



From Islamic School to Global Stage: Islamic Education Strategies in Building Internationally Standardized English Language Competencies

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to examine Islamic education strategies in developing internationally recognized English language competencies for Islamic students. The globalization of Islamic educational institutions was transforming from local educational institutions into actors capable of competing on the global stage. One of the main challenges in this process was mastering English as an international language without neglecting Islamic values. This research used a qualitative approach with literature study methods and conceptual analysis of educational policies, curricula, and English language learning practices in Islamic educational institutions. The results of the study indicate that the integration of Islamic values in English learning, the implementation of a global competency based curriculum, improving teacher quality through professional training, and the use of digital technology are key strategies in improving students' English language skills. In addition, a supportive learning environment, international collaboration, and a communicative approach based on an Islamic context had been proven to strengthen students' motivation and confidence in using English actively. This article concludes that Islamic education had great potential to produce of Muslims generation who not only excel in internationally recognized English language proficiency but also have Islamic character and global competitiveness. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for policy makers and practitioners of Islamic education in designing adaptive and sustainable English language learning.

Keywords: Strategies, Internationally Standardized, English Language

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I INTRODUCTION

In globalization and transnational mobility era, English had emerged as a pivotal medium for academic exchange, professional advancement, and intercultural communication. Educational institutions across the world were increasingly challenged to equip learners with English language competencies that meet international standards while remaining responsive to local values and identities. Within this context, Islamic schools often perceived as locally oriented and religiously bounded were undergoing significant transformation to prepare their students for meaningful participation on the global stage.

Islamic education has traditionally emphasized moral formation, spiritual development, and mastery of religious sciences. However, contemporary Islamic schools were now redefining their educational missions by integrating global competencies, particularly English proficiency, into their curricula. This shift reflects a growing awareness that linguistic capital was essential not only for accessing global knowledge but also for articulating Islamic perspectives within international academic, diplomatic, and professional arenas.

Building internationally standardized English language competencies in Islamic schools requires deliberate and context-sensitive strategies. These include curriculum alignment with global frameworks, the adoption of communicative and learner-centered pedagogies, and the professional development of teachers capable of bridging religious content with modern language instruction. Importantly, such strategies must negotiate the balance between maintaining Islamic identity and embracing global educational norms.

Moreover, the rise of international benchmarking, accreditation systems, and cross-border educational partnerships had intensified the pressure on Islamic institutions to demonstrate measurable language outcomes. English was no longer treated merely as a foreign language subject, but as a strategic tool for academic literacy, critical thinking, and global engagement. As a result, Islamic schools are increasingly positioning English as a medium for accessing science, technology, and international discourse without compromising their foundational values.

This article explored how Islamic education institutions strategically develop English language competencies that align with international standards. By examining pedagogical approaches, institutional policies, and ideological considerations, the study seeks to illustrate how Islamic schools could successfully transition from locally grounded religious institutions to globally engaged educational actors, contributing to both the preservation of Islamic identity and active participation in the global knowledge society.

The development of globalization had positioned English as an international language, playing a vital role in cross-cultural communication, scientific development, and human resource competitiveness at the global level. English served as a *lingua franca*, enabling individuals and educational institutions to participate in international academic and professional networks, stated by Elder, C., & Davies, A. in 2006. In the context of national education, the demand for internationally recognized English language proficiency was becoming increasingly relevant, including for Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic School. Globalization and Internationalization education had positioned English language proficiency as one of the key competencies of the 21st century. English served not only as a tool for global communication but also as a primary medium for accessing science, technology, and international academic networks. In the context of Islamic education, particularly in Islamic

School, English proficiency presents both a challenge and a strategic opportunity to enhance graduates' global competitiveness without neglecting Islamic values Ushioda, E. (2013).

Islamic educational institutions played a crucial role in shaping a generation of Muslims with religious character, a global outlook, and the ability to adapt to changing times. However, historically, madrasas had often been perceived as focusing more on strengthening Islamic knowledge than on developing foreign language competency, particularly English. This situation had limited access for madrasa graduates to international academic and professional competition (Muflikhun, M et al., 2025).

