

**INTEGRATING ELT WITH PHILOSOPHY AND CLASSICAL
ISLAMIC STUDIES AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL
LUHUR BAITUL HIKMAH, KEPANJEN: A STRATEGY TO
COUNTER INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIC
NARRATIVES**

Thesis

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THESIS

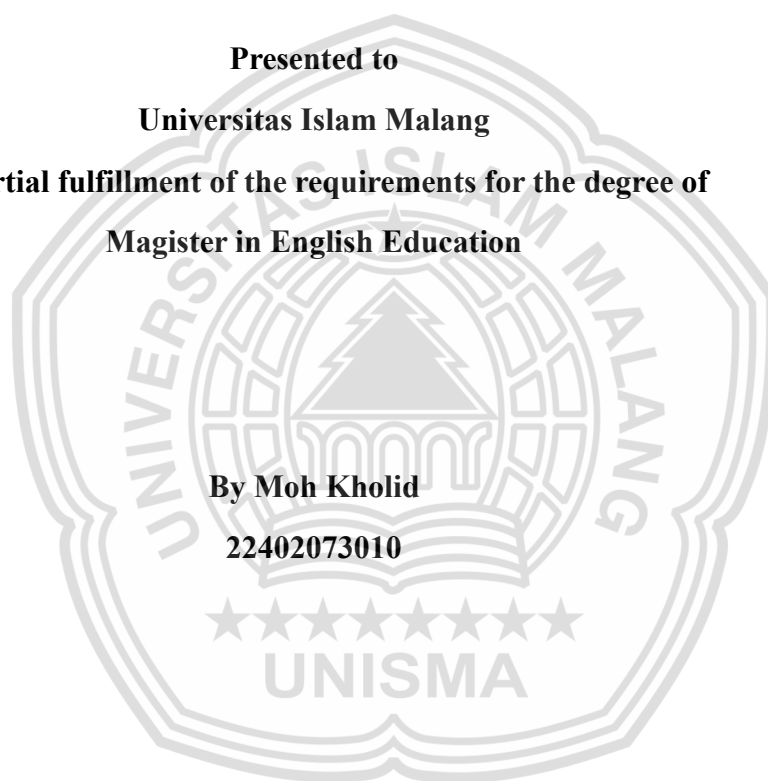
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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Islamic education, epistemic hybridity, critical pedagogy, counter-narrative agency.

This study investigates the integration of English Language Teaching (ELT) with philosophy and classical Islamic studies (*Kitab Kuning*) at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*, Kepanjen, as a strategic educational response to international Islamophobic narratives. The research pursued three objectives: (1) to analyze the pedagogical design and implementation of this integrated curriculum, (2) to explore students' experiences and perceptions of engagement, and (3) to identify the specific competencies developed through this approach.

Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected over six weeks through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with two lecturers and five purposively selected students, and document analysis of curricular materials and student work. Thematic analysis, guided by critical pedagogy and hermeneutic philosophy, was employed to analyze the data systematically.

The findings revealed three key results. First, the curriculum is implemented through four interconnected practices: bilingual text analysis, Qur'anic paraphrasing, Thursday night speech rehearsals (*muhadarah*), and immersive language scaffolding (70% English, 30% Bahasa Indonesia). Second, students undergo a transformative journey from initial "epistemic shock" to adaptive navigation and ultimately perceived empowerment, linking their education to countering global misconceptions about Islam. Third, students develop three interconnected competencies: linguistic-hermeneutic competence enabling sophisticated cross-cultural mediation, epistemic hybridity allowing synthesis of Islamic and Western knowledge systems, and proactive counter-Islamophobic agency manifested in analytical, hermeneutic-justificatory, and communicative-productive dimensions.

The study concludes that this integrated curriculum offers a coherent pedagogical model for cultivating Muslim graduates capable of engaging confidently in global discourse, thereby contributing to theoretical discourse on epistemic hybridity and decolonial pedagogy while providing a practical blueprint for Islamic educational reform.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to present the introduction of the research. This part comprises background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the early 21st century, the global Muslim community (*Ummah*) faces a complex and pervasive challenge: the rise of international Islamophobia. This phenomenon extends beyond individual acts of prejudice to become a structured discourse, perpetuated through media narratives, political rhetoric, and academic circles, which often portray Islam as a monolithic, anti-modern, and inherently violent religion (Appiah, 2012; Khamis, 2023). These narratives simplify the rich tapestry of Islamic thought and practice, reducing it to a set of negative stereotypes that paint Muslims as a civilizational "other" incompatible with contemporary, secular-humanist values. This environment creates a pressing need for effective counter-strategies that move beyond mere apologetics. Countering these hegemonic discourses requires equipping Muslims, particularly the younger generation, with the intellectual tools to deconstruct these narratives and the communicative competence to articulate sophisticated, evidence-based counter-narratives to a global audience (Khamis, 2023; Xia et al., 2024).

