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Islam and English language teaching: A critical literature review

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ABSTRACT

Islam is one of the religions, after Christianity, which has been extensively discussed in terms of its connection with English language teaching. However, exploration on this is still needed to be undertaken, that not much context is discussed. This critical literature review examines how the little research on Islam and English language education has tried to overcome the challenges to discover new insights. 32 texts from 1996 to 2020 were used to explore how Islam encounters English language teaching (ELT). The analysis revealed a number of key themes within the discourses of Islam and ELT. Moving forward, we recommend that additional initiatives –further exploration of Islam-ELT relation– should be undertaken for further development.

ABSTRAK

Islam adalah salah satu agama, setelah Kristen, yang banyak diperbincangkan kaitannya dengan pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Namun, pendalaman tentang hal ini masih perlu dilakukan, konteks yang tidak banyak dibahas. Tinjauan literatur kritis ini mengkaji bagaimana penelitian kecil tentang Islam dan pendidikan bahasa Inggris telah mencoba mengatasi tantangan untuk menemukan wawasan baru. 32 teks dari tahun 1996 hingga 2020 digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Islam menghadapi pengajaran bahasa Inggris (ELT). Analisis mengungkapkan sejumlah

tema kunci dalam wacana Islam dan ELT. Ke depan, kami merekomendasikan bahwa inisiatif tambahan – eksplorasi lebih lanjut tentang hubungan Islam-ELT – harus dilakukan untuk pengembangan lebih lanjut.

Keywords: Critical literature review,English language teaching, Islam.

Introduction

While research on English language teaching (ELT) sustains to develop, inquiries on the impact of teachers' spiritual and religious beliefs on their professional practices are often excluded from the discussions (Mahboob & Courtney, 2018). In fact, the modern educational system had not provided a space to discuss it (Canagarajah, 2018). Meanwhile, spiritual and religious beliefs have been the central part of the society. ELT literature may engage with these issues, but it mostly explores or questions the connections between Christianity and ELT (e.g., Edge, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2011; Wong, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018). The links between other belief traditions and English language education remains under-explored.

Among other religious beliefs, Islam may become the most discussed religion, after Christianity, in relation to its connection with ELT. Indeed, some scholarly works on Christianity and ELT have partly mentioned Islam, or Muslims, as a counterpart of discussions (e.g., Wong, 2009; Purgason, 1997, 2009; Mambu, 2016). Further, research on the links between Islam and ELT was around its connections to terrorism (Elyas, 2008; Elyas et al., 2020; Karmani, 2005a, b, c, d, 2006; Karmani & Pennycook, 2005) and Islamophobia (Yacoub, 2017), particularly after the '9/11' incident and the 'Arab Spring'; the curriculum reform as the impact of this incident; and Muslim perceptions on English, along with Western values, and its supremacy as an 'imperialistic tool' and a 'missionary language' (Pennycook, 2005; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005; Phillipson, 1992; Wong & Canagarajah, 2009); the presidential executive order of banning Muslims (Yacoub, 2017); and identity construction (Song, 2018, 2019).

Discussions on the interactions of Islam and English language teaching are dominated by the contexts of Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), while the contexts of countries in the regions where Muslim are the majority population like South Asia and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia as the most populous Muslim country in the world, are still less-studied. For instance, there have been a body of research on the encounter of Islam and English language pedagogy in the context of Saudi Arabia (e.g., Elyas & Picard, 2010, 2013, 2018; Elyas, Alzahrani, & Widodo, 2020), Qatar (Hillman & Eibenschutz, 2018), Morocco (Kabel, 2007), Lebanon (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003; Shaaban, 2018), Egypt (Abouelhassan & Meyer, 2016; Boraie, Gebril, & Gabriel, 2018), and Iran (Soleimani & Lovat, 2019). Meanwhile, among the few studies on the links of Islam and ELT in the contexts of South Asian and Southeast Asian countries are Mahboob's (2009) in Pakistan, Dewi's (2012) and Farid & Lamb's (2020) in Indonesia, Dan, Haroon, & Naysmith's (1996) & Mohd-Asraf's (2005) in Malaysia. Among the understudied contexts are those in non-Muslim countries like Canada (e.g., Hartse & Nazari, 2018) and the United States (e.g., Song, 2018, 2019;

Yacoub, 2017).

