LOCAL WISDOM-BASED CURRICULUM OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: BRIDGING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN INDONESIAN MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how a curriculum rooted in local wisdom can connect English language teaching with local cultural values in Islamic Junior High Schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) in Indonesia. Language and culture are deeply intertwined in learning a foreign language, especially in religious educational settings like madrasas with distinctive characteristics. Using a qualitative approach, this research reviews relevant scientific sources—including journal articles, academic books, and curriculum policy documents—focused on integrating local wisdom into English education. Findings suggest that incorporating local wisdom into the curriculum can make foreign language learning more relevant, reinforce students' cultural identity, and promote intercultural communication skills. Additionally, this approach enables teachers to develop contextual, meaningful teaching materials that reflect students' social realities, preventing English learning from becoming isolated from their cultural background. The

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study highlights the importance of designing an English curriculum that emphasizes both linguistic competence and the transmission of local values and culture. This foundation is essential for cultivating madrasah generations capable of speaking foreign languages while maintaining their cultural identity. Consequently, English teaching in madrasas can serve as an educational transformation rooted in values yet open to global engagement.

Keywords: *local wisdom, English curriculum, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, local culture, contextual learning*

Introduction

Local wisdom-based English language curriculum development in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic Junior High School) is an essential issue in the educational context in Indonesia, considering the need to integrate local wisdom aspects in the instructional process. Amid the vast mainstream of globalization, local cultural values are often marginalized in formal education, including language teaching. This article aims to explore how the English language curriculum can be designed in a way that is relevant to local wisdom without ignoring the instructional purpose of the target language itself. By relating English language instruction to local cultural elements, it is expected that students can have a better understanding of the target language in the broader social context.

Local wisdom plays a significant role in the development of students' character and identity. A study pointed out that education based on local culture can increase students' sense of belonging and identity towards their circumstances (Fajarini, 2014). In the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah, which traditionally delivers religious and cultural values, the development of an English language curriculum that considers local wisdom can encourage students to increasingly appreciate their culture while maintaining access to the global world.

On the other hand, low English proficiency among students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah has been a significant concern of many

stakeholders. Many students face difficulties in understanding English language materials, which are primarily universal and not relevant to their local context. Therefore, the approach that is based on local wisdom needs to be implemented to increase students' motivation and understanding (Suarni, 2023). By synchronizing English language instruction with local content, educators can create a learning environment that is more contextual and engaging for students. The implementation of a curriculum based on local wisdom involves not only language aspects but also pedagogical aspects. Teachers need to be trained to adopt a creative and innovative approach relevant to local cultural values (Suhadi et al., 2014). Engaging and relevant instruction can make students more enthusiastic about learning the English language, which in turn will increase their learning outcomes.

The advantage of a local wisdom-based curriculum is the ability to encourage students' critical thinking. Through discussions, text analysis, and community-based projects that incorporate local culture, students learn the English language and develop their analytical and critical thinking skills. Using this method, students are expected to develop their speaking skills effectively. In this view, learning media also play an essential role in curriculum development. The use of interactive media relevant to local wisdom, such as educational games or digital-based resources, can create a more engaging learning experience (Ermawati et al., 2023). This will help students become actively involved in learning and increase their desire to use English in broader contexts.

Furthermore, the collaboration among schools, parents, and communities in designing and implementing a local wisdom-based curriculum is crucial. Students' performance can improve when they feel supported by the community (Rohaya, 2022). This collaborative approach will stimulate learning activities that involve the community, such as cultural festivals or community service projects that utilize English as the primary means of communication.

By exploring the importance of curricula rooted in local wisdom in English language teaching, students are expected to enhance their proficiency in the target language and develop a deep understanding of

their local culture. This integrated learning approach should serve as a model for other subjects at Madrasah Tsanawiyah.

The long-term effects of implementing this curriculum extend beyond enhancing students' target language skills to include character development, which involves embracing local culture and preparing for global competition. Therefore, this initiative aims not only to improve English as a means of communication but also to act as an intercultural bridge in the age of globalization.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative method based on library research. It was selected because the main goal was to analyze and synthesize theoretical ideas and prior findings about integrating local wisdom into the English curriculum, especially within the madrasah context. This approach enabled a thorough exploration of core concepts such as the values of local wisdom, contextual education, and the link between language and culture in formal Islamic secondary education.

