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## Contextualizing Islamic Traditions in English Language Teaching at Indonesian Islamic Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

English language teaching (ELT) in the context of Indonesian Islamic higher education has been particular and little known. The spirit of interconnecting ELT and Islamic tradition has given birth to the concept of dual tasks suggesting the practitioners to teach English and preach Islam. The practitioners are faced with strategic efforts to contextualize Islamic traditions into ELT. By examining six State Islamic higher education located in Lombok, Java, and Sumatera as the main contexts, this study explores issues related to the English teachers' dual tasks and their practiced strategies of contextualizing Islamic traditions into their teaching activities. Narrative inquiry was employed to explore those issues as they are closely related to the participants' life experiences as English teachers at Indonesian Islamic higher education. This study concludes that the participants' dual tasks are supported by theological narratives, particularly that of the Islamic propagation argument, and by academic narratives highlighting scientific distinction and knowledge integration. Further, the contextualization of Islamic tradition in ELT is polarized in the explicit mode narratives, referring to the strategies directly related to ELT, and the implicit mode narratives which cover the strategies indirectly connected to ELT. The findings highlight the intricate interaction between ELT and Islamic tradition within the realm of Indonesian higher education, thereby indicating potential pathways for subsequent research endeavors and pedagogical enhancements.

**Keywords:** Dual tasks; Indonesian Islamic higher education; Narrative inquiry; Particular experience

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## 1. Introduction

The context of English language learning is general and specific based on the learning objectives to be achieved. In the general context, the purpose of learning is to fulfill a variety of learner needs that include linguistic, affective, cognitive, and social needs (Renandya and Jacobs, 2021). In specific contexts, such as Islamic educational institutions, English language practitioners seek to fulfill learners' spiritual needs (Irwansyah and Nurgiyantoro, 2019), in addition to the various needs mentioned in the general context. This research is directed at English language learning in Islamic educational institutions under a particular context, especially in Islamic Higher Education (hereafter PTKI).

Several scholars have reported on the particularities of Islamic educational institutions. Tan and Kasmuri (2007) highlighted the dual needs of madrasas in Singapore, namely the need to fulfill high academic performance and the need to produce religious people who are adaptive to the modern world, secular state, and pluralistic society. Meanwhile, Ihsan et al. (2021) noted the dual burden phenomenon of Islamic schools in Indonesia, namely the burden of meeting the demands of the national curriculum and the burden of running a religious curriculum. Both studies tend to point to the particularity of Islamic education institutions at the macro level. For this reason, further research at the micro level, such as at the learning scope of certain courses or subjects, needs to be carried out. This micro-level research is believed to contribute to the literature because it examines the practice of contextualizing Islamic traditions, as a marker of the particularity of Islamic educational institutions, in learning English, which Tan and Kasmuri (2007) categorized as a secular subject instead of a religious subject.

This research is based on three arguments. First, the labeling of English as a secular subject seems less relevant in the context of Islamic educational institutions, because English is taught by practitioners who seek to fulfill the spiritual needs of learners. Secondly, English practitioners in Islamic educational institutions carry out dual tasks, namely teaching and

preaching. It is believed that preaching is not attached to a particular profession, but rather that all professions have the task of preaching according to their respective contexts. Third, English language practitioners in Islamic educational institutions are believed to have carried out these dual tasks explicitly by using teaching materials containing Islamic teachings, and/or implicitly through classroom routines.

In the global landscape of English language learning, contextualizing Islamic traditions with the three arguments mentioned above has not received much attention from scholars. This phenomenon tends to indicate two things. First, the practice of contextualization is still a particular experience. Second, the contextualization experience comes from expanding circle countries, or countries that place English as a foreign language (Tajeddin and Pakzadian, 2020), which from a postcolonial perspective tend to be vulnerable to Western hegemony (Phan, 2017). As a result, in the context of power struggles, the contextualization experience tends to be a marginal practice. Based on the above arguments, it is important to conduct a narrative inquiry study. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research used to describe little-known phenomena or experiences that are likely marginalized (Lyons and LaBoskey, 2002). The study was guided by two research questions: (1) how do English practitioners at PTKI respond to their dual role as language teachers and preachers of religious teachings? (2) how do English practitioners at PTKI contextualize Islamic traditions in English language learning?