In the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, Indonesia, the *pesantren* stands as a bastion of Islamic education, deeply rooted in the tradition of character and moral formation (Webre, 2025). Historically, the core of *pesantren* education has been the deep engagement with classical Islamic texts, known as the *Kitab Kuning*, which encompass disciplines such as theology (*ilmu kalam*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*) (Fathorrahman et al., 2024; Winata et al., 2021). However, in an increasingly interconnected world, the *pesantren* is not insulated from global currents. The imperative for graduates to engage with modern knowledge and global communication has made English Language Teaching (ELT) a growing component of the Indonesian educational landscape, including within Islamic schools (Saputra et al., 2024). English holds a formal position as the first foreign language in the national curriculum (Marzulina et al., 2021), representing a key to socioeconomic mobility and international engagement.

This integration, however, is fraught with tension. The English language is often perceived as a conduit for Western secularism, liberalism, and the very colonial epistemologies that have historically marginalized indigenous and religious knowledge systems (Saputra et al., 2024; Webre, 2025). Consequently, within many conservative *pesantren*, Arabic retains primacy as the language of religious scholarship, while English is viewed as a pragmatic, yet intellectually and spiritually neutral—or even threatening—tool (Fitria, 2023). This creates a significant pedagogical dilemma: how can *pesantren* embrace the instrumental benefits of ELT for global dialogue without inadvertently facilitating the erosion of Islamic identity or the uncritical adoption of conflicting worldviews? This tension underscores the critical need for context-responsive pedagogies that are sensitive to the specific sociocultural and religious values of the learners (Efrizal, 2023; Madkur et al., 2024a).

Amidst this challenging landscape, some *pesantren* have embarked on innovative paths. *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* Kepanjen Malang distinguishes itself as a pioneering institution that confronts this dilemma head-on. It moves beyond an additive model of education—where ELT is simply tacked onto a traditional curriculum—and instead, pioneers a transformative model of integration. This *pesantren* uniquely incorporates an intensive study of philosophy, particularly hermeneutics, making it a core subject that is actively taught, debated, and analyzed (Muhammad Hilal, 2024). Philosophy, in this context, is regarded as essential knowledge for exploring human nature and critical thinking, providing direction in a complex world (Dahri, 2020; Van Adiputra & Husniyah, 2023).

Prior to entering the integrated program, new students at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* undergo a distinctive four-month quarantine period designed to establish foundational competencies essential for engagement with the interdisciplinary curriculum. During this preparatory phase, students are immersed in an intensive language and conceptual training regimen that includes: (1) systematic English vocabulary development, with particular emphasis on building glossaries of technical terms that will recur in philosophical and theological texts; (2) foundational Arabic syntax instruction (*Nahwu*), which serves as the essential gateway to reading and interpreting classical Islamic texts (*Kitab Kuning*), enabling students to access the primary sources of Islamic scholarship in their original language; and (3) preliminary exposure to philosophical terminology and key concepts, ensuring that students possess the necessary vocabulary to engage with hermeneutic and philosophical discourse when the integrated curriculum commences. This quarantine period functions not merely as language preparation but as a deliberate scaffolding mechanism that addresses the very "epistemic shock" students might otherwise experience when confronting the simultaneous demands of English-medium instruction, classical Arabic textual analysis, and philosophical inquiry. By establishing these foundational competencies before students encounter the

integrated curriculum, the *pesantren* intentionally mitigates the cognitive overload that characterized earlier cohorts' initial experiences, creating conditions under which the subsequent integration of ELT, *Kitab Kuning*, and hermeneutics can proceed with greater accessibility and reduced disorientation. This preparatory structure reflects the institution's recognition that meaningful integration requires not only pedagogical sophistication in the classroom but also systematic groundwork that equips students with the linguistic and conceptual tools necessary to navigate multiple knowledge systems simultaneously.

The institutional characteristic of *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*, which combines traditional Islamic studies with a strong emphasis on hermeneutic philosophy and ELT, offers a unique and fertile setting for educational inquiry (Wajdi, 2022). Its explicit curriculum is designed not only to improve language proficiency but also to achieve a higher moral and intellectual purpose: to intellectually arm its students against international Islamophobia. The *pesantren*'s strategy involves a sophisticated, interdisciplinary fusion where ELT becomes the linguistic medium, classical *Kitab Kuning* provides the theological and ethical substance, and hermeneutic philosophy serves as the methodological bridge for critical interpretation. This approach aims to produce what scholars' term "epistemic hybridity" (Valaskivi & Robertson, 2022; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2023)—graduates who can synthesize knowledge from different systems and confidently navigate both Islamic and Western intellectual spheres.