Data for this study were collected from diverse academic sources, including journal articles, books, education policy reports, and madrasah curriculum documents. The data gathering involved systematic searches in online databases like Google Scholar, Garuda, ResearchGate, and DOAJ, using keywords such as local wisdom, English curriculum, Islamic education, madrasah tsanawiyah, and intercultural learning. Inclusion criteria specified publications from the last ten years (2013–2023), relevance to the topic, and applicability to the Indonesian context. Works that were opinion-based, not peer-reviewed, or irrelevant to the madrasah context were excluded.

Data analysis employed a thematic approach, identifying patterns from relevant literature. This process involved initial coding, categorizing themes, and exploring the connections between local wisdom, curriculum, and English language teaching. The findings were then summarized into a narrative that explains how local wisdom can be incorporated into English classes at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic junior high schools),

aiming to develop a curriculum that is contextual, relevant, and culturally rooted.

Finding and Discussion

Literature Review

a.   English language curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah

The development of the English language curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah has become a focus of attention in Indonesia, given the need to create a curriculum that meets national standards and is relevant to the local context. Since the launch of Curriculum 2013, there has been a significant shift in the teaching of the English language, designed to respond to the social and cultural dynamics of the communities (Wekke & Astuti, 2017; Wero et al., 2022). This curriculum aims to ensure that education not only focuses on academics but also integrates moral values and character, which is very important in an Islamic-based educational context (Nahar et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2023).

On the other hand, Merdeka Curriculum provides a space for madrasahs to adjust instructional content to local needs. With this condition, it is expected that English language teaching in Madrasah Tsanawiyah can be more meaningful and relevant (Wahyudi & Ariyani, 2023). However, this also brings its challenges, especially in terms of providing contextual teaching materials. Many teachers face difficulties in adapting materials from international sources into relevant local cultural contexts, resulting in less effective teaching (Abid et al., 2022; Sya & Helmanto, 2020). Therefore, the urgency to develop a curriculum that integrates local wisdom is increasingly pressing.

One main challenge faced is the difference in approach to teaching the language between madrasahs and common schools. In madrasahs, the emphasis is on integrating Islamic values into all aspects of instruction, which often restricts the context of English language teaching (Dewi et al., 2023). The materials in target language teaching should not only focus on the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, but also on how the target language can be used to understand and appreciate local wisdom within the community (Haryadi & Riyanto, 2023).

Additionally, language policies that support the use of English continue to pose a challenge. Many schools encourage the use of English exclusively without providing space for the local language, which actually should play a significant role in education (Abid et al., 2022; Wahyudi & Ariyani, 2023). The use of the local language in English language learning can enrich students' learning experiences and optimize the process of understanding the modules (Bong & Firmansyah, 2023). Therefore, adjustments in education policies are needed to foster the use of local languages in English language instruction, making teaching and learning more inclusive and meaningful.

Based on these challenges, curriculum development should involve the participation of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and the broader community. The implementation of local wisdom in English language instruction can be done by module development based on the relevant culture (Haryadi & Riyanto, 2023). For instance, using reading texts that reflect local culture can increase students' interest and provide richer learning experiences. This aligns with a study that identifies the integration of local culture in English language instruction as a means to improve students' involvement (Kusuma, 2019).

It is essential to take decisive action to implement an English language curriculum that not only enhances language skills but also embraces and integrates local wisdom within Madrasah Tsanawiyah. It includes several efforts, such as training for teachers in developing contextual modules and creating a learning environment that supports the exploration of broader local wisdom (Liyana & Kurniawan, 2019; Setiyana et al., 2023). Thus, the curriculum is anticipated to not only develop competent students in using the English language but also to foster a strong appreciation for their own culture.

In general, the development of the English language curriculum based on local wisdom in Madrasah Tsanawiyah is an urgent need. By considering local contexts and cultural values, English language education in madrasahs can significantly contribute to character building and the development of students' identities in today's global era (Ling Ling et al., 2024; Nahar et al., 2024). This step is essential for creating a

generation that is proficient in English and also values and preserves their cultural identity.

Local wisdom plays a significant role in education, primarily as a foundation to build on students' character and strengthen their cultural identity. Elements such as customs, local language, and local Islamic culture are vital components that can be integrated into the curriculum. Studies indicate that when education incorporates local culture, students not only connect with the materials but also feel motivated to learn. (Prasetyo et al., 2020). For instance, the teaching that connects local values to school subjects, such as Civic Education, has been shown to enhance students' awareness of their cultural identity and values. (Wafiqni & Nurani, 2019).