## 2. Literature review

Fang (2018) notes the massive use of English in global contexts by non-native speakers who in addition to using English for global purposes also have local or particular communication needs. This phenomenon has given rise to the phenomenon of glocalization or glocalized ELT practices or the accommodation of local values, practices, and terms into English language learning. Except that, the phenomenon of glocalization has resulted in the fading of the dichotomy between native English

speakers and non-native English speakers, the global standardization of one particular variety of English, and the uniformity of English learning methodologies. the likely marginalized community (Lyons and LaBoskey, 2002). The study was guided by two research questions: (1) how do English practitioners at PTKI respond to their dual role as language teachers and preachers of religious teachings? (2) how do English practitioners at PTKI contextualize Islamic traditions in English language learning? At this point, learning English as a foreign language that is based on Islamic values, traditions and practices can be seen as a manifestation of the phenomenon of glocalised ELT practices. It is against this context that relevant theories related to Islamic education and identity in English language learning are presented.

## 2.1 Islamic education

The nature of Islamic education refers to educational activities that are oriented to actualize the teachings and values of Islam. Islamic education is a system based on, imbued with, and developed for Islamic teachings and values (Muhaimin, 2009). Islamic education is built on three main concepts: *tarbiyyah*, *ta'dib*, and *ta'lim*. *Tarbiyyah* focuses on aspects of *tawhid*, oneness of God, and worship, while *ta'dib* boils down to aspects of *muamalah* or ethics in social and political relations. *Tarbiyyah* and *ta'dib* are the main objectives of Islamic education, both of which are achieved through *ta'lim* or teaching. Different interpretations of the conception of *talim* have given birth to two main traditions in Islamic learning, namely *salafi* and liberal. The *salafi* tradition accepts the instrumental aspects of technology produced by modern thoughts, but rejects the epistemological aspects that prioritize rationality, humanism, and individual autonomy. Meanwhile, the liberal tradition suggests critical teaching characterized by critical understanding, rational thinking, reflective education, gender equality, and contextualization of religious teachings. However, the *salafi* tradition and the liberal tradition are not an exclusive dichotomy, but are interrelated. Both

traditions have influenced educational pedagogy in the Islamic world (Saada, 2018).

Alkouatli (2018) suggests two other important concepts related to contemporary Islamic education, namely internalization and contextualization. The first concept, internalization, is related to the metaphor of the Prophet Muhammad as the walking Qur'an, which is based on Aisha's (peace be upon her) statement that the Prophet's character is the Qur'an. This means that the Prophet Muhammad had internalized the principles contained in the Qur'an into his words and actions. The second concept, contextualization, is based on the postulate that the purpose of education is not limited to the presentation of knowledge or information to learners. More than that, education must be aimed at developing the individual awareness of learners regarding the context of the surrounding culture. For this reason, students need to be equipped with contextual knowledge and skills so that they can work and take part in society. Both concepts imply the need for Muslim educators to transmit and actualize Quranic principles into a variety of instructional variables, such as teaching materials and learning methods, and into a variety of educational taxonomies that include affection, cognition, and psychomotor. Another implication is that Muslim teachers need to find creative ways to express and actualize Islamic teachings and traditions in a plural and heterogeneous society.

Qomar (2012) notes the strategic role of PTKI in constructing Islamic religious thoughts amid contemporary international issues. Scholars and thinkers at PTKI are believed to have been responsive to the challenges of modernization and globalization through understanding and interpreting Islamic teachings in the context of space and time. In the process of producing thoughts aimed at responding to contemporary international issues, Muslim scholars at PTKI tend to rest on three foundations, namely reasoning from a Western perspective, mastery of an Islamic perspective based on the Qur'an and *sunnah*, and understanding of the perspective of Indonesian culture. Thoughts based on

these three perspectives are then published for public testing and verification.

## **2.2 Identity in English language teaching**

Teng (2019) mentions identity as one of the important variables in foreign language learning. This is mainly because it opens up the possibility for learners to reconstruct their identity. Identity itself is understood as the way learners see themselves and their relationship with society. It is said that identity is dynamic, interactive and constructed based on the learning context presented. On the other hand, learners' identity is an entity that develops and is not fixed. In the context of foreign language learning, learners will bring their life histories, including identity and culture, into the classroom. These life histories then interact with the foreign life histories inherent in the English language. This interaction opens up opportunities for learners to modify their identity or perspective on themselves and their relationship with society. Identity is ultimately historically and socially formed. This kind of identity will affect the results and effectiveness of foreign language learning. For this reason, foreign language teachers need to maximize the role of historical and social contexts in order to get the expected projection of learner identity.