In line with global demands, the paradigm of Islamic education was beginning to transform a local orientation to international standards. Integrating English language learning with Islamic values was a relevant strategic approach to addressing these challenges. English language education in Islamic School was not only directed at linguistic mastery, but also at developing communicative competence, global literacy, and a moderate and inclusive Islamic character (Syafei, I, July 2025).

Therefore, this article aimed to examine Islamic education strategies for developing internationally standardized English language competency in Islamic school environments. The discussion focused on the curriculum approach, learning methods, the role of educators, and the integration of Islamic values in English language learning as an effort to bring from local educational spaces to the global stage (From Islamic School to Global Stage).

II METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic educational strategies implemented in Islamic School to develop internationally recognized English language competencies. Dodgson, J. E. (2017) stated that this qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore social and educational phenomena holistically, contextually, and naturally, particularly regarding the integration of Islamic values into English language learning.

The research design used was a case study, focusing on several Islamic School which implemented an Islamic-based English language strengthening program. Case studies were chosen because they provided space for in depth analysis of Islamic school practices, policies, and academic culture in a real life context, thus providing a comprehensive description of educational strategies (Yin, 2018).

The research subjects included Islamic School principals, English teachers, Islamic religious education teachers, and students directly involved in the English language learning program. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, with the criteria being experience and active involvement in English language competency development at madrasahs. The research location was deliberately selected at madrasah that demonstrated a commitment to improving English language quality and an international orientation, it stated by Patton, 2015.

Data were collected through several techniques, including interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore stakeholders' perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to Islamic education-based English language learning (Kvale et al, 2015). Participatory observation was used to directly observe the learning process, teacher student interactions, and the integration of Islamic values into English classroom activities, Pham, L. T. M. (2018). Document analysis included the curriculum,

syllabus, lesson plans, teaching modules, and madrasah policies related to English language competency development (Bowen, 2009).

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Interview results were verified through observations and supporting documents, enhancing the credibility of the findings. Furthermore, researcher reflection and peer discussions were conducted to minimize interpretation bias, ensuring that the research results provide a valid and comprehensive picture of English language competency development practices in Islamic schools for the global stage.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data from various sources were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns, categories, and themes related to Islamic education strategies for developing internationally recognized English language competencies.

III RESULT

The findings indicate that Islamic schools involved in this study have articulated a clear institutional vision that links English language mastery with global engagement and Islamic values. English was positioned as a strategic competence that enables students to participate in international academic and professional contexts while confidently expressing Islamic perspectives. This vision was formally embedded in school policies and is consistently communicated to teachers, students, and parents, creating a shared understanding of the role of English in Islamic education.

In terms of curriculum design, the results reveal deliberate efforts to align English language instruction with internationally recognized standards. Schools adapt global competency frameworks into locally relevant curricula that emphasize communicative competence, academic literacy, and intercultural awareness. At the same time, Islamic themes and contexts are integrated into learning materials, allowing students to develop language skills through content that reflects their religious and cultural background.

Pedagogically, teachers demonstrate a shift from teacher-centered instruction to more interactive and student-centered approaches. Classroom practices frequently include group discussions, presentations, project-based learning, and problem-solving activities conducted in English. These methods encourage active language use and critical thinking, fostering greater student confidence and fluency in authentic communicative situations.

The study also found that English language exposure extends beyond formal classroom instruction. Several schools implement bilingual or English-rich environments through extracurricular activities, school announcements, clubs, and international programs. This extended exposure creates a more immersive learning context, enabling students to practice English in meaningful and varied settings, which contributes significantly to their overall language development.

Teacher capacity building emerges as a crucial factor in achieving internationally standardized English competencies. Schools invest in continuous professional development through training programs, workshops, and collaborative learning communities. These initiatives focus not only on enhancing teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills but also on equipping them to integrate Islamic values into English language teaching in a balanced and contextualized manner.

