



# THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CULTIVATING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Zainuddin\*

Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo, Indonesia

Email: [zainuddintutik@gmail.com](mailto:zainuddintutik@gmail.com)

## Abstract:

*English language learning serves not only as a tool for global communication but also as a medium for fostering religious moderation among university students. This study aims to analyze the role of English language learning in instilling values of religious moderation, such as tolerance, openness, and respect for diversity. Using a qualitative approach, this research involves classroom observations, analysis of teaching materials, and interviews with lecturers and students from several Islamic universities. The findings indicate that the use of multicultural-based teaching materials, inclusive communication strategies, and cross-cultural discussions in English language learning significantly contribute to students' understanding and practice of religious moderation. Additionally, the communicative approach in English language teaching encourages students to think critically, understand different perspectives, and avoid exclusivist religious attitudes. Therefore, integrating religious moderation values into English language learning can be an effective strategy for shaping moderate character within academic environments.*

**Keywords:** English Language, Religious Moderation, Education, Multiculturalism, Tolerance

## Abstrak:

Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat komunikasi global, tetapi juga sebagai media untuk memupuk moderasi agama di kalangan mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moderasi agama, seperti toleransi, keterbukaan, dan penghargaan terhadap keberagaman. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan observasi kelas, analisis materi ajar, dan wawancara dengan dosen serta mahasiswa dari beberapa universitas Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan materi ajar berbasis multikultural, strategi komunikasi inklusif, dan diskusi lintas budaya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris secara signifikan berkontribusi pada pemahaman dan praktik moderasi agama di kalangan mahasiswa. Selain itu, pendekatan komunikatif dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris mendorong mahasiswa untuk berpikir kritis, memahami berbagai perspektif, dan menghindari sikap eksklusivis agama. Oleh karena itu, mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moderasi agama dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dapat menjadi strategi efektif untuk membentuk karakter moderat di lingkungan akademik.

**Kata Kunci:** Bahasa Inggris, Moderasi Agama, Pendidikan, Multikulturalisme, Toleransi

## INTRODUCTION

English has long been a global language of communication, used across various fields, including education, diplomacy, and cross-cultural interactions (Aljarelah, 2024). In the era of globalization, proficiency in English serves not only as a linguistic skill but also as a means to understand and engage with diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives (Sawalmeh & Dey, 2023). In the context of higher education, learning English can be an effective tool in shaping an inclusive mindset and fostering religious moderation (Shofiyuddin et al., 2023). Religious moderation, which emphasizes values such as tolerance, openness, and respect for differences,

\*Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [zainuddintutik@gmail.com](mailto:zainuddintutik@gmail.com)

has become increasingly important in addressing the challenges of diversity and the potential for ideological conflicts in society (Yana et al., 2024).

Education plays a strategic role in fostering religious moderation, particularly among university students who are in the critical phase of developing their analytical thinking and social identity. In academic settings, English language learning often involves multicultural content, cross-cultural discussions, and critical thinking skills that enable students to explore different perspectives (Amirovich et al., 2021). Therefore, integrating the values of religious moderation into English language learning can help students understand the importance of peaceful coexistence while equipping them with effective communication skills to express their ideas in a polite and respectful manner.

However, challenges remain in optimizing the role of English language learning in promoting religious moderation (Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). Many educational institutions have not systematically integrated the concept of religious moderation into their English language curricula, resulting in a learning process that focuses primarily on linguistic aspects without considering the social and humanitarian values embedded within it (Taufiqi et al., 2024). Additionally, a lack of awareness among both lecturers and students regarding the urgency of religious moderation in foreign language learning presents another challenge (Sholeh et al., 2022). Therefore, further research is needed to explore how English language teaching approaches can be developed to effectively instill the values of religious moderation within academic environments.

This study aims to analyze the role of English language learning in fostering religious moderation among university students. Using a qualitative approach, this research will examine how teaching materials, instructional methods, and classroom interactions in English courses contribute to shaping inclusive, tolerant, and open attitudes toward diversity. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for educators and policymakers in designing English language learning strategies that not only focus on linguistic competence but also on character development, particularly in cultivating the moderation necessary for life in a multicultural society.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to analyze the role of English language learning in fostering religious moderation among university students (Priya, 2021). Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, and an analysis of teaching materials used in English language courses at several Islamic higher education institutions. Observations were conducted to examine how teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and instructional materials contribute to students' understanding of religious moderation values. Meanwhile, interviews aimed to explore the experiences, perspectives, and understanding of both students and lecturers regarding the integration of moderation values in English language learning.

