Intercultural Communicative Competence Based Learning Model For Teaching Efl In Islamic Higher Education In 21st Century

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Abstract

The 21st century present tremendous challenges and significant opportunities to EFL policy makers and educators in Islamic Higher Education as they need to formulate and implement proper curriculum and programs. Increasingly, they are being asked to design a learning model which can promote religious value while promoting foreign language competency. This conceptual research explores the potential of developing an Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) based learning model for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Islamic higher education institutions. Drawing on existing literature in EFL pedagogy, intercultural communication, and Islamic education, the study proposes a conceptual framework for such a model. The framework emphasizes the integration of Islamic values and principles with EFL instruction to foster intercultural awareness, respectful communication skills, and critical thinking in students. Through a review of relevant literature, the study identifies key elements and learning activities that could be incorporated into the ICC-based model. This includes techniques for promoting self-awareness, fostering intercultural understanding, and developing practical communication skills in an EFL classroom. This conceptual research contributes to the field by laying the groundwork for a more comprehensive ICC-based learning model specifically tailored for Islamic higher education institutions. By bridging the gap between Islamic values and EFL pedagogy, the proposed framework offers valuable insights for educators seeking to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), EFL Teaching, Islamic Higher Education, Learning Model, Conceptual Framework, 21st Century Skills

INTRODUCTION

21st-century education is undergoing a significant transformation to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving world (Alawi & Soh., 2019; Alone, 2024). This shift emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and digital literacy (Cherbonnier et al., 2024). Responding to this global shifting, the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning is undergoing a significant transformation in response to the demands of the 21st century.

Fuelled by the rise of technology and globalization, learners today require a skillset that extends beyond traditional grammar and vocabulary acquisition (Jennings, 2023).

In EFL classrooms around the world, equipping learners with 21st century skills conducted through various practices. Studies advocate some educational institutions started integrating technology (Kuru & Zeybek, 2022), fostering collaboration and communication through project-based learning (Wijayanti & Budi, 2023), and encouraging critical thinking through discussions of real-world issues (Paschal & Gougou , 2022). Additionally, some countries are exploring cultural exchange through extracurricular activities and self-access centres, which provide opportunities for authentic language use beyond the classroom walls (Paschal & Gougou, 2022).

On the other hand, teaching EFL for 21st century in Indonesia faces particular challenges in equipping students with 21st-century communication skills. While the curriculum emphasizes grammar and vocabulary, opportunities for real-world communication practice are often limited due to the lack of real world communication and use of technology (Boy et.al, 2021). Islamic Higher Education, as one of the religious based higher education institution in Indonesia, faced not only similar problems in EFL teaching practice for 21st century like other educational institution in Indonesia, but also need to deal with several domestic challenges. The strong emphasis on religious studies can lead to a neglect of the target culture, potentially hindering students' understanding of the language's social context (Hidayati, 2017). Furthermore, EFL teachers in Islamic education institution may lack confidence in their own English proficiency, particularly when it comes to navigating cultural nuances, due to limited exposure or a focus on religious language acquisition (Pitaloka, et al, 2021). Those condition then drive Islamic higher education the real problem of pursuing the 21st century education, that is the lack of real world communication activities (Anggraini, et al, 2021). Therefore, integrating real-world interaction into EFL curriculum design is crucial for preparing Indonesian Islamic higher education students to effectively navigate the globalized world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. EFL Teaching Practice in Islamic Higher Education: Understanding the Context