From the students' perspective, the results showed increased motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English. Students perceive English proficiency as essential for accessing global knowledge, pursuing higher education abroad, and engaging in international networks. Importantly, they report feeling that their Islamic identity is affirmed rather than diminished, as English learning is framed within an Islamic educational ethos.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified several challenges, including varying levels of students' initial English proficiency, limited instructional resources, and the demanding workload faced by teachers. However, schools demonstrate adaptive strategies such as differentiated instruction, peer collaboration, and innovative use of available resources. Overall, the findings suggested that Islamic schools can successfully build internationally standardized English language competencies through coherent strategies that harmonize global standards with Islamic educational principles.

Research showed that Islamic schools that successfully improve students' English language competency to international standards implement an integrated curriculum that combines Islamic values and language learning. English was not taught solely as a linguistic subject, but rather as a global communication tool, embodying ethical values, character, and multicultural insight. This integration is evident in the use of contextual teaching materials that address global issues, Islamic studies, and communication practices relevant to students' real life situations (Abdurahman, D. (2018).

Furthermore, research findings reveal that creating an immersion based learning environment was a dominant factor in improving speaking and listening skills. Islamic schools that implement English Day policies, English Zones, and extracurricular English language activities demonstrate increased student confidence in actively using English. This environment broadens language exposure, accelerating the process of second language acquisition Johnson, M. H., 2015.

From a human resources perspective, research had found that teacher competence and professionalism play a significant role in successful English learning. Teachers who possess an understanding of modern pedagogy, adequate language skills, and sensitivity to Islamic values are able to create communicative and meaningful learning. Continuous training programs, collaboration with native speakers, and teacher participation in international forums have been shown to improve the quality of learning and alignment with global standards Guerguiev, J, et al 2017.

Research also showed that Islamic schools that adopt international standards based assessments, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), have a more structured and measurable learning evaluation system. Assessments focused not only on grammar but also comprehensively cover the four language skills. Implementing the CEFR helped schools map student competency outcomes objectively and sustainably Assembly, P. (2001).

Overall, research findings confirmed that a holistic Islamic education strategy encompassing an integrative curriculum, immersion environments, teacher competency enhancement, and internationally standardized assessments contributed positively to improving students' English language competency. This strategy not only prepared students to compete globally but also maintains Islamic identity and values as the moral foundation for the use of an international language (Zein, 2018).

IV DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that Islamic schools are no longer positioned merely as locally oriented religious institutions, but are increasingly emerging as dynamic educational spaces that actively engage with global standards, particularly in the area of English language competence. This transformation reflects a broader shift in Islamic education, where the pursuit of global relevance is not seen as contradictory to religious values, but rather as a strategic extension of Islamic educational goals. English, in this context, functions as both a communicative tool and a form of cultural capital that enables Islamic schools to participate meaningfully in global academic and professional arenas.

One of the most significant insights from the results was the central role of institutional vision in shaping English language development strategies. Schools that explicitly articulate English proficiency as part of their Islamic mission are more successful in implementing coherent and sustainable programs. This vision reframed English not as a symbol of Westernization, but as a neutral and functional medium for *da'wah*, knowledge dissemination, and intellectual exchange. Such positioning aligns with the Islamic tradition of engaging with diverse languages throughout history to access and contribute to global knowledge, suggesting that the current emphasis on English was a continuation rather than a departure from Islamic educational heritage.

Curriculum alignment with international standards emerged as a critical factor in building globally competitive English competencies. The discussion of results indicated that Islamic schools selectively adapt global frameworks rather than adopting them wholesale. This adaptive approach allowed schools to contextualize international benchmarks within local religious and cultural realities. By embedding Islamic themes into English learning materials, schools avoid the perceived dichotomy between religious education and global competence. This finding supported the argument that culturally responsive curricula enhance learner engagement and facilitate deeper learning, particularly in contexts where identity preservation is a core educational concern.