The success of integrating local wisdom is also evident from the report, which shows that students exposed to instructions based on local wisdom demonstrate better social skills and can adapt more effectively to their environment (Rasmin & Samsudin, 2024). In the context of religious education, integrating local culture into the curriculum within madrasas can facilitate students' comprehension and application of their religious teachings within a broader social framework (Dilber, 2023).

b.   Supporting Theories

Theories supporting the integration of the English language curriculum with local wisdom in education are highly relevant to consider. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasized that social and cultural environments play a crucial role in shaping instructional methods and personal development. (Madkur & As'ad, 2024)This theory is crucial in understanding how students interpret the English language within their cultural context, especially when the target language is taught in madrasahs.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in the learning process. Vygotsky believed that a person's cognitive development is inherently linked to the culture and social environment in which they live (Newman, 2018). In English language education, this understanding is fundamental when discussing the incorporation of local wisdom into the curriculum. Local

wisdom, encompassing values, tradition, and community cultural practices, can enrich language learning experiences by providing students with more relevant context (Damopolii et al., 2024). Vygotsky emphasizes the significance of the "zone of proximal development," where interactions between teachers and students enhance learning, especially when teaching materials are tailored to students' cultural backgrounds.

A fundamental component of Vygotsky's theory involves mediating tools, including language. Language functions not only as a medium for communication but also as a tool for cognition and comprehension of the world. Consequently, incorporating English within the context of local wisdom can facilitate students' language acquisition and enhance their recognition of its significance in their daily lives. (Aimin, 2013). For instance, English language teaching integrated with folklore or relevant local values improves students' linguistic understanding and strengthens their cultural identity (Munisa et al., 2024).

Vygotsky also highlighted the significance of collaboration in education. An environment that fosters teamwork enables students to acquire knowledge through interaction and discussion. When incorporating local wisdom, group activities focused on exploring local traditions and values within English learning help students share their experiences, insights, and perspectives (Mulyani et al., 2023). This is crucial because fostering a community that supports one another's learning can boost motivation and enhance students' sense of ownership of the material.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural approach encourages critical reflection by incorporating local wisdom into the curriculum. This integration prompts students to consider and discuss the connection between their cultural values and the global concepts they learn English language. This can enhance cultural awareness and empower students to voice the challenges their culture encounters in the age of globalization (Rachmadyanti, 2017). In this case, learning English involves more than just mastering grammar and vocabulary; it also includes understanding the cultural significance within a larger context.

Moreover, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of the social environment in learning and development. Education that leverages local wisdom naturally aligns with this idea by focusing on students' cultural experiences. In this approach, local wisdom acts as a bridge that helps students grasp and internalize new ideas more effectively. For instance, incorporating local poetry or prose into English instruction can enhance student engagement and make learning more relevant and meaningful. (Suastini & Sumada, 2022).

In the pursuit of inclusive education, recognizing that local wisdom can serve as a bridge for communication among students from diverse backgrounds is crucial. When students understand and value each other's local cultures, they are more likely to foster mutual respect and tolerance, key qualities in a multicultural learning environment (Hasanuddin & Rusydi, 2024). Vygotsky emphasized the importance of collaboration and diversity in learning, and incorporating local wisdom into the English curriculum can promote this.

Finally, integrating local wisdom into English language learning, guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters their development into empathetic individuals with strong cultural awareness (Setya et al., 2024). Through a learning process rooted in local experiences and cultural exchanges, students grasp language not just for communication but also as a way to understand and appreciate the surrounding cultural diversity. Therefore, English education that incorporates local wisdom can nurture a generation that is both academically capable and rich in character and human values.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), as defined by Michael Byram, is essential for enabling students to participate effectively in cross-cultural exchanges (Byram, 2020). This approach highlights the need to go beyond mastering language rules, such as grammar and vocabulary, emphasizing the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural subtleties that influence communication. It supports Byram's view that ICC comprises skills, attitudes, and knowledge, which enable individuals to operate successfully within diverse cultural settings (Cruz et al., 2024; Kahanurak et al., 2023). Moreover, the focus on successful intercultural communication is

especially significant in English language education, where local cultural wisdom and values are often integrated (Eko & Putranto, 2019).

