

## **EFL Materials Development in Islamic Educational Contexts: A Narrative Literature Review of Local Wisdom, Sustainability, and Value-Integrated Content**

**Cyntia Wimanda<sup>1</sup>, Nadiatul Khair<sup>2</sup>, Nazla Nuri Adillah<sup>3</sup>**

Email : , [nazlanuriadilla@gmail.com](mailto:nazlanuriadilla@gmail.com) , [icieganteng@gmail.com](mailto:icieganteng@gmail.com), [nadiakhair30@gmail.com](mailto:nadiakhair30@gmail.com)

**English Education Department Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training  
State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau**

### **Abstract**

The development of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) materials has shifted from a primarily linguistic orientation toward broader educational purposes that include cultural identity, ethical values, and global sustainability. This narrative literature review synthesizes scholarship on the integration of Islamic values, local culture, critical cultural content analysis, environmental themes, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and teachers' perceptions in EFL materials development. Drawing on recent conceptual and empirical studies, this review explores how value-integrated materials contribute to learner engagement, character formation, intercultural awareness, and communicative competence. The literature indicates that standardized EFL textbooks often underrepresent deep socio-cultural realities, creating a representation gap that can be addressed through glocal materials that harmonize international English with local spiritual and cultural contexts. The review further suggests that environmental and SDG themes provide meaningful carrier content for authentic language use, while teacher cognition remains central to successful implementation. Research gaps remain in longitudinal impact studies, localized materials evaluation, and frameworks for integrating faith-based and sustainability-oriented content. The review concludes that "glocal" EFL materials offer a promising paradigm for transforming language learning into a site of multiliteracies, ethical learning, and global citizenship.

*Keywords: EFL materials development, Islamic values, local wisdom, SDGs, critical content analysis, glocal curriculum*

### **1. Introduction**

Materials development has long been recognized as a central dimension of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because instructional materials shape not only what learners study, but also how they understand language, culture, and identity. Traditionally, EFL materials were designed primarily to develop linguistic competence through grammar exercises, vocabulary practice, and communicative tasks. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly

positions materials as vehicles for broader educational goals, including moral education, intercultural awareness, and global citizenship.

In the context of globalization and Society 5.0, English is no longer viewed merely as an international communication tool but as a “glocal” medium that should connect global engagement with local identity (Zainuddin et al., 2024). This shift is particularly significant in Islamic educational contexts, where English learning is expected to support not only communicative competence but also character formation grounded in spiritual and cultural values.

A persistent challenge in EFL materials development concerns the cultural distance embedded in many standardized, Western-oriented textbooks. Studies have found that such materials often represent culture superficially and underrepresent students’ lived realities, including religious practices, local wisdom, and indigenous values (Handayani et al., 2021; Normalela & Kardena, 2022). This gap creates a need for materials that allow students to engage with English while affirming their own socio-cultural identities.

At the same time, contemporary EFL materials are increasingly expected to address global concerns such as sustainability, social justice, and environmental responsibility. The rise of Green ELT and the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have expanded the scope of materials development by positioning language learning as a means for addressing real-world issues (Willbold, 2022).

Despite growing scholarship, studies on Islamic values, local culture, sustainability themes, and teacher perceptions remain dispersed across separate strands of research. This review therefore synthesizes literature across these themes to provide a conceptual framework for value-integrated EFL materials development.

## **2. Method of Review**

This study adopts a narrative literature review approach to synthesize conceptual and empirical scholarship related to EFL materials development in value-integrated educational contexts. Narrative reviews are appropriate for examining broad themes, tracing conceptual developments, and identifying patterns and research gaps.

The literature reviewed was selected according to relevance to five major themes:

1. EFL materials based on Islamic values and local culture
2. Critical cultural content analysis of textbooks
3. Authentic materials through environmental themes

4. SDG integration in reading and speaking materials
5. Teachers' perceptions of value-integrated materials

Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, conceptual studies, and library-based research published primarily between 2018 and 2025, supplemented by foundational literature related to intercultural pedagogy, content-based instruction, and materials evaluation. The reviewed studies were analyzed thematically to identify recurring concepts, major findings, and unresolved issues.