Despite the significant number of *pesantren* in Indonesia—approximately 40,000 (Webre, 2025)—and a growing body of research on ELT within this context (Hamid & Ali, 2023; Pertiwi et al., 2022), a conspicuous gap remains in the literature. There is a limited understanding of specific, integrated curricula that are deliberately designed to address contemporary global issues like Islamophobia (Madkur et al., 2024a). While studies have reviewed ELT strategies and challenges in *pesantren* generally (Fitria, 2023), the particular

integration of ELT with hermeneutic philosophy and classical Islamic studies for the explicit purpose of countering Islamophobic narratives remains a profoundly under-explored area. This study, therefore, is situated at the confluence of these global challenges and local innovations, seeking to delve deeply into the unique pedagogical integration at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* Kepanjen Malang as a strategic response to one of the most pressing issues facing the global Muslim community.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of the research could be formulated as follows:

1. How is the instructional integration of ELT and classical Islamic studies (Kitab Kuning) pedagogically designed and implemented at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* to counter Islamophobic narratives?
2. How is the instructional integration of ELT and hermeneutic philosophy pedagogically designed and implemented at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* to counter Islamophobic narratives?
3. What are the students' experiences and perceptions of engaging with this *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah's* integrated curriculum?
4. What specific competencies do students develop through this integrated instructional approach?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the problems above, the purposes of this research were as follows:

1. To analyze the pedagogical design and implementation of the integrated curriculum combining English Language Teaching (ELT) and classical Islamic studies (*Kitab Kuning*) at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*.
2. To analyze the pedagogical design and implementation of the integrated curriculum combining English Language Teaching (ELT) and hermeneutic philosophy at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*.
3. To explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding their engagement with the integrated curriculum, with particular attention to cultural navigation and identity formation processes.
4. To identify and analyze the specific competencies students develop through the integrated curriculum, including linguistic, hermeneutic, intercultural, and counter-Islamophobic capabilities.

1.4 Significance of The Study

This research holds substantial significance across multiple domains, offering contributions that extend from theoretical advancement to practical application and institutional development.

1. Theoretical Significance

There are several theoretical significances from this study as listed below:

- a. Bridging Disciplinary Divides: This study contributes to bridging the theoretical gaps between TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Islamic Education Studies, and Critical Pedagogy. It demonstrates how theories

from these disparate fields can be productively synthesized in a single, practical model (Lumbard, 2024).

- b. **Advancing Epistemic Hybridity:** It provides an empirical grounding and deepens the understanding of the concept of "epistemic hybridity" (Valaskivi & Robertson, 2022). The study shows how this hybridity is actively cultivated in a classroom setting, moving it from an abstract concept to a tangible pedagogical goal.
- c. **Enriching Decolonial and Critical Pedagogy:** The research offers a non-Western, religiously-grounded case study for critical and decolonial pedagogy. It illustrates how Freirean and Gadamerian principles can be adapted and enacted within an Islamic educational context to resist epistemic marginalization and reclaim agency in knowledge production (Bello, 2023; L. T. Smith et al., 2019).

2. Practical Significance

There are several practical significances from this study as listed below:

- a. **A Blueprint for Educators:** For *pesantren* leaders, teachers, and curriculum designers across Indonesia and the Muslim world, this study provides a detailed, evidence-based blueprint for innovative curriculum reform. It offers concrete pedagogical strategies—such as bilingual text analysis, Qur'anic paraphrasing, and philosophy-driven debates—that can be adapted and implemented to make education more relevant and empowering.
- b. **Informing Policy:** The findings can serve as a valuable resource for Indonesian government bodies, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, by showcasing a successful model of how to strengthen the global competitiveness and intellectual rigor of *pesantren* education while maintaining its distinctive Islamic character.
- c. **Resource for Global Dialogue:** By outlining a method for cultivating articulate and critical Muslim graduates, the study contributes to global interfaith and

intercultural efforts. It provides a practical educational approach that can help counter extremist narratives and Islamophobic stereotypes simultaneously, promoting a vision of Islam that is intellectually robust and engaged.

3. Institutional Significance

There are several institutional significances from this study as listed below:

- a. For *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* itself, this study serves as a formal and rigorous evaluation and documentation of its unique educational model. The findings can validate its innovative efforts, provide insights for its own future curriculum refinement, and enhance its reputation as a center of excellence in interdisciplinary Islamic education (Lumbard, 2024).
- b. The research can also strengthen the institutional network of similar progressive *pesantren*, providing a shared framework and a common language for discussing and advancing their educational missions (Marzulina et al., 2021).

