhances students' language proficiency but also strengthens their moral identity. Students who internalize these values in EFL learning demonstrate higher motivation and more positive attitudes toward English. The development of Islamic character in EFL learning for the millennial Muslim generation reflects increasing need to integrate moral, spiritual, and cultural dimensions into modern education. By incorporating Islamic content, contextual learning materials, and value-based pedagogical strategies, EFL instruction becomes more meaningful and relevant to learners' identities in a globalized context. Overall, the integration of Islamic character education in EFL classrooms contributes to improved motivation, ethical awareness, and intercultural competence while preserving students' religious and moral values.

Kata Kunci: Islamic Character, English as a Foreign Language, Millennial Muslim

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has gained increasing importance as a key academic and professional skill in the 21st century. However, conventional EFL teaching often prioritizes linguistic competence without adequate attention to students' moral, spiritual, and cultural identity. For the millennial Muslim generation, this narrow focus can create a disconnection between language learning and the internalization of Islamic values. Research on integrating Islamic values in English learning highlights that embedding religious and moral dimensions into EFL instruction enriches affective and spiritual engagement while reinforcing ethical behavior in students. Studies in Indonesian Islamic educational contexts demonstrate that integrating Islamic values into English classrooms strengthens learners' cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects beyond linguistic proficiency alone.

The theoretical basis of this study draws on character education and value integration theories, which argue that education should develop not only intellect but also moral virtues that guide behavior in diverse real-world contexts. Character education frameworks emphasize values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and tolerance as foundational for moral development. In EFL instruction, contextualizing language tasks with Islamic content can provide meaningful learning experiences that connect language use with students' cultural and religious identity. Previous research has shown that such integration helps foster holistic learning, increases motivation, and enhances students' readiness to apply language skills in ethical and socially responsible ways.

Despite the recognized benefits, many EFL programs still overlook Islamic character integration, which can lead to learners who excel in language mechanics but lack moral awareness and cultural rootedness. Therefore, the central problem of this research is how to systematically integrate

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Islamic character education into EFL learning for the millennial Muslim generation in ways that reinforce both language competence and moral identity.

To address this problem, this study proposes a holistic EFL instructional design that embeds Islamic values through contextual learning materials, reflective activities, and value-centered pedagogical strategies Ahmedtelba, E. (2025). By aligning language objectives with moral development goals, such an approach seeks to create a more relevant and motivating learning environment for Muslim learners in the global era.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to explore how Islamic character values can be integrated into EFL instruction and to examine the impact of this integration on students' motivation, attitudes, and overall learning outcomes. This research aims to contribute to theoretical understanding and provide practical insights for educators seeking to harmonize linguistic competence with moral and spiritual growth in EFL contexts.

Mastery of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become a strategic necessity in the era of globalization and digitalization, marked by the massive flow of cross-cultural information. For the millennial Muslim generation, English language competence serves not only as an instrument of international communication but also as a primary medium for accessing global knowledge, digital technology, and academic and social discourses dominated by Western perspectives. However, EFL learning practices in various educational institutions are still dominated by instrumental and pragmatic approaches that emphasize the achievement of linguistic and communicative competence alone, while the ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of students tend to be marginalized. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching and learning of English in contexts where English is not used as a primary means of daily communication. In EFL settings, learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making formal instruction a crucial factor in developing language proficiency (Sato, M., & Storch, N. (2022)). Therefore, effective pedagogical strategies are essential to enhance learners' linguistic competence and communicative skills.

From an Islamic educational perspective, learning is not solely directed at mastering cognitive skills, but also at developing individuals of faith and noble character, as exemplified in the Qur'an. Islamic character values such as *ṣidq* (honesty), *amanah* (responsibility), *istiqamah* (consistency), *tasammuḥ* (tolerance), and *adab al-ḥiwar* (communication ethics) are directly related to language learning practices, particularly in the context of using language as a tool for social interaction Siregar, A. H. (2025). Ironically, in EFL learning, these values often emerge only implicitly or symbolically, without systematic pedagogical planning. This situation creates a dichotomy between foreign language mastery and the formation of Islamic identity, which has the potential to cause a value crisis in Muslim students. With the rapid advancement of globalization and digital technology, the role of EFL has become increasingly significant for the younger generation. Harmer (2015) highlights that EFL learning today should address not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, character development, and intercultural awareness to prepare learners for global challenges.

A number of previous studies have indeed examined character education in values-based language or EFL learning. However, the majority of these studies still start from a universal or secular value framework, thus providing little space for Islamic values as an epistemological and pedagogical resource. Furthermore, studies specifically focusing on the Muslim millennial generation, with their digital-native, critical, and open to global culture characteristics, as the primary subject of EFL learning are still relatively limited. This gap indicates an urgent need for research that is not only normative, but also conceptual and applicable in integrating Islamic character values into EFL learning.