Incorporating local cultural elements into English language education is vital for developing students' intercultural competence (ICC). Language inherently carries cultural influences, so students need to understand the values and social norms prevalent in different contexts to communicate effectively (Eko & Putranto, 2019; Kahanurak et al., 2023). Qi's research indicates that pragmatic competence has a positive correlation with intercultural sensitivity, suggesting that a deeper understanding of local cultural values enhances communication skills and social interactions (Qi, 2023). Therefore, teaching students in culturally-rich settings not only boosts their linguistic abilities but also enhances their confidence and skills in intercultural exchanges.

Moreover, curriculum design is crucial in integrating ICC into language teaching. As Havrilova et al. note, the structure of intercultural communication studies provides a framework for linking key concepts in the curriculum (Havrilova et al., 2021). Educators should strategically include activities like role-playing and real-life cultural interactions to improve students' understanding of different perspectives and build empathy (Brainee, 2024; Yefremtseva et al., 2021). For instance, students can simulate real-world situations or participate in discussions that encourage them to reflect on their cultural biases and gain a deeper understanding of intercultural dynamics.

Recent research suggests that intercultural communicative competence should be viewed not only as an abstract concept but also as a practical objective within language education. Several studies highlight that this competence encompasses qualities such as flexibility, curiosity, openness, and the ability to handle ambiguity (Braslauskas, 2021; Nazarenko, 2015). This underscores the need for learners to cultivate soft skills that allow effective interaction in diverse environments, thus preparing them for the globalized professional world (Yefremtseva et al., 2021). Such skills are especially crucial in higher education, where students collaborate with peers from various cultural backgrounds.

The importance of instructional strategies that foster ICC development is crucial. Effective methods should incorporate

collaborative projects, engagement with diverse perspectives, and dialogues on cultural differences (Etri, 2021; Haas, 2019). Educational models that promote experiential learning can improve students' capacity to reflect on their intercultural encounters and modify their communication approaches (Jonathan & Nang Laik, 2019). Applying theory practically not only supports language learning but also cultivates essential intercultural skills.

In summary, developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in English language teaching is essential for providing students with the skills needed to handle the intricacies of global communication. Incorporating local cultural insights into the learning process enables educators to create engaging environments that foster an understanding of social norms and values from diverse cultures. This method not only improves language skills but also builds empathy, tolerance, and a broader cultural perspective among students, effectively preparing them for their roles in a connected world (Eko & Putranto, 2019; Kahanurak et al., 2023; Yefremtseva et al., 2021). The combination of language acquisition and cultural awareness offers a comprehensive approach to education that addresses the evolving needs of learners today.

Contextual Language Learning (CLL) and Place-based Education (PBE) are innovative approaches in English teaching, focusing on the importance of language use in real-world, local contexts. CLL helps students see how English functions practically in daily life, turning it into more than just a skill—it is a means to understand and value their own culture. This approach is crucial because it enables students to view language as a means of connecting and participating within their community, thereby boosting their cultural identity while enhancing their language skills.

In PBE, students learn by connecting materials to their social and cultural surroundings. This approach enables them to explore and understand language within their local context, resulting in more profound and meaningful learning. Research indicates that project-based learning—a method that combines these approaches—can enhance student engagement and promote the use of English in real-world, contextual situations (Poonpon, 2017). Such activities can make learning

more enjoyable and relevant, motivating students to become more active participants in their education.

By incorporating elements of local culture into the curriculum, teachers not only enhance students' English skills but also foster intercultural communication abilities. As the need for graduates with cross-cultural communication skills grows in the workplace (Eko & Putranto, 2019), preparing students within a culturally relevant context equips them to face future challenges. Consequently, teachers should have a deep understanding of the importance of culture in language learning to develop engaging and effective instructional materials.

Language instruction that focuses on local contexts and intercultural skills provides students with opportunities to develop social skills and empathy. Enhancing students' intercultural awareness is crucial for improving communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (I. I. Klimova et al., 2019). By employing context-based learning approaches, students can explore cultural differences and address communication challenges, enabling them to appreciate and value global diversity.

These methods are also applicable to English language teaching in today's globalized world. As technology and social media improve, facilitating cross-cultural exchanges, students' skills in English communication are more vital than ever (Ahmad & Khasawneh, 2023; B. Klimova & Chen, 2024). By engaging with language in authentic local situations, students not only develop speaking and writing skills but also deepen their understanding of how culture impacts communication.