Indonesia, with its growing economy and increasingly interconnected population, faces unique challenges in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching practices in the 21st century. While the importance of English proficiency is undeniable, several obstacles hinder achieving optimal learning outcomes. The teacher's lack of training in communicative language teaching methods (Hakim, 2022), teacher's inadequate technology integration skills (Setyaningsih, et.al, 2020) and problems of curriculum and assessment practices which do not promote self-directed learning skills (Ashadi, et al., 2022; Hutasuhut, et.al, 2023) are the most common problems found in EFL teaching and learning practice. Beside those basic problems, Islamic higher education institutions (IHEIs) as one of educational institutions in Indonesia faced another challenges. Play a crucial role in shaping future generations of Muslim scholars and leaders in Indonesia, learning English at Islamic Higher Education Institution cannot be equated with general higher education institution. Learning held at Islamic Religious Universities is expected to be able to instil the values of monotheism, morals, goodness and other Islamic values in order to form graduates with noble morals. Meanwhile, on the other hand, language teaching certainly cannot be separated from teaching the culture of native speakers. That is why teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is quite challenging. Teaching

practices in these institutions face unique challenges related to their focus on Islamic values and traditions. The main problem is to find the balance between religious values and target culture. Islamic higher education institution which prioritize religious studies, potentially neglecting exposure to the target culture inherent in language learning (Mulyati & Kultsum 2023). This practice can limit students' ability to engage with the broader English-speaking world. The existed curriculums might place undue emphasis on Eastern Islamic culture, neglecting the importance of understanding Western cultures within the globalized world (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2020). That is why integrating Islamic values within an EFL curriculum while promoting open-mindedness and respect for different cultures can be challenging. This situation is getting worse then with the lack of students motivation to strengthen their English. They made very limited interaction in real world communication which then hinders their development of intercultural communication skills crucial for navigating the global landscape (Susilowati, 2023).

While religious values are important, equipping students with competency to communicate in global context is needed for 21st century. Having a strong communication skills in a global context is needed to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. What students from Islamic Higher Education can do with good intercultural communication skill?. Strong communication skills allow Islamic scholars and future leaders to engage in constructive dialogue with people of other faiths, fostering peace and understanding (Singh, 2020). Effective communication also helps students in Islamic education effectively share Islamic knowledge and perspectives with a global audience. This promotes cross-cultural awareness and combats negative stereotypes (Anggaira, et.al, 2024). Students with strong global communication skills are also better equipped to contribute effectively in workplace (Susilowati, 2023). Communication skills allow students to navigate diverse workplace cultures and collaborate effectively with colleagues from various backgrounds. Finally getting exposure to different cultures can expands students' worldviews and allows students to address misconceptions about Islam and promote tolerance and understanding in a globalized world (Mahalingapa, et al, 2019). That is why, the need of intercultural competence integration in EFL curriculum should take serious concern from the stakeholders to pursuit the goal of 21st century education which promotes real world communication and global context collaboration.

The challenges faced by EFL teaching in Indonesia, particularly within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs), highlight the need for a unique learning model. While developing strong English proficiency is crucial, IHEIs must also ensure students retain their Islamic values and cultural identity. The ideal learning model would integrate Islamic values and traditions with exposure to diverse cultures within the globalized world. This balance fosters intercultural communication skills, allowing future Muslim scholars and leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue, share knowledge effectively, and contribute positively in a globalized workplace. By addressing the specific needs of IHEIs and the demands of the 21st century, a well-designed learning model can equip students with the necessary communication skills to navigate the complexities of a diverse world while staying true to their Islamic values.

B. Teaching EFL in 21st Century

The 21st century demands a new approach to education, one that equips students with the skills to thrive in a rapidly changing and interconnected world. This revamped educational landscape is characterized by a shift from rote memorization to fostering

critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation. The characteristics of 21st-century education based on recent studies are first, student-centered learning. The focus is on moving away from teacher-directed instruction towards a more student-centered approach. This empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey, fostering curiosity and a deeper understanding (Garcia et.al, 2020). Second, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (4C) (Thomas, 2022). Third, adaptation to technology. Technology is not just a delivery method; it's a powerful tool for research, collaboration, and creative expression (Haleem et.al, 2022). However, focus should remain on effective integration, not just on using technology for technology's sake (Ali, et.al, 2019). Forth, Global Classrooms and Lifelong Learning. The interconnected world necessitates a global perspective in education. Students can connect and collaborate with peers from around the world, fostering intercultural understanding (Paschal & Gougou., 2022). Additionally, 21st-century education prepares students for lifelong learning, as the ability to adapt and acquire new skills is crucial (Csenger, 2023). Fifth, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Creating inclusive learning environments that cater to all learners' needs and backgrounds is essential (Diaz, 2021). Personalized learning approaches can ensure all students are challenged and supported. These characteristics represent a significant shift in the educational paradigm. By embracing these elements, educators can empower students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, and lifelong learners, well-equipped to succeed in the 21st century.

Responding to the shifting, countries are adapting their EFL curriculums and methodologies to cater to the evolving needs of learners in a more interconnected world. Many countries are moving away from grammar-heavy approaches and prioritizing the development of communicative competence. Some countries equipping learners with the skills to use English effectively in real-world situations (Alaviyya & Yasinli, 2024). China responded 21st century by formulating China's new curriculum which emphasizes spoken English and integrates technology for interactive learning (Li, et.al 2018), another example is The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which sets a communicative competence-based standard for EFL learning across Europe (Council of Europe, 2018). The rise of technology also has revolutionized EFL teaching. Online platforms like gamified learning apps and virtual classrooms enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles (Thuraisu, 2022). Social media, podcasts, and online videos integrated in EFL learning to expose learners to real-world English in various contexts (Fang & Abdullah, 2024). Japan's "Super Global High Schools" initiative utilizes technology for collaborative learning projects with international partners (Fast, 2022), while Iran is promoting the use of mobile apps and online resources for personalized learning (Izadpanah, 2024). In order to empowering learners to become independent language users, some countries are implementing strategies to develop self-directed learning skills. They provided learning resources like online materials and apps equips students to explore the language beyond the classroom (Jennings, 2023). Self-evaluation also fostered to promote students autonomy as language learners. One example is Australia which emphasizes learner agency and provides resources for independent learning activities (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Commission (ACARA)) and Canadian curriculum which emphasizes critical thinking skills and self-reflection, encouraging learner autonomy (Canadian Council of Ministers of Education, 2019).

The current gap in EFL teaching for Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) lies in reconciling the demands of the 21st century with the unique needs of these institutions. While global education trends emphasize student-centred learning, critical

thinking, and technology integration, IHEIs must also ensure students retain their Islamic values and cultural identity. A well-designed learning model for IHEIs can bridge this gap by incorporating the strengths of 21st-century education, such as technology-aided collaboration and self-directed learning, while integrating these elements with Islamic values and exposure to diverse cultures. This approach empowers students to become not only proficient communicators but also culturally aware and responsible global citizens, fostering dialogue, knowledge sharing, and effective collaboration in a globalized world.

C. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

In today's interconnected world, effective communication transcends language proficiency. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate communication across diverse cultures.

Theoretical Framework

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) development is grounded in several key learning theories. Constructivism, as proposed by Piaget (1954), emphasizes that learners actively build knowledge through experience and interaction. ICC learning environments reflect this by promoting collaboration, exploration of cultural differences, and opportunities for reflection. Sociocultural Theory, championed by Vygotsky (1978), highlights the social context of learning and its influence through interaction. This aligns with ICC development, as collaborative activities and peer interaction are crucial for fostering intercultural understanding. Finally, Intercultural Communication Theory, as discussed by Byram (1997), underscores the significance of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for effective communication across cultures. The ICC framework itself integrates all three of these theoretical components to cultivate well-rounded ICC in learners.

Core Components of ICC

1. Knowledge

Building strong intercultural communication competence starts with knowledge. This means understanding not only your own cultural background, but also the cultures you'll be interacting with (Byram, 1997). This knowledge base encompasses several key areas: the values and beliefs that shape a culture, its customs and traditions that provide context for behavior, the communication styles employed (such as direct or indirect communication), and the social norms and etiquette that govern everyday interactions.

