

Teaching Tolerance through Law and Language: English for Sharia Purposes and Interfaith Legal Education in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines how English for Sharia Purposes can serve as a pedagogical platform for cultivating tolerance and interfaith competence among Muslim law students in Indonesia's plural legal order, where state law interacts with Sharia-based norms and diverse religious communities. Conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga within the Constitutional Law study program of the Faculty of Sharia, the research responds to institutional commitments to Islamic moderation and global engagement. While English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Sharia faculties has traditionally emphasized linguistic proficiency, limited attention has been given to its potential for preparing future Sharia lawyers to

navigate socio-legal challenges involving religious rights, minority protections, and interreligious dispute resolution. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students, and document analysis of teaching materials and institutional policy statements. Findings show that debates on minority rights, interfaith-mediation role-plays, and analysis of constitutional and international human-rights texts did more than improve students' legal English; they fostered professional dispositions of fairness, empathy, and rights-aware reasoning grounded in Sharia principles of *'adl* (justice), *tasāmūh* (tolerance), and *wasatiyyah* (moderation). Student reflections suggested movement from "othering" to recognizing non-Muslims as equal subjects of justice, consistent with intercultural sensitivity and interfaith competence models. The study contributes to interfaith law and society by demonstrating how discipline-specific language education can serve as a socio-legal formation, translating interfaith ethics into practical legal communication skills for plural, rights-based contexts.

KEYWORDS

English for Sharia, Interfaith competence, Islamic higher education, Religious freedom, Islamic legal education

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Introduction

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, is home to a rich tapestry of religious traditions and a pluralistic legal framework.¹ Within this setting, Islamic law (Sharia) functions alongside national law and other religious legal systems, creating a dynamic arena where legal practitioners must engage with diverse perspectives.² For Sharia law graduates, professional competence requires not only mastery of Islamic jurisprudence but also the capacity to navigate interfaith interactions with respect, empathy, and fairness.³ These abilities are vital in legal practice, where decisions may directly impact individuals from varied religious backgrounds, and where professional integrity is measured by the capacity to uphold justice in a multi-religious society.⁴ This professional demand also resonates with broader debates in Indonesian education regarding equity and social justice as foundational aims of democratic citizenship formation.⁵

From a law-and-society perspective, this professional demand is inseparable from Indonesia's legal pluralism, in which constitutional and statutory norms operate alongside Islamic legal institutions and locally embedded religious and customary authorities. In practice, socio-legal tensions frequently crystallize around religious rights—freedom of religion or belief, equality before the law, minority protections, and the management of interreligious disputes in courts and community forums.⁶ For emerging Sharia lawyers, interfaith competence therefore functions not only as an interpersonal virtue but as a juridical capacity to translate across normative vocabularies, uphold due process, and protect equal citizenship in multireligious settings.

¹ Jeremy Menchik, "Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism," *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*, January 11, 2015, 1–207, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316344446>.

² Mark Cammack and Michael Feener, "The Islamic Legal System in Indonesia," *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 21, no. 1 (2012): 13–42, <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wilj/vol21/iss1/5>.

³ Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Shari'a Today: Essays on Contemporary Issues and Debates in Muslim Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁴ John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007).

⁵ Zulfa Sakhriyya and Teguh Wijaya Mulya, *Introduction: Education in Indonesia—A Critical Introduction. In Education in Indonesia: Critical Perspectives on Equity and Social Justice* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1878-2>.

⁶ Adrian Hadiputra et al., "Juvenile Justice in Comparative Perspective: A Study of Indonesian State Law and Islamic Law," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (December 15, 2024): 203–28, <https://doi.org/10.15294/CIILS.V3I2.31396>.

The imperative to cultivate these competencies is not confined to domestic legal work. Graduates of Indonesia's Sharia faculties increasingly participate in international academic forums, cross-border legal collaborations, and policy dialogues where English serves as the primary medium of communication.⁷ Proficiency in English enables access to global legal discourse, international treaties, and scholarly debate.⁸ However, English instruction in Sharia faculties has often focused narrowly on linguistic skills, with less emphasis on fostering the intercultural awareness and tolerance essential for legal practice in both national and transnational contexts.⁹ This pedagogical gap limits the extent to which students can integrate language learning with the ethical and relational dimensions of their future profession.¹⁰

The institutional vision and mission of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga directly address this challenge.¹¹ By 2045, UIN Salatiga aspires to become a center of excellence in Islamic moderation, pioneering in science, technology, and the arts for the dignity of humanity. Its mission emphasizes harmonizing revelation-based knowledge with reason and empirical reality for the common good, fostering graduates who are democratic, moderate, and globally competitive.¹² These aspirations are echoed in the Sharia Faculty's vision to become, by 2030, a competitive and high-quality institution in the deepening and development of Islamic legal sciences with an Indonesian perspective, dedicated to advancing a peaceful and dignified civilization. Its mission is to produce professional Islamic law graduates with high competitiveness, cultivate a culture of ijtihad through research and community engagement, and foster national and international collaborations.

