



## Incorporating Values of Moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners in an EFL Class

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v3i1.1299>

Received: 4 januari 2018

Revised: 6 April 2018

Approved: 1 Mei 2018

### **Abstract**

*This present study aims to explore how to incorporate values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class. This research was conducted in the single class consisting of 44 undergraduate students who took English for Islamic Education course at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pekalongan. The data were collected through observation and interview. The finding has revealed that five values of moderate Islam could be noticed in the EFL class, namely: 1) objectivity, 2) tolerance in encountering diversity, 3) inclusiveness in receiving something new, 4) logic and flexibility in understanding texts, and 5) innovation in daily life. Another result demonstrates the lecturer's pivotal roles in incorporating the values of moderate Islamic for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in the EFL class, including 1) facilitating as a good model to incorporate the values such as respecting diversity without any discrimination of gender and social backgrounds, respecting diversity in the learners' responses, and having enthusiasm for helping the learners, 2) organizing an online group on Edmodo learning management system, and 3) providing the EFL learners with opportunities for enhancing good morality in both individual and group learning activities. Meanwhile, relating to the use of learning materials, online news articles containing Islamic values were used as the authentic materials, and EFL teaching may impact on the learners' disappointment or conflict with the culture embedded in the learning materials.*

**Keywords:** *Values of Moderate Islam, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners, EFL Class*

### **Introduction**

Education plays a very pivotal role in building a mode of characters of learners and society. Rohman (2017: 422) points out that education constitutes a strategic pillar to disseminate the values of tolerance, moderation, respect, and empathy, and to develop an attitude of non-violence for learners. The importance of skills and knowledge needs to be

enhanced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Teachers/lecturers should be technology-literate to face the advancement of technology so as to integrate this dynamics in their classes. For this reason, it is necessary for teachers/lecturers, school/faculty members, and policy makers to rethink current views of scientific literacy that are needed for learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Choi, Lee, Shin, Kim, and Krajcik, 2011: 671) To meet this demand, Ait, Rannikmäe, Soobard, Reiska, and Holbrook (2015: 492) identify that there are six major criteria related to scientific literacy needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, namely: 1) schools need to transform in ways that enable learners to acquire the sophisticated thinking, flexible problem solving, and collaboration and communication skills needed to be successful in work and everyday life, 2) through science education, learners need to develop an understanding of big ideas about objects, phenomena, materials, and relationship in the natural world, 3) individuals need to be nurtured who are able to appreciate diversity of values and culture sensitivities surrounding issues, to have compassion for others, collaboratively construct values for the larger welfare, and ultimately take action, 4) an increasing urgency needs to be recognized for skills such as analyzing the credibility and utility of information, evaluating its appropriateness and intelligently applying it, 5) skills are needed to infer meaning from science texts which relates to the ability to recognize the standard genres of science and their appropriate use to evaluate the claims and evidence advanced, and 6) metacognitive knowledge is also important need for science learning which is related to positive attitudes and knowledge gains.

Relating to the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in Indonesia, teachers/lecturers need to take into account of cultural contents in their classes since this country is considered unique in terms of religious diversity and language variety. Hidayati (2016: 67) promotes that Indonesia is regarded to be more dynamic, more tolerant, and respects the multi-culturalism and religious diversity of its community. Consequently, the cultural contents integrated in EFL teaching and learning may bring them into conflict with the culture upheld by EFL learners. Rohmah (2005: 116) argues that the domination of English over local languages may cause the speakers of English in expanding circles to experience mixed feelings of happiness and disappointment. It is in line with the Umam's (2014: 228) statement, EFL speakers often encounter the problem of communication in the target language culture. They often face the problem of cross-cultural miscommunication for they do not understand the norms of

the target language culture when performing their English skills. In other words, since language is greatly influenced by culture, the target language culture needs to be deemed in EFL teaching and learning.

