

Integrating Islamic Studies into English Language Learning for Qur'anic Studies Students: A Content-Based Approach at UIN Datokarama Palu

Sahril¹, Nurasia Munir²

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia; sahrilmuhtar@uindatokarama.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia; nurasia@uindatokarama.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Content-Based Instruction;
English Language Learning;
Islamic Studies;
Qur'anic Studies;
ESP

Article history:

Received 2025-10-28

Revised 2025-11-26

Accepted 2025-12-31

ABSTRACT

English language instruction in Islamic higher education is increasingly expected to support students' disciplinary learning and future academic engagement in global scholarly communities. However, English courses are often delivered using general materials that are not closely related to students' fields of study, resulting in limited relevance and motivation. This study aims to explore the integration of Islamic Studies content into English language learning for students of the Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir Department at UIN Datokarama Palu through a Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study collected data through classroom observations, document analysis, and student reflections during the implementation of English learning activities based on Islamic Studies topics, including Qur'anic themes, tafsir discourse, Islamic ethics, and contemporary Muslim issues. The findings indicate that the integration of discipline-specific content enhances students' motivation to learn English, enriches their academic vocabulary, improves reading comprehension, and increases their confidence in discussing Islamic topics in English. Students also demonstrated greater engagement in classroom discussions because the learning materials were closely connected to their academic background and interests. These findings suggest that Content-Based Instruction provides meaningful and contextualized learning experiences by simultaneously promoting language development and disciplinary knowledge acquisition. The study concludes that integrating Islamic studies into English language learning is an effective strategy for improving English proficiency among Qur'anic Studies students and can serve as a practical model for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in Islamic higher education institutions.

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license.



Corresponding Author:

Sahril

Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia; sahrilmuhtar@uindatokarama.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become increasingly central to higher education because it functions as both a medium for accessing scientific knowledge and a channel for participating in international academic communication. In ESP research, university students' language needs are understood to differ substantially across disciplines, academic goals, and future professional contexts, so general English often does not adequately prepare them for the genres and communicative demands of higher education (Hyland, 2022). Within Islamic higher education, this issue is especially important because students frequently learn English not only for employment and academic advancement, but also for accessing Islamic literature in English, communicating religious ideas internationally, and supporting da'wah in global and digital spaces (Gusmuliana et al., 2023).

For students in the Department of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir, English proficiency is increasingly relevant to the study of Qur'anic interpretation, hermeneutics, Islamic thought, and contemporary religious discourse. Needs-analysis studies in Islamic higher education show that students prefer English materials that are directly related to their disciplinary backgrounds, and many report that existing courses still rely on general materials that repeat what they studied in school rather than addressing academic or religious purposes (Az & Munawwaroh, 2024; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022). Islamic Studies students have specifically requested materials connected to Islamic history, Islamic thought, modern da'wah, and other religion-based topics, indicating that contextual relevance is a central requirement for meaningful English learning in this setting (Latif, 2019; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022).

When English instruction remains detached from students' fields of study, learners tend to perceive it as an isolated subject rather than as a tool for disciplinary engagement. This mismatch weakens participation and motivation because teaching materials, learner motivation, and classroom involvement are closely related in Islamic higher education contexts (Gusmuliana et al., 2023; Mauludin et al., 2023). Evidence from non-English study programs in Islamic universities also shows that most students recognize the importance of English, but many want more field-relevant materials, more academic writing practice, and more speaking opportunities tied to their study needs (Az & Munawwaroh, 2024). Comparable work in higher education ESP settings further indicates that motivation tends to increase when students anticipate or experience English instruction that directly aligns with their disciplinary interests (Martín-González & Chaves-Yuste, 2023).

One pedagogical response to this problem is the use of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), both of which connect language learning with meaningful subject matter. At a broad level, CBI and CLIL share the core principle that academic content is taught through an additional language, even if some scholars distinguish CLIL as more explicitly dual-focused on both content and language outcomes (Cenoz, 2015; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020). In practice, these approaches are valued because they provide authentic learning contexts in which students can develop vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing, and critical thinking while engaging with disciplinary knowledge (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Shykun, 2023).

The research based on CLIL and CBI generally shows positive outcomes for language proficiency, content understanding, motivation, and academic achievement. Literature syntheses report that students in CLIL settings often improve across multiple language skills and can achieve content learning outcomes comparable to or better than those in more traditional instruction (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024). Other reviews likewise describe CLIL as promoting active learning, intrinsic motivation, deeper content comprehension, and intercultural awareness through authentic and meaningful use of language (Shykun, 2023). In higher education, project-based CLIL has also been reported to work effectively in Indonesian tertiary classrooms, particularly through collaborative tasks, presentations, and sustained student participation (Yufrizal, 2021). Related evidence further suggests that CLIL can help reduce foreign language anxiety when implemented through competence-based designs that support learner progress in bilingual classrooms (López-Medina & Casado, 2024).