4. Research Significance

There are several research significances from this study as listed below:

- a. This study directly addresses the identified gaps in the literature, particularly the lack of research on integrated curricula in *pesantren* designed to counter global issues like Islamophobia (Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Pertiwi et al., 2022).
- b. It opens up new avenues for future research, suggesting topics such as the long-term impact of such an education on graduates, the application of this model in different sociocultural contexts, and the challenges of scaling such an intensive, interdisciplinary approach (Fitria, 2023).

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Educational research, particularly within specific cultural and religious contexts, requires careful delineation of its boundaries to ensure both focus and methodological integrity (Crowley et al., 2025). This section transparently articulates the specific parameters and inherent constraints of investigating the integrated curriculum at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*, clarifying what this study encompasses and what it necessarily excludes. By acknowledging these scope definitions and research limitations at the outset, readers can appropriately contextualize the findings while understanding the deliberate choices that shape this qualitative exploration of pedagogical innovation in Islamic education.

1. Scope of the Study

To provide a clear and structured overview of the investigation's boundaries, the scope of this study is delineated across following five key dimensions:

- a. **Conceptual Scope:** This research focuses exclusively on the integration of three specific educational domains: English Language Teaching (ELT), classical Islamic studies (*Kitab Kuning*), and hermeneutic philosophy. These components constitute the core innovation of the curriculum at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* and directly address the study's central concern with developing responses to Islamophobia through education. While the institution offers additional subjects including metaphysic, sciences, and vocational training, these fall outside the present investigation to maintain analytical precision on the integrated model under examination.
- b. **Contextual Scope:** The investigation is confined to *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* in Kepanjen, Malang, Indonesia. This specific institution was selected as

a critical case due to its explicit commitment to interdisciplinary Islamic education and its innovative approach to countering Islamophobia through integrated pedagogy. The Javanese cultural context of this *pesantren*, with its distinctive synthesis of Islamic and local educational traditions, further defines the contextual boundaries of the study.

- c. Temporal Scope: Data collection occurred over a concentrated six-week period during the 2024 academic year. This timeframe enabled intensive classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and detailed document analysis, capturing the implementation of the integrated curriculum during a specific academic term. While this provides rich qualitative data about the educational process, it represents a focused timeframe rather than longitudinal tracking of development.
- d. Participant Scope: The study involves seven purposively selected participants: two lecturers responsible for curriculum design and implementation, and five students actively engaged in the integrated program. These participants were chosen as key informants who could provide deep insights into the pedagogical processes, learning experiences, and outcomes of the integrated curriculum. Other stakeholders—including parents, administrators, alumni, and students not in the integrated program—fall outside this bounded participant group.
- e. Analytical Scope: Analysis focuses on three primary dimensions: (a) pedagogical design and implementation of the integrated curriculum, (b) student experiences and perceptions of the integrated learning process, and (c) competency development outcomes related to language proficiency, critical thinking, and Islamophobia response. Cultural dimensions are examined as they intersect with these primary analytical categories rather than as separate foci.

2. Limitations of the Study

To ensure methodological transparency and contextualize the findings appropriately, the following section outlines the key limitations inherent in this study's design and execution:

- a. **Generalizability Limitation:** As a qualitative case study of a single innovative institution, the findings are context-specific and not statistically generalizable to other *pesantren* or Islamic educational settings. The unique characteristics of *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah*—including its exceptional faculty qualifications, selective student body, institutional autonomy, and specific pedagogical approach—limit direct transferability to more typical Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia or elsewhere.
- b. **Sample Size Limitation:** With only seven participants, the study prioritizes qualitative depth over quantitative breadth. While this allows for rich, detailed understanding of individual experiences and perspectives, it cannot capture the full diversity of experiences within the institution. The small sample size necessarily limits the range of perspectives represented in the findings.
- c. **Researcher Positionality Limitation:** As a non-inhabitant researcher studying Islamic education, there may be inherent limitations in fully comprehending the nuanced religious and spiritual dimensions of the educational experience. While reflexivity practices, member checking, and collaborative interpretation were employed to mitigate this limitation, some aspects of religious learning and identity formation may be interpreted through external rather than internal frames of understanding.
- d. **Temporal Limitation:** The six-week observation period, while intensive, provides what anthropologists term a "thick slice" of educational life (Kakar et al., 2023) rather than a longitudinal view of developmental trajectories. The study captures

implementation and experience during a specific period but cannot trace long-term retention of learning, career impacts, or life-course influences of the educational approach.