Currently, it can be noticed that there were some tragedies of radicalism (or even terrorism) in Indonesia, including bombing attacks at three churches and Police headquarters in Surabaya (Kahfi, Andapita, and Boediwardhana, 2018). More surprisingly, a study conducted by the Agency for Research and Development of Religion, Semarang (BLAS) at 17 public schools located in nine cities/regencies of Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta revealed that some of the students agreed with the idea of changing Pancasila (Indonesia's way of life). Another study, additionally, carried out by the Agency for Research and Development of Religion, Makassar exposed that 10% of 1,100 senior and vocational high school students demonstrated their potential of being radical groups. Lastly, Wahid Foundation and Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) in 2016 reported 7.7% of 1,520 senior high school students in 34 Indonesia's provinces also showed the potential of committing radical actions (Tribun News, 2017). These research results illustrate that radicalism and extremism have affected the students' mindset and may endanger the existence of Indonesia that promotes unity in diversity.

In order to deal with the issues of violence and radical or extreme actions, various endeavors need to be undertaken. Ni'am (2015: 131) asserts that there are several alternatives that can be offered in response to the phenomena. Firstly, Islam should be presented as a universal teaching that provides the guideline for peace on the earth. Secondly, there needs to be an effort to raise the action to prevent violence and terrorism. Thirdly, it is time to build the values of moderate Islam for building the Islamic character which is democratic, open, and rationale. It indicates that values of moderate Islam are very important to realize a quality human civilization.

Moreover, relating to the field of education, incorporating values of moderate Islam in EFL teaching and learning could be the alternative to erode the feeling of anxiety and disappointment to English language teaching, particularly for the culture embedded in English material contents. It is expected that the learners are familiar with these values so as to inculcate them with dynamic attitudes and prevent them from extreme or radical actions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, education based on moderate Islam

demonstrates the education that integrates the mental and physical knowledge and also the religious knowledge pertaining to the self and society (Hanapi, 2014: 60).

Based on the elaboration presented above, this present study aims to explore how to incorporate values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class. This research seeks the answers of the three research questions, namely: 1) what are values of moderate Islam incorporated for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class, 2) how are the teacher/lecturer's roles in incorporating values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class, and 3) how is the use of learning materials in incorporating values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

Not to mention, this study used a qualitative approach by conducting field research. The research questions were investigated at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. Furthermore, it was carried out in a single classroom consisting of 44 undergraduate students. They were the second semester students of Islamic Education department who took English for Islamic Education course in the academic year of 2017/2018. They were considered to be the students who had been incorporated with Islamic values in their classes, especially values of moderate Islam. It became the main consideration in conducting this study.

Meanwhile, the data were collected through observation and interview as the instruments of the study. The former was carried out during three meetings in the classroom and used as the primary data, whereas the latter was done with the English lecturer and some of the students and functioned as the supporting data. These instruments were employed to uncover the main umbrella of the research questions, namely: how are values of moderate Islam incorporated for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class. The data, in addition, were analyzed in four steps, namely: 1) data reduction, 2) data transcription and coding, 3) data classification, and 4) data description and interpretation (Hatch, 2002).

### **Moderate Islam**

The term 'moderate Islam' is required to be understood by Muslims. Yaakub and Othman (2016: 62) highlight that the words 'moderate Islam' (*wasatiyyah*) is a terminological term that represents a conceptual framework given only to the Muslim *ummah* as stated in the Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah (2: 143). This term is a special message

of compassion that Islam offers to mankind in terms of promoting moderation, tolerance, justice, and peaceful co-existence between and among people of various racial, socio-cultural, and ethno-religious backgrounds. Further, Bakir and Othman (2017: 22) define moderate Islam as the 'middle' conceptual senses of balancing act such as fair and simple approaches and the state of balancing act that is zero from extreme and fanatic in every single aspect of human life.