In Islamic higher education specifically, CBI has been reported to support both cognitive and affective gains, including increases in students' Islamic content knowledge and foreign language competence, while also helping lecturers integrate language teaching with the internalization of Islamic values (Shofiya, 2019). Teachers in Islamic educational contexts also tend to view CLIL positively because it enhances teaching engagement and student learning, although they consistently note challenges related to teacher language proficiency, professional preparation, and the availability of culturally relevant materials (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Prastyo et al., 2024). This caveat is important because successful implementation depends not only on the approach itself, but also on institutional support, resources, and teacher development (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Hu, 2023).

Despite this promising evidence, studies on CBI and CLIL have more often centered on science, business, technology, or broad academic subjects than on Islamic Studies as a disciplinary field (Hu et al., 2023). Research in Islamic higher education has identified strong demand for ESP materials rooted in Islamic culture, religious moderation, and discipline-specific communicative purposes, but it also shows that such materials are still insufficiently developed in many programs (Budiasih & Dewi, 2023; Permatasari & Nurmaidah, 2024). This gap is especially significant for Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir students because their academic formation requires engagement with specialized concepts, interpretive traditions, and contemporary Islamic issues that can serve as authentic content for English learning (Gusmuliana et al., 2023). Recent work also indicates that Islamic-themed English materials can be designed around values such as tolerance, multiculturalism, and moderation, suggesting that content integration can support not only language development but also broader educational and ethical goals (Budiasih & Dewi, 2023).

Based on this background, integrating Islamic Studies content into English learning appears to be a relevant ESP strategy for students of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir. Such integration aligns with the central ESP principle that instruction should respond to learners' target needs and communicative purposes (Hyland, 2022; Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020). It also reflects findings that students in Islamic institutions want English learning to help them read Islamic publications, write scholarly work, communicate Islamic ideas, and participate in religion-related academic and public discourse (Gusmuliana et al., 2023; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022). Furthermore, content-integrated and technology-supported CLIL environments have shown potential to support simultaneous learning of language and cultural content, which is relevant in increasingly digital higher education settings (Mageira et al., 2022).

Against this background, the present study investigates the integration of Islamic Studies content into English language learning through a Content-Based Instruction approach at UIN Datokarama Palu. The study focuses on how Islamic Studies materials are used in classroom instruction and how they contribute to students' motivation, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and communication skills. By addressing a context that remains underrepresented in the literature, this study seeks to extend current discussions on ESP, CBI, and CLIL in Islamic higher education and to show that English learning grounded in Islamic disciplinary content can function not as a separate subject, but as a meaningful medium for developing both language proficiency and academic engagement in the field of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the integration of Islamic Studies content into English language learning for first-semester students of the Department of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir at UIN Datokarama Palu. A qualitative design was appropriate because it enables in-depth exploration of teaching and learning processes within a specific educational context and supports contextualized interpretation of participants' experiences and classroom practices (Darussalam, 2024).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling because they shared a common disciplinary background while representing different levels of English proficiency. In qualitative

educational research, purposive sampling is used to recruit information-rich participants who are well positioned to address the research questions (Arifin & Muhajir, 2019; Chanifah et al., 2021; Rasyid, 2022).

The study was conducted over one academic semester. English instruction was organized using a Content-Based Instruction (CBI) framework, in which language learning was developed through discipline-relevant subject matter. CBI lessons typically center on a specific topic and are intended to connect language development with meaningful academic content, student motivation, and purposeful language use (Darussalam, 2024). The instructional materials covered core themes in Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir, including Introduction to Qur'anic Studies, History of Qur'anic Revelation, Principles of Tafsir, Islamic Ethics and Values, Contemporary Issues in Qur'anic Interpretation, and Moderate Islam and Social Harmony. Such content selection is consistent with evidence that integrating disciplinary and religious knowledge can support contextually relevant and globally oriented learning in Islamic higher education (Muslim et al., 2024).

