

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES IN EFL TEACHING STRATEGIES WITHIN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This study investigates the integration of Islamic principles into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching strategies within the Merdeka Curriculum, a student-centered educational framework in Indonesia. Recognizing the global importance of English and the ethical foundation of Islamic values, the research explores how values such as honesty, discipline, and respect can enhance EFL teaching practices. Using a qualitative approach and case study design, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and literature review. The findings show that integrating Islamic principles with the Merdeka Curriculum fosters a balanced educational environment that prioritizes both academic success and character development. Strategies like reflective practices, collaborative learning, and ethical discussions were found to effectively incorporate these values into teaching, promoting student engagement and enhancing critical thinking, moral reasoning, and language skills. The study also highlights the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum in embedding moral considerations into teaching, preparing students for academic and personal challenges. The implications suggest the need for a values-based approach to language education, with recommendations for teacher training and development of materials reflecting both linguistic and ethical goals. Future research could examine the long-term impact on students' holistic development and explore broader applications in education.

Keywords: islamic principles, efl teaching, merdeka curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The instruction of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has assumed considerable significance in the

contemporary globalized landscape, where English functions as an essential medium for communication, education, and economic exchange. Mastery of the

English language provides individuals with access to a wide array of opportunities, ranging from advanced academic pursuits to international career pathways, while also enabling active engagement in global networks (Crystal, 2003). Within this framework, EFL education extends beyond the mere acquisition of linguistic competencies; it encompasses the development of skills necessary for individuals to succeed and contribute meaningfully in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent society.

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum has been implemented as a strategic initiative to cater to the diverse educational needs of students. This curriculum prioritizes flexibility, learner-centered approaches, and the integration of character education, reflecting the broader objectives of cultivating critical thinking, creativity, and ethical values (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2022). By emphasizing holistic development, the Merdeka Curriculum aims to equip students with the skills and moral foundation necessary to navigate academic, social, and personal challenges with confidence and competence.

Islamic principles, which emphasize foundational values such as honesty (siddiq), discipline (ihtisab), respect (adab), and compassion (rahmah), are deeply aligned with the overarching goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. These core values offer a

strong moral and ethical framework that complements and enhances the academic objectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. By integrating Islamic values into EFL teaching methodologies, educators can create a holistic learning environment that not only facilitates effective language acquisition but also fosters the development of character and integrity. This approach encourages students to cultivate important personal qualities, such as honesty, discipline, and empathy, which are essential for becoming wellrounded individuals. As a result, students are not only equipped with the linguistic skills necessary for academic success but also with the ethical foundation needed to navigate personal, social, and professional challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. By embedding these Islamic principles into the teaching process, educators help empower students to grow into individuals who are not only proficient in language but also grounded in strong moral values, ready to contribute meaningfully to society.

This research investigates the influence of Islamic principles on the development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching strategies within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. The study focuses on identifying key Islamic values and examining methods for their effective integration into EFL instruction. The overarching goal is to enhance students'

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linguistic proficiency while simultaneously fostering their moral and ethical growth, aligning language education with holistic character development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is a specialized area of pedagogy dedicated to cultivating English proficiency among learners in countries where English is not the primary language. Its primary goals include the development of the four essential language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—while fostering the ability to communicate effectively in authentic, real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based

Learning (TBL), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) prioritize interactive learning, collaborative engagement, and the practical application of language skills, ensuring a comprehensive and contextually relevant learning experience.

In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum signifies a progressive shift in educational practices, emphasizing flexibility and autonomy for both educators and learners. This curriculum fosters a student-centered learning environment, allowing teaching methods to be adapted to the individual strengths, needs, and interests of students. Additionally, it

incorporates character education as a central component, aiming to balance moral and ethical development with academic excellence (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2022). By promoting holistic growth, the Merdeka Curriculum aspires to nurture students who are not only academically proficient but also socially responsible, emotionally resilient, and equipped to contribute positively to society.