Data analysis was carried out using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques (Alimron et al., 2023). The data obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis were categorized based on key

themes such as tolerance, openness, and respect for differences in English language learning. The validity of the data was ensured through source and methodological triangulation to confirm the accuracy of the findings (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). The results of this analysis are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which English language learning contributes to religious moderation and to offer recommendations for educators on strategies to integrate moderation values into English language teaching.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Integration of Religious Moderation Values in English Language Learning

English language learning in Islamic higher education institutions is not only aimed at improving students' linguistic skills but also plays a role in shaping moderate character (Puspitasari et al., 2024). Based on Banks' Multicultural Education theory, education should reflect cultural diversity and inclusive values (Vavrus, 2023). Classroom observations indicate that lecturers have implemented this principle by using teaching materials that promote pluralism and tolerance. For instance, students are encouraged to read and discuss texts depicting intercultural interactions and social diversity.

Interviews with several lecturers revealed that they deliberately select teaching materials that incorporate moderation values. One lecturer stated:

*"I often use texts that discuss the lives of Muslims in Western countries or compare the concept of tolerance in Islam with other cultures. This helps students see how Islamic values of moderation can be applied in a broader context."* (Interview with Lecturer A, February 15, 2025)

According to Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory, language is not just a tool for communication but also a means of reproducing ideology and social values. (Pešić, 2022) A review of syllabi and teaching materials shows that some textbooks already contain inclusive content, although some remain neutral. Therefore, the role of lecturers is crucial in guiding discussions and providing additional insights related to religious moderation in English language learning.

Thus, integrating religious moderation values in English language learning can be achieved through the selection of relevant teaching materials, teaching strategies that encourage critical thinking, and institutional support in providing appropriate learning resources. (Sholeh et al., 2022) These efforts will strengthen students' understanding of religious moderation and enhance their ability to communicate effectively in multicultural environments.

### The Role of Teaching Methods in Instilling Moderation

The teaching methods employed by lecturers play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward moderation. According to Richards & Rodgers' Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory, effective language learning should be communication- and interaction-based. (Bhagwani Hemnani & others, 2023) Observations show that this approach has been implemented through activities such as group discussions, presentations, and text analyses that encourage students to understand different perspectives. One student shared:

*"In our English class, we are often asked to discuss social and cultural issues from different countries. This helps me understand different perspectives and appreciate diversity more."* (Interview with Student B, February 12, 2025)

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that language learning is influenced by social interactions and the surrounding environment. (Alkhudiry, 2022) Observations indicate that students who frequently engage in discussions and debates with diverse perspectives tend to develop a more inclusive attitude. Documentation of classroom discussions shows that students have begun to use more inclusive and diplomatic language when expressing their opinions.

Therefore, the implementation of communication-based, dialogue-driven, and interactive teaching methods needs to be further developed in English language learning. Lecturers can adapt various teaching techniques that not only focus on language acquisition but also cultivate students' ability to engage with social and religious differences in a moderate and inclusive manner.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Implementation**

Despite various efforts to integrate religious moderation values into English language learning, several challenges remain. According to Giroux & Penna's Hidden Curriculum theory, social values are often not explicitly taught in formal curricula but are embedded in daily pedagogical practices. (Kärner & Schneider, 2023) Some lecturers feel that their primary responsibility is to teach linguistic skills, making them less focused on the social and moderation aspects of learning. One lecturer admitted:

*"I want to incorporate the concept of religious moderation into my teaching, but sometimes I struggle to find an appropriate way to do so without disrupting the primary goal of learning English."* (Interview with Lecturer C, February 18, 2025)

Additionally, Kuh's Student Engagement theory suggests that students' level of participation in learning is influenced by the relevance of the material to their experiences. (Parrott, 2024) Interviews with students indicate that not all of them share the same interest in religious moderation issues. Documentation of students' reflections shows that only a small portion recognize the significance of the connection between language learning and religious moderation.

To address these challenges, a more systematic approach is needed to integrate religious moderation into English language learning. Higher education institutions can organize training programs for lecturers to enhance their understanding of religious moderation and how to apply it in language teaching. (Taufiqi et al., 2024)

### **Recommendations for Developing Moderate English Language Learning**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the integration of religious moderation values into English language learning.

First, there is a need for the development of teaching materials that explicitly embed religious moderation values. According to Brinton, Snow, & Wesche's (1989)

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) theory, teaching materials should include social topics relevant to students' lives. Higher education institutions can develop learning modules containing texts, exercises, and case studies related to pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and tolerance in various contexts. One lecturer suggested:

*"I believe it is crucial to have textbooks that directly address moderation values. These could serve as a guide for both lecturers and students."* (Interview with Lecturer D, February 20, 2025)

Second, the implementation of dialogue- and interaction-based teaching methods should be strengthened. According to Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence theory, language learning should equip students with cross-cultural communication skills. (Khan et al., 2023) Lecturers can increasingly utilize strategies such as debates, role-plays, and case-based discussions to familiarize students with respectful communication in diverse settings. Documentation of classroom learning outcomes indicates that more interactive classes produce students who are more reflective in their critical thinking about social and diversity issues.