Learning activities included reading academic texts, identifying discipline-specific vocabulary, participating in pair and group discussions, delivering oral presentations, and writing reflective assignments. CBI has also been associated with improvements in students' speaking, reading, and writing development, although some contexts still report difficulties in listening and speaking confidence, indicating that implementation benefits depend on task design and instructional support (Farzana, 2024; Mahsar, 2020).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through classroom observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Using multiple sources of evidence is a common strategy in qualitative educational research because it supports richer description and strengthens the credibility of interpretation through triangulation (Peel, 2020). Classroom observations were used to document student participation, interaction patterns, and language use during content-based activities. Document analysis covered lesson plans, teaching materials, students' written work, and reflective journals to examine how Islamic Studies content was integrated into instruction (Chanifah et al., 2021). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students at the end of the semester to explore their perceptions of the learning approach, the challenges they encountered, and its perceived contribution to language and disciplinary learning (Chanifah et al., 2021; Rasyid, 2022).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used and flexible approach for identifying patterns of meaning in qualitative datasets (Dawadi, 2020; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; W. Xu & Zammit, 2020). The analysis began with repeated reading of observation notes, interview transcripts, and student reflections to achieve data familiarization, followed by initial coding, category development, theme generation, and interpretive refinement (Chanifah et al., 2021; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Rasyid et al., 2023). Thematic analysis is especially suitable for educational research when researchers need a transparent and systematic procedure for tracing how interpretations are developed from multiple classroom-based data sources (Dawadi, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017; W. Xu & Zammit, 2020).

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation by comparing findings across observations, interviews, and documents (Chanifah et al., 2021). Qualitative studies also strengthen credibility through explicit analytic procedures, audit trails, and participant verification (Peel, 2020; Rasyid et al., 2023). Member checking has been used as an important strategy for confirming whether interpretations accurately reflect participants' experiences (Chanifah et al., 2021; Rasyid et al., 2023). In addition, data analysis triangulation can add nuance and dependability to theme development when researchers compare patterns across analytic sources or tools (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. *Learner Motivation and Engagement*

One of the most significant findings of this study was the increase in students' motivation to learn English when Islamic Studies content was incorporated into classroom instruction. Data obtained from classroom observations indicated that students participated more actively during lessons involving Qur'anic themes, Islamic ethics, and tafsir discussions than during lessons based on general English topics. During group discussions and oral presentations, most students voluntarily contributed ideas and responded to their peers' arguments. Observation notes further revealed that students were more willing to ask questions and express opinions when the subject matter was related to concepts they had previously studied in their major courses.

Data from student reflective journals further confirmed this finding. Many students expressed that learning English through Islamic Studies content helped them recognize the practical value of English for their future academic and professional development. One student stated that reading English texts related to Qur'anic interpretation made English feel more relevant to his field of study, while another reported feeling more motivated because the learning materials reflected topics that he regularly encountered in other courses.

Interview data also demonstrated that familiarity with the subject matter reduced students' anxiety when using English. Because students already possessed background knowledge about topics such as Qur'anic revelation, Islamic ethics, and contemporary Islamic issues, they felt more comfortable participating in discussions and expressing opinions. Rather than struggling simultaneously with unfamiliar content and language, students were able to focus on understanding English expressions and communication strategies.

When content is meaningful, authentic, and linked to students' present and future needs, CBI/CLIL tends to raise motivation, attention, engagement, and volunteering in class (Cenoz, 2015; Othman, 2024; M. Zhang & Pladevall-Ballester, 2021). Students feel more willing to participate because the focus is on conveying ideas, not only on grammatical accuracy, which lowers anxiety and makes them less afraid of making mistakes (Cenoz, 2015; M. Zhang & Pladevall-Ballester, 2021).

In Islamic higher education, integrating Islamic values and subject matter into English instruction supports both cognitive (knowledge) and affective (attitudes, behavior) development and helps lecturers fulfill the dual task of teaching language and Islamic values simultaneously (Matsubara & Yoshida, 2018; Shofiya, 2019). Islamic Studies students generally show positive attitudes and intrinsic motivation toward learning English, especially when they see its importance for academic and professional purposes (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Kuzairi, 2022).

2. *Discipline-Specific Academic Vocabulary Development*

The analysis of students' written assignments, reflective journals, and oral presentations revealed substantial improvement in academic vocabulary related to Islamic Studies. At the beginning of the course, many students demonstrated limited familiarity with English terminology commonly used in international discussions of Islamic scholarship. However, by the end of the semester, students showed increased ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately use discipline-specific vocabulary.

The most frequently used terms identified in students' assignments included *revelation*, *interpretation*, *exegesis*, *contextualization*, *moderation*, *jurisprudence*, *Islamic ethics*, *social harmony*, and *Qur'anic worldview*. Students not only recognized these terms in reading materials but were also able to incorporate them into written reflections and oral presentations. For example, several students successfully explained the concept of Qur'anic interpretation using the terms *exegesis* and *contextualization*, demonstrating both conceptual understanding and linguistic competence.

Classroom observations indicated that vocabulary acquisition occurred naturally through repeated exposure to authentic and semi-authentic Islamic Studies texts. Students encountered key terminology in reading passages, discussion activities, presentation tasks, and writing assignments.

This repeated exposure facilitated retention and enabled students to apply newly acquired vocabulary in different communicative contexts. Interview responses further revealed that students felt more confident when reading English-language articles related to Islamic Studies because they had become familiar with essential disciplinary terminology.