- e. Cultural Context Limitation: The examination of integration occurs within the specific cultural context of Javanese Islamic education, particularly the *pesantren* tradition in East Java. Findings may not apply directly to Islamic educational contexts in other Indonesian regions with different cultural traditions, or to Muslim educational settings in other countries with distinct historical, cultural, and educational contexts (Gay, 2002).
- f. Resource Limitation for Replication: The resource-intensive nature of the integrated model (Valaskivi & Robertson, 2022)—requiring highly qualified teachers proficient in both Islamic sciences and Western disciplines, small student-teacher ratios, and substantial preparation time—represents a significant practical limitation for replication in the resource-constrained environments typical of many Indonesian *pesantren* (Marzulina et al., 2021). This limitation affects the potential scalability of the model.
- g. Measurement Limitation: Qualitative assessment of competency development, while rich in descriptive detail, lacks the precision of standardized quantitative measures (Kakar et al., 2023). The study documents observed and perceived competencies rather than measuring them against external benchmarks through validated instruments or standardized tests. This limits comparative analysis with other educational approaches.
- h. Limitations of the Methodology: The study's limitations include its single-case design and small sample size, which restrict the generalizability of findings. The qualitative nature of the inquiry may also introduce subjectivity, though this was

mitigated through triangulation and reflexivity (Tracy, 2010). The focus on one *pesantren* limits comparative analysis but allows for deep contextual understanding (Crowley et al., 2025). Future research could expand to multiple sites and incorporate quantitative measures of language proficiency to complement the qualitative insights generated here.

1.6 The Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the following key terms are defined operationally, specifying their meaning within the context of this research:

1. Instructional integration refers to the deliberate and synergistic pedagogical approach employed at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* where the teaching of English Language Teaching (ELT), classical Islamic studies (*kitab kuning*), and hermeneutic philosophy is interwoven. It is not a simple co-location of subjects but a curriculum design where the content, skills, and methodologies of each domain interact continuously to achieve the unified learning objective of countering Islamophobia.
2. *Pesantren* Educational System denotes an Islamic boarding school institution in Indonesia that is characterized by its core emphasis on classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), character building (*akhlak*), and a communal living system under the spiritual guidance of a *kyai* (religious leader). In this study, it specifically refers to modern *pesantren* models that intentionally incorporate general knowledge (e.g., philosophy) and foreign languages (English) into their traditional curriculum to engage with contemporary global contexts.
3. Classical Islamic Studies (*Kitab Kuning*) is the canonical corpus of classical Islamic scholarship, written primarily in Arabic, covering disciplines such as theology (*tauhid*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), and Sufism. In this research,

these texts are not treated as closed, static entities but are dynamically engaged as living documents that are interpreted using hermeneutic principles to derive ethical and intellectual guidance for addressing modern challenges like Islamophobia.

4. Hermeneutics—the theory and methodology of interpretation—in this study, refers specifically to philosophical hermeneutics (informed by thinkers like Hans-Georg Gadamer) that emphasizes the dialogical relationship between the reader, the text, and their historical and cultural contexts. It is employed as a critical tool to enable a contextual and nuanced interpretation of both classical *kitab kuning* and modern Islamophobic discourses, facilitating a "fusion of horizons" between the past and present.
5. Epistemic Hybridity is a dynamic cognitive and intellectual process whereby learners synthesize knowledge and modes of reasoning from distinct epistemological traditions (specifically, Islamic scholasticism, Western linguistics, and Greek philosophy). This process results in an integrated, flexible form of understanding that allows students to navigate, contribute to, and critically engage with multiple intellectual worlds, thereby challenging the hegemony of any single knowledge system.
6. Islamophobia is defined as a set of dominant, internationally circulating narratives and discourses that systematically portray Islam and Muslims in a negative, simplistic, and stereotypical light, often associating them with irrationality, violence, and oppression. The study focuses on how the integrated curriculum equips students to critically analyze the linguistic and rhetorical structures of these discourses and to produce effective, evidence-based counter-narratives.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter interprets the findings presented in Chapter IV through the theoretical lenses established in this study: Critical pedagogy, Hermeneutic Philosophy, and Epistemic Hybridity. The discussion clarifies how the integrated curriculum *at Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* functions as a strategic educational response to misconceptions of Islamic teaching, moving from empirical observations to their broader theoretical, practical, and socio-political significance. It addresses how the findings answer the research questions and contribute to the existing literature on Islamic education, TESOL, and critical pedagogy.