Islamic education, grounded in foundational values such as justice (adl), knowledge (ilm), respect (adab), and personal integrity (akhlaq), shares a strong synergy with the principles underpinning the Merdeka Curriculum. These values advocate for the comprehensive development of

individuals by addressing their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. Within the sphere of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, Islamic principles can inform the creation of teaching strategies that harmonize ethical and moral development with language acquisition. For instance, integrating themes such as mutual respect and honesty into classroom activities fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment, promoting both linguistic proficiency and character development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research utilizes a case study approach to investigate the integration of Islamic principles into

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching strategies in schools adopting the Merdeka Curriculum. By focusing on specific educational contexts and practices, this method facilitates a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the interplay between pedagogy, curriculum design, and value-based education. The case study approach offers rich, context-sensitive insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of how ethical and moral principles can be effectively embedded within language instruction (Yin, 2018)

Data collection

The data for this study were gathered through a combination of complementary methods to ensure a robust and comprehensive analysis:

1. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL teachers and educational experts to capture detailed insights into their experiences, strategies, and perspectives regarding the integration of Islamic principles into EFL teaching practices. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual viewpoints (Kvale, 2007).
2. Classroom Observations: Direct observations of EFL classes provided firsthand evidence of how Islamic values were incorporated into teaching activities and interactions. These observations offered a real-time understanding of the practical application of these

principles within the classroom environment (Cohen et al., 2002).

3. Literature Review: A thorough review of existing scholarly literature established a theoretical foundation and contextual framework for the study. This analysis helped to situate the research within the broader discourse on the integration of Islamic values in education and language teaching (Hartley, 2008).

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to examine the data, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and themes related to the integration of Islamic principles into teaching strategies. This approach provided a systematic and organized way of exploring the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the robustness and credibility of the findings, triangulation was employed, cross-referencing data from interviews,

classroom observations, and the literature review. This process enhanced the reliability and validity of the results by confirming the consistency of the emerging themes across different data sources (Denzin, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that integrating Islamic principles into EFL teaching within the Merdeka Curriculum creates a balanced

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approach to education, addressing both academic and moral development. Islamic Values in EFL Teaching Islamic principles, including honesty, discipline, and respect, were identified as fundamental values shaping teaching strategies. Teachers demonstrated honesty by promoting open and transparent communication with students, encouraging academic integrity, and creating a culture of trust. Discipline was emphasized through well-structured, goal-oriented learning activities that encouraged students to stay focused and committed to their educational goals. Respect was nurtured by cultivating an inclusive and supportive classroom environment, where all students felt valued and encouraged to contribute (Sardar, 2017).

EFL Strategies Aligned with Islamic Values

Teachers implemented student-centered strategies that aligned with both the Merdeka Curriculum and Islamic principles. For instance, collaborative tasks were designed to foster mutual respect and promote cooperation among students, encouraging them to work together harmoniously. Role-playing activities offered students a chance to practice their language skills while simultaneously embodying values such as empathy and compassion. Furthermore, reflective practices, such as journaling, were utilized to help

students connect their learning experiences with broader moral and ethical considerations, encouraging self-awareness and personal growth (Munzir, 2023).

Impact on Students

The integration of Islamic principles had a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement in EFL classes. Lessons that aligned with their cultural and moral values enhanced the relevance and significance of their learning, helping students feel more connected and engaged in the educational process. Additionally, students exhibited not only improved linguistic abilities but also noticeable growth in their character development, illustrating the holistic advantages of this approach in fostering both academic and moral progress (Japeri, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the crucial role of Islamic principles in shaping English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching strategies within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. By incorporating core values such as honesty, discipline, and respect, educators can create a learning environment that nurtures both language acquisition and moral development. The flexibility inherent in the Merdeka Curriculum provides an ideal framework for this integration, fostering a holistic approach to

education that prepares students for success across academic, social, and personal domains.

For teaching practice, EFL educators are encouraged to embed Islamic values into their instructional strategies, with a focus on promoting integrity, discipline, and respect. Curriculum developers should prioritize the inclusion of character-building elements that reflect Islamic principles, ensuring a well-rounded approach to language learning. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of integrating Islamic principles into EFL education, particularly with regard to students' character development and language proficiency. Longitudinal studies could offer valuable insights into the sustainability and broader implications of values-based education. By further exploring this intersection between pedagogy and moral values, educators can contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world (Al-Munir, 2020).

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