Content-based and CLIL/EMI programs commonly produce gains in discipline-specific vocabulary, even when general grammar does not improve much (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022). Content-based vocabulary work, especially when tied closely to reading and tasks, enhances academic performance in vocabulary and encourages more autonomous learning (Soh & Sharif, 2021; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022).

In EMI/CLIL science and trade programs, students expand productive and receptive technical vocabulary and can handle academic reading and writing more effectively (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014; Sharizan et al., 2024; Warda & Dalimunte, 2022). Teaching academic vocabulary explicitly, embedded in subject content, is considered crucial for accessing academic texts and succeeding in content courses (Sharizan et al., 2024; Soh & Sharif, 2021).

3. *Enhanced Reading Comprehension*

The findings also indicated improvements in students' reading comprehension abilities. Analysis of reading assignments and classroom activities demonstrated that students were better able to understand English texts when the content was related to concepts they had previously studied in Islamic Studies courses. Throughout the semester, students engaged with texts discussing topics such as the history of Qur'anic revelation, principles of tafsir, Islamic moderation, and ethical values in Islam.

Observation data showed that students were increasingly able to identify main ideas, interpret supporting details, infer meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary, and summarize academic texts. During classroom discussions, students frequently referred to their prior knowledge of Islamic concepts to explain the meaning of English passages. This process enabled them to construct meaning more effectively than when dealing with unfamiliar subject matter.

Student reflections highlighted the important role of background knowledge in facilitating comprehension. Several participants reported that they could predict the content of texts and infer the meanings of unfamiliar words because they were already familiar with the underlying Islamic concepts. One student explained that understanding the topic of tafsir helped him comprehend the overall message of a text even when some vocabulary items were unfamiliar.

The findings that Islamic Studies-based reading activities improved students' comprehension are aligned with research on schema activation in EFL reading. When learners are familiar with the topic, they can connect new language to existing mental frameworks, read faster, and understand more deeply (Cao, 2021; Cimermanová, 2020). Studies show that activating content schemata through pre-reading activities (e.g., brainstorming, discussion, questions) significantly improves test scores and helps students handle complex texts (Cao, 2021). Content-based instruction that integrates subject matter with language similarly promotes active use of background knowledge during reading, which supports better comprehension than traditional instruction (Usman & Mahmud, 2024). Teachers, however, note that low language proficiency and lack of suitable materials can limit how effectively prior knowledge is used (Cimermanová, 2020).

4. *Development of Communication Skills*

Another important finding was the improvement in students' communication skills, particularly in speaking and academic presentation activities. Throughout the implementation of the content-based approach, students participated in structured discussions, group presentations, and reflective sharing sessions focused on Islamic Studies topics.

Classroom observations revealed noticeable progress in students' willingness to communicate in English. At the beginning of the semester, many students tended to provide brief responses and showed hesitation when expressing opinions. However, as the course progressed, students became more

confident in explaining concepts, asking questions, and responding to their peers during discussions. This confidence appeared to stem from their familiarity with the content being discussed.

Students demonstrated the ability to discuss various topics, including Qur'anic values, Islamic ethics, environmental stewardship in Islam, religious moderation, and social harmony. Their presentations showed gradual improvement in fluency, vocabulary usage, and organization of ideas. Furthermore, students increasingly used academic vocabulary accurately while presenting Islamic concepts to their classmates.

Interview data confirmed that students perceived the learning activities as valuable preparation for future academic and professional roles. Several participants expressed that they felt more capable of explaining Islamic concepts to international audiences and accessing global academic discussions related to Islam. This finding is particularly important for students of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir, who may later become researchers, educators, religious leaders, or da'wah practitioners operating in multilingual environments.

The reported gains in speaking and presentation skills through Islamic content echo work on integrated and content-based teaching. Integrated strategies that combine skills around meaningful content significantly raise speaking scores and classroom participation in Islamic education settings (Al Asmari & Javid, 2018). Content-based and ESP/Islamic Studies-oriented courses also lead to measurable improvements in speaking performance, especially in vocabulary use, fluency, and confidence in oral presentations (Adawiyah, 2018; Rusdin & Purwati, 2023). Literature- and content-integrated models further strengthen intercultural and communicative competence by using authentic, value-laden texts as discussion triggers (Darmayenti & Yustina, 2021). These outcomes support the claim that Islamic content provides authentic, high-meaning contexts for expressing opinions and articulating religious perspectives in English (Al Asmari & Javid, 2018; Darmayenti & Yustina, 2021; Rusdin & Purwati, 2023).

5. *Challenges in Implementation*

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges that affected the implementation of the content-based learning model. Data from classroom observations, student interviews, and document analysis revealed four major challenges.

First, there was a limited availability of English-language Islamic Studies materials that matched students' proficiency levels. Many authentic texts contained complex academic vocabulary and sentence structures that were difficult for lower-proficiency learners. Consequently, instructors often needed to adapt or simplify materials before they could be used effectively in classroom instruction.

