

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings forth some background information about the research. It draws attention to a few key points about the study, Integrating National Characters and Islamic Values in English Language Teaching at an Integrated Islamic School: Strategies, Challenges, and Benefits. Integrating local curriculum and Pancasila learning profile in English subject in an Integrated Islamic Schools (SIT). Therefore, this section introduces the background, research questions, purposes of the study, and contribution of the study.

1.1 Background of the Research

The role of education in shaping both intellectual and moral character has never been more critical in this rapidly evolving world. In Indonesia, there are various educational institutions as the place to nurture the young generation to be an intelligent and *kaffah* generation. *Kaffah* is an Arabic word that means comprehensive, complete, or holistic. Integrated Islamic schools are present to answer this concern; they not only give the students general knowledge but also equip the students with some values that individuals should have to defeat the challenges. In a recent investigation, Azkal (2022) reported that programs integrating Islamic teachings into the curriculum have positively impacted students' character traits such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility.

This view is supported by Kasmawati et al. (2023) that the result of the study shows that the development of an Islamic character-based curriculum at the school has succeeded in creating a learning environment that encourages students to internalize Islamic values and develops superior characters, such as integrity, responsibility, cooperation, and independence. It proves that integrated Islamic schools that utilize Islamic teachings into the curriculum and instil it in their teaching and learning activities help the students to develop a tremendous Muslim character, preparing the

students to face the challenges of the real world. This recent study will focus on English language learning and teaching in an Islamic-integrated school located in Subang.

English is one of the mandatory subjects. It becomes a vital skill in navigating global opportunities. Saehu & Hanifah (2024) mentioned that English is an Indispensable global language in the globalization era, enabling individuals to communicate and participate in the global community. Integrating national character and Islamic values into language learning teaching activity presents a unique opportunity to shape globally competitive students deeply rooted in their religious and national identity. This study seeks to explore the strategies, challenges, and benefits of integrating national character and Islamic values in an ELT setting at an Integrated Islamic school, where education goes beyond mere academics and becomes a transformative tool to build students' character.

Islamic integrated schools have been developing fast in recent years in Indonesia. The schools provide the need for modernization because some people feel traditional Islamic schools do not equip students with the necessary secular skills for the modern world. Integrated schools aimed to bridge this gap by incorporating the national curriculum alongside Islamic subjects. By dissolving dichotomy, breaking down the separation between religious and general knowledge, and promoting Islam as a way of life that informs all aspects of learning. Basid (2019) reveals that Islamic education is designed to nurture the whole person, body, mind, and heart, differentiating it from Western educational models that often focus solely on intellectual development. He added that this comprehensive educational approach fosters a generation that embodies prophetic values, contributing positively to society.

Furthermore, Zubairi (2023) highlights that the Quran serves as a primary source of guidance, outlining morals and ethics that shape a believer's character and actions. This indicates a need to recognize teachers' challenges in balancing these two aspects and provide support and resources to help them navigate this complex task. Even though the teachers are Muslim and well-versed in Islamic teachings, they must be

equipped with engaging strategies and tailored approaches to integrate Islamic values into English language teaching effectively.

Islamic integrated schools offer a comprehensive education that combines academic excellence with Islamic values in line with the national characters, providing a well-rounded learning experience for students. These schools emphasize not only the mastery of academic subjects but also the development of moral and ethical behaviour. Among the various general subjects taught English holds one of the key positions as a tool for communication. As English is considered a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, it means learning English in non-English countries (Si, 2019). Indonesians learn English as EFL, so both students and the teachers are EFL learners.

In this context, both teachers and students are EFL learners, navigating the challenges of mastering the language in a setting where English is not the primary language used as a medium to communicate. Therefore, English teachers play a pivotal role as facilitators. As mentioned (Si, 2019), teachers play a leading role and the core of the class in an English learning teaching setting. In contrast to Si, Shrestha (2024) argues that teachers encourage learner autonomy by employing strategies that empower students to take control of their learning process. A broader perspective has been adopted by Anteneh & Anshu (2024), which is that teachers must adapt curricula to align with students' needs, balancing institutional requirements with individual learner interests.