2. Skills

Goes beyond simply understanding different cultures. It equips individuals with a practical skillset for successful communication across cultures. This toolbox includes active listening, the ability to pay close attention and demonstrate understanding (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Empathy, seeing things from another person's perspective, is also crucial (Golubeva & Guntersdorfer, 2020). Furthermore, ICC requires the ability to adapt communication styles to different audiences (Deardorff, 2021).

3. Attitude

A key aspect of successful ICC development lies in cultivating the right attitudes. Byram (1997) emphasizes that a successful ICC learner embodies open-mindedness, respect for diversity, and a genuine desire to learn from different cultures. This translates into a curious spirit, a drive to understand viewpoints beyond one's own. It also necessitates a willingness to challenge personal biases and stereotypes that might hinder communication.

Benefits of Developing ICC

The benefits of developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) extend far beyond simply navigating cultural differences. Individuals with strong ICC possess the ability to bridge cultural divides and communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds (Deardorff, 2021). This fosters a globalized environment rich in collaboration, understanding, and cooperation. Furthermore, ICC enhances critical thinking by encouraging learners to analyze information through various cultural lenses, leading to informed decision-making and problem-solving (Byram, 1997). The positive impact of ICC extends to relationships as well. Strong ICC skills pave the way for building stronger bonds with people from different cultures, fostering collaboration and mutual understanding. The development of ICC can be nurtured in various contexts. EFL classrooms, for example, can become hubs for ICC by incorporating activities like using authentic materials, project-based learning, and virtual exchanges (Mekheimer & Fageeh, 2024; Mejia, et al, 2020; Hřebačková, 2019). The business world also recognizes the importance of ICC, with training programs focusing on cultural sensitivity, negotiation styles, and building rapport across cultures. In the realm of international relations, diplomats and professionals rely heavily on strong ICC skills to navigate complex negotiations, foster cross-cultural understanding, and ultimately, build bridges between nations.

The gap between current EFL models and the needs of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in the 21st century necessitates a novel learning model that bridges the divide between fostering intercultural communication competence (ICC) and preserving Islamic values. a well-designed ICC-based learning model which consist of 3 phases (SIP): self-culture awareness, intercultural understanding and practical communication which integrated with technology can empower students to become not only competent communicators but also responsible global citizens who can navigate the complexities of the 21st century while staying true to their Islamic identity.

METHOD

This research employed a conceptual research methodology to explore and develop a model for intercultural communicative competence (ICC) based learning in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within Islamic higher education institutions in the 21st century. The primary method will involve a comprehensive literature review that analyses existing research on ICC, EFL pedagogy, and the unique context of Islamic higher education. This review will identify key theoretical frameworks and best practices relevant to the proposed model. Additionally, the research may incorporate elements of document analysis, examining relevant curriculum documents and educational policies within the target institutions. Through critical analysis and synthesis of these sources, the research will aim to construct a robust and theoretically grounded model for ICC-based

EFL learning tailored to the specific needs and values of Islamic higher education in the contemporary globalized world.

FINDINGS

Intercultural Communicative Competence Based Learning Model for Teaching EFL in Islamic Higher Education in 21st century

Finding a way to integrate Islamic values within an EFL curriculum while promoting open-mindedness and respect for different cultures can be challenging. The possible solution is integrating the intercultural skills which can make them to acknowledge own religious and culture while explore and collaborate with other person from different religion and cultural background. Promoting intercultural understanding through curriculum activities and projects that encourage interaction and collaboration with students from different religious and cultural backgrounds may help (Aryati & Suroso, 2022). To make this happen, the technology-aided language learning by utilizing online platforms and virtual exchange programs to facilitate communication with native English speakers and learners from diverse backgrounds (Hřebačková, 2019) need to be conducted.