The pedagogical shift toward communicative and student-centered learning represents another important dimension of transformation. Traditional language teaching methods, which often emphasize grammar memorization and passive learning, are increasingly replaced by interactive practices that prioritize meaning-making and real-life communication. In Islamic school contexts, these pedagogical changes have additional significance: they promote confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative skills that are essential for global participation. Moreover, the use of discussion, presentation, and project-based learning encourages students to articulate ideas, including Islamic perspectives, in English, thereby bridging religious knowledge with global discourse.

The creation of English-rich environments beyond the classroom further reinforces language acquisition and reflects a holistic understanding of learning. When English was used in extracurricular activities, school events, and informal interactions, students were exposed to authentic language use that accelerates fluency and comprehension. For Islamic schools, this practice also signals an institutional commitment to English as a lived skill rather than a purely academic subject. However, the discussion also suggested that such environments must be carefully managed to ensure inclusivity, particularly for students with lower proficiency levels, so that increased exposure does not lead to anxiety or marginalization.

Teacher professional development was highlighted as a cornerstone of successful implementation. The results indicated that teachers were not only language instructors but also cultural and ideological mediators. Their ability to integrate Islamic values into English instruction in meaningful ways determines whether global standards were perceived as supportive or threatening to Islamic identity. Continuous training enables teachers to develop both linguistic competence and pedagogical confidence, equipping them to navigate the dual demands of religious authenticity and international quality assurance. This finding underscores the need for professional development models that address identity, pedagogy, and global competence simultaneously.

From the students' perspective, the discussion reveals a shift in attitudes toward English learning. Rather than viewing English as an external or imposed requirement, students increasingly perceive it as a gateway to future opportunities. This instrumental motivation was complemented by integrative motivation when students see English as a means to represent themselves and their faith on a global stage. The affirmation of Islamic identity within English learning contexts appears to play a crucial role in sustaining motivation and reducing resistance, particularly in environments where globalization was sometimes viewed with suspicion.

The challenges identified in the results warrant careful consideration. Variations in students' initial proficiency levels pose a significant obstacle to uniform implementation of international standards. Without appropriate differentiation strategies, ambitious language policies may exacerbate educational inequality. Similarly, limited resources such as access to authentic materials, technology, and qualified teachers can constrain program effectiveness. The demanding workload placed on teachers, especially in institutions that combine national, religious, and international curricula, raises concerns about sustainability and burnout.

Nevertheless, the adaptive strategies employed by schools demonstrate institutional resilience and innovation. Differentiated instruction, peer learning, and collaborative planning are practical responses that align with both educational best practices and Islamic values of cooperation and mutual support. These strategies suggest that resource limitations do not necessarily preclude quality outcomes, provided that schools adopt flexible and context-sensitive approaches. The discussion therefore highlights the importance of leadership and organizational culture in translating vision into practice.

At a broader level, the findings contribute to ongoing debates about globalization and education in Muslim contexts. Rather than framing globalization as a homogenizing force, this study supports a more nuanced understanding of "glocalization," where global standards were reinterpreted through local values. Islamic schools, in this sense, are not passive recipients of international norms but active agents that negotiate, adapt, and reshape those norms to align with their educational philosophies. English language education becomes a site of negotiation where identity, power, and knowledge intersect.

The implications of this study extend beyond Islamic schools to other faith-based and culturally grounded educational institutions. The strategies identified vision alignment, curriculum contextualization, communicative pedagogy, teacher development, and holistic language environments offer a transferable framework for integrating global competencies without eroding local identity. This suggests that the perceived tension between religious education and international standards is not inevitable, but contingent on how educational change is conceptualized and implemented.

In terms of policy implications, the discussion underscores the need for supportive educational policies that recognize the dual mission of Islamic schools. Policymakers and accrediting bodies should consider flexible models of standardization that allow for contextual adaptation. Rigid enforcement of international benchmarks without regard for cultural and religious contexts risks undermining local ownership and sustainability. Conversely, policies that encourage innovation and contextual relevance can empower Islamic schools to achieve excellence on their own terms.