Second, students displayed considerable variation in English proficiency. While some students were able to engage actively with academic texts and discussions, others required additional support in vocabulary and grammar. This disparity sometimes created challenges in designing activities that could accommodate all learners simultaneously.

Third, balancing language objectives and content objectives proved challenging. In several learning sessions, instructors needed to decide whether to focus on linguistic accuracy or conceptual understanding of Islamic Studies content. Maintaining an appropriate balance between these two goals required careful lesson planning and instructional flexibility.

Fourth, the implementation of content-based learning demanded additional preparation from instructors. Teachers were required to select relevant Islamic Studies topics, adapt instructional materials, design integrated learning activities, and provide linguistic scaffolding to support student comprehension. This process required both language teaching expertise and sufficient understanding of Islamic Studies content.

The challenges identified mirror broader CLIL/CBI experience. Across contexts, teachers report: (1) lack of appropriate dual-focus materials that match students' background knowledge and proficiency (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015); (2) wide variation in language levels that complicates balancing content and language aims (Sirokmány, 2023); and (3) heavy demands on teachers' language,

methodological competence, and preparation time for adapting or creating materials (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015; Sirokmány, 2023). Reviews of CLIL stress that successful implementation requires systematic teacher training, institutional support, and curriculum-level planning rather than isolated classroom initiatives (Sirokmány, 2023).

Discussion

The findings indicate that integrating Islamic Studies content into English instruction through CBI supports students' motivation, vocabulary growth, reading comprehension, and communication skills because language learning is anchored in content that is already academically meaningful to them (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Shofiya, 2019; Shykun, 2023). In CLIL and CBI research, content-language integration tends to improve language proficiency and content understanding simultaneously, especially when learning tasks are authentic and closely aligned with students' disciplinary needs (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2023; Shykun, 2023).

This interpretation fits evidence from Islamic higher education showing that CBI can increase both Islamic content knowledge and foreign language ability, while also addressing affective dimensions of learning (Shofiya, 2019). It is also consistent with studies using Islamic historical content, where English learning was organized around vocabulary building, reading comprehension, writing summaries, and reflection on moral values drawn from the content (Kuzairi, 2022).

The increase in learning motivation is consistent with evidence that integrated content-language instruction provides meaningful learning experiences and promotes active participation because students see the relevance and utility of English for real academic purposes (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Shykun, 2023). In Islamic higher education, virtual project-based learning also increased active participation, motivation, collaboration, and communication, which supports the idea that contextualized and purposeful tasks strengthen engagement (Asfihana et al., 2022). Vocational CBI research likewise found that students responded positively to authentic materials and showed instrumental motivation when they perceived English as important for their lives and goals (Sharizan et al., 2024).

The finding on academic vocabulary is also well supported. Content-based vocabulary instruction improved academic performance and learner autonomy in reading-related contexts (Matsubara & Yoshida, 2018), while CBI in writing with technology-enhanced learning produced substantial improvement in vocabulary size and more varied topic-appropriate word use (Sariani et al., 2022). Additional evidence from digital-game language learning shows gains in vocabulary learning and retention together with positive student attitudes (Bouzaiane & Youzbashi, 2024). These studies support the present result that repeated exposure to Islamic Studies terminology across reading, discussion, presentation, and writing can strengthen discipline-specific lexical development.

The improvement in reading comprehension is consistent with broader CLIL findings that integrated instruction facilitates deeper comprehension and retention through authentic contexts for learning (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024). It is also supported by task-based reading research showing that engaging post-reading activities improve both vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (Vela, 2023). In the present context, students' prior familiarity with Qur'anic and Islamic concepts likely reduced conceptual difficulty, allowing more attention to English structures and unfamiliar vocabulary.

The development of communication skills also aligns with the literature. CLIL research consistently reports gains across speaking, listening, reading, and writing, alongside stronger communicative competence and active learning (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Shykun, 2023). In Indonesian higher education, project-based CLIL worked effectively through group work, presentations, and student responses during the learning process (Yufrizal, 2021). Together, these findings support the conclusion that students speak more confidently when they discuss content they already understand conceptually.

A key contribution of this study is its focus on Islamic disciplinary content as the vehicle for English development. Most of the literature frames CBI and CLIL as general models for bilingual or

multilingual education, but fewer studies examine their role in specifically Islamic settings (Ayure, 2021; Prastyo et al., 2024). Existing evidence from Islamic higher education and Islamic educational contexts nevertheless suggests that such integration is viable and beneficial, while also requiring culturally relevant resources and targeted professional development (Prastyo et al., 2024; Shofiya, 2019).