This recent investigation explores integrating national characters and Islamic values in ELT. By combining two aspects into their teaching practice, this approach not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also instils moral and cultural awareness among students. The applied strategies, the emerging challenges, and the benefits of integration contribute to fostering students' holistic growth and development as versatile individuals. Shanahan & Doyle-Kent (2024) mention that modern education emphasizes lifelong learning, equipping individuals with the skill to adapt to evolving technologies and societal needs. Students are expected to become responsible citizens

who embody both religious and national ideals by instilling national characters and Islamic values.

National character, namely the profile of Pancasila learners, has six dimensions. Integrating these six dimensions will build students' character and prepare them to face challenges in the future. *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* does not contradict Islamic values. In fact, it goes hand in hand with Islamic values. The profile of Pancasila learners follows the vision and mission of the Ministry of Education and Culture as stated in the regulation of the minister of Education and Culture number 22 of 2020 concerning the strategic plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2020-2024. However, in 2019, as we know, something big happened in the world; it paralyzed most human activities on Earth.

The pandemic has attacked the world for almost three years. It has influenced most of the factors in our lives, such as business, healthcare, and education. Fauzan, Ansori, Pratama, & Hairit (2023) wrote that the worldwide COVID pandemic, which has had a severe influence on education, particularly in Indonesia, with the loss of learning and widening achievement gaps, has made this condition worse. They added that to avoid this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology established the Emergency Curriculum, a unique curriculum designed to minimize learning loss during the pandemic. Furthermore, Fauzan et al. (2023) explained that the findings are very positive in 31.5% of the schools using the emergency curriculum; the pandemic's effect on literacy and numeracy can be reduced by 73% and 86%, respectively.

This emergency curriculum is known as the Merdeka curriculum. Merdeka curriculum has this national character or Pancasila students profile. There are six characters in Pancasila students profile; faithful, devoted to the almighty God and having noble character, global competence, working together, creative, critical reasoning, and independent (Kemendikbud, 2023). The values of the national curriculum, i.e., the Merdeka curriculum, align with the implementation of coaching character in integrating Islamic schools, especially in As-Syifa boarding schools.

Islamic integrated schools provide this approach by combining the national characters and Islamic values that bring in the English learning activity. The emphasis on both religious teaching and traditional subjects appeals to parents seeking a holistic approach to their children's education. Putra & Silfiana (2023) stated that parents seek environments that foster piety, responsibility, and independence in their children. They desire their children to master both religious and general knowledge, aiming for them to become well-rounded individuals. Additionally, factors such as school location, facilities, curriculum, and the school's vision significantly influence parental choice. The reputation of the school and its alumni achievements also play a crucial role (Putra & Silfina, 2023).

However, these Islamic integrated schools demand high tuition fees. Nevertheless, the parents are willing to pay for it for the sake of their children getting the best education. They hope integrated Islamic schools that employ integrated Islamic values in their academic learning process will help them develop a strong sense of identity and value and produce a pious Muslim character. Other studies (Nafiah et al., 2022; Nugroho & Kristiawan, 2021; Suyatno, 2015) have shown that curriculum integration is one of their concern; integrated Islamic schools are recognized for their ability to combine religious teachings with academic subjects, which is seen as a significant advantage by parents. Moreover, memorization programs that focus on memorizing the Quran are particularly appealing, with a significant percentage of parents citing this as a primary reason for their choice (Nugroho et al., 2021).

Islamic boarding schools face a variety of significant problems that impact student well-being and educational outcomes, for instance, health and hygiene issues, academic challenges, social dynamics, bullying, and managerial and curriculum problems. Haflin, Agusriani, & Hartesi (2024) argue that many Islamic boarding schools, such as Sa'adatu Darain, struggle with cleanliness, particularly in a dormitory, leading to health problems like scabies and diarrhea. Additionally, the use of contaminated water sources for bathing and washing exacerbates these health risks, highlighting the need for better sanitation practices.