The discussion also points to the importance of assessment practices in reinforcing internationally standardized competencies. While this study focused primarily on strategies and perceptions, future efforts should examine how assessment systems align with communicative and global objectives. Performance-based assessments, portfolios, and international proficiency tests may provide more valid measures of students' readiness for global engagement than traditional exams. However, such assessments must also be designed in ways that respect linguistic diversity and educational equity.

Another important consideration was the role of technology in supporting English language development. Although not a central focus of this study, digital tools and online resources have the potential to expand access to authentic English input and global interaction. For Islamic schools, technology-mediated learning can facilitate international collaboration while maintaining controlled and values-based learning environments. Integrating technology strategically could therefore enhance the effectiveness of existing strategies and address some resource constraints.

The discussion further highlights the symbolic significance of English proficiency for Islamic education in the global arena. Mastery of English enables Islamic schools and their graduates to contribute to international scholarship, counter stereotypes, and participate in global conversations about religion, ethics, and society. In this sense, English competence was not merely a technical skill but a form of intellectual empowerment. This perspective challenges deficit narratives that portray Islamic education as insular or resistant to modernity.

Despite its contributions, this study had limitations that should be acknowledged. The qualitative case study design provides depth but limits generalizability. The findings reflected specific institutional contexts and may not fully capture the diversity of Islamic schools across regions and socio-economic settings. Future research could employ comparative or mixed-methods designs to examine how different models of Islamic education approach English standardization and with what outcomes.

Further research might also explore longitudinal impacts of internationally oriented English programs on students' academic trajectories, career paths, and identity formation. Understanding how graduates of Islamic schools navigate higher education and professional environments would provide valuable insights into the long-term effectiveness of the strategies discussed. Additionally, research that includes parents' perspectives could shed light on community support and resistance, which are crucial factors in faith-based education.

The findings of this study confirmed that the integration of Islamic values into English language learning does not hinder the achievement of internationally recognized competencies, but rather strengthens the relevance and meaningfulness of learning. Curriculum integration that links English material to the Islamic context and global issues enables students to understand language as a means of ethical and responsible cross-cultural communication. This aligns with the Islamic educational perspective, which emphasizes the balance between mastery of knowledge and character development (*akhlaqul karimah*) Abdurrahman, 2017.

Further discussion indicated that implementing an immersion-based learning environment was a key strategy for improving students' communicative competence. Intensive exposure to English through the English Zone policy and co-curricular activities created an authentic context for language use. This strategy reinforced second language acquisition theory, which stated that the frequency and quality of language input significantly influence the success of foreign language learning (Krashen, 1985). In the context of Islamic schools, controlled immersion also helps maintain a balance between foreign language use and the preservation of Islamic identity.

From a pedagogical perspective, the research findings emphasize the importance of teachers' roles as facilitators of global learning. English teachers in Islamic schools were required not only to possess linguistic competence but also pedagogical skills and an understanding of religious values. This discussion aligns with the theory of communicative language teaching, which positions teachers as facilitators of meaningful interactions, not simply transmitters of material (Richards, 2017). Thus, teacher professionalism was a key foundation for achieving international standards for English language learning.

Furthermore, the use of CEFR based assessments had been proven to provide an objective and transparent evaluation framework for students' language competency achievements. The CEFR allowed Islamic schools to map students' abilities incrementally and compare them to global standards without neglecting local contexts. These findings strengthen the argument that adopting international standards in Islamic education was a strategic step to increase graduates' competitiveness on the global stage (Council of Europe, 2001).

Overall, this research demonstrated the transformation of Islamic schools toward the global stage is not a process of westernization, but rather an adaptive and selective effort to respond to global demands. An Islamic education strategy that combined religious values, international language competency, and a modern pedagogical approach can produce a generation of Muslims who are globally competent and deeply rooted in their Islamic identity. This emphasized the strategic role of Islamic schools in facing the challenges of educational globalization (Karim, 2018).