Moreover, incorporating advanced technology into language learning proves to be a highly effective method for improving CLL and PBE strategies. Utilizing tools like open online courses (MOOCs) allows students to access a broader array of resources that promote intercultural understanding (Li, 2024). This approach not only expands learning opportunities but also motivates students to engage with different cultural viewpoints through various interactions.

In summary, the CLL and PBE methods offer a solid basis for more integrated and context-aware English language instruction. By focusing on language learning within environments that are meaningful

and familiar to students, they acquire language skills alongside a deeper appreciation and understanding of their local culture. This approach is essential for developing learners who are not only proficient in English but also culturally sensitive and open to diversity.

c.   Theoretical Framework

This framework aims to clarify how to integrate the language curriculum with local values through a connected approach that explores and promotes the concept of a "Glocalized Curriculum." It highlights the need for a comprehensive perspective in language education, striking a balance between international standards and local relevance. The concept of a glocalized curriculum merges global educational practices with the unique cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds of students. This method guarantees that learning stays meaningful, engaging, and aligned with students' real-life experiences (Chikoko, 2021; Yang & Li, 2022).

A key element of this framework is pinpointing essential competencies in English language learning, which serve as critical inputs for students. These include skills like reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as critical thinking and cultural awareness (Huang & Bond, 2016). These competencies are not only fundamental for effective communication but also act as gateways to deeper cultural understanding and engagement. Focusing on these skills enables the creation of a curriculum that is flexible enough to accommodate students from various backgrounds, helping them to succeed in both local and international contexts (Dolgunsoz, 2014).

The educational process described here incorporates teaching methods closely tied to cultural contexts. These culturally aware strategies promote experiential learning, enabling students to explore their cultural surroundings while developing their language skills (Simons, 2014). Through project-based activities and community involvement, teachers can create chances for students to practice their language abilities in real-world situations, effectively connecting theory with practice. Designing instruction with cultural responsiveness in mind boosts both student participation and personal development (Wang & Kim, 2023).

The model's output has two main aspects: students will acquire both linguistic and intercultural skills that are crucial in today's interconnected world. This aligns with current research advocating for educational outcomes that go beyond academic knowledge to include social and emotional intelligence (Chaika, 2024). Such skills are essential for engaging meaningfully in global dialogues and respecting cultural diversity. By fostering these competencies, educators prepare students to become active global citizens who value their local heritage while embracing broader cultural perspectives (Kerkhoff, 2017).

Positioning teachers as "cultural mediators" is essential within this framework. They play a vital role in bridging global educational standards with local cultural settings. As mediators, educators need to develop a thorough understanding of both the language they teach and their students' cultural backgrounds (Kats et al., 2024). This approach necessitates ongoing professional development and cross-cultural training to empower teachers to support students effectively throughout their learning experiences.

Moreover, an effective glocalized curriculum necessitates ongoing assessment and adjustment in response to cultural changes and evolving student needs (Chikoko, 2021). Educators must regularly review their teaching methods, curriculum content, and student experiences to ensure they remain relevant and practical. Feedback from students about their cultural engagement and language learning can inform curriculum development and teaching practices, thereby creating a responsive educational environment (Lan, 2024). Such adaptive strategies are essential for maintaining student interest and encouraging sustained learning.

In conclusion, the outlined integrative model highlights the importance of combining language education with local cultural values using a glocalized approach. By focusing on core skills, employing culturally relevant strategies, and viewing teachers as cultural mediators, the educational experience becomes transformative, empowering learners (Kats et al., 2024). As education adapts to globalization and localization, this framework provides a sustainable approach to developing culturally aware and competent communicators who can succeed in diverse settings.

This framework encourages educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to collaborate in developing an educational environment that accurately reflects and honors students' cultural differences while equipping them with essential global skills. Integrating local and global aspects into the curriculum is not merely an ideal; it is essential for creating a more equitable and effective educational environment.

d.   Findings

The study indicates that integrating local wisdom into the English curriculum can enhance students' understanding of the language's cultural elements. Previous research emphasizes the significance of learning language within its cultural context, where students not only develop communication skills but also learn the associated cultural values (Jayanti & Sujarwo, 2019; Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Local wisdom provides valuable resources that can serve as practical teaching tools, making English learning more relevant and meaningful (Amalia & Marzuki, 2023; Muniroh et al., 2023).