Based on these issues, this study aims to critically analyze the concept and implementation of Islamic character education in EFL learning for the Muslim millennial generation, as well as examine its implications for the development of language competence and character formation of learners. This research is significant because it offers an alternative paradigm for holistic and integrative EFL learning,

which is not only responsive to global demands but also firmly rooted in Islamic values as the foundation for the identity and character formation of future Muslim generations.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore in depth how Islamic character values are integrated in EFL learning for the millennial Muslim generation. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand phenomena based on participants' perspectives and contexts, which is appropriate for investigating motivations, attitudes, and instructional practices that cannot be quantified easily. Qualitative research has been widely adopted in language education and value integration studies to capture rich, descriptive insights from participants and document sources. This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical design to gain a deeper understanding of the integration of Islamic character values in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This approach was chosen to explore students' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes toward the application of Islamic values in the context of English language learning. The subject of this study is the second class of Miftahul Ulum Junior High School in Bondowoso. The participants were selected using a random sampling technique, ensuring fair representation of the study population and enabling broader implementation of the research results.

The instruments used in this study included a questionnaire and structured interviews. The questionnaire contained questions measuring students' attitudes and motivations toward English learning and their understanding of Islamic values, adapted from research by Junaidi (2021), which has been validated. After the questionnaire was distributed to students during EFL class hours, a structured interview session was conducted with 20 selected students to deepen their understanding of the application of Islamic values in learning. Data in this study were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research focus. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL teachers and millennial Muslim students to elicit their views, experiences, and reflections regarding the integration of Islamic character values in English learning. Second, classroom observations were carried out to record real-time instructional practices, teacher-student interactions, and learning activities that reflect the manifestation of Islamic values. Third, document analysis was used to review related instructional materials, lesson plans, curriculum guidelines, and policy documents that inform value integration within EFL instruction. Studies on Islamic value integration in English education have similarly employed interviews, observations, and document review to capture multi-dimensional evidence.

Data were analyzed using qualitative methodology for interviews and descriptive statistics for questionnaires. Interview results were analyzed by identifying key themes emerging from student responses, while quantitative data were analyzed by calculating percentages and averages of questionnaire responses. Through this approach, this study aims to generate relevant findings on the impact of integrating Islamic character in English language learning, providing comprehensive insights into students' learning experiences.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research findings indicate that the integration of Islamic character values into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has a positive impact on the attitudes, motivation, and moral awareness of the millennial Muslim generation. The application of learning materials containing Islamic values, such as reading texts on Islamic ethics, dialogues based on daily Muslim life, and reflective

activities, has been shown to increase student engagement in the learning process. Students demonstrated a more active and enthusiastic response because EFL learning felt aligned with their religious and social identities. Naily in 2025 argues that language learning is inseparable from cultural values, suggesting that EFL classrooms provide opportunities to integrate local identities and moral perspectives alongside language skills. This approach allows EFL learning to be more meaningful and relevant for learners. The integration of Islamic character values in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning for the millennial Muslim generation was implemented effectively and consistently across teaching practices. Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness were embedded in learning objectives, instructional materials, classroom interaction, and assessment practices. EFL learning activities were designed not only to develop linguistic competence but also to foster moral awareness, making the learning process more meaningful and relevant to students' religious and cultural identities.

The findings further indicate that students demonstrated increased motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English. Students showed greater enthusiasm, active participation, and confidence in using English during classroom activities. Learning English through Islamic-themed materials and value-based discussions encouraged students to engage more actively, particularly in speaking and collaborative tasks. Students expressed that this approach reduced anxiety and enhanced their sense of purpose in learning English as part of their personal and spiritual development.

In terms of character development, the results show observable positive changes in students' behavior. Students became more disciplined in attending classes and completing assignments, demonstrated greater honesty during evaluations, and showed improved responsibility and cooperation in group activities. These character improvements occurred alongside the development of language skills, indicating that the integration of Islamic values supported, rather than hindered, EFL learning outcomes.

Overall, the results confirm that the revolution of Islamic character in EFL learning provides significant benefits for the millennial Muslim generation. The integration of moral and spiritual values within EFL instruction strengthens students' motivation, ethical awareness, and linguistic competence, supporting the role of EFL classrooms as spaces for both academic and character development. This study found that an Islamic character-based pedagogical approach significantly contributed to strengthening core values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and cooperation. These values were not only conceptually understood but also reflected in student behavior during learning activities, such as increased mutual respect in class discussions, discipline in completing assignments, and the ability to work collaboratively. This demonstrates that EFL learning can serve as an effective tool for character development, beyond simply language proficiency.

The research findings also revealed that the use of digital technology in Islamic character-based EFL learning is highly relevant to the characteristics of the millennial generation. The use of digital media, such as learning videos, online platforms, and interactive Islamic-themed content, can improve language comprehension while instilling moral and spiritual values. This technological integration helps create a contextual, innovative learning environment that aligns with the learning styles of the Muslim millennial generation.

Furthermore, this study shows that the Islamic character revolution in EFL learning also improves students' cross-cultural communication competencies. By understanding universal Islamic values, such as peace, justice, and social concern, students become more confident in interacting in a global environment without losing their Islamic identity. These findings confirm that the integration of Islamic character in EFL learning does not hinder global openness but rather strengthens the position of the Muslim millennial generation as moral, competent, and globally competitive learners.