The challenges identified here are also strongly supported by the literature. Successful CLIL depends on teacher preparation, institutional support, and adequate resources (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024). Teachers in Islamic educational contexts report challenges related to language proficiency and resource availability (Prastyo et al., 2024), and higher education research notes difficulties in writing clear content and language objectives in CBI lessons (Ayure, 2021). These patterns suggest that the main limitation is not the value of the approach itself, but the practical demands of implementing it well.

The broader implication is that English in Islamic higher education can function as a gateway to international academic participation, not merely as a general foreign language (Ayure, 2021; Hu et al., 2023). When English instruction is connected to Qur'anic studies and tafsir, students are better positioned to access global scholarship and communicate Islamic perspectives in wider academic forums.

Future research should test this model with larger samples and comparative designs, since much of the current evidence is positive but still context-specific (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Sharizan et al., 2024). Digital extensions also appear promising: AI-mediated language instruction has improved achievement, motivation, and self-regulated learning (Wei, 2023), and AI-generated or socially contextualized video instruction has supported vocabulary learning, retention, and intrinsic motivation (T. Xu et al., 2024; Z. Zhang et al., 2023).

Overall, the discussion supports the claim that integrating Islamic Studies content into English learning is a pedagogically sound and contextually relevant model for students of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir. The evidence indicates that this approach strengthens motivation, academic language development, and classroom participation, while its long-term success depends on materials development, teacher support, and careful balancing of language and content objectives.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how the integration of Islamic Studies content into English language learning could support the linguistic and academic development of students in the Department of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir at UIN Datokarama Palu. The findings demonstrate that the use of a Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach successfully transformed English from a general language subject into a meaningful academic tool closely connected to students' disciplinary learning. By engaging with topics such as Qur'anic studies, tafsir, Islamic ethics, and contemporary Islamic issues, students were able to develop language proficiency while simultaneously strengthening their understanding of subject-specific knowledge.

Beyond improving motivation, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and communication skills, the study reveals that content-based English learning contributes to the development of academic literacy that is directly relevant to students' future roles as scholars, educators, researchers, and da'wah practitioners. The integration of Islamic Studies content enables students to access international sources of knowledge, participate in broader academic conversations, and communicate Islamic perspectives in global contexts. These findings suggest that English language instruction in Islamic higher education should be viewed not merely as language training but as a strategic means of supporting disciplinary learning and international academic engagement.

The study also highlights the importance of contextualized and discipline-specific English instruction within Islamic universities. The successful integration of Islamic Studies content indicates that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs can be designed to reflect students' academic identities and learning needs, thereby increasing the relevance and effectiveness of language education.

Such an approach may serve as a model for other Islamic higher education institutions seeking to strengthen both language competence and disciplinary expertise among their students.

Nevertheless, the implementation of content-based learning requires appropriate teaching materials, instructor preparation, and institutional support. Therefore, further efforts are needed to develop standardized English learning resources specifically designed for students of Qur'anic Studies and other Islamic disciplines. Future research may employ quantitative or mixed-method designs to measure the impact of this approach on specific language skills and academic outcomes. In addition, further studies may investigate the integration of digital technologies, online Islamic academic resources, and artificial intelligence-assisted learning tools in content-based English instruction. Research currently underway in English for Specific Purposes and technology-enhanced language learning may also provide valuable insights into how Islamic Studies-based English learning can be expanded and adapted to the evolving demands of higher education in the digital era.

REFERENCES

- Adawiyah, R. (2018). The Effectiveness Of Content Based Instruction In Teaching Speaking Skill For Efl Learners. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, 2(2).
- Al-Jahwari, Y., & Al-Humaidi, S. (2015). Prior knowledge in EFL reading comprehension: Omani teachers' perspectives & classroom strategies. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 4(1), 169.
- Al Asmari, A., & Javid, C. Z. (2018). Role of content schema in reading comprehension among Saudi EFL students: EFL teachers' perspective and use of appropriate classroom strategies. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(4), 96–105.
- Arifin, M., & Muhajir, A. (2019). Analisis Persepsi Mahasiswa atas Kompetensi Pedagogik Dosen Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan KALUNI*. <https://doi.org/10.30998/prokaluni.v2i0.149>
- Asfihana, R., Salija, K., Iskandar, I., & Garim, I. (2022). Students' English Learning Experiences on Virtual Project-Based Learning Instruction. *International Journal of Language Education*. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v6i2.20506>
- Ayure, C. P. A. (2021). Expanding the value of CLIL: Perspectives from primary to higher education. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 13, 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2020.13.2>.
- Az, I., & Munawwaroh, E. I. (2024). Syllabus Design for Teaching English for Specific Purposes to Non-English Study Programs at IAIN Syaikh Abdurrahman Siddik Bangka Belitung. *Berumpun: International Journal of Social, Politics, and Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.33019/berumpun.v7i2.237>
- Bouzaiane, B., & Youzbashi, A. (2024). The Role of Digital-Game Based Language Learning in EFL Vocabulary Learning and Retention: A Case Study at a Higher Educational Institute in Oman. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1505.27>
- Budiasih, B., & Dewi, F. A. I. (2023). STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH ENGLISH LEARNING MATERIALS. *Leksema: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra*. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ljbs.v8i2.7482>
- Cao, Y. (2021). Exploring Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teaching materials in Chinese universities: teachers and students perceptions and reflections. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 12(3), 23–32.
- Cenoz, J. (2015). Content-based instruction and content and language integrated learning: the same or different? *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 28, 24–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2014.1000922>
- Chanifah, N., Hanafi, Y., Mahfud, C., & Samsudin, A. (2021). Designing a spirituality-based Islamic education framework for young muslim generations: a case study from two Indonesian universities. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 6, 195–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2021.1960879>