### **3. Thematic Review and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Developing EFL Materials Based on Islamic Values and Local Culture**

One major theme in the literature concerns the integration of Islamic values and local culture into EFL materials. Scholars argue that materials should function not only as linguistic tools but also as instruments of identity preservation and character development (Suryantari, 2022). Several studies emphasize the pedagogical value of local folktales, legends, and moral narratives in EFL instruction. These materials allow learners to practice language skills while engaging with familiar ethical concepts, thereby reducing cognitive burden and increasing learner engagement (Agung et al., 2025). Because learners already understand the moral framework of these stories, they can focus more effectively on language production.

Research also highlights the importance of embedding Islamic ethical concepts such as modesty, responsibility, and social justice into communicative tasks (Ed-dali, 2025). This helps address the cultural alienation often created by imported textbooks and allows students to use English to express their own worldview. Moreover, digital platforms have expanded possibilities for culturally responsive materials development. Studies suggest that tools such as Canva and Google Sites support blended learning environments where local stories and Islamic values can be represented through digital multimodal texts (Fadlilah et al., 2025).

Overall, the literature positions Islamic and local culture integration as a foundation for glocal EFL materials.

#### **3.2 Critical Cultural Content Analysis of EFL Textbooks**

A second major strand of literature focuses on Critical Cultural Content Analysis (CCCA) as a framework for evaluating hidden ideologies and cultural representations within textbooks. Studies indicate that many EFL textbooks prioritize “Big C” culture—holidays,

landmarks, and famous figures—while neglecting “small c” culture involving daily practices, values, and social norms (Normalela & Kardenia, 2022). This imbalance can weaken students’ cultural identification with the materials.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely used to examine peace values, bias, politeness norms, and cultural framing in textbooks (Pasha et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2023). Findings suggest that representations of ethics, diversity, and conflict resolution are often superficial. Scholars also categorize textbook culture into source culture, target culture, and international culture. Many argue that source culture should receive stronger emphasis to prevent linguistic imperialism and strengthen learner confidence before engagement with foreign cultural norms. In this sense, critical content analysis is viewed not simply as textbook evaluation but as pedagogical transformation, enabling teachers to adapt or supplement materials according to contextual needs.

### 3.3 Authentic Materials for Environmental-Themed EFL Learning

A growing body of literature emphasizes authentic materials using environmental themes as a form of Green ELT. Authentic environmental texts—such as reports, articles, campaigns, and multimedia resources—provide meaningful content for content-based instruction (CBI). Studies suggest these materials promote both language development and scientific literacy by exposing learners to complex vocabulary and real-world discourse (Willbold, 2022).

Environmental themes also serve as motivational “affective hooks.” Because students often perceive ecological issues as personally relevant, engagement tends to increase when such topics are incorporated into tasks. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) studies show that environmental projects support project-based learning, allowing students to use English as a tool for social action, such as designing campaigns or analyzing local waste problems (Mandarani et al., 2023).

However, the literature also emphasizes the need for scaffolding. Because authentic materials can be linguistically demanding, teachers must support learners through vocabulary preparation, visual aids, and structured tasks.

Overall, environmental EFL materials are framed as a bridge between classroom learning and global citizenship.

### 3.4 Integrating SDGs into EFL Reading and Speaking Materials

The integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has emerged as a significant trend in EFL materials development. Scholars view the SDGs as a form of “world syllabus” that provides meaningful content for language instruction. In reading instruction, SDG-related texts are used to develop higher-order thinking skills while encouraging reflection on social justice, sustainability, and human rights (Mandarani et al., 2023).

Speaking materials integrating SDGs emphasize negotiation, advocacy, and argumentation. Rather than focusing on routine conversational functions, students engage in discussions on issues such as climate action or educational equity, requiring more complex language use. Researchers also highlight the interdisciplinary potential of SDG-based materials, particularly through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In this approach, students learn language alongside content related to economics, biology, and ethics (Kassem, 2019).