5.1 Discussion

The empirical findings decode a unique pedagogical approach whereby the teaching model exemplifies a form of critical pedagogy that has been deliberately integrated within a specific Islamic educational context (Bello, 2023). This adaptation is deeply embedded in practical classroom praxis, transcending conventional additive bilingualism to foster critical awareness and dialogic engagement. By employing targeted activities, such as Qur'anic paraphrasing and public speaking (Thursday night speeches rehearsal), English language learning is reconceptualized from a potential instrument of cultural dominance into a powerful tool for counter-hegemonic expression (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2023). Consequently, the curriculum empowers students not merely to deconstruct Islamophobia as a structural issue, but to emerge as articulate agents capable of reclaiming their voice within the global discourse.

The curriculum's foundational justification, as articulated by Teacher 1 with a critical diagnosis of traditional *pesantren* education as overly reliant on transmitted sciences (*naqli*) and neglectful of rational inquiry (*ma'qulat*). This internal critique aligns with Freire's insistence that liberatory education must start by "problematizing" the learners' existential

situation. The integration responds directly to what Student 2 termed the “knowledge-power nexus,” wherein Western academia has historically dominated the representation of Islam world. By mastering English and Western philosophical discourse, students are equipped to enter and contend the very epistemic arena where Islamophobic narratives are produced. This represents a form of Freirean “cultural action for freedom,” where education enables the oppressed to reclaim the means of representation.

As evidenced in the findings, this is not a passive process. Students like Student 2 engage in explicit geopolitical analysis, arguing that “hegemony over educational systems and knowledge production regarding Islam constitutes one strategic mechanism through which Western powers advance their broader geopolitical objective.” This explores the development of critical consciousness (*conscientização*), where students move from seeing Islamophobia as individual prejudice to understanding it as a structural feature of global power relations.

The core pedagogical activities—bilingual text analysis, Qur’anic paraphrasing, and Thursday night speeches—are not passive learning exercises but active dialogical praxis—transformative interaction. Paraphrasing sessions, as described by Teacher 1, are a direct “response to misinterpretations of Islamic traditions and teachings,” where students learn to reinterpret sacred texts to articulate messages of justice and compassion relevant to contemporary allegations. This aligns with critical pedagogy’s focus on using literacy to “read the word and the world” and then to “rewrite it”.

The findings show that the students are not just learning English; they are practicing how to use it as an instrument of intellectual self-defense and counter-hegemonic communication. The Thursday night speeches, for instance, serve as a rehearsal space where students, as Student 4 noted, must “recall specialized vocabulary and construct meaningful sentence while articulating accurate Islamic concepts—particularly challenging when these

must be conveyed in English.” This practice exemplifies Freire’s belief that true learning occurs through dialogue and action, not through the banking model of education. The curriculum thereby reclaims agency in global discourse by transforming students from objects of representation into subjects of their own narrative.

The findings demonstrate that philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer et al., 2011) functions not simply as a taught subject but as the core methodological framework that brings intellectual coherence to the integration of English and classical Islamic texts. By applying hermeneutic principles, the curriculum synthesizes traditional Islamic scholarship with modern language practice, ensuring its relevance to contemporary global concerns. This approach operationalizes Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons,” enabling students to engage critically with classical sources while reimagining English as a vehicle for counter-hegemonic expression. Hermeneutics thus provides the essential scaffolding that supports students in navigating the tensions between sacred tradition and modern discourse.

The student experiences showcase Gadamer’s “fusion of horizon” in action. Student 1’s comparative analysis of tauhid and Aristotelian metaphysics is a prime example. He did not treat the Qur’anic text as a closed artifact but intertwined it in dialogue with Western philosophical tradition, finding convergent truths about the “uncaused cause.” This hermeneutics process prevents a defensive, isolationist reading of Islamic text and promotes a confident, intellectually open engagement with other knowledge systems. As Student 1 stated, the bridge between traditions is “reason (*aqlu*) itself,” highlighting the universalizing potential of hermeneutics.

Similarly, Student 3 tracing of consciousness from Saussure back to Islamic mysticism (*Sufism*) exemplifies how hermeneutics allows for a reciprocal dialogue where Western and Islamic intellectual traditions mutually illuminate each other. This dialogical approach counters

the Orientalist dichotomy that positions Western thought as actively analytical and Islamic thought as passively traditional—as if the Western epistemology was the default of truth.

A significant challenge in Islamic education is the perception of classical Kitab Kuning as static and irrelevant to modern problems. The integrated curriculum directly addresses this by applying hermeneutic principles to render these texts “living documents.” Teacher 1’s pedagogical use of specific Qur’anic verses (e.g., Surah *Al-Mumtahanah* 60:8-9) to address modern themes of peace and pluralism directly operationalizes this hermeneutic pivot.

