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*Opportunities and Challenges of Linguistics Development and Language Teaching and Learning  
in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era*



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## LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA

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### Abstract

English teaching practice in the Covid-19 pandemic era has currently received increased attention in educational research. Many studies have highlighted the practical changes and cultural changes of TEFL due to the pandemic, yet such changes remain less explored in Islamic educational context. The aim of the paper is to document the changes that occur in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools with a particular focus on: (1) digital literacy, (2) multimodal materials, and (3) Islam moderation contextualization. The paper presents a case study on four Islamic boarding schools in Lampung Province, Indonesia. Data were drawn from audio-recorded teacher interviews, field notes, and documentation. A qualitative analysis of the data revealed the importance of digital literacy improvement for both students and teachers; the emergent needs of designing multimodal materials; and the urgency of incorporating four pillars of Islam moderation into English language teaching practices. It is argued that being conversant with such practical and cultural needs can be a remarkable springboard to improve English instruction in the Islamic boarding schools during and post pandemic era. With growing consciousness coming from this research, a multimodal teaching material that accommodates the spirit of Islam moderation can be studied and developed further.

**Keywords:** digital literacy, Islam moderation, Islamic boarding school, multimodal material

### 1. Introduction

Learning media migration is one of the adaptation efforts in the educational process during the pandemic. Digital literacy's usage is increasingly found everywhere, especially in language teaching and learning practices (Hafner et al., 2015). Digital literacy can help both teachers and students to provide and access materials easier during learning from home in pandemic era. Furthermore, technological advances bring changes in students' learning styles in receiving lessons (Kustini et al., 2018). This leads to the provision of multimodal material which is able to facilitate students in understanding meaning through various media and sensory modes (Anggrainy, 2016). In its utilization, the teacher can explain the subject materials in a variety of ways by

using communication media such as images, colors, and audio (Ajayi, 2012).

Further, multimodal material is something commonly found in learning English (Lirola, 2020). The use of multimodal materials is widely used in learning English (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016; Nasution, 2019). Moreover, there is also supplementary material on the use of multimodal materials that can build students' awareness of the social conditions around them (Azizah & Sugirin, 2019). Several studies on supplementary materials in learning English have been conducted. The research on multimodal usually also included supplementary material using local cultural content (Amelia & Hikmawati, 2019; Nurliana, 2019) and the use of cartoons, anecdotes, and stories (Dodd et al., 2015; Mina, 2015; Thakur, 2015). In



variety of digital tools and applications” (Ferrari, 2012, p. 16).

Teachers found this integration of digital literacies in English language teaching beneficial for both teachers and students which in turn contribute to good learning outcome. This is in line with Liza & Andriyanti (2020) who maintained that by integrating digital technology, teachers might meet the digital literacy standards of professional English teachers and improve the quality of English teaching and learning output. The involvement of digital literacies in blended learning is considered effective in terms of accessibility, ease of use, design, and duration of the e-learning (Tang and Chow, 2016). Digital literacies help students’ autonomy to navigate the treasure of information accessed using the digital border and inherently free to select to work with texts that are most appropriate for their current language proficiencies (Yuan, et al., 2019).

However, it is worth noting that digital literacies in Islamic boarding school context might face some constraints due to the contextual rule of Islamic boarding schools which limits students’ access to internet. Other factors which influencing this barrier include the complexity of digital literacy technologies, varying levels of understanding among young learners, and EFL teachers’ lack of digital literacy experience (Mudra, 2020).

### 3.2 Multimodal Material

The need for a readjustment of ESL teaching and learning in various contexts can be realized by, among others, including a focus on multimodal pedagogical approaches, which enhances effective student learning outcomes. Multimodal techniques integrated into EFL teaching and learning can increase students’ autonomy in learning, increase motivation to learn, and accommodate a variety of learning styles (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016). In the same vein, specifically in the area of reading skill, Ikasari et al, (2020) showed how multimodal texts with diverse modes or semiotic resources such as color, sound, motion, written text, and gesture could

affluence the teacher to help the students perform better. Moreover, the use of multimodal texts allowed the students to participate more actively in the classroom activities

A variety of print and digital multimodal texts were used in ELT practices in Islamic boarding schools such as, Islamic story books and novels, a collection of quotes, Islamic speeches, websites, video games, and picture books. This multimodal materials are expected to stimulate students to learn more effectively since it is assumed better learning outcome, that according to (Moreno & Mayer, 2007), is produced from a mixture of pictures and words than from words alone.