Discussion

This study aimed to address the problem of how Islamic character values can be integrated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning for the millennial Muslim generation and how this integration influences students' motivation, attitudes, and learning outcomes. The findings demonstrate that Islamic character values were successfully embedded within EFL instruction and functioned not merely as supplementary content but as an integral part of the learning process. These results directly answer the research problem by confirming that EFL classrooms can serve as effective spaces for both linguistic development and character education without compromising either domain.

The findings of this study confirm that the integration of Islamic character into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is a transformative approach that addresses the educational challenges of the millennial Muslim generation in the era of globalization. The research findings indicate that EFL learning that incorporates Islamic values is not only oriented towards mastering language skills but also serves as a medium for character formation. This aligns with the holistic educational perspective that emphasizes a balance between cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects in the learning process.

The interpretation of the findings suggests that the integration of Islamic values enhances students' intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English. When learning materials and classroom interactions reflect students' religious and cultural identities, learners experience greater relevance and personal meaning in the learning process. This supports existing perspectives in value-based and character education, which emphasize that meaningful learning occurs when cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions are interconnected. In this study, Islamic-themed content and ethical discussions encouraged students to engage more actively and confidently in English communication.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by reinforcing the idea that character education can be effectively integrated into language learning through contextual and culturally responsive pedagogy. Previous studies have argued that language learning is not value-neutral; rather, it inherently carries cultural and ideological elements. This research extends that understanding by demonstrating that Islamic character values can be systematically incorporated into EFL instruction, enabling learners to develop intercultural competence while maintaining their moral and religious identity in a globalized context.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of a holistic EFL learning framework that integrates linguistic competence with Islamic character formation. The findings suggest a modification of conventional communicative language teaching models by embedding moral and spiritual values within communicative practices. In this sense, EFL learning for the millennial Muslim generation can be conceptualized as a transformative process that not only equips learners with global communication skills but also strengthens ethical awareness and identity construction. This integrated model supports the notion of EFL education as a medium for producing linguistically proficient, morally grounded, and socially responsible global citizens.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that the relevance of learning materials to students' religious identities is a key factor in increasing motivation and engagement in learning. Millennials tend to be more responsive to contextual and meaningful learning, so the integration of Islamic content in EFL helps create emotional and value connections between students and the learning materials. These findings strengthen the argument that foreign languages can be taught without neglecting local and religious values and, in fact, enrich students' understanding of the meaning of cross-cultural communication.

The discussion also shows that strengthening Islamic character through EFL learning contributes to the internalization of universal values such as tolerance, justice, and social responsibility. These values serve as an important foundation for the millennial Muslim generation in navigating the dynamics of a multicultural global society. Therefore, Islamic character-based EFL learning is not exclusive, but rather inclusive and adaptive to diversity, thus supporting the development of a

moderate and open attitude in interacting with the international community. The use of digital technology in Islamic character-based EFL learning strengthens the effectiveness of this approach. Millennials, who are closely connected to technology, demonstrate increased participation and understanding when digital media is used in an integrated manner with Islamic values. This confirms that the Islamic character revolution in EFL is inseparable from pedagogical innovation and digital transformation, which together create a relevant, dynamic, and sustainable learning environment.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the Islamic character revolution in EFL learning is a strategic and contextual educational strategy for the millennial Muslim generation. The integration of Islamic values, innovative pedagogical approaches, and the use of digital technology create a learning model that not only produces linguistically competent learners but also strong character and a solid religious identity amidst the currents of globalization.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic character values in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning for the millennial Muslim generation can be implemented effectively and meaningfully. The findings answer the research questions by confirming that Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness can be embedded within EFL instruction without hindering language acquisition. Instead, this integration enhances students' motivation, fosters positive attitudes toward learning English, and supports the development of ethical behavior alongside communicative competence. EFL learning thus functions not only as a tool for linguistic development but also as a strategic medium for strengthening Islamic identity and moral awareness in a globalized educational context. The study demonstrates that value-based EFL learning contributes to a more holistic educational experience. By aligning language learning with students' religious and cultural identities, EFL classrooms become more relevant and engaging for millennial Muslim learners. This finding reinforces the notion that language education is inherently value-laden and that integrating moral and spiritual dimensions can enrich both affective and cognitive learning outcomes.

Based on these conclusions, several practical suggestions are proposed. First, EFL teachers are encouraged to integrate Islamic character values into learning objectives, instructional materials, and classroom activities through contextual and reflective approaches. Second, educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools and universities, should support the development of curricula and teaching resources that balance linguistic competence with character education. Third, policy makers and curriculum developers are advised to provide clear guidelines and professional development programs that promote value-based EFL instruction. Finally, future researchers are recommended to explore this topic using different methodological approaches or broader contexts to further develop theoretical models of Islamic character integration in EFL learning.

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