The praxis application is crucial for deconstructing stereotypes of Islam as rigid and anti-modern—as most Western societies concerned. When students learn to derive ethical guidance for interfaith relations from Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsir*), they acquire a powerful tool for counter-narrative. They can move beyond simplistic claims that “Islam is peaceful” to sophisticated arguments showing how Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Islamic theology (*Kalam*) provide frameworks for pluralism and justice. Hermeneutics thus serves as the critical tool that allows the “theological and ethical substance” of classical Islam to be rendered meaningful and persuasive for a 21st-century global audience.

This study provides a potent empirical model of epistemic hybridity (Valaskivi & Robertson, 2022; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2023) in practice, moving the concept from theoretical abstraction to observable pedagogical outcome. Epistemic hybridity here refers to the dynamic cognitive process through which learners synthesize knowledge, methodologies, and modes of reasoning from distinct epistemological traditions—specifically, Islamic scholasticism, Western philosophy, and modern linguistic theory. The findings meticulously chart the students’ transformative journey from initial “epistemic shock”—a state of cognitive dissonance induced by confronting incommensurate knowledge systems—to the development of a consolidated, agile intellect capable of what can be termed synthetic agency.

The journey begins with the disruptive experience of "shock," as students accustomed to traditional *pesantren* pedagogy encounter the demand to simultaneously engage with classical Arabic *Kitab Kuning* and Western philosophical texts in English. This dissonance, however, is pedagogically scaffolded through immersive, integrative practices. Guided by the hermeneutic principle of the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer et al., 2011), students learn to navigate between textual traditions, not by erasing differences but by creating a dialogical "third space" of intellectual synthesis. In this space, as evidenced by Student 1's comparison of Qur'anic *tauhid* with Aristotelian metaphysics or Student 3's linkage of Saussurean semiotics with Sufi concepts of consciousness, knowledge systems are not seen as hierarchical or contradictory but as complementary domains for critical engagement.

The climax of this process is synthetic agency—the capacity to consciously select, blend, and deploy insights from multiple epistemologies to generate novel understandings and articulate self-authored positions. This agency transcends mere interdisciplinary competence; it represents an empowered intellectual identity that can confidently navigate complex global discourses. Within the context of countering Islamophobia, this hybridity is particularly salient. It equips students to deconstruct reductive narratives not from a defensive posture but from a position of epistemic strength, allowing them to reframe conversations about Islam through sophisticated, transcultural reasoning. Thus, the fostering of epistemic hybridity emerges not merely as an academic goal but as a foundational strategy for fostering resilient, articulate Muslim subjectivities in a pluralistic and often contentious global public sphere.

The initial student shock—feeling like they had to "jump from level one to fifteen"—represents the cognitive dissonance (discrepancy) of confronting diverse epistemological systems. The integrated curriculum, however, is designed to mediate students through this tension via immersive, practice-based methodology ("learning by doing") and a supportive

communal environment. The outcomes, as seen in advanced students, is the ability to operate in a “third space” of intellectual synthesis. This space, as theorized by postcolonial scholars like Homi Bhabha, is a productive, in-between zone where fixed identities and knowledge categories are destabilized, enabling new forms of understanding.

Student 1’s advocacy for combining rational analysis (*aqlu*) with revelation (*naql*), and Student 3’s mapping of philosophical convergence points, describes this hybrid competencies. They no longer see Islamic and Western knowledge as contradictory or hierarchical but as distinct domains that can be critically and productively intertwined in proposed dialogue. This is evident in the analytical tables from the previous chapter above, which show students consistently drawing on philosophy to explain theology, and using linguistic theory to analyze translation.

Here, the cultivated epistemic hybridity serves as the foundational bedrock for the specific counter-Islamophobic competencies identified in this study. Whereas a student confined to a mono-epistemic perspective might respond to Islamophobia with emotional reactivity, a student who has developed epistemic hybridity is equipped to engage with it through multifaceted agency. First, they can analyze it structurally, as demonstrated by Student 2, who deconstructs the geopolitical and historical power structures underpinning academic Islamophobia. Second, they can refute it theologically, drawing upon balanced, mainstream Islamic theological principles—such as those from the *Asy’ariyah* and *Al-Maturidiyah* traditions highlighted by Guru 2—to challenge literalist extremism and present Islam in its intellectually nuanced form. Third, they can communicate beyond it, proactively producing English-language explanations of Islamic concepts, as practiced in Thursday night speeches, to address global audiences. Thus, epistemic hybridity transforms students from passive subjects of discourse into active, articulate agents capable of navigating and reshaping it. This

shift from reactive defense (“Islam is not violent”) to proactive articulation (“Here is what Islam teaches about justice”) represents a more sophisticated and sustainable strategy for challenging stereotypes and reshaping global understanding.