Therefore, this article is intended to highlight the trends and the topics of studies on the intertwin of Islam and ELT in the last two decades. It also presents the body of research on this issue in several contexts, both the most discussed and the least ones. It concludes with the possibilities of other topics and contexts to be explored more for further research. In addition, it looks at the potential of this issue to be a particular focus within the discussions of religion or spirituality and language education.

Methodology

This critical literature review was undertaken in order to investigate trends in the research on the relationship of Islam and English language teaching regarding how Muslims perceive English and the teaching of this language after the 9/11 incident and its development in today's era; and how Muslims in different regions and contexts view English language teaching differently. In particular we searched for the answers of the two research questions:

(1) What are the existing trends and topics within research on Islam and English language teaching?
(2) What specific issues faced by Muslims in their regional contexts in relation to their faith and English language education?

The inclusion/exclusion criteria were developed in tandem by the authors. We searched through eight databases: Emerald, Eric, Multilingual Matters, Oxford Academic, Routledge, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley. From the number of the articles and book chapters (30), it can be understood that research on the relationship of Islam and English language education is still not that many. Issues discussed within the articles include the connection of these key terms 'Islam', 'terrorism', 'English', 'teaching', 'identity', 'religious and/or cultural values', 'World Englishes', 'perceptions', and 'interreligious understandings. In order to connect these key terms, we examined several of the most read and relevant journals including World Englishes, Journal of Language, Identity & Education, and Applied Linguistics. Primary search terms included combinations of 'Islam', 'English', 'spirituality', 'Islamic values', 'religious values', and 'spiritual values.' We used predominantly articles from peer-reviewed scholarly journals; however, published books from notable publishers were also incorporated.

Islam in the discourses of Christianity and ELT

The interaction of Islam and language discourses was once found in the discussions of Christianity and English language. Studies by Wong (2009) and Purgason (2009) are some of which reflect this issue. For instance, Wong (2009) demonstrates on how a Christian language teacher, Jacques, was amazed by the

positive attitudes of her Muslim neighbours, despite the fact that she was non-Muslim. She admired their acceptance and welcome on strangers or foreigners like her, saying:

> ... I had these feelings about Muslims and stuff like that, but these people were not like that. They were tender. They cared for me. Welcomed me and they knew we were Christians. And one day the uncle came up to me and said 'Christians and Muslims should be friends.' And he said to me, 'no matter what happens to you, keep and nurture your faith, keep your faith intact.' And I left there feeling exhorted, encouraged and blessed in a way that I had not in many churches. (Wong, 2009, p. 102)

Jacques, as it can be interpreted from her story, felt comfortable to live with Muslims and enjoyed her time being a language teacher in a neighbourhood where she is just a minority in terms of religious beliefs. Narrowing into a language classroom context, Purgason (2009) recounts her experience in dealing with controversial religious issues in his class, while she is a Christian and some of her students were Muslims:

> When a student says something about what Muslims believe and I add a comment about what Christians believe, does it come across as respectful, interested, informative, and gentle? Or do I sound shrill, defensive, or pressuring? The impact of what I say may be very different on my students from what I perceive. (p. 188)

After questioning this, she reflected if talking about Christianity was problematic, even after something about another religion (i.e., Islam) was raised. In her previous work, Purgason (1997) also indicates this problematic issue and says: "If you talk about Christian holidays, also talk about Muslim holidays" (Purgason, 1997, p. 62).

Further, in the Indonesian context, Mambu (2016) reveals on how a Muslim language learner in a Christian-based university was having difficulties in dealing with her essay writing task instructed by her Christian teacher. As Mambu narrates, the student's proposed topic for the essay task about terrorist attacks perpetrated by non-Muslims, one of which was a Christian, was rejected by the teacher. Although there is no description of why the teacher rejected it, it can be assumed that he/she did not like that idea; the idea that Christians also terrorize. In an interview, the student said that the topic is chosen because she wants to show that terrorism is not and must not always be associated to Islam and Muslims. She said: 'There have been many cases of terrorism associated with Muslim, so I didn't find it necessary to provide more examples from Islam' (p. 172). Mambu's study indicates that religious issues are still sensitive to be discussed within a diverse classroom, particularly when a certain religious belief is negatively portrayed by people of other religious beliefs.