In the madrasah setting, where religious education is combined with general knowledge, adopting a curriculum rooted in local wisdom can benefit students. For instance, incorporating local culture into teaching can reinforce students' national identity and enhance their English skills (Saefurrohman et al., 2024; Wulandari, 2024). Evidence indicates that students learning a language within their cultural context tend to be more motivated and achieve better academically than those learning without such context (Anggiani et al., 2022; Jayanti & Sujarwo, 2019).

The bilingual learning approach in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (Islamic junior high schools) is crucial in addressing the varied backgrounds of students. It allows students to learn English while maintaining their native language (Abduh, 2018). Educators at madrasah have shown that employing two languages during instruction helps students grasp the material more effectively (Jayanti & Sujarwo, 2019; Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Additionally, research indicates that a bilingual teaching strategy fosters a more inclusive and empowering

educational environment for students (Nwachukwu et al., 2024; Surdyanto, 2018).

Many educators face challenges when integrating local language and cultural content into foreign curricula in madrasas (Nashruddin, 2015; Natasya & Kembaren, 2025; Rahman et al., 2023). When teaching English through local wisdom, creating a curriculum that meets international standards while remaining relevant to the local context and students' identities is essential (Musthafa, 2015; Jayanti & Sujarwo, 2019). Research indicates that ignoring local wisdom in the curriculum can cause students to feel disconnected from the material (Widodo & Dewi, 2019; Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2019).

Furthermore, integrating media and technology in teaching has demonstrated effectiveness in supporting a curriculum based on local wisdom (Sarinauli & Gayo, 2022; Aryani & Rahayuni, 2016). Digital resources enable educators to design interactive and engaging learning experiences, which help motivate students to improve their English skills (Hafid & Margana, 2022; Pujiani et al., 2024). Traditional methods that are now outdated should be replaced with innovative strategies rooted in students' local contexts (Adijaya, 2023; Amalia & Marzuki, 2023). .

Developing critical thinking skills is essential in English education rooted in local wisdom. Studies indicate that students who participate in discussions and activities about their culture improve their critical thinking and information analysis (Anggiani et al., 2022; Wulandari et al., 2022). This method enhances their language abilities and provides practical skills applicable in daily life.

Effective coordination between teachers, students, and parents is crucial for the successful implementation of this bilingual curriculum (Saefurrohman et al., 2024; Abduh, 2018). Research indicates that parental involvement can increase students' motivation to learn English and improve teaching effectiveness (Hafid & Margana, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Involving the whole community in learning activities creates a more positive and harmonious environment for students.

Despite the many benefits of a local wisdom-based curriculum, this study identified several challenges, including insufficient teacher training on relevant methods and a scarcity of resources (Amalia &

Marzuki, 2023; Muniroh et al., 2023). Consequently, enhancing teacher capacity and ensuring access to sufficient educational resources are essential for delivering effective education in Islamic junior high schools.

Overall, the findings indicate that integrating a local wisdom-based curriculum with bilingual instruction can connect language and culture, while also reinforcing students' cultural identities and enhancing educational quality in Islamic junior high schools. Achieving this progress requires support from educators, policymakers, and the community to reach more comprehensive and relevant educational objectives.

Discussion

The integration of local wisdom into English language teaching at Madrasah Tsanawiyah highlights a growing awareness that language education should be connected to learners' cultural and social backgrounds. Language is inherently tied to cultural expression, and as Byram (2020) and Liddicoat & Scarino (2013) suggest, effective language acquisition requires not only mastering linguistic elements but also understanding intercultural meanings (Byram, 2020; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). For Islamic junior high schools in Indonesia, incorporating local cultural values into the curriculum enables students to relate their English studies to their daily lives and Islamic identity.

This study's results indicate that curriculum design in such settings should adhere to essential intercultural and contextual principles. Specifically, English instruction should act as a link between international communication requirements and cultural identity preservation. Instead of viewing English as a neutral language, madrasah educators should frame it as a means to express local values, wisdom traditions, and Islamic teachings. This aligns with Liddicoat's view that intercultural language teaching should promote learners' critical reflection on their own culture while engaging with the target language (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Integrating local content and narratives aligns with sociocultural theory, which suggests that learning is most effective when it leverages learners' existing knowledge and cultural backgrounds. By including

elements like local proverbs, folklore, religious practices, and community experiences in English classrooms, teachers can boost both student motivation and cultural relevance. Studies reviewed here (Amalia & Marzuki, 2023; Muniroh et al., 2023) support this by showing how local cultural materials help make abstract language concepts more accessible and engaging for students.