This study makes significant contributions by bridging several distinct theoretical fields. Firstly, it enriches Critical Pedagogy by demonstrating how Freirean principles can be effectively grounded in a non-Western, religious context, thereby expanding the geographic and cultural application of this framework. The curriculum illustrates that "conscientization" can be oriented toward global discursive inequity as much as toward local socio-economic oppression. Secondly, it advances the concept of Epistemic Hybridity by providing a concrete pedagogical model for its achievement, moving the idea from an abstract theoretical goal to observable educational outcomes realized through identifiable practices such as bilingual text analysis and comparative paraphrasing. Finally, the study contributes to Decolonial Education theory by showcasing a praxis that masters the "colonizer's language" (English) and intellectual tools (Western philosophy) not for assimilation, but to reclaim the right to self-representation and directly challenge the coloniality of knowledge production about Islam.

For Islamic educators and curriculum designers, this study offers a practical, actionable blueprint. The research highlights several transferable strategies that can be adapted in similar contexts. These include Thematic Integration, where lessons are structured around core concepts—such as justice, consciousness, or knowledge—and explored simultaneously through *Kitab Kuning*, philosophical texts, and English resources. Another key strategy is the Pedagogy of Immersion, in which English is used as the medium of instruction for content rather than taught as a separate subject, supported through scaffolded activities like paraphrasing and bilingual text analysis, gradually progressing from a supportive 70/30 language ratio toward full immersion. Additionally, educators are encouraged to

build Counter-Narrative Production directly into the curriculum, where students create materials—such as essays, digital content, and speeches—that explicitly address contemporary stereotypes, thereby moving them from comprehension to public articulation. For policymakers, particularly within Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs, this model presents a viable pathway for modernizing *pesantren* education—enhancing global competitiveness and intellectual rigor without compromising Islamic identity. It demonstrates how “global competence” can be authentically integrated with “religious character building.”

The research posits that the most effective, long-term antidote to ideological Islamophobia is educational. It shifts the focus from reactive media rebuttals to proactive human development. By culturing graduates who are theologically grounded, philosophical sophisticated, and communicatively competent in global languages, this model creates what can be termed “intellectual diplomats”, where the students can engage in theological discourse with radicals, philosophical debate with secular critics, and public discourse with a misinformed global audience, thereby addressing the roots of Islamophobia across multiple societies. Hence, the curriculum plays as a form of intellectual resilience training, preparing them to encounter prejudice with reasoned argument rather than alienation or anger.

Building on the findings of this study, several pathways for future inquiry emerge to further clarify the complexities of dialogic praxis in ELT. These include comparative case studies examining similar integrative efforts across diverse contexts—such as traditional versus modern *pesantren* or Muslim-minority settings like madrasas in non-Muslim countries—to identify cross-cultural principles of effective integration and adaptation challenges. Additionally, research focused on scalability and teacher training could address the practical hurdles of implementing interdisciplinary models, potentially developing streamlined versions for less-resourced institutions. Finally, impact measurement through mixed-methods

designs would allow for quantitative assessment of gains in language proficiency and critical thinking, complementing the qualitative insights into epistemic and identity development presented here.

This study set out to investigate the unique pedagogical integration at *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* as a strategic response to international Islamophobia. The findings reveal a sophisticated educational model that is philosophically coherent, pedagogically robust, and effective in its aims. The curriculum operates as a practical enactment of critical pedagogy, designed to foster conscientization and agency against discursive hegemony. Hermeneutic philosophy serves as its operational core, enabling a dynamic, dialogical, and relevant engagement with Islamic tradition. Together, these components systematically cultivate epistemic hybridity—the key competency that empowers students to synthesize knowledge across boundaries and develop the analytical, theological, and communicative tools necessary to deconstruct and counter Islamophobic narratives.

In conclusion, *Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah* offers more than an innovative school model; it provides a vision for Islamic education in a globalized world. It demonstrates that deep religious commitment, rigorous intellectual inquiry, and global communicative competence are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing. By equipping a generation to articulate a confident, complex, and compassionate Islam, this approach addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing the global Muslim community, turning the tools of global discourse into instruments of understanding and liberation. The integrated curriculum stands as evidence that education, when thoughtfully designed, can be a powerful form of *jihad al-nafs* (struggle of the self) and *jihad al-lisan* (struggle of the tongue)—an intellectual and communicative striving for truth and justice in the modern world.



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