Learner identity is a key driver in the context of learning English as a foreign language. It is believed that foreign language learning itself is a process of negotiation and navigation between the initial identity and the new identity. In learning English as a foreign language, learners will, consciously or unconsciously, negotiate the initial identity with the new identity. At this point, identity becomes an evolving variable and open to change. Ultimately, the changes that occur will be able to positively or negatively affect English learning outcomes (Teng, 2019).

Regarding the relationship between Islamic identity and English language learning, Azmi et al. (2021) assert that English language learning can be designed to strengthen Islamic values such as respect, self-esteem, and cooperation. With the

support of an Islamic school environment, English learning is less likely to have a negative impact on the formation of learners' Islamic identity. Hence, ELT exhibits the potential to fortify prescribed Islamic principles.

## **3. Methodology**

This research applied a narrative inquiry, which is a type of qualitative research that reveals the life experiences, unique perspectives, and deep understanding of an individual or group of people. This type of research is commonly used to voice the perspectives of individuals or groups that are seen as having a marginalized position or voice. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) assert that narrative inquiry reveals personal observation or experiences. It, thus, strengthens the dimensions of realism, authenticity, humanity, personality, emotions, views, and values contained in a particular situation. This type of research tends to be appropriate for the social sciences, and now places personal experience or life history as an entry point to better understand the life of a person or group of people. Life history then becomes an approach to examine the reactions, responses, interpretations, inside views, or autocriticism of a person or group of people towards the phenomena of their world (Bungin, 2015). In ELT context, Suryana et al., (2021) applied narrative inquiry to explore English teachers' perception in such a specific context as Covid-19. So, narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research that provides in-depth information about the unique experiences or perspectives of individuals or groups of people.

### **3.1 Procedure and participants**

Regarding the narrative inquiry procedure, the researchers adopted the steps proposed by Barkhuizen et al. (2014): contacting, taking inventory, sending notifications, and conducting interviews. The researchers contacted the potential participants by phone or e-mail and explained the purpose of the study; took inventory of willing English language practitioners; sent

initial notifications to participants via offline communication tools; and conducted semi-structured interviews face-to-face with open-ended questions. The interview questions focused on two main themes, namely on the double duty as an English practitioner at PTKI and on the practitioners' experiences in contextualizing Islamic traditions into English language learning. Demographic information was sought first, followed by open-ended questions regarding personal information, affiliation, teaching experience, the importance of English for a PTKI, English teaching as a symbol of modernity of a PTKI, the notion of English as a secular subject, PTKI as a particular landscape of ELT, the necessity of accommodating the uniqueness of PTKI into ELT, and the practitioners' experiences in contextualizing Islamic traditions into English learning. More concrete questions were also applied such as: (1) have you ever incorporated Islamic values or traditions into teaching materials? (2) have you ever incorporated Islamic values or traditions into the learning process (classroom routines)? (3) besides teaching materials and learning process, are there any other schemes or strategies that you have done to incorporate Islamic values or traditions? and (4) do you feel morally obliged to introduce or teach Islamic values into English learning? The above list of questions is a practical guide only. Other questions that are spontaneous but relevant to the two major themes of the research questions are still considered as part of the interview questions. All interviews of the participants in this study were recorded and transcribed.

The research participants were 6 practitioners selected based on their easy availability and accessibility to the researchers. They teach English at four different Indonesian state Islamic higher education (PTKIN) located on the islands of Lombok, Java, and Sumatra; 2 participants from State Islamic University (UIN) of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, Pekalongan; 1 participant from State Islamic University (UIN) of Mataram, Lombok; 1 participant from State Islamic University (UIN) of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta; and 2 participants from State

Islamic Institute (IAIN) of Metro, Lampung.

The first participant was SF who has been teaching in the Tadris English (hereafter TBIG) Study Program at K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University (hereafter written as UIN Gus Dur) for more than a decade. At the time of data collection, SF served as secretary of the Tadris TBIG Study Program. UIN Gus Dur has the vision to become a superior Islamic university in the development of science for humanity based on national culture. One of the visions proclaimed is to develop and produce knowledge based on the harmonization of science and religion through research and scientific publications at the national and international levels ((Maghfur et al., 2022) <https://www.uingusdur> With its inherent role and position, SF is a stakeholder who needs to describe and implement the vision and mission of UIN Gus Dur in a multidimensional manner from curricula, learning outcomes, learning objectives, teaching materials, research, publications, to community service.