As elaborated by teacher 2, the materials in term of videos made and uploaded on YouTube were found to be more likeable among students since young learners today are familiar with this worldwide platform. This is beneficial to reduced students’ boredom in learning English materials which are mostly presented in textbooks. This in congruence with what argued by Liu (2013) that multimodal learning classrooms which employ several modes, verbal and non-verbal, to represent content knowledge aims to activate both learners’ visual and auditory sensory modalities.

### 3.3 Islamic Moderation

To this end, despite the large number of Islamic schools in Indonesia, studies and practices to include Islamic moderation norms into English language instruction remain less explored (Rizal, 2020). In fact, whereas including Islamic moderation comprising of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, *tasamuh*, and *i'tidal* values could support the character development in Islamic junior high schools. This can be executed through simple routine activities such as wearing school uniform, perceiving ancestral culture, familiarizing greetings, sympathetic care routine for orphan and poor people and so on (Saefudin, 2020).

Situated in the school context with main emphasis on religious education, English teachers in Islamic boarding schools

have positive attitude toward the instilling of religious moderation values into English language teaching practices. The accommodation of religious moderation values into ELT in is in relevance with the importance of addressing inter-culturality in online learning environment (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019).

In attempt to identify how Islamic moderation understandings are promoted in ELT practices in this schooling context, some particular values are highlighted. The first is nationalism. The nationalism values, according to T1, were presented through the section of cultural awareness in the textbooks used in English classes. She emphasized that through cultural awareness section, students are provided the local and foreign cultures contained in each unit of the textbook. The representation of the balanced culture in the textbooks has motivational effect on learning English language. (Shah et al., 2019)

The other value was tolerance. Regarding this, T3 ascertained that

*"It is very crucial to teach students tolerance values because I sometimes see my students from different ethnics bully each other. Therefore, to reduce this issue, we teachers should take a part of spreading the importance tolerant behaviors by instilling it in our instruction".*

Tolerance is a valuable trait to have, and it will help students greatly if it is instilled early in their education, particularly in English learner. Therefore, multicultural language learning can be used as an alternate strategy in the classrooms. They can think critically and be tolerant from an early age as a result of this influence, but it must be tailored to their age and mental capacity (Miftakh & Wachyudi, 2019). Furthermore, according to a study, learning culture "allows the student to gain a fondness for the individuals of that culture," "helps the students avoid stereotypical views," and is part of the general education (Kitao, 2000).

The next pillar of Islamic moderation is anti-violence. In this regard, English teachers assumed that

*"Students should know about the value of anti-violence considering many criminality and violence out there. We as educators need to provide Islamic moderation value so that they don't do something bad to others" (T4).*

The integration of Islamic moderation made by teachers in Islamic boarding schools was implemented in several ways. For example, teacher 2 and 3 used quote of the day and Islamic stories containing moral values related to the pillars of Islamic moderation. The same way was stated by teacher 1 that used an advice as a media to prevent violence among the students. This media consisted of proverb in ELT which put up moral values that can represent pillar of Islam in the theme of anti-violence.

The integrations above are pursuant to a study by Siswanto (2019) which found that the mainstream way of implementing Islamic moderation value is not explicitly explained in the textbook. The Islamic value substances such as the values of tolerances, democracy, simplicity, and justice and harmony –which is the part of anti-violence– indeed is essentially have to be reflected in the education process.

The last pillar of Islam moderation found in ELT process of Islamic boarding school is democracy all the participants agreed that the value which represent cultural awareness and nationality commitment in their teaching-learning process. Specifically, the teacher 1 used to compare the cross-culture found in Indonesia and western as a result of ELT. Then they added the importance of building a nationalism in students' heart and realized in daily behavior.

This is in congruence with (Zuhdi, 2018) which stated that schools in Indonesia have to provide a chance as wide as possible for children to understand and practice religion with promoting a sense of nationalism. The result is that Indonesian students have been considered as moderat Islam. As the teacher 2 and 3 added further that if the teacher do not teach the student about nationalism and such, the big stream of foreign culture will dominate or even swept away Indonesian culture.



This study was conducted to shed light on the integration of digital literacy in ELT during instructional process from home in pandemic era. In general, it could be stated that students had good responses to digital literacy in their class. Both teacher and student could adapt new learning environment during pandemic by implementing multimodal materials. Based on the finding of this study, the teachers could use multimodal text and integrate the values of Islamic moderation as the supplementary materials for students. It helps the teacher to provide good values with some particular values highlighted as nationalism, tolerance, anti-violence, and democracy. Further, the teacher could promote local content as teaching materials in order to introduce and show the students' national identity.

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