A key principle emphasized is the promotion of cultural identity alongside bilingual skills. Many Islamic junior high schools implement bilingual instruction in Arabic and English while preserving Indonesian as the national language. This trilingual setting requires a careful pedagogical approach, enabling students to enhance their English proficiency without overshadowing their native or religious languages. According to Abduh (2018) and Brainee (2024), bilingual or multilingual classrooms, when effectively managed, can encourage greater understanding and create more inclusive learning environments (Abduh, 2018; Brainee, 2024).

This study emphasizes the significance of content development based on local wisdom within curriculum components. English learning resources should go beyond Western-focused topics and include cultural references that resonate with madrasah students. For example, texts about local heroes, Islamic festivals, traditional arts, or regional environmental challenges could serve as reading or writing materials. Such an approach promotes critical thinking (Anggiani et al., 2022) and enhances students' cultural pride and relevance in global conversations.

An essential element is the instructional strategy. Teachers in madrasah should implement teaching methods that are engaging, interactive, and culturally sensitive. Approaches like storytelling, discussion-oriented activities, project-based assignments, and incorporating local idioms or Islamic ideas into English conversations can enhance student involvement. However, a significant challenge is providing teachers with the proper training to manage this pedagogical transition (Setyaningrum & Purwati, 2020).

The study also shows that assessment methods should focus on intercultural competence, not just language accuracy. Anderson et.al. (2001) suggested that evaluating students on their ability to express and

analyze cultural themes in English can foster higher-order thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). For instance, students could compare a local proverb with an English idiom or write an opinion essay on a cultural topic using English expressions. These types of assessments match current global trends favoring formative and performance-based evaluation.

Technology integration further bolsters curriculum innovation. Digital platforms and media improve access to varied resources and facilitate interactive learning. According to Hafid & Margana, incorporating culturally relevant videos, online quizzes, and discussion forums enables students to engage with English in contemporary and contextually relevant ways (Hafid & Margana, 2022). Additionally, digitizing local content, such as manuscripts or e-books on local wisdom, contributes to the overall curriculum objectives.

Additionally, community and parental participation are crucial. Learning extends beyond the classroom; thus, effectively implementing a curriculum grounded in local wisdom depends on collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. Research indicates that when parents recognize the cultural importance of English education, they tend to support their children's learning more actively (Rahman et al., 2023). Projects rooted in the community and religious gatherings incorporating English can serve as valuable extensions of classroom instruction.

This study identifies key challenges such as limited teacher capacity, resource shortages, and the tension between local adaptation and international curriculum standards. Without adequate support, teachers might revert to traditional, decontextualized teaching methods. Thus, professional development, curriculum redesign, and policy interventions are crucial for the effective and sustainable incorporation of local wisdom into English curricula at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Creating a curriculum that links language with culture offers a transformative approach to integrate global skills with local values.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section outlines key considerations for various stakeholders, including government officials, educators, curriculum developers, and

researchers, to create a vibrant and culturally meaningful English learning environment. This framework provides a foundation for improving educational practices, aligning them with both local wisdom and international standards.

The government should implement flexible policies to support innovative education at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level, particularly those rooted in Islamic values and local traditions. Allowing regions to adapt curricula that include local Islamic wisdom—such as principles of cooperation, respect towards teachers, insights into boarding school life, and religious customs—can help madrasas provide more meaningful and relevant learning experiences. These adaptable policies are crucial for encouraging experimental programs that mix language learning with the development of Islamic character, increasing student engagement and ownership of their education. This strategy embodies the essence of Islamic education, which is built on local culture but open to global dialogue (Hasanuddin & Rusydi, 2024; Tauhid, 2025)

For educators at Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), training programs that help teachers incorporate cultural content into the English curriculum are vital, especially those aligned with Islamic values and traditions. Professional development focused on enhancing cultural awareness and understanding of local Islamic wisdom—such as adab (civilized manners), ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), and traditional practices like mujahadah (religious praying groups)—will enable teachers to develop language instruction that resonates with students' identities and experiences. Ongoing capacity building enables teachers to stay current with the latest pedagogical strategies while remaining faithful to Islamic principles. Equipping teachers with these skills can significantly enhance the quality of English education in Islamic junior high schools and cultivate a generation proficient in foreign languages while remaining grounded in Islamic values (Rohmah et al., 2022).