ELT and Muslims' perceptions

This interaction of English as a foreign language and Islamic (or Muslim) identity then continues as it contacts with a larger context of the Muslim world, that negative perceptions and impressions surround this issue. The spread of English has a significant impact on the identity of Muslims (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Hillman & Ocampo Eibenschutz, 2018; Mahboob, 2013). For instance, there have been discourses on the tension between Islam and the West, which might cause a conflict between Islamic-national and Western-global influences and the clash between civilizations (Elyas, 2008; Elyas & Picard, 2013; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Huntington, 2000). Simultaneously, many forms of 'marketization discourse' about English echo a neoliberal approach to the educational system of Muslim countries, particularly in the Middle Eastern context (Elyas & Mahboob, 2020). Along with the impetus for individualism, critical thinking, and creativity, English and technology have become more significant in educational policy (Elyas & Picard, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2017). Moreover, the 'technology of power', as when 'Anglo-American hegemonic discourse' is mentioned, for instance, in the medium of English instruction. After '9/11' and the 'Arab Spring', Muslim countries have certainly become more and more noticeable globally, and this has boosted the attention on the Muslim world in general, its politics, society and culture and educational development.

As religion cannot be separated from the lives of Muslims, it will always affect every aspect of their lives (Colbran, 2010; Elyas, Alzahrani & Widodo, 2020; Mahboob, 2009). Moreover, some Muslim countries, where Islam has become their official religion, draw their laws based on the Islamic sharia law, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Tibi, 1997; Mahboob, 2009). Among other aspects, culture, as well as language, are the two components which are profoundly influenced by religion and become part of their religious identities. Arabic, for instance, is praised by Muslims as a language of Islam since its holy book, the Koran, is written in Arabic. This direct link to the Koran is grounded in the belief that it has a perfect grammatical structure and is rich with vocabulary (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Elyas & Picard, 2018; Mahboob & Elyas, 2017). This attachment on their religious identities has also reflected on their attitude towards foreign languages, such as English.

Islam, ELT, and terrorism

The relationship of English and Islam cannot be separated from political and social discourses. In the past, right before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, English was normally situated in local flavors (Elyas, 2008; Elyas et al., 2020). In the Saudi Arabian context, for example, no foreign or Western discourses were presented at schools. As a school subject, English is taught in high schools while traditional,

national, and religious themes fill up the English curriculum (Shah & Elyas, 2019). It is demonstrated by the use of Arabic religious text as in بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم [bi-smi llahi r-rahmani r-rahım] 'in the name of Allah/God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' in the form of masculine pronoun he rather than she. Meanwhile, no one questioned the fact that English is needed as a tool to gain prosperity and wealth. However, enthusiastic acceptance was confined out of fear of Westernization and its 'hidden agendas' (Elyas, 2008; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

Global pressures in the aftermath of the attacks worsen the situation. Campaigns for 'more English and less Islam' only stimulated the rumours and discontent towards English (Elyas, 2008; Karmani, 2005a, b, c, d). These have led to a shift on the attitude towards English in education curricula in Muslim countries, as a result of the infamous terrorist attacks in the U.S. in September 11, 2001, or popular with the 9/11 incident. In turn, Muslim governments are forced to reform their Islamic educational curricula with English to be introduced more than Islamic subjects (Karmani, 2005a, b, c, d; Elyas, 2008; Elyas et al., 2020). Some of the textbooks being used at schools in Saudi Arabia, for instance, were accused to be fostering a set of "intolerance, ignorance, ant-Semitic, anti-American, and anti-Western views" (Karmani, 2005b: 262). Soon later, alarmed with such negative charges by such a power, waves of movement to restructure Muslim educational curricula were undertaken in ways to reduce the 'threat' to US national security interests. This was done by cutting back on the amount of religion (Islam) being taught at schools, colleges and universities. Then, a "broader, more secular based curriculum" was announced in the Muslim world under the ambiguous excuse of "educational aid" (p. 263).