The second participant was BD who has been teaching in UIN Gus Dur's TBIG Study Program for eight years, since 2015 when UIN Gus Dur was still a high school. BD witnessed and experienced the transition from high school to university. Since 2021, BD has served as the head of UIN Gus Dur's TBIG Study Program, which places him as one of the policymakers regarding the foundation and orientation of English language learning at the university. Administratively, UIN Gus Dur's TBIG Study Program implements the vision: "developing knowledge in the field of English language education and learning that is in line with authentic learning theory and a multimodal approach for humanity based on national values and culture." (Burhanuddin, 2023). The vision of authentic learning and the use of multimodal approach seem to indicate contextualized learning that accommodates the various characteristics of English learners.

The third participant was AZ who has been teaching English at the Tadris English Language (TBI) Study Program, State Islamic University (UIN), Mataram for more than a decade. AZ

has experience as the Head of the Technical Implementation Unit for Language Development who also takes a strategic part in English learning policies at UIN Mataram.

The fourth participant was WT who has been teaching English at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, since 2006. With seventeen years of teaching experience, WT has been directly or indirectly involved in the strategic efforts made by her university to obtain various international achievements. WT believes in the importance of mastering English as an important key to gaining international recognition (go international), especially through publications written in English. Mastery of English by the academic community, supported by reliable learning technology facilities, will help shape a modern image for a PTKI. WT does not really agree with the labeling of English as a secular subject, because secularity is a complex entity that cannot be identified by the use of English alone.

The fifth participant was UY, a lecturer at the English Education Study Program (hereafter TBI which stands for Tadris Bahasa Inggris), Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (hereafter FTIK) at the State Islamic Institute of (IAIN) Metro, Lampung. UY has been teaching English, especially Reading, for more than two decades. UY believes that learning English at PTKI is urgent because, in addition to fulfilling a variety of instrumental interests such as study abroad, inter-agency cooperation, benchmarking, and access to knowledge sources, learning English is also seen as in line with and has roots in Islamic tradition.

The sixth participant was SS who has been teaching English at IAIN Metro's English Department for more than a decade. Previously, she had a decade of experience teaching English at the high school level, so accumulatively SS has taught English for more than two decades at two different levels of education.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the research data will be conducted

through the steps proposed by Tsui (2007), namely: (1) sorting the data chronologically from the first participant to the last participant; (2) sorting the data thematically; and (3) analyzing the data based on the research issue framework: double duty and contextualization of Islamic tradition. The interview results have been confirmed.

## 4. Results

This section presents six narratives of English language practitioners from four PTKIN spread across Lombok Island, Yogyakarta, Pekalongan, and Metro Lampung. In this study, the term "narratives" is written as "narrative" to emphasize that the type of research used is narrative inquiry, which is a type of research aimed at presenting unique perspectives or views that have not been widely discussed in the general discourse, in this case, the English Language Teaching (ELT) discourse.

### 4.1 Narratives of Islamic tradition contextualization in Indonesian Islamic higher institutions

#### *SF's Narrative*

When asked about the dual tasks of an English lecturer at PTKI, SF affirmatively emphasized that PTKI is different from public universities in terms of the obligation to spread Islam and *da'wah Islamiyah*.

"English for PTKI is actually no less important than that of non-PTKI. This is because English recognizes no dimensional boundaries between PTKI and non-PTKI...But maybe in PTKI, there are some aspects that may not exist in non-PTKI, for example, there is *da'wah* and the need of presenting Islam abroad..."

PTKI not only needs to do *syi'ar* at the regional and national levels but also at the international level. The latter requires a complex configuration of skills that at some point emphasizes a good command of English. SF sees a future projection that if PTKI students are going to continue their studies abroad to, among other things, realize the vision and mission that Gus Dur's UIN once proclaimed, students will have to master good English. Starting from the

need to disseminate Islamic values to international circles, and the instrumental need for students to master English well in the context of further study, it appears that the dual role of an English lecturer at PTKI is a necessity. This narrative affirms the concept of dual needs proposed by Tan and Kasmuri (2007) regarding the need for Islamic educational institutions to produce religious people who are able to adapt to modernity and plurality.