- Cimermanová, I. (2020). On developing materials for CLIL. *SOCIETY. INTEGRATION. EDUCATION. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, 1*, 86–96.
- Darmayenti, D., & Yustina, L. S. (2021). Developing efl religious characters and local wisdom based efl textbook for islamic higher education. *Studies in English Language and Education, 8*(1).
- Darussalam, A. (2024). CBI CONTENT BASED INSTRUCTION AS INNOVATIVE TEACHING ENGLISH FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT HIGH SCHOOL. *PEEL (PASER ENGLISH EDUCATION AND LINGUISTIC)*. <https://doi.org/10.56489/peel.v5i1.159>
- Dawadi, S. (2020). Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step by Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49731>
- Dzulkurnain, M. I., Irianto, S., Rasmita, R., Uktolseja, L., Hartono, W., & Manurung, T. (2024). Understanding the benefits and challenges of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English education: a literature synthesis. *Journal on Education*. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i4.5876>
- Farzana, T. (2024). MAKING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EASIER: TEACHING LITERATURE USING CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION IN THE BANGLADESHI TERTIARY EFL CLASSROOM. *International Journal of English Learning and Applied Linguistics (IJELAL)*. <https://doi.org/10.21111/ijelal.v4i1.11113>
- Gusmuliana, P., Safnil, S., Syafryadin, S., & Kodarni, K. (2023). English for Religious Purposes: The Specific Purposes of Islamic University Students in Indonesia in Learning English. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*. <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i1.503>
- Heidari-Shahreza, M. A. (2014). The effect of content-based language instruction on EFL learners' attention, engagement, volunteering and verbal Interaction. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 20*, 14–21.
- Hu, H. (2023). Emerging From Content and Language Integrated Learning and English-Medium Instruction, is CLIL-ised EMI the Next Trend of Education? *Higher Learning Research Communications*. <https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v13i2.1422>
- Hu, H., Said, N.-E. M., & Hashim, H. (2023). Sustaining Content and Language Integrated Learning in China: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15053894>
- Hyland, K. (2022). English for Specific Purposes: What Is It and Where Is It Taking Us? *ESP Today*. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2022.10.2.1>
- Kiger, M., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher, 42*, 846–854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2020.1755030>
- Kuzairi. (2022). Learning English Through Islamic Historical Content. *Adabuna : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran*. <https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v2i1.910>
- Latif, H. A. (2019). Needs Analysis of English for Specific Purposes on Islamic Boarding School Students. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v3i2.1568>
- Lemon, L., & Hayes, J. (2020). Enhancing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Findings: Using Leximancer for Qualitative Data Analysis Triangulation. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4222>
- López-Medina, E., & Casado, J. M. C. (2024). CLIL, a competence-based coping strategy against foreign language anxiety in higher education. *Discover Psychology, 4*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44202-024-00187-6>
- Mageira, K., Pittou, D., Papasalouros, A., Kotis, K., Zangogianni, P., & Daradoumis, A. (2022). Educational AI Chatbots for Content and Language Integrated Learning. *Applied Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app12073239>
- Mahsar, L. (2020). TEACHING ENGLISH USING CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION (CBI) IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL (A Classroom Action Research in the Second Grade Students of Poltekpar Lombok). *Jurnal Ilmiah Hospitality, 9*(2), 241–254.
- Martín-González, D., & Chaves-Yuste, B. (2023). From English for General Purposes to English for