ELT curriculum: Western values vs. Islamic values

While early English curriculum were focused on local cultures and religious values, deleting orientations to Western cultures, values, habits, or customs such as dating, drinking alcohol, and co-education (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Elyas et al., 2020), a new policy reform driven by the global Western pressure amended this position. Western culture(s) and various paradigms of thinking and behaving have now been carefully initiated and show differences between sociocultural practices, but not as a clash of civilizations (Elyas, 2008). The Muslim youth are exposed to the ideas of acceptance, tolerance, and living harmony with the 'others' or the 'West' (Azuri, 2006). A shift in the English language curriculum in Saudi Arabia may become an evidence for this. Both the allocation of time to English instruction and the way in which English is taught were examined (Elyas, 2008). A campaign for a 'broader, more secular based curriculum in the Muslim world' has been shouted by the Western media (Karmani, 2005b: 262; Elyas 2008: 35), and this has been followed up with accounts and references by the US Congress (H. Con. Res 432; cited in Karmani 2005d); other international organizations such as Freedom

House (FH), The Institute for Gulf Affairs (IGA), The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE), and the Institute for American Values (IAV); as well as other scholars (Brown, 2001; Bar, 2006; Sharp, 2004; Azuri 2006).

This change may be welcomed by some, but not by others. There may have been an emphasis that English would not be taught at the cost of other subjects, such as Arabic and Islamic sciences, the real truth is far from that as 'Islamic classes have been cut since 2003 to one class per day instead of four classes per day' (Glasser 2003: 3). Some Saudi Muslim scholars are also concerned with the fact that the introduction of different teaching methodologies, and even the introduction of English itself, will come with 'alien' ideologies (Al- Brashi, 2003). Al-Brashi even reported that there was a fatwa by a Wahhabi Sheikh warning young people not to speak or to study English, and calling English the 'language of the infidels'. In turn, these issues have also attracted a global concern about English supremacy as an 'imperialistic tool' (Phillipson 1992), and a 'missionary language' (Pennycook 2003; Pennycook & Makoni, 2005; Wong & Canagarajah, 2009). The EFL classroom is even seen as a means for propagating Judaeo-Christian tradition and Western values (Karmani 2005a, b, c, d). Muslim scholars have also resonated these worries and concern about the impacts on young Muslims from learning English (Argungu, 1996: 412). These concerns are primarily related to Western, particularly American, colonization, and the spread of Western secular ideas (Argungu, 1996), which is believed to weaken Islamic values and damage young Muslims as a consequence. English and English teaching methodologies are viewed as a 'catalyst in the ['de-Islamisation] process since it cuts across almost all disciplines acting as a conveyor of knowledge and culture' (Argungu 1996: 331).
The campaign for 'more English and less Islam' has irritated many Arabic and Muslim scholars, most remarkably Karmani (2005a, b, d). He criticized 'the resounding call these days to promote 'more English and less Islam', in the belief that such a position will somehow serve in eradicating the seeds of Islamic terrorist activity' (Karmani 2005a: 263). The view of English as promulgating Western ideologies, which may reform ideas in the Muslim world, descends within the 'channel' conceptualization of language where ideas are regarded as objects and language is viewed as a container for communication (e.g., Kabel, 2007). While this is in the context of Saudi Arabia, this view of language may also be reflected from other Muslim countries regarding the call for reform, and they seem to pass it over.

Stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, for example, have focused on recruiting Western (mostly North American) counsellors and employed pedagogies, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL), in their English language programs. These pedagogies have also been extended across the curriculum, and started to be introduced into high school curricula (Picard, 2007). 'Authentic texts' from Western cultural contexts

are employed by these pedagogies, and they attempt to connect language learning with outdoor class activities. They emphasize on the learner's personal experiences within an 'authentic' native-speaker context (Nunan, 1991). Many educationalists problematize this 'centring' attitude of English/Western culture, and it has resulted in a healthy debate among Muslim scholars (e.g., Argungu, 1996, Karmani, 2005a, b, c, d, 2006; Mohd-Asraf, 2005). Alternatively, other foreign languages, such as Mandarin (Chinese) and Hindi/Urdu are suggested to complement the curriculum of Muslim countries (Mohd-Asraf, 2005).