Furthermore, responding to questions related to strategies or schemes for contextualizing Islamic traditions into English language learning, SF explicitly stated that “Learning and language activities wrapped in Islamic traditions are distinctive nuances for religious universities, especially Islam.” Conceptually, the integration of Islamic values and traditions into English language learning is the scientific distinction of PTKI. Practically, the contextualization of Islamic traditions can be done through reading texts, namely by using English texts that have content related to Islamic traditions. The use of reading texts can bridge the achievement of sociocultural aspects that make it easier for students to understand the context of the texts they read. SF’s particular experience shows that reading texts with the theme of character recognition, certain events, and customs are examples of texts that can be well explored by her students.

Regarding other schemes or strategies to contextualize Islamic values and traditions into English language learning at PTKI, SF proposes the importance of maintaining Islamic traditions related to dress code, Islamic way of dealing with people, and greetings. When these various ways of contextualization go together, the assumption of English as a secular subject will be dismissed. Another fact that at UIN Gus Dur shows the highly instrumental function of English, such as passing certain programs and meeting exam requirements, has made us think that English is not a secular subject. For this reason, other schemes or strategies that support the contextualization of Islamic values and traditions into English learning deserve attention.

At the end of her narrative, SF seems optimistic

about the distinction of English language learning at PTKI. It is emphasized that English language skills are very urgent. However, good English competence needs to be supported by a character rooted in Islamic traditions and a moderate attitude that leads individuals to be tolerant and respectful of differences between nations. SF also emphasized two other roles that need to be considered by an English lecturer at PTKI, namely as a facilitator of moderation values and as a supervisor of student characters.

### ***BD’s Narrative***

Regarding the assumption about the double duty of an English lecturer, namely a language teacher and a preacher of religious teachings, BD confirmed that lecturers at a PTKI should not only touch the cognitive aspects of students but also pay attention to the socially religious aspects of students. It is explicitly said that “we teach and insert the values of Islamic traditions that are adapted to the students’ social life.” English teachers at PTKI should simultaneously voice the importance of English as a medium of learning, a source of learning, and a tool for disseminating knowledge. On the one hand, English has been transformed into an academic language, making it an efficient instrument for producing and disseminating knowledge. Knowledge production requires receptive skills, especially reading skills, and productive skills, especially the ability to write scientific articles. On the other hand, in the process of producing scientific articles, lecturers need to emphasize the importance of integrity and honesty because both characters are part of the values of Islamic tradition. In other words, the dissemination of knowledge through productive skills in English must be based on Islamic values. This narrative shows that the dual role of an English lecturer at PTKI seems inherent and open to be manifested in various ways.

When asked about other strategies or schemes that can be done by an English practitioner at PTKI to contextualize Islamic traditions in English language learning, BD said that for that, a philosophical view is needed, especially about the

universality of English. Today, English has become a cross-cultural, cross-national, and cross-religious property. English, which in the past may have been synonymous with certain countries and education systems, so that the term secular subject emerged, can no longer be viewed that way. English is now more neutral and thus open to be integrated with new cultures or traditions. This universality and neutrality can be utilized by PTKI to determine the scientific distinction associated with English education. As the Head of the TBIG Study Program, BD has a particular experience in accreditation activities, especially when asked by the assessor regarding the difference between English education in non-religious-affiliated universities (hereafter PTU) and PTKI. For the assessor's question, BD gave an affirmative answer that Islamic values are the distinction that becomes the core values which are inserted into academic life and linguistic practices at PTKI, especially at UIN Gus Dur.

For the notion that PTKI must make the Islamic aspect a distinction, BD suggested that every lecturer who teaches English "...to link English learning to the Islamic tradition." The most concrete step is to link aspects of learning with religious arguments. BD even seemed optimistic that the Islamic tradition is the spirit of the university's three main responsibilities of education, research, and community service at PTKI and those responsibilities can be directed to the preservation of the Islamic tradition.

At the end of his narrative, BD stated that English language educators at PTKI have the responsibility to present English language learning with Islamic traditions. This responsibility, at the same time, is also a challenge for educators, especially related to the aspect of intensity. This means that the integration between Islamic tradition and English language teaching needs to be done continuously. The intensity aspect will help the dual tasks of English language educators at PTKI, namely "realizing Islamic noble character (*akhlakul karimah*) and intellectual people."