Suharto (2014: 71) suggests that moderate Islam reveal eight characteristics, namely: 1) performing moderate actions (*tawassuth*) in the implementation of Islamic teachings, 2) upholding tolerance towards different opinions and thoughts, 3) avoiding radical actions, 4) emphasizing dialogic approach, 5) accommodating modern concepts containing substantially positive effects, 6) thinking rationally based on the guideline of divine revelation (*wahyu*), 7) interpreting texts written in the Qur'an and Hadith contextually, and 8) using independent reasoning (*ijtihad*).

Regarding the values of moderate Islam, Kamal (2017: 78) promotes seven values embedded in moderate Islam, covering 1) the value of objectivity, 2) the value of tolerance in encountering diversity, 3) the value of inclusiveness in receiving something new or different, 4) the value of logic and flexibility in understanding texts, 5) the value of relevance in interpreting texts, 6) the value of innovation in daily life, and 7) the value of social transformation. These values of moderate Islam are internalized in education so as to provide learners with the moderate character. In short, it becomes an effort to build character education that can be meaningful and beneficial in daily life.

In addition to the values, Kamal (2017: 78) also suggests three stages in incorporating values of moderate Islam. Firstly, the transformation of value that becomes the process done by teachers/lecturers/educators in inculcating the values of moderate Islam. Secondly, the transaction of value that performs the values of moderate Islam is demonstrated in an interactive dialogue between teacher-students and student-student. Lastly, the trans-internalization of value that shows not only verbal communication, but also concern of mentality and personality to get students accustomed to character representing values of moderate Islam. These stages propose the importance of the internalization of moderate Islam values in education.

### **Values of Moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners**

Based on the result of observation, this current research highlights five values of moderate Islam appeared in the EFL class for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners as follows. First, the value of objectivity could be noticed when the EFL learners were asked to work in groups. They made their own groups without any like or dislike when choosing the group members. It demonstrates that the value of objectivity that represents moderate Islam was upheld by the learners. This is in line with Bakir and Othman's (2017: 14-15) view concerning that Islamic moderation carries the objectivity of "Islam" – in itself as a religion, where the principle of balance is characterized as a basic creed in shaping the Islamic way of life, knowledge paradigm, type of action, art of worship, and interaction that transforms the culture and the personal character in civilization development and nation building.

Second, the value of tolerance in encountering diversity also came to the surface when the EFL learners had differences in ideas from other members in their own group. This reveals that the EFL learners respected diversity in others' thoughts. It fits what Shihab (2007: 52) in Ni'am (2015: 20-21) promotes, diversity is something pivotal in daily life that is desired by Allah. It copes with a wide difference of opinions related to the scientific field and even the diversity of human responses in terms of the truth of scriptures, the interpretation of their contents, and the form of their practices. In a greater detail, it also agrees another study carried out by Wani, Abdullah, and Chang (2015: 653-654) revealing that diversity is the natural inclination which all human beings have to accept. People with conflicting behavior are those who lack of tolerance, accommodation, and cooperation. Further, through civilizational dialogue, people of different philosophies and ideologies can minimize and mitigate their differences.

Third, the value of inclusiveness in receiving something new could be observed when they were open for others' responses an in-group presentation and performed dialogues or role plays in front of the class. This result denotes that values of moderate Islam incorporated in the teaching and learning process emphasize justice, avoid injustice, and promote inclusiveness. It fulfills Hasan (2011) in Islam and Khatun's (2015: 72) study explaining that the essence of Islamic moderation is the attainment of justice, inclusiveness, and moral excellence and the avoidance of injustice, exclusiveness, and

extremes which may or may not cause unnecessary hardship or burden oneself or for others.

Fourth, the value of logic and flexibility in understanding texts was noted when the EFL learners were provided with a certain article containing a social phenomenon. They discussed it together by regarding the context of the phenomenon occurred in society, and the lecturer asked them to use their logical thinking by analyzing the social issue. This finding suggests that logic and flexibility which are included into moderate Islam values are incorporated for EFL learners to have logical thinking that becomes one of indicators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It is relevant to Kamal's (2017: 76) study proposing that moderate Islam emphasizes learners to use logical thinking skills in analyzing social issues in relation to certain social values, encourages them to employ rational and analytical thinking, and formulates the value that builds their character.