Responding to worries on the campaign of 'more English, less Islam' (e.g., Charise, 2007; Elyas, 2008; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Glasser 2003; Kabel, 2007; Karmani 2005a, b, c, d, 2006; Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Mirhosseini, 2008), an Islamic approach to English teaching is suggested to be attached (Argungu, 1996). Arab English teachers, as reported by Karmani (2006; cited in Mahboob & Elyas, 2014), argue that:

> The current designed English syllabus in the Arab world doesn't reflect the true aspiration of the Muslim Nation. It does not contribute to the right upbringing of a true Muslim generation. The English syllabus that we have in our educational institutions is completely based on the western culture which is totally different and far away from the Islamic teachings.

This debate continues demanding 'syllabus designers in the Arab world to be inspired' to design syllabi by 'the wealthy and glorious Islamic Heritage of this 'NATION' [capitalization emphasized in the original] and provide an outstanding syllabus that contributes to Islamic propagation to reflect the 'GREAT Message of ISLAM' [capitalization emphasized in the original].'

According to Zughoul (2003), such an approach and curriculum would 'stress the consolidation of mother-tongue teaching and a localized and learner-relevant content' (p. 145). This approach would centre on the learning facilitation and access to 'modern-day knowledge' (science and technology) for Muslim learners, and 'censor content' that could be perceived as 'anti-Islamic' (Picard, 2018: 159). The attitudes of some Muslims towards English learning stand for this position (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The need for the subject to learn a foreign language may be accepted, but speakers of the language (English) are 'othered'. This is based on religious sources (hadith) which promote the learning of a foreign language, yet negatively suspect the speakers of that language. One of the famous hadith says:

مَن تَعَلَّمَ لُغَةَ قَومٍ أَمِنَ مَكرَهُم

He whoever learns other people's language will be secured from their cunning.

Despite the debate on the validity of the hadith (Al Bayan, 2013), it has been promoted and used as a slogan by many English language centres, particularly in

Saudi Arabia, to endorse the learning of English or other languages.

Islamizing ELT materials

While some Muslim scholars argue on the 'strong Islamisation' (e.g., Karmani, 2006), other scholars have discussed that some components of English culture and values need to be taught as part of EFL curriculum. Hare (2005), for example, asserts that 'tolerating different cultures or different points of view, does not mean accepting or practicing them' (p. 6). He suggests that English teaching should encompass teaching students to separate many ideas of context and meaning which occur in any given text. Islamic culture(s) are accused to have essential links to English culture(s) from the fact that there are many Muslims who are native to English. They even cite a verse from the Koran, Sura Al-Hujurat (49:13) to strengthen their arguments that differences in culture are mentioned and appreciated:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقۡنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٖ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلۡنَٰكُمۡ شُعُوبٗا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ أَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتۡقَىٰكُمۡۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٞ

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.

And the Koran, Sura Ar-Rum (30:22):

وَمِنۡ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ خَلۡقُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَٱخۡتِلَٰفُ أَلۡسِنَتِكُمۡ وَأَلۡوَٰنِكُمۡۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَٰتٖ لِّلۡعَٰلِمِينَ

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colours. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge.

In fact, many Arabic words have been absorbed into English and thus English may be considered not only Islamic, but also Judeo-Christian (Mahboob 2009; Weber 2011). From the stance of a 'weaker Islamisation' (Elyas, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2013; Hadley, 2004; Karmani, 2005; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Picard, 2018), Kabel (2007) argues that although English is viewed as 'putative hegemonic discourse [and an] inhibitive and imposed encumbrance, we need to take into account how the language is constantly and unpredictably appropriated and creatively reshaped and expropriated to give voice to emerging agencies and subjectivities' (p. 136). While Islamic discourses are emphasized, English culture(s) and the shifting character of both Western and Islamic culture(s) are accepted. Teachers are allowed to extract Western values in texts and to relate them with local values. Hadley (2004) affirms that teachers should 'think globally and teach locally' (p. 13). This is evidenced by the making of English language

textbooks in Saudi Arabia with an emphasis on local culture in the curricula rather than the dominant culture of the 'Inner Circle' (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; see Kachru, 1992). A similar approach of cultural and religious localization in the use of English for communication and educational purposes, as in textbooks, may also be found in Pakistan (Mahboob, 2009). The use of English in the Pakistani context has been referenced to local Islamic traditions, practices, and personalities.