### ***AZ's Narrative***

When asked about the urgency of English for

the context of PTKI and the possibility of the dual role that English teachers have in it, AZ gave an impression of the importance of English for the context of PTKI while proposing several challenges that should be considered by English practitioners at PTKI. First, AZ reminded the correlation between language and culture, where culture is inherent in a language. This means that English must contain Western culture which is in many ways different from Islamic culture. Second, teaching English that only accommodates Western culture is not wise in the context of PTKI. All branches of knowledge and learning activities at PTKI need to have a connection to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Third, English practitioners need to place the students they teach as "people of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH". By doing so, practitioners have a teaching motive that connects English content with Islamic values. English teachers need to always ask themselves: has the knowledge I teach been connected to the Prophet Muhammad? If some of these considerations can be accommodated, English learning at PTKI will be contextualized with Islamic values. The configuration of Islamic values actually needs to start from the initial intention of the practitioners when leaving for campus. That is, intending to convey knowledge to the people of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and intending to make the knowledge he conveyed connected to the Prophet. Thus, the assumption of the dual tasks of English teachers at PTKI is confirmed through the narrative built by AZ.

Responding to a question related to strategies or schemes that can be done by English practitioners at PTKI to contextualize Islamic traditions into English learning, AZ argued that English practitioners can also integrate Islamic values through Islamic texts. The use of texts should be done selectively so that the main purpose of using texts is connected to the original purpose of teaching, namely: integration should also be done through a methodological approach. In this case, teachers should cultivate a critical attitude towards research and teaching approaches, methods, techniques, or strategies that come from the West. It is good to know that science



is not value-free. Western research and teaching methodologies appear to be different from the teaching methodologies that exist in the Islamic treasury. This kind of difference should be bridged. Thus, even though the object of knowledge taught is English, the values and orientations in it need to be harmonized with the Islamic tradition.

Regarding the possibility of a power struggle between the Western tradition, which is inherent in English, and the Islamic tradition, the orientation of English learning at PTKI, AZ argues that such a struggle is inevitable because English learning is actually also a cultural transfer event. When English teachers use the persona Jack as the subject of a sentence, “Jack” represents a cultural concept, and perhaps also a Western belief system. When the teachers change Jack to an Islamic name, there will be a battle of language, precisely a battle of meaning. The teaching of English at PTKI, therefore, can become a battle for meaning. This needs to be a concern because meaning making meaning, meaning making actions, meaning making behavior, meaning making interaction, and meaning making life. At that point, English practitioners at PTKI need to have an Islamic propagation role. English teaching conducted at PTKI is a field of Islamic propagation or *da'wah*.

### ***WT's Narrative***

Regarding the possibility of dual roles, teaching and disseminating Islamic teachings, attached to English practitioners at PTKI, WT agreed that a lecturer at PTKI must have a moral responsibility to introduce or teach, explicitly or implicitly, Islamic values through English learning. WT pointed out that at the institutional level, there is a policy on thesis, or the final project of writing scientific papers, whose content must be integrated with Islamic values. The policy resonates with WT's particular experience when mentoring papers.

“I examined and guided one student whose work discussed was about Paulo Coelho, about the Alchemy, but then there was actually a very Christian perspective, about Christianity. But it turned out that there were interesting things there about interfaith dialogue, about how the journey of a Santiago who

then travelled, who used to hate Muslims. Then when he came into contact with the outside world, then it turned out that it changed his paradigm to become a Christian. It was very integrative. For example, things like that are often discussed in class. It talks about tolerance, diversity, about Islam.”

WT's views and classroom activities confirm the dual role of an English practitioner at PTKI. Teaching English integrated with Islamic teachings and traditions encourages practitioners to not only teach English, but also proclaim Islamic teachings.

When asked about her experience in contextualizing Islamic traditions into English learning at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, WT did so through the preparation of a lesson plan (hereafter RPS which stands for the Rencana Pembelajaran Semester) that connects religion and film, and religion and ideology. Through the RPS, WT builds learning activities that stimulate students' critical thinking to examine more deeply their Islamic faith and ideology.

### ***UY's Narrative***

“If we refer to the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat 13, Allah created humans to know each other, then tribes and nations, and that is *sunnatullah*. Then in a history also the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) also ordered Zaid bin Sabit to learn the language of the book of the Jews to facilitate and launch *da'wah* and communication. Thus, in my opinion, it is very important because in this era of globalization, English is very necessary because it is related to everything.”