Lastly, the value of innovation in daily life could be noticed when the EFL learners were asked to submit their assignments on an Edmodo learning group. This learning activity promotes creativity and innovation as several indicators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that meet this value of moderate Islam. Respectively, according to Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2009), there are three skills classified into factors required in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, namely: 1) learning and innovation skills, 2) information, media, and technology skills, and 3) life and career skills (Ongardwanich, Kanjanawasee, and Tuipae, 2015: 738).

Overall, this finding promotes that values of moderate Islam are necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, especially in an EFL class. It is consistent with Hanapi's (2014: 59) statement highlighting that the values of moderate Islam are applied the field of education with the intention of seeking a point of balance not only as a process for delivering information, knowledge, and skills, but also as a transformation process of the self and the system. True and beneficial knowledge disseminated and interpreted according to the values would yield people with firm, religious beliefs and a civilized mannerism. This shows that the incorporation of moderate Islam values is deemed relevant to prepare learners, particularly EFL learners, for the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education so that the learners possess meaningful knowledge and skills embedded with values of moderate Islam.

## **Teacher/Lecturer's Roles in Incorporating Values of Moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners**

Regarding the result of observation, there were three main roles undertaken by the lecturer in incorporating moderate Islam values for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in the EFL class. Firstly, the lecturer played a good model to incorporate the values of moderate Islam such as respecting diversity without any discrimination of gender and social backgrounds in dividing the EFL learners into groups, appreciating diversity in the learners' answers, and having enthusiasm for helping the learners. This finding is in line with Ninlawan's (2015: 1733) point of view suggesting that teachers and educators play a pivotal role in supporting and motivating learners. To make classroom management effective, teachers need to be equipped with five characteristics, including 1) spirit of being a teacher, 2) skills in developing integrated courses, 3) ability to come up with innovation, teaching techniques, an ICT-based classroom, 4) enthusiasm for helping learners – based on psychology of education, and 5) ability to use English for communication. In short, it illustrates that teachers, specifically EFL teachers, should be capable of being a good model and facilitator in incorporating values of moderate Islam for their 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in their EFL classes.

Secondly, the lecturer organized an online group on Edmodo learning management system (LMS) and asked them to join this online learning platform as a part of learning processes. In other words, it is not sufficient if teachers become the ones who are responsible of using technology in their classes. For this reason, they should be able to encourage their students to take advantage of the rapid advancement of technology in preparing them for various professions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which they are incorporated with the values of moderate Islam.

This result reveals that it meets a study carried out by Ongardwanich et al. (2015: 738) declaring that measuring 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is an important mechanism in reflecting the abilities of individuals on whether they are ready for specialized professions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It indicates that one of skills needed by the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners relates to the use of information, media, and technology that meets the value of innovation promoted in moderate Islam. In short, the integration of technology in language teaching has been beneficial for teachers/lecturers to achieve the well-established learning objectives internalized with these values.

Thirdly, the lecturer provided the EFL learners with chances for enhancing good morality both individually and in groups. It agrees Kamal's (2017: 76) study explaining that the education of values is intended to give learners with opportunities for performing moral-based behavior individually and in groups and 2) encourage them to reflect themselves as both individual and social beings. It is also consistent with the study conducted by Ongardwanich et al. (2015: 738) promoting life and career skills as the factors and social and cross-cultural skills as the indicators of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. This result denotes that the incorporation of moderate Islam values, especially in an EFL class, is expected to build social beings equipped with good life and career skills in developing the qualities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for the learners.