For curriculum developers, it is crucial to design teaching materials rooted in local culture and Islamic principles when creating curricula for Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah). Incorporating Islamic stories, local legends with religious significance,

and examples from community leaders and scholars into textbooks and learning resources increases student engagement and relevance. Including diverse cultural perspectives within an Islamic framework fosters inclusive representation and helps students connect more deeply with their spiritual and cultural heritage. A curriculum that is both culturally responsive and Islamic-oriented will not only aid in English language learning but also enhance students' understanding of their Islamic identity within both national and international contexts. (Sholeh et al., 2022)

Researchers have a notable opportunity to investigate various facets of this curriculum model, particularly its effectiveness and how students perceive the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom into English learning. Future research could assess students' language skills in conjunction with their understanding of Islamic culture and local traditions, highlighting factors that facilitate successful integration within madrasah education. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the effects of values-based teaching methods and help refine curriculum practices better to incorporate the cultural and spiritual dimensions of Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Ultimately, this research could promote English language education that is both globally relevant and grounded in Islamic values. (Wisran et al., 2025).

Policymakers and madrasah leaders must build strategic partnerships with local governments, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations to promote culturally relevant Islamic education. These partnerships should focus on designing a curriculum that integrates local values and Islamic heritage, such as adab (Islamic manners), stories of prophets and companions, and local religious customs, all within the framework of national education standards. Such collaborations can improve resource sharing and bring together diverse expertise to develop effective learning programs. Fostering a collaborative, brotherhood-based educational environment is crucial for encouraging innovation in language learning, particularly English, while maintaining Islamic principles. (Zulfa et al., 2024).

Engaging community members in curriculum development and learning activities at Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) can significantly enrich students' educational experiences. Madrasahs should establish strong relationships with religious leaders, local ulama

(Islamic scholars), pesantren kiai (teachers at Islamic boarding schools), and cultural groups that uphold Islamic values and traditions. This participation provides authentic, contextual learning opportunities, such as inviting community speakers to discuss religious wisdom, local Islamic history, or regional practices. Such strategies make education more meaningful, foster pride in Islamic identity and local culture, and promote patriotism and a sense of brotherhood. As a result, madrasahs evolve into not just centers of formal learning but also essential parts of the community's socio-religious fabric. (Rofiki & Rohmah, 2025).

Focusing on local wisdom in English education at Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) is a strategic way to prepare students for challenges both locally and globally. By deepening their understanding of Islamic cultural roots and traditions—such as adab (civility), tolerance, brotherhood (ukhuwah), and the exemplary behavior of local ulama—students will become better at communicating across cultures. Madrasah policies should support this dual goal—reinforcing students' Islamic and national identities while preparing them to be adaptable and virtuous global citizens. This strategy not only boosts students' confidence in speaking English but also empowers them to participate actively in diverse societal dialogues while maintaining Islamic values. In summary, a comprehensive approach in policy and practice emphasizes the importance of creating an educational framework that combines language learning with local wisdom. By implementing flexible policies, offering cultural training for teachers, developing culturally relevant materials, and engaging the community, stakeholders can establish a robust educational foundation that respects both local identities and global perspectives. These efforts will improve the learning experience for students in Madrasah Tsanawiyah and prepare them for success in an interconnected world.

Conclusion

The integration of local wisdom into English language teaching in Madrasah Tsanawiyah represents a significant advancement in curriculum development, aligning language education with cultural identity and social relevance. By framing English as a tool to express

local values and Islamic teachings, this approach transcends traditional, decontextualized instruction and embraces the intercultural principles advocated by scholars such as Byram (1997) and Liddicoat & Scarino (2013). Grounded in sociocultural theory, such integration not only enhances learner motivation and critical thinking but also reinforces students' sense of belonging and cultural pride.

This study highlights the importance of curriculum principles that prioritize intercultural understanding, bilingual competence, and contextual authenticity. It also highlights the importance of well-designed curriculum components—content, pedagogy, assessment, and technology—that reflect and celebrate the cultural environment of the learners. Community and parental involvement further strengthen the ecosystem of support necessary for successful implementation.

Despite these promising directions, challenges persist in teacher preparedness, material availability, and striking a balance between local identity and global standards. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. Ultimately, a local wisdom-based English curriculum in Madrasah Tsanawiyah offers a transformative pathway to bridge language and culture, fostering globally competent yet culturally grounded learners.

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