With these measures, English language learning can become a strategic instrument in developing students who are not only linguistically proficient but also possess a moderate and inclusive attitude toward religion and social life.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the role of English language learning in fostering religious moderation among students in Islamic higher education institutions. Through inclusive teaching materials, interactive methods, and institutional support, English courses can cultivate students' awareness of pluralism, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue. Lecturers play a key role in selecting relevant materials and facilitating discussions that encourage critical thinking about religious and cultural diversity. However, challenges remain, such as balancing linguistic objectives with ethical values and varying levels of student engagement. Addressing these issues requires systematic integration of moderation values, professional development for lecturers, and the use of interactive teaching approaches.

Integrating religious moderation into English language learning can shape students who are both linguistically proficient and socially inclusive. By fostering critical thinking and intercultural communication, language education serves as a bridge for students to engage in global interactions while upholding ethical and religious principles. Higher education institutions should further develop strategies and curricula that strengthen the role of language learning in promoting religious moderation, ensuring its long-term impact on student character development.

## REFERENCES

- Alimron, A., Syarnubi, S., & Maryamah, M. (2023). Character Education Model in Islamic Higher Education. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(3), 3334–3345.
- Aljarelah, A. K. (2024). Language and International Communication the Impact of Language on International Understanding and Diplomatic Relations. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, 6(06), 144–175.

- Alkhudiry, R. (2022). The Contribution of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in Mediating L2 Knowledge Co-Construction. *Theory \& Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)*, 12(10).
- Amirovich, K. S., Zamirovich, G. E., Lutpullayevna, A. F., Nabiyevna, I. Z., & Saliyevna, S. D. (2021). Cross-cultural context of English language teaching. *Annals of the Romanian Society for Cell Biology*, 25(2), 3737–3750.
- Bans-Akutey, A., & Tiimub, B. M. (2021). Triangulation in research. *Academia Letters*, 2(3392), 1–7.
- Bhagwani Hemnani, B. M., & others. (2023). *The Development of Oral Interaction: The Use of Functional Language to Achieve Communicative Efficiency in the EFL Classroom*.
- Kärner, T., & Schneider, G. (2023). A scoping review on the hidden curriculum in education: Mapping definitory elements for educational theory building.
- Khan, I. U., Ahmed, A., & Saeed, K. (2023). Analyzing the models of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and constructivist EFL pedagogy: A review study. *Journal of Communication and Cultural Trends*, 5(1), 128–147.
- Parrott, A. S. (2024). *Perceptions of the Impact of Social Media on College Student Engagement at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. Jackson State University.
- Pešić, M. (2022). Critical discourse analysis as a critical social study: Norman Fairclough's approach. *Политичка Реџуја*, 4(2022), 89–113.
- Priya, A. (2021). Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(1), 94–110.
- Puspitasari, D., Khasanah, N., Nofianto, N., Rosyid, O. A., & Maulida, C. (2024). Integrating Religious Moderation Into English Learning Materials: A Narration of Two Teachers. *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 10(1), 29–45.
- Rahmadi, R., & Hamdan, H. (2023). Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia. *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora*, 21(1), 59–82.
- Sawalmeh, M. H., & Dey, M. (2023). Globalization and the increasing demand for spoken English teachers. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 4(2), 47–60.
- Shofiyuddin, A., Khoiriyah, S., & Sa'adillah, R. (2023). Building Tolerance And Balance: A Systematic Literature Review On Religious Moderation Among Students In Higher Education. *Journal of Islamic Civilization*, 5(2), 123–137.
- Sholeh, M. B., Ahsin, N., Alany, Z., & Fatimah, F. (2022). The integration of religious moderation values in English language teaching in madrasah. *International Conference on Madrasah Reform 2021 (ICMR 2021)*, 178–185.
- Taufiqi, M. A., Purwanto, M. B., & others. (2024). Promoting Religious Moderation through English Language Teaching: Strategies and Challenges in Islamic Educational Settings. *ETERNAL (English Teaching Journal)*, 15(2), 192–202.
- Vavrus, M. (2023). James Banks: Preeminent Scholar of Multicultural Civic Education. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Educational Thinkers* (pp. 1–18). Springer.
- Yana, H. H., Andrianto, D., Nawawi, M. L., Sudrajat, W., Kurniawan, W., & Khusnia, U. (2024). MODERATED COEXISTENCE: EXPLORING RELIGIOUS

TENSIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF PEACE, JUSTICE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS. *Raudhah Proud To Be Professionals: Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah*, 9(1), 68–82.