Based on the problems occurred in EFL teaching practice in the context of Islamic Higher education, compiled with the supported previous research and theories related to 21st century skills and intercultural communicative competence, this study proposed a learning model which integrate intercultural communicative competence and 21st century skills. Below are the key characteristics, model components and stages in applying Intercultural Communicative Competence Based Learning Model (ICCMLM) for teaching EFL for students at Islamic Higher Education in 21st century.

Key characteristics:

student-centred, exploration, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration on cultural differences, and also creativity in technology adaptation.

Model Components:

1. Needs Analysis and Goal Setting:
- Identification: Gauge students' understanding of Islamic teachings on respecting diversity and interacting positively with people from different backgrounds. This ensures our curriculum aligns with their existing religious values. Evaluate their existing language skills and prior exposure to intercultural communication concepts. This helps us build upon their current knowledge and avoid redundancy. It's important to consider if students plan to pursue further studies or careers involving intercultural interactions. This allows us to tailor learning objectives to their future needs. Identifying preferred learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) allows us to design activities that cater to diverse learners and maximize their engagement.
- Content and Materials: Integrate quotes from Islamic scholars emphasizing the importance of respecting diversity and promoting understanding, show short videos showcasing diverse communication style from various cultures, discuss how Islamic historical figures interacted with people from different cultures.
- Interactive Online Activities: Utilize online platforms with activities that allow students to practice communication in different cultural contexts.

2. Learning Activities:
- Self-culture awareness: Engage students with leading questions related to their own culture. Starting with what they know is always better before introducing them to the new information.
- Intercultural understanding: Design activities that require students to analyse information from different cultural perspectives and challenge stereotypes, both from Muslim perspective and western or other countries.
- Productive Communication: Employ project-based learning, simulations, and discussions that encourage interaction and collaboration between Muslim and people around the world.
- Integrate Technology: Utilize online platforms for virtual exchanges and communication like Tandem, HelloTalk, Discord, Facebook, iTalki, iNext Generations, etc, discussing cross cultural understanding, world issue, etc with native speakers from diverse backgrounds

3. Assessment:
- Self-Assessment: Encourage students to maintain reflective journals on how their Islamic values inform their interactions with people from different backgrounds.
- Performance-Based Assessments: Students research cultural practices in different cultures, highlighting both similarities and differences..
- Observation: Observe students' behavior and communication during group discussions. Focus on aspects like their willingness to listen to different perspectives.

Below is the example of implementation procedures of intercultural communicative competence for teaching EFL in Islamic higher education

Topic: Introducing Self and Others in an Intercultural Context

Target Learners: Students in an Islamic higher education institution learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Time Allotment: This lesson plan can be adapted depending on the available time, but it can be delivered in 1-2 sessions (100 minutes each).

Materials:
- Whiteboard or Projector
- Markers or Pens
- Self-reflection prompts
- Short videos showcasing diverse greetings and introductions
- Case studies or simulations
- Role-playing scenarios
- Collaborative project materials (e.g., presentation tools, video editing software)
- Online platforms for virtual exchange

Procedures

1. Before Phase
- Identify Learner Needs: Assess their understanding of Islamic teachings on respecting diversity and proper etiquette for introductions, Gauge their existing English skills and knowledge of greetings and introductions in their own language(s), Consider if students plan to pursue further studies or careers where interacting with people from different cultures is necessary.
- Set Learning Objectives: explain the objective of the meeting that students can explain an Islamic principle related to respectful introductions (e.g., importance of greetings),

Students can identify their own cultural greetings and introduction customs, Students can demonstrate basic knowledge of greetings and introductions in different cultures, and Students can introduce themselves and others using appropriate English language structures and vocabulary.