Importantly, several studies note alignment between SDG principles and Islamic concepts such as khalifah (stewardship), justice, and charity, suggesting strong conceptual compatibility. Thus, the literature positions SDG integration as a means of linking English learning with global citizenship education and ethical development.

### 3.5 Teachers’ Perceptions of Value-Integrated EFL Materials

Teacher cognition emerges consistently as a determining factor in materials implementation. Research indicates that teachers generally hold positive perceptions of value-integrated materials but often experience emotional, technical, and institutional challenges (Muhallim et al., 2023). Many feel motivated to integrate values but lack resources or confidence to address sensitive religious or socio-political themes.

The literature also highlights the role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in strengthening teacher confidence and supporting collaborative innovation (Fadlilah et al., 2025). Another recurring issue concerns the washback effect of assessment. If cultural values and SDG-related learning are absent from examinations, teachers may perceive them as peripheral rather than essential (Agung et al., 2025). Studies further show that teachers often respond critically to imported textbooks by developing localized materials they perceive as more authentic and relevant.

Overall, the literature suggests that successful value-integrated materials depend not only on design quality but also on teacher self-efficacy, institutional support, and assessment alignment.

## 4. Research Gaps

Despite growing scholarship, several gaps remain. First, few longitudinal studies examine the long-term effects of value-integrated materials on both language proficiency and character development. Second, limited research investigates systematic evaluation models for localized and faith-integrated materials. Third, more empirical studies are needed on how teachers operationalize SDG and Islamic values in classroom materials design. Fourth, research remains limited on the alignment between assessment systems and value-integrated materials.

Future research should address these gaps through mixed-method and context-sensitive studies.

## 5. Conclusion

The literature reviewed suggests that EFL materials development in Islamic educational contexts must move beyond conventional linguistic goals toward a glocal model that integrates international communication, local identity, and ethical responsibility. Evidence indicates that Islamic values, local wisdom, critical content analysis, environmental themes, and SDG integration contribute to meaningful, culturally responsive, and socially relevant materials. At the same time, teacher perceptions and institutional support remain central to successful implementation.

By transforming materials into tools for multiliteracies, character education, and global citizenship, value-integrated EFL materials offer a promising paradigm for contemporary language education.

## References

- Agung, M., Budiarty, N. A., & Sunra, L. (2025). Indonesian EFL teachers' strategies for integrating character values and local culture. *IDEAS Journal*, 13(2), 8028–8048.
- Ed-dali, R. (2025). Islamic ethics and EFL learning: An analysis of Moroccan textbooks. *International Education Studies*, 18(5), 29–41.
- Fadlilah, S., Yuliasri, I., & Fitriati, S. W. (2025). Faith, culture, and technology in EFL classrooms. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 25(2), 181–202.
- Handayani, S., Suwarno, B., & Dharmayana, I. W. (2021). Evaluation of Indonesian English textbooks. Bengkulu University.

- Kassem, H. (2019). CLIL and global citizenship education in EFL. *Journal of Language Education*, 8(3), 211–225.
- Mandarani, V., Retnaningdyah, P., & Mustofa, A. (2023). Multiliteracies in extensive reading. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 10(1), 865–877.
- Muhalim, Nur, S., Korompot, C. A., & Mahmud, M. (2023). Navigating religious discourses in EFL teaching. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(4), 1478–1495.
- Normalela, & Kardena, A. (2022). Content analysis of Indonesian culture in EFL textbooks. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 7(1), 85–94.
- Putri, F. D., Djatmika, & Putra, K. A. (2023). Framing culture in EFL textbooks. *Al-Ishlah*, 15(3), 2955–2966.
- Zainuddin, et al. (2024). Glocal EFL curriculum in Society 5.0. *Journal of Language and Education Innovation*, 12(1), 44–60.