Due this day, discourses on whether English is a threat to religious or national identity can still be found in the context of other Muslim countries. Boraie, Gebril, and Gabriel (2018), for instance, address on the views of two groups of Egyptian language teachers from two different religious backgrounds (Islam and Christianity) on the connection of language learning and teaching, and religious identity. They agree that faith interconnects with language pedagogy, whether it is Arabic or English. However, different voices on the impacts of English are presented by both groups that English is perceived as a threat to national identity by Muslim teachers, while Christian teachers do not think so. Similar voices may also come from Shaaban (2018), who studies on the issue of multilingualism and identity formation in the Lebanese context. He reveals the strong connection between language dimensions (i.e., language choice, language learning, and language use) with one's identity. Although Arabic is the first language of the Lebanese, learning foreign languages for them is seen as a support to form a 'linguistic unity'.

Islam and ELT: Moving forward

The growth of technology, the internet, and globalization has led to a new perspective and brought some positivities on the interaction of Islam and English language teaching. Muslims are now immersed with experiences with other cultures. Additionally, calls to accept modernity and diversity—some of the concepts which were hard to be perceived before – have been sounded more and more (Elyas et al., 2020). This in turn has led to changes regarding Muslims' attitudes towards foreign languages, particularly English. Although fear, resentment, and hesitancy on Westernization still exist (Alswuail, 2015) as it threatens national and religious identity (Boraie, Gebril, and Gabriel, 2018), Muslims start to be open with other cultures, which consequently strengthen the position of English (Elyas et al., 2020). The stigma of Arabic within a religious context which is considered backward has also become another factor. Although Muslim English learners have never been fostered with Western values, or to disrespect their traditions and culture, integrating English and new Western customs may result in a new direction of Islam and English discourses. With the current changes of power in the world between the West and the East, Muslims may face the issue of acquiring balance between combining their religious identity and the emergence of globalization and modernization (Elyas et al., 2020).

Instead of being warned with the ideologies brought by English, Muslims are suggested to utilize and reform English to serve Islamic ideologies. In the context of Saudi Arabia, for instance, English is used with the reflection of the Saudi culture, which is very much affected by Islam (Elyas et al., 2020). The strong attachment of culture and religion may also be seen in other Muslim countries, such as Pakistan (Mahboob, 2009). For this, a new term to represent this bond is introduced by Elyas et al. (2020) as 'culigion', an acronym of culture and religion. As language is influenced by its speakers' culture, that of the Saudi is affected by 'culigion', which in this is Islam. The Saudis' positive attitudes towards English are improved by international attempts and compliance to be transcultural negotiators, although not at cost of their non-negotiable Islamic identity (Bukhari, 2019). Religious discourses are also reflected within Saudi textbooks (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) and speeches (Fallatah, 2017). Cultural representations, such as gender segregation, which originate from Islamic teachings and Arabic morality, are showcased on several occasions. An example of genderisation is shown in the usage of masculine pronouns he/his rather than the feminist ones she/her. Gender segregation can also be seen from an image of a woman whose entire body is covered in black including her face, while a man turns away (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). This might be seen as cultural, but it is considered religious that it adopts a lifestyle taught by the prophet as he says in a hadith:

مُرُوْا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِيْنَ، وَاضْرِبُوْهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشَرٍ، وَفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ

Command your children to pray when they become seven years old, and beat them for it (prayer) when they become ten years old; and arrange their beds (to sleep) separately.
(Sunan Abi Dawud, Vol. 1, Book of the Prayer, Hadith 495)