Another challenge is the academics. Rusda (2024) reveals that Syamsudhuha Islamic boarding school students exhibit inadequate writing skills, which hinder their academic performance in Arabic subjects. He added that contributing factors include ineffective teaching methods and a lack of resources, necessitating improvements in instructional quality and language learning environments. The challenge list goes on while these problems are significant. Researchers argue that Islamic boarding schools also provide a unique environment for character development and moral education, which can counterbalance the challenges faced (Shiddiq, Ulfatin, Imron, & Imron, 2024). Integrated Islamic boarding schools are quite different from the general boarding schools previously explained.

Previous studies (Djamdjuri et al., 2023; Rohmah & Hanifiyah, 2023; Siraj et al., 2023; Irawan, 2020) have reported that integrating national character and Islamic values in English language teaching at integrated Islamic schools involves various strategies, challenges, and benefits. This integration aims to create a holistic educational environment that nurtures students' spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions while enhancing their language skills. In addition, Lubis (2018) mentioned that the presence of an Integrated Islamic School is a new phenomenon in the form of a system of Islamic education in Indonesia. This recent study takes place in boarding schools which has never been done in the previous study mentioned. This will fill the gap in how the integration of both aspects was applied in ELT in a boarding school setting.

Integrated Islamic schools would not have developed immensely in these past years without the support from society. The development of integrated Islamic schools, particularly boarding institutions, reflects a significant evolution in educational models that harmonize Islamic teachings with contemporary curriculum. The community helped the schools evolve and elevate for all these years. They have mutual relations; the community needs the schools, and the schools contribute to society by providing good quality education and producing faithful young generations. This integration aims to produce well-rounded graduates who are proficient in both religious and secular

knowledge. Halim (2023) argues that the internalization of life values within these schools promotes multiculturalism, teaching students tolerance and respect for differences, which is essential in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Society's belief in education plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources, preparing them to face future challenges, and turning this belief into hope (Badrudin, Satori, Komariah & Kurniadi, 2023). In other words, society has a strong belief that education has an impact on someone's life, preparing them to cope with challenges and helping people gain a better future in a rapidly changing world. Integrated Islamic Schools are one of the answers to creating students who are not only good in general knowledge, especially English, but also students who have great character according to Islamic values. To achieve those goals, teachers have the critical role of providing guidance, support, and resources to help students succeed. Additionally, they must create a positive and inclusive learning environment that fosters growth and development.

Teachers and all school stakeholders have an essential role in creating the best environment for the students. The researcher believes they may face challenges in conducting all the curricula to balance integrated Islamic curriculum and national character in the ELT setting. This study aims to clarify several aspects, such as the strategies, challenges and benefits the schools face, while implying the integrated Islamic values and national character in the ELT setting. In addition, the study will explore potential solutions to overcome these challenges and ensure a successful implementation of national character and Islamic values in the ELT setting. By addressing these issues, principals and educators can better support the students in their academic and spiritual development.

There are specific problems with the integration of national characters and Islamic values in ELT. One of these is that fewer particular strategies work for the integrations. It may differ from one English teacher to another English teacher; the difference is where they teach, which might influence how they tailor the integration of both values, especially Islamic values. For instance, if an English teacher works in

public schools, they tend to ignore the Islamic values associated with English learning teaching. On the contrary, if the English teachers work in integrated Islamic schools or even in boarding schools, they are likely to promote the integration of Islamic values and national characters within their ELT activity. Even so, English teachers who work in integrated Islamic schools need to put more effort into finding the best strategies to imply integration in ELT. They need to find solutions to the challenges that might appear during their teaching practices.

1.2 Research Questions

The thesis aims to address the issue of integrating national character and Islamic values within an integrated Islamic school setting by exploring the strategies, challenges, and benefits involved. To achieve this, two interconnected research questions within the framework on how national characters and Islamic values are integrated into English language learning teaching activities are formulated. These two research questions are outlined as follows:

1. What are the English teachers' strategies to utilize for integrating national characters and Islamic values into English language teaching at an integrated Islamic school in a boarding school setting?
2. How do EFL teachers perceive the challenges and benefits of integrating national characters and Islamic values into their English language learning?