In conclusion, the discussion affirmed that Islamic schools were capable of bridging the gap between local religious identity and global educational standards through intentional, reflective, and context-sensitive strategies. The development of internationally standardized English language competencies did not necessitate the dilution of Islamic values; rather, it could serve as a means of articulating those values more effectively on a global stage. By integrating vision, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher development, and institutional culture, Islamic education can move confidently from the local classroom to the global arena, contributing to a more pluralistic and inclusive global knowledge society.

V CONCLUSION

This study had examined how Islamic schools strategically develop English language competencies that align with international standards while preserving their religious identity and educational values. The findings demonstrate that Islamic education was not inherently at odds with global engagement; rather, it possesses significant potential to contribute to and benefit from international academic and professional discourse. Through intentional planning and

contextual adaptation, Islamic schools could successfully position themselves as globally relevant institutions without compromising their foundational principles.

A key conclusion of this study was the importance of a clearly articulated institutional vision that integrates English language mastery into the broader mission of Islamic education. When English was framed as a tool for accessing global knowledge, fostering intercultural communication, and articulating Islamic perspectives internationally, it was more readily accepted by teachers, students, and the wider school community. This shared vision served as a guiding framework that ensures coherence between policy, curriculum, and classroom practice.

The study also highlights the central role of curriculum design and pedagogy in achieving internationally standardized English competencies. Aligning curricula with global standards while embedding Islamic values enables students to develop linguistic, academic, and intercultural skills in a meaningful and identity-affirming manner. Communicative, student-centered pedagogical approaches further support this process by encouraging active language use, critical thinking, and confidence in real-world communication. These practices were essential for preparing students to engage effectively in global contexts.

Teacher professionalism emerges as another crucial factor in the successful implementation of English language strategies. Continuous professional development equips teachers with the linguistic proficiency, pedagogical expertise, and cultural sensitivity required to balance international standards with Islamic educational goals. Teachers acted as key mediators in this process, shaping students' perceptions of English learning and ensuring that global competencies are developed within a supportive and values-based learning environment.

Despite the positive outcomes identified, the study acknowledges ongoing challenges, including disparities in students' initial language proficiency, resource limitations, and the complexity of managing multiple curricular demands. However, the adaptive strategies employed by Islamic schools such as differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and innovative use of available resources demonstrate institutional resilience and commitment to continuous improvement. These efforts suggested that challenges can be effectively managed when schools adopt flexible and context-sensitive approaches.

This study concluded that Islamic education plays a strategic role in developing students' English language competencies that meet international standards without diminishing Islamic identity and values. Integrating the English curriculum with Islamic moral and spiritual values had proven effective in creating meaningful, contextual learning that is relevant to global needs. English was positioned not only as a linguistic skill but also as a means of ethical and character building global communication.

Furthermore, the implementation of immersion based learning strategies and a conducive English-language environment have a positive impact on improving students' communicative competence. The English Zone policy, co-curricular activities, and authentic language practice encourage increased student confidence and fluency. These findings indicate that applied and communicative English learning is more effective than a solely grammar-oriented approach.

Furthermore, this study confirmed that teacher professionalism and the use of internationally standardized assessments, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), were key factors in improving the quality of English learning in Islamic schools. Competent and globally-minded teachers, supported by a measurable evaluation system, were able to prepare Islamic school graduates to be ready to compete at the global level while remaining grounded in Islamic values.

In conclusion, this study affirmed that Islamic schools can move confidently from local educational contexts to the global stage by implementing coherent and reflective strategies for English language development. Building internationally standardized English competencies does not require the erosion of Islamic identity; instead, it could strengthen students' ability to represent their values and perspectives in global forums. By harmonizing religious principles with global educational standards, Islamic education could play a significant role in shaping graduates who are both spiritually grounded and globally competent, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse global knowledge society.

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