- Choose Content and Materials: Integrate quotes from Islamic scholars emphasizing the importance of respecting cultural differences and proper introductions, Utilize short videos showcasing diverse greetings and introductions from various cultures, Discuss how Islamic historical figures interacted with people from different cultures during introductions, Utilize online platforms that provide interactive activities for practicing introductions in different cultural contexts.
- Develop Learning Activities: Design scenarios where students role-play introductions in different cultural settings, emphasizing appropriate greetings and communication styles based on Islamic principles (e.g., using respectful titles, body language), Facilitate discussions on Islamic teachings about respectful greetings and overcoming communication challenges during introductions, Students create charts comparing greetings, introductions, and communication styles in different cultures, highlighting similarities and differences.

2. During Phase
- Self-culture awareness:
    1. **Warm-up Activity (5 minutes):** Begin with a brainstorming session around greetings. Ask students to share different greetings used in their own cultures and languages.
    2. **Self-Reflection Prompts (5 minutes):** Distribute self-reflection prompts or utilize a personality assessment tool suitable for the Islamic context. Examples of prompts:
        - "Describe the typical way you greet someone in your culture."
        - "Do you have specific body language, appropriate titles when greeting someone?"
        - "Do you know how to greet someone in other cultures? (greetings, gesture)"
- Intercultural Understanding:
    1. **Multicultural Greetings Videos (5 minutes):** Introduce students to greetings and introductions in different cultures through short videos or interactive online platforms.
    2. **Cultural Practices and Norms (10 minutes):** Explore cultural practices, customs, communication styles, and social norms related to introductions in various cultures. Utilize diverse materials like texts, images, or presentations.
    3. **Case Studies or Simulations (15 minutes):** Present case studies or simulations that highlight intercultural communication challenges during introductions. Students analyze the scenarios and suggest solutions based on Islamic principles and cultural sensitivity.
- Productive communication:
    1. **Collaborative Projects (35 minutes):** Divide students into diverse groups and assign collaborative projects related to introductions. This could involve creating an intercultural dialogue through role play.
    2. **Real-World Scenarios (15 minutes):** Connect language learning to real-world scenarios by have a class video call session with foreigners through digital platform or posting a video of greeting on social media personal account/ group.

3. After Phase: Assessment and Reflection
    - Self-Assessment: Provide rubrics that outline specific ICC skills related to introductions

- Performance-Based Assessments: Students research and present on traditional greetings and introductions in a chosen culture.
- Teacher Observation: Observe students' behavior of student use of appropriate greetings

DISCUSSION

This study's findings concerning the need for an ICC-based learning model in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) align with previous research on the importance of integrating intercultural communication skills (Byram, 1997) in the 21st century (Alawi & Soh., 2019). Similar to studies highlighting the limitations of grammar-heavy approaches (Alaviyya & Yasinli, 2024), our findings suggest that IHEIs require a model that fosters real-world communication and exposure to diverse cultures. Furthermore, our model's emphasis on student-centered learning (Garcia et.al, 2020) and technology integration (Haleem et.al, 2022) resonates with current trends in EFL education. The proposed model's foundation in Constructivism (Piaget, 1954) aligns with the importance of active learning and exploration in ICC development. Similarly, the model's focus on collaborative activities reflects the influence of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) by promoting interaction and peer learning. In conclusion, this study's findings build upon existing research and theoretical frameworks, proposing a novel ICC-based learning model specifically tailored to address the unique challenges and needs of EFL teaching within Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research investigated the need for a revised English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning model specifically designed for Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in the 21st century. The findings revealed that existing models often lack a strong focus on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) development, hindering graduates' ability to navigate the complexities of global communication.This study proposed a novel ICC-based learning model that incorporates Constructivism, Sociocultural Theory, and Intercultural Communication Theory into its framework. This model emphasizes student-centered learning, collaborative activities, technology integration, and exposure to diverse cultures. By fostering critical thinking, cultural awareness, and communication skills, this model aims to equip IHEI graduates with the necessary tools to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of this model in real-world classroom settings. However, this study contributes significantly to the field of EFL education in IHEIs by proposing a framework that bridges the gap between Islamic values, intercultural communication, and the demands of 21st-century education.

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