UY rejects the assumption that the use of English in PTKI is a symbol of modernity. According to her, the teaching of English at PTKI is a gateway to scientific integration. PTKI needs to maintain Islamic sciences and the use of Arabic, and at the same time spread its wings to integrate with a variety of other scientific disciplines, including the discipline of English education. UY disagrees with the labeling of English as a secular subject in PTKI because English and Islamic teachings can be integrated with each other.

Responding to a question about the possibility of a dual role, teaching and preaching Islam, attached

to English practitioners in PTKI, UY believes that the outcome of students who study English in IAIN Metro's TBI Study Program is characterized by mastery of English and good morality. For this reason, an English practitioner needs to be a role model who is competent in the use of English, and at the same time a role model in speech and behavior. UY's response seems to confirm the dual role that, explicitly or implicitly, an English practitioner in PTKI carries. That is, the practitioner not only needs to teach good English, but also needs to proclaim, verbally and through behavior, Islamic teachings and traditions.

Regarding strategies or schemes that can be carried out by an English practitioner at PTKI to contextualize Islamic traditions in English language learning, UY sees great opportunities in teaching materials, especially in the use of reading texts that can be flexibly used to teach Islamic values of wisdom, honesty, piety, purity, and morality. More than that, reading texts can also be used as a means to inspire students to help others, appreciate differences, respect others, not to be persecuted, and stay away from adultery. The various configurations of moral messages and values can be linked to Islamic teachings. Except that, UY also sees opportunities to contextualize Islamic traditions in electronic communication modes. In her particular experience, UY often shares with students the procedures and use of language when communicating via WhatsApp.

At the end of her narrative, UY views that every English practitioner at PTKI seems to have homework to introduce and teach Islamic values into English learning. In her opinion, an English teacher at PTKI not only needs to teach good linguistic competence, but also morality in accordance with Islamic values and traditions.

### ***SS's Narrative***

When asked about the possibility of a dual role, teaching and broadcasting Islamic teachings, which is often attributed to an English practitioner at PTKI, SS replied that he has a moral obligation to introduce or teach Islamic values through English language learning. The obligation to broadcast Islamic values

is not only because of his capacity as an educator, but also as a Muslim who needs to preach to other Muslims. SS does not deny the potential of students who have a tendency to liberal, secular, or deviant understanding. For this reason, she needs to insert a moderate understanding through learning English.

"My duty as a lecturer is mandatory, especially at PTKI. My duty is obligatory because I am a fellow Muslim, then I am in the PTKI environment. It is obligatory for me to include Islamic values in my learning, because this is also my responsibility as a PTKI lecturer."

SS's response in the interview quote above confirms the dual role of an English practitioner at PTKI, namely teaching and preaching. Both roles are not only driven by the practitioner's capacity as an English teacher, but also by the role inherent in the obligations of a Muslim towards other Muslims.

In relation to the strategies or schemes that can be done by an English practitioner at PTKI to contextualize Islamic traditions in English learning, SS has a particular experience when teaching English in the Tadris Biology Study Program. SS compiled English for Biology teaching materials which included reproductive studies that were connected to the verses of the Qur'an. On other occasions such as Ramadan, SS inserted Islamic teachings or traditions related to fasting before starting English learning.

SS emphasized that English learning at PTKIN is related to three issues. First, English and secularity are two different things. English is not a secular subject departing from the fact that English practitioners at PTKIN can give Islamic color to the ELT study area. Second, the use of English is one of the factors of modernity of a PTKI. As an international communication tool, English is an instrument for international cooperation or recognition. Third, English language learning has the opportunity to be a means of mainstreaming moderation values that can stem radical and deviant ideas.

## **5. Discussion**

This narrative inquiry research was guided by two main questions. The first question explores

the dual tasks, teaching language and proclaiming Islamic teachings, of English practitioners at PTKI. The narratives presented by six English language practitioners from four PTKIN clearly indicate the existence of dual tasks in which English language practitioners feel a moral responsibility and obligation to insert Islamic teachings, values and traditions, directly or indirectly, into their English language learning. From the practitioner's point of view, the role to proclaim Islamic teachings through contextualizing Islamic traditions into English language learning is driven by the intention to make English as a medium of *da'wah*; as a contextual and distinctive activity; as a bargaining power in the midst of meaning and power struggles; as a manifestation of institutional regulations that require scientific integration; as an embodiment of Islamic values that have a theological basis in the Qur'an and hadith; and as a Muslim's obligation to other Muslims. It appears that the various factors behind the dual role narrative can be narrowed down as theological and academic narratives. The theological narrative refers to arguments related to Islamic *da'wah*, while the academic narrative boils down to arguments about scientific distinctions and efforts to build interconnections between scientific disciplines.