### **Use of Learning Materials in Incorporating Values of Moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners**

The use of authentic materials is very common in an EFL class. Based on the result of the interview, relating to the use of authentic materials, the lecturer used online news articles containing Islamic values from "The Jakarta Post" for several times. The lecturer stated that she was not sure whether the articles discussed moderate Islam or not and found difficulties in selecting the materials that were suitable for the pre-determined topics in the syllabus. It is in line with Rohmah's (2012: 160) study arguing that authentic materials also have some weaknesses. Authentic materials, for example, may use low-frequent words, using authentic materials might be a burden for teachers, and they do not contain suggestions on how to use them in the classroom. Furthermore, the lecturer stated that English learning materials embedded with values of moderate values were not available. This reality becomes one of obstacles in inculcating values of moderate Islam in well-determined ways.

This result implies that guidelines for selecting learning materials are required to benefit the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class. Rohmah (2012: 160) also proposes the guiding questions that teachers need to take into account before providing their students with appropriate materials. The questions include: "do the materials fit the syllabus? Do the materials provide opportunity for communicative practice? Do the materials facilitate self-assessment? Is the purpose of the materials clear? Are the materials up-to-date? Are the materials likely to motivate the learners? Do the materials have credibility? Are the

materials culturally appropriate, or do they provide an interesting view of another culture? Can learners relate to the materials on a personal basis? Can the materials be used with classes of various levels of ability? Are the materials quick, easy, and cheap to prepare? Do the materials prove a good model of usable English?” It indicates that teachers should be able to design their syllabus and lessons embedded with values of moderate Islam for preparing learners to the demand of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dealing with the result of interview with the lecturer, it was also found out that the learning materials, including the ones containing Islamic values, were also provided on the Edmodo learning group. It was aimed at providing them with ease in access both time and place by using this LMS. This result is consistent with Ali and Sofa’s (2018: 21) study suggesting that the online component featured on Edmodo helped EFL learners with the flexibility in time management and setting so that they could keep up with the learning materials when the learners were not able to attend the face-to-face class. Similarly, Balasubramanian, Jaykumar, and Fukey (2014: 421) suggest that Edmodo fostered the combined knowledge creation of a group better than individual diaries since this social platform facilitated sharing ideas beyond the classroom setting and allowed learners to continue discussion at additional times. It denotes that providing EFL learners with learning materials on Edmodo fulfills innovation in daily life as one of moderate Islam values for equipping the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners with information, media, and technology skills.

Considering the result of interview with some of the EFL learners, it is exposed that teaching an EFL class whose learners are majoring Islamic education department may impact on the learners’ disappointment or conflict with the culture embedded in the learning materials provided. It agrees Hasyim and Suhono’s (2017: 5) view asserting that English language teaching may bring English that represents the Western culture into conflict with Islamic values upheld by the EFL learners. The alternative was to overcome this problem is integrating Islamic values into teaching and learning processes. This result proposes that the learning materials should be enriched with Islamic values, particularly the values of moderate Islam, as well as to provide them with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It implies that the EFL learners were incorporated with the value of inclusiveness in receiving something new as one of the moderate Islam values so as to prepare them for the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The current study contributes to highlight how to incorporate values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class. Interestingly, the research findings propose objectivity, tolerance in encountering diversity, inclusiveness in receiving something new, logic and flexibility in understanding texts, and innovation in daily life as the values of moderate Islam appeared in EFL teaching. Concerning another research result, teachers' role in inculcating the values are strongly needed. It demonstrates that teachers should encourage their learners, especially Muslim learners, to enhance their knowledge and skills internalized with the values of moderate Islam to prepare them for the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so as to prevent them from radical or extreme actions.

The use of learning materials, likewise, to incorporate the values of moderate Islam for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners in an EFL class is absolutely required. Nonetheless, the difficulties to select the materials embedded with the values that were appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, particularly in an EFL class, promote the obstacle found during this study. This barrier are supposed to be taken into consideration by further researchers who plan to conduct their studies relevant to this issue and/or textbook writers that intend to design the one containing the integration of the moderate Islam values into EFL teaching.

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