Another hadith states the strictness of meetings between men and women, who are not related, whether as a family or a husband and a wife as in a marriage. These meetings are labeled as taboo, and those who happen to do it will be considered as sinners. The hadith states:

لاَ يَخْلُوَنَّ رَجُلٌ بِامْرَأَةٍ إِلاَّ كَانَ ثَالِثَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ

No man is alone with a woman but the Satan will be the third one present.
(Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 1, Book 7, Hadith 1171)

In another version of the hadith, women are not allowed to meet men, except with her mahram (i.e., a husband or a relative):

لاَ يَخْلُوَنَّ رَجُلٌ بِامْرَأَةٍ إِلاَّ وَمَعَهَا ذُو مَحْرَم

No person (man) should be alone with a woman except when there is a Mahram with her.
(Sahih Muslim, Book 7, Hadith 3112)

These cultural (slash) religious practices are those which Elyas et al. (2020) call as 'culigion', or 'a religiously modulated cultural schema (i.e., a cultural tradition or practice which is derived from a religious teaching or practice)' (p. 10). Elyas et al. give an example of 'culigion' as Saudi comedians make jokes on the tradition to wear the hijab, with calling it as 'shame' rather than haram. The utilization of Islamic ideologies into English language pedagogy may also be reflected from Soleimani and Lovat's (2019) work on the inseparable connection of the faith-motivated morality and language teaching in the context of another Muslim country, Iran. Their empirical study on Muslim teachers in Iran reveals that Muslim teachers' views of morality in teaching were so much influenced by their Islamic ideologies.

Learning from the past and leaving the negativity behind, the relationship of English and Islam has become better than before (Elyas, Alzahrani & Widodo, 2020). Muslims have become more lenient towards English. Through remarkable efforts, Muslim governments have been successful to gain the public attention to be aware more on other cultures. The value of peace and a better understanding of Islam have replaced the sorrow of terrorist attacks in the past. Interfaith dialogue is promoted even more, along with the initiation of national war against terrorism (Elyas & Badawood, 2016; Hartse & Nazari, 2018). The rise of technology, the internet, and social media, is considered to also have a significant role on this shift. However, as suggested by Elyas et al. (2020), 'this change needed to be done locally with the country and its people's interests in mind, and not through foreign interference and Western ideologies' (p. 3). This peaceful transition may happen if it was flavoured and filled with national identity and expectations (Asiri, 2017; Boraie, Gebril, & Gabriel, 2018; Shaaban, 2018). This positive attitude may also be reflected from a duo-ethnography study by two scholars from different religious backgrounds, Christianity and Islam (Hartse & Nazari, 2018). Hartse, a Christian, and Nazari, a Muslim, have proven that a Muslim and a Christian can work together in an academic context. This can be successful, as Hartse and Nazari address, with the understanding between each other, and by looking for similarities rather than differences. As shown by both Hartse and Nazari through the process of exchanging information about their beliefs, this may not be easy, but at least they have a profound understanding about both faiths. This positive attitude is also voiced by Muslims from another country like Indonesia, which comprises the largest Muslim country in the world (Dewi, 2012). Her empirical study exposes Indonesian university stakeholders' perceptions of English in relation to identity. It questions on whether English is considered as an expression of imperialism, and whether English is viewed as affecting national and religious identities. The result shows that, in contrast with that of the Middle Eastern context (e.g., Karmani, 2005a, b, c, d), Indonesian Muslims positively perceive English that learning the language provides more benefits than negative effects, as they are eager to learn and use the

language. As the findings expose, Indonesian Muslims constantly negotiate their identities as Indonesians and Muslims as they learn and use English as a tool for international communication and for the sake of improvement, regardless of their beliefs.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored specific gaps in the discussions on Islam-ELT relation, based on topics and contexts. Moving forward, we recommend that other topics like language materials development within the Islamic education sector should be determined for future research. Additionally, the current body of studies which are mostly dominated by the contexts of countries in the MENA region should be enriched with research in other Muslim contexts, particularly within the regions of South Asia and Southeast Asia which encompass a majority of Muslim population in the world.

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Appendix

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