The two research questions involve qualitative data, which is collected through two different techniques: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. These collection data techniques are used to explore how the participants apply distinct strategies to integrate national character and Islamic values into their own ELT. The challenges and the benefits they encounter manifest in different forms across each classroom, and it depends on the context and dynamics. This data triangulation analysis is used to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of research findings. This approach allows cross-verifying the information from multiple perspectives, providing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the integration process.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The current research aims to explore the experiences of English teachers in an integrated Islamic school. Focusing on how national characters and Islamic values are woven into the English teaching and learning process. There are several purposes of this study, as presented as follows:

1. To explain the strategies utilized for integrating national characters and Islamic values into English language teaching at an integrated Islamic school in a boarding school setting.
2. To report the EFL teachers' perceptions on the challenges and benefits of integrating national characters and Islamic values into their English language learning.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is conducted in an integrated Islamic school setting where teachers, policy makers, and stakeholders that are involved in this institution integrate Islamic values and national characters. The research primarily focused on teaching strategies used by English teachers to promote these values while developing students' language proficiency. This research examines how elements of both national characters and Islamic values are internalized in the curriculum, learning activities, and classroom interactions.

In addition, the study explores the challenges that English teachers encounter when trying to balance the goals of English language proficiency and character building based on national characters and Islamic values. There are some factors, such as time constraints, available resources, and students' varying levels of English proficiency will be analyzed to understand how these obstacles affect the integration process. Furthermore, the study seeks to highlight the benefits of this value-based teaching approach, especially in fostering students' moral and ethical development, which is crucial in shaping well-rounded individuals who are prepared to navigate both the global and Islamic contexts of their lives.

1.5 Contribution of the Study

This current investigation extends our knowledge of the integration of national characters and Islamic values in English language teaching theoretically and practically. The following contribution will be explained in the next paragraph.

1.5.1 Theoretical Contribution

The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. First, it enriches the body of knowledge by providing insights into how these values can be harmoniously embedded in ELT practices. It fosters a deeper understanding of the impact on educational outcomes. Character building among students can be done by instilling both values in English learning teaching. It indicates that instilling both values influences the internalization of students' subconscious, and it is hoped that by doing so, students can practice it in their real lives. In addition, the present study contributes to the theoretical discourse on culturally responsive teaching by addressing the specific context of integrating Islamic teachings and national characters within language instruction. It proposes strategies that align language learning objectives with moral and cultural goals. It offers a valuable perspective for educational theorists and policymakers. Furthermore, it highlights the intersection between linguistic proficiency, ethical development, and national pride and advances the conversation about the broader purpose of education in multicultural and religiously diverse societies.

1.5.2 Practical Contribution

The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to English teachers, educational stakeholders, parents, and students. The data was collected from English teachers' perspectives on the integration of national characters and Islamic values in English language teaching. Educators will gain valuable insights into how teachers instil national characters in the classroom, the strategies they use for the integrations, the challenges they face, and the solutions they apply. Moreover, this research will

highlight the benefits of integrating both national and Islamic values, shedding light on their positive impact not only on students but also on teachers.

For students, this integration reinforces the importance of nationalism while emphasizing that being a strong Muslim protects them from negative influences as long as they apply Islamic teaching in their daily lives. The Quran cited that Allah created humans to worship Him, to please Him, and to gain the live-in hereafter. As for teachers, it highlights the need to serve as role models (*Qudwah*), and it allows the teachers to continuously improve their understanding of Islamic values and practice them inside and outside the classroom. As for parents who entrust their children to educational institutions, the study reassures them that the institutions' goals are firmly grounded in strong values, with moral development (*Akhlak*) being an essential part of the final semester assessment.

This study also offers a valuable opportunity to deepen the understanding of the effectiveness of the integration of national characters and Islamic values in boarding school settings. The research not only provides practical insights for educators, parents, students, and individuals interested in establishing similar educational institutions but also highlights the foundational role of education in shaping future generations. In addition, the findings from this research are expected to help educators create a holistic learning environment that cultivates both academic excellence and character development, ensuring that students are well-equipped to contribute to a meaningful society. To conclude, the study also serves as a resource for future researchers, enriching the discourse on integrating national character and Islamic values in education and offering a roadmap for further exploration. Ultimately, the integration of national character and Islamic values in education lays the groundwork for producing well-rounded individuals who are not only academically capable but also morally and socially responsible, ready to face the challenges of a globalized world.



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