The narratives constructed by the participants confirm that English language learning is more than a language learning event (Phillion and He, 2007), but also to proclaim ideology and strengthen the image of modernity (Syah, 2015). The results of this study also strengthen Hadi's (2011) research on the different orientations of English language teaching at PTKI and PTU. While English teaching at PTKI pays attention to Islamic, local, national and global contexts, similar teaching at PTU refers to contexts that are general, secular, or tend not to be religious. The narratives that are the findings of this research contradict the concept of de-Islamization which is the orientation of English language learning in the context of Bangladesh where the majority of English language learners are Muslims. De-Islamization is a mechanism to mainstream secularism in English language learning textbooks (Hamid and Ali, 2023).

The second question in this study explores the strategies used by English language practitioners at PTKI to contextualize Islamic traditions in English language learning. The narratives constructed by the practitioners show, at least, eleven strategies that have been practiced, namely: (1) learning and linguistic activities in the classroom; (2) the selection of reading texts that contain Islamic teachings or that can be used as a foothold to proclaim Islamic values or traditions; (3) the prevalence of Islamic dress code; (4) Islamic social interaction guidance; (5) scientific writing, both at the process level, which emphasizes honesty values, as well as at the product level in the form of written works that integrate English learning with Islamic traditions; (6) community service; (7) meaning making process, namely by choosing diction or naming personas that represent Islamic concepts; (8) designing lesson plan (RPS) that connect teaching materials with Islamic critical reflection; (9) teaching materials that contain Islamic figures, events and thoughts; (10) development of specific teaching materials (English for Specific Purpose) equipped with theological arguments; and (11) contextual teaching and learning approach, namely through the discussion of Islamic values and traditions that are ongoing or within close reach of students. The strategies confirm the finding of Kirkgöz (2021) highlighting the importance of integrating values into curriculum.

The various practices of contextualizing Islamic traditions in English language learning shown by the participants' narratives reinforce the research findings reported by Hidayati (2016) that the integration of Islamic values and traditions into English language learning in Islamic institutions makes English language learning not a threat or a source of negative influence for Indonesian culture in general, and for Islam in particular. The findings of this study also extend the variety of strategies proposed by Rohmana (2020) and Irwansyah (2018) who suggested the use of Islamic names, places and events related to Islam, and the linking of teaching materials with Quranic verses.

## 6. Conclusions

In summary, English language practitioners at PTKI confirm the existence of dual tasks, namely as teachers of English and as messengers of Islamic teachings, values, and traditions. This dual role is supported by theological narratives, especially Islamic *da'wah* arguments, and academic narratives that point to the scientific distinction of English language learning at PTKI as well as efforts to integrate knowledge based on an interdisciplinary perspective. The contextualization of Islamic traditions in English language learning at PTKI is polarized into explicit mode narratives, namely through building elements that are directly related to English language learning, and implicit mode narratives, namely through elements that are not directly related to English language teaching such as codes of conduct for dressing and social interaction. English language stakeholders at PTKI should make the narrative of dual tasks part of the official documents of institutions and study programs. The documentation is expected to provide official information to external parties regarding the distinction of English learning at PTKI. Teaching materials appear to be an explicit mode of contextualization strategy that deserves further attention. For this reason, efforts to develop teaching materials based on Islamic English and Islamic literature appear potential through Research and Development research schemes. The authors note that a limitation of this study pertains to the limited number of participants involved. To achieve a more comprehensive narration of the contextualization of Islamic tradition in ELT, future research endeavors ought to encompass a broader spectrum of participants from various regions and PTKI across the Indonesian archipelago to figure out whether such contextualization practices challenge or align with conventional ELT methodologies and theories.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, NS and DI; methodology, DI; software, SNA; validation, NS, DI and SNA; formal

analysis, DI; investigation, NS; resources, NS; data curation, NS and SNA; writing—original draft preparation, DI; writing—review and editing, NS, TDH, MD, and LS; visualization, TDH, MD, and LS; supervision, DI; project administration, SNA; funding acquisition, DI, NS, TDH, MD, and LH. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Conflict of Interest

The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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