- Specific Purposes: The Role of Motivation in Higher Education in Spain. *ESP Today*. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2024.12.1.2>
- Matsubara, M., & Yoshida, H. (2018). FOSTERING AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS OF VOCABULARY ACQUISITION USING CONTENT-BASED ICT METHODS. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6, 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2018.617>
- Mauludin, L., Sefrina, L., Ardianti, T., Praseyto, G., Prasetyo, S., & Putri, C. (2023). An Investigation of the Students' Perceptions of Motivating Teaching Strategies in English for Specific Purposes Classes. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.6.5>
- Muslim, A. B., Arroisi, J., Jan, J. M., & Ramazani, R. (2024). Indonesian pesantren-affiliated higher education: universal Islamic values to develop locally engaged but globally oriented multilingual graduates. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 29, 138–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2023.2285633>
- Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Othman, J. (2024). *Academic vocabulary learning in EMI classrooms: Challenges and strategies*.
- Peel, K. (2020). A beginner's guide to applied educational research using thematic analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 25, 2. <https://doi.org/10.7275/ryr5-k983>
- Permatasari, Y. D., & Nurmaidah, A. (2024). THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLYING ESP (ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES) THROUGH ISLAMIC CULTURE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS. *Proceeding of International Conference on Education and Sharia*. <https://doi.org/10.62097/ices.v124.33>
- Prastyo, H., Jabu, B., & Baa, S. (2024). Teachers' Perceptions of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in an Islamic Educational Context: A Qualitative Case Study in East Java, Indonesia. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v11i2.66992>
- Rasyid, M. (2022). Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Towards Language Assessment in an Indonesian Islamic University. *Langkawi: Journal of The Association for Arabic and English*. <https://doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v0i0.4475>
- Rasyid, M., Rauf, M., Junaid, S., Nur, S., & Syukur, H. (2023). Assessing Listening Comprehension Skills in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education EFL Classrooms: Current Practices, Challenges and Solutions. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v5i2.4187>
- Rusdin, R., & Purwati, D. (2023). Speaking Up: A Comprehensive Investigation of EFL Secondary Students' Speaking Skill Problems in Indonesia's Islamic School Context. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 5(2), 236–249.
- Salmani-Nodoushan, M. A. (2020). English for specific purposes: Traditions, trends, directions. *Studies in English Language and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i1.16342>
- Sariani, S., Rozi, F., & Yaningsih, Y. (2022). Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in Writing E-Brochure: Integrating Vocabulary Learning and Technology-Enhanced Language Teaching. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Applied Science and Technology on Social Science 2021 (ICAST-SS 2021)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220301.082>
- Sharizan, S., Titania, F. N., Rihatmi, R., Handayani, R., Sukarno, S., Musaldin, L., & Sadiyah, N. I. (2024). Examining Students' Perception and Motivation on the Content-based Instruction (CBI) Implementation in Vocational Education. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i4.12424>
- Shofiya, A. (2019). THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION. *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia*. <https://doi.org/10.21274/lis.2019.11.2.327-342>
- Shykun, A. V. (2023). Content and language integrated learning: enhancing language acquisition and content understanding. *International Science Journal of Education & Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.46299/j.isjel.20230204.05>
- Sirokmány, V. (2023). CLIL in tertiary education—developing material for the course, Scientific Writing in English. *Porta Lingua*, 1, 127–136.

- Soh, O.-K., & Sharif, N. (2021). The attitude and motivation of Islamic studies students towards learning the English Learning. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(2), 625–647.
- Usman, A. H., & Mahmud, A. F. (2024). Addressing Low Speaking Proficiency in EFL Students: The Impact of Integrated Teaching Strategies in an Islamic Education Setting. *International Journal of Language Education*, 8(3), 503–519.
- Vela, V. (2023). Exploring the Impact of Task-Based Activities on Vocabulary Acquisition and Student Attitudes Towards Reading Short Stories: A Comparison of Two Approaches. *SEEU Review*, 18, 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.2478/seeur-2023-0008>
- Warda, Z., & Dalimunte, A. A. (2022). Students' Perceptions on English Learning Materials: Need Analysis of Islamic Studies Students. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (IJIES)*. <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v5i1.2476>
- Wei, L. (2023). Artificial intelligence in language instruction: impact on English learning achievement, L2 motivation, and self-regulated learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1261955>
- Xu, T., Liu, Y., Jin, Y., Qu, Y., Bai, J., Zhang, W., & Zhou, Y. (2024). From recorded to AI-generated instructional videos: A comparison of learning performance and experience. *Br. J. Educ. Technol.*, 56, 1463–1487. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13530>
- Xu, W., & Zammit, K. (2020). Applying Thematic Analysis to Education: A Hybrid Approach to Interpreting Data in Practitioner Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920918810>
- Yufrizal, H. (2021). *The impact of project based-CLIL on students' english proficiency*. 15, 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v15i1.15692>
- Zhang, M., & Pladevall-Ballester, E. (2021). Discipline-specific language learning outcomes in EMI programs in the People's Republic of China. *Language and Education*, 35(4), 357–374.
- Zhang, Z., Li, H., & Zhou, J. (2023). Teaching with social context in instructional video facilitates second language vocabulary learning. *Heliyon*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e14540>