⁷ Ondřej Glogar, "The Concept of Legal Language: What Makes Legal Language 'Legal'?", *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 36, no. 3 (2023): 1081–1107, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-023-10010-5>.

⁸ Citra Dwi Safitri, Baso Jabu, and Samtidar Samtidar, "The Integration of Islamic Values in English Language Teaching Context: Practices and Challenges," *Celebes Journal of Language Studies*, November 30, 2023, 315–24, <https://doi.org/10.51629/CJLS.V3I2.156>.

⁹ Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800410251>.

¹⁰ Wisran Wisran, St. Hartina, and Dewi Furwana, "Integrating Islamic Values and Local Wisdom in Designing English Textbook For Islamic Higher Education," *Elsya : Journal of English Language Studies* 7, no. 1 (2025): 38–60, <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v7i1.22572>.

¹¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, "Visi Dan Misi," 2024, <https://www.uinsalatiga.ac.id/visi-misi>.

¹² Fakultas Syariah UIN Salatiga, "Visi Dan Misi," 2024, <https://syariah.uinsalatiga.ac.id/visi-misi>.

"English for Sharia" emerges as a compulsory subject with strategic potential within this institutional framework.¹³ Positioned at the intersection of language education and professional formation, it offers a platform not only for acquiring legal English but also for embedding the values of moderation, peaceful coexistence, and intercultural engagement articulated in the university and faculty's guiding statements.¹⁴ The present study draws conceptually from intercultural communicative competence theory, the emerging field of interfaith competence, and Islamic ethical principles of moderation, tolerance, and justice.¹⁵ Together, these frameworks inform the design of English for Sharia Purposes as a pedagogical space where students develop linguistic proficiency alongside the ethical and intercultural capacities essential for Sharia graduates as national and global legal actors.

Research on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Islamic higher education has generally concentrated on linguistic skill development, with limited exploration of its potential for values education.¹⁶ Studies in Indonesia have examined the design and implementation of English courses for Sharia students, often focusing on curriculum adaptation to legal vocabulary and the integration of Islamic legal concepts.¹⁷ These works demonstrate the importance of contextualizing language instruction within students' disciplinary fields but rarely address intercultural or interfaith dimensions as explicit learning outcomes. In contrast, a study by Al-Saadi in Oman highlighted how ESP courses in Islamic law faculties can serve as platforms for discussing comparative legal

¹³ Khalid Al-Saadi, "ESP in Islamic Law Faculties: Comparative Legal Systems as a Learning Platform," *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* 11, no. 2 (2020): 431–450, <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no2.29>.

¹⁴ Michael Byram and Manuela Wagner, "Making a Difference: Language Teaching for Intercultural and International Dialogue," *Foreign Language Annals*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12319>.

¹⁵ Hamzeh Abu Issa, Thair Kaddumi, and Naji Alwerikat, "The Impact of Moot Courts on the Quality of Legal Education: Students of the Faculty of Law at the Applied Science Private University as a Model," *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 23, no. 19 (December 29, 2023): 266–70, <https://doi.org/10.33423/JHETP.V23I19.6681>.

¹⁶ Dewi Hidayati et al., "Developing an LMS-Based of ESP Course for Islamic Undergraduate Students," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 11 (January 1, 2025): 101635, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SSAHO.2025.101635>.

¹⁷ Al-Saadi, "ESP in Islamic Law Faculties: Comparative Legal Systems as a Learning Platform."

systems, indirectly exposing students to diverse religious frameworks, although such integration was not systematically designed to cultivate tolerance.¹⁸

Intercultural communicative competence in legal or language learning contexts has been more extensively studied in general education settings. For instance, Byram and Wagner have argued for embedding intercultural skills into foreign language curricula to prepare students for global citizenship.¹⁹ In legal education, how international moot court competitions function as intercultural spaces is analyzed, requiring participants to negotiate legal reasoning across jurisdictions and cultural backgrounds.²⁰ However, few studies have connected Intercultural communicative competence with ESP courses in Sharia faculties, particularly in ways that foreground interfaith engagement as part of professional preparation.

Tolerance and interfaith competence in Muslim-majority educational settings have also received scholarly attention. Abu-Nimer emphasized that Islamic principles of *ta'aruf*, *tasamuh*, and *'adl* provide a normative basis for peaceful coexistence, and that higher education institutions can operationalize these principles through curricula and pedagogy.²¹ In Indonesia, research by Nasir and Rijal examined how Islamic universities promote religious moderation, finding that extracurricular programs were more commonly used than formal classroom instruction.²² While these initiatives align with national policies on religious harmony, they often operate separately from subject-specific courses such as English for Sharia Purposes, leaving untapped potential for integration.²³

Taken together, these studies reveal three patterns. First, ESP in Sharia faculties has primarily been approached as a language-focused subject, with

¹⁸ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Alternative Approaches to Transforming Violent Extremism: The Case of Islamic Peace and Intercultural Education," Berghof Foundation Handbook Dialogue Series, 2017.

¹⁹ Byram and Wagner, "Making a Difference: Language Teaching for Intercultural and International Dialogue."

²⁰ Issa, Kaddumi, and Alwerikat, "The Impact of Moot Courts on the Quality of Legal Education: Students of the Faculty of Law at the Applied Science Private University as a Model."

²¹ Muhammad Shafiq and Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims, Islamic Relief Worldwide* (Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011).

²² Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (December 8, 2021): 213–41, <https://doi.org/10.18326/IJIMS.V11I2.213-241>.

²³ Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited*.

minimal explicit integration of intercultural or interfaith competencies. Second, while Intercultural communicative competence has been recognized as valuable in legal and language education, it has seldom been operationalized within the specific context of Sharia law students' English learning. Third, tolerance and interfaith competence have been promoted through institutional or extracurricular initiatives but rarely embedded into discipline-specific language curricula.

Despite the alignment between institutional vision and the potential of English for Sharia courses, empirical studies examining how such courses can intentionally cultivate interfaith competence remain scarce. Most research in Islamic higher education addresses intercultural or tolerance education in broad terms, without exploring its integration into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in legal contexts. This gap is particularly significant in Indonesia, where higher education institutions like UIN Salatiga explicitly commit to producing graduates who embody Islamic moderation while engaging constructively with global realities. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how an English for Sharia Purposes course at the Sharia Faculty of UIN Salatiga can serve as a vehicle for building interfaith competence. Using a qualitative approach, this study examines classroom practices, learning materials, and participant reflections to identify how legal English activities can foster tolerance and intercultural understanding, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on Islamic legal education and interfaith law.

Indonesia's multireligious social reality operates within a plural legal order in which state law, Sharia-informed norms, and the normative expectations of diverse religious communities often intersect in everyday governance and dispute handling. Although the 1945 Constitution guarantees religious freedom and equal citizenship, socio-legal frictions continue to emerge in areas such as minority religious protection, the public regulation of religious expression, and institutional responses to interreligious contestation. In this setting, "interfaith competence" is not only a civic virtue but also a socio-legal capacity: it concerns how future legal professionals interpret rights claims, justify decisions, and communicate across religious differences under constitutional and human-rights constraints. Law students in Sharia faculties, who may later work in legal practice, advocacy, mediation, or public institutions, thus require preparation to navigate interreligious disputes and rights-based disagreements with fairness, empathy,

and legally grounded reasoning in a manner consistent with Islamic ethical commitments and plural constitutionalism.²⁴

Against this backdrop, this study reframes English for Sharia Purposes not merely as a language-learning domain but as a pedagogical site where interfaith legal subjectivity can be cultivated. The classroom becomes a structured arena in which students learn to translate ethical principles—such as justice ('adl), tolerance (tasāmuh), and moderation (wasatiyyah)—into forms of professional legal communication required in plural, rights-oriented contexts: articulating arguments, engaging opposing views, reasoning with constitutional and international norms, and practicing dialogic mediation. By examining how these practices shape students' orientations toward non-Muslims as equal subjects of justice, the article contributes to interfaith law and society by showing how discipline-specific language education can operate as socio-legal formation rather than solely linguistic training.²⁵

Despite the alignment between institutional commitments to moderation and the strategic position of English for Sharia, empirical work remains scarce on how such courses can deliberately cultivate interfaith competence as a socio-legal skill for navigating legal pluralism and religious-rights claims.²⁶ Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how an English for Sharia Purposes course at the Sharia Faculty of UIN Salatiga functions as a micro-site of interfaith legal socialization by examining classroom practices, learning materials, and participant reflections. The article contributes to interfaith law and society scholarship by (i) theorizing interfaith competence as a professional capacity within plural legal orders, and (ii) providing qualitative evidence of how

²⁴ Billy Nathan Setiawan, "Embracing Cultural Threads: A Qualitative Exploration of English Language Teaching Materials Within an Intercultural Perspective in an Indonesian Multilingual Context," *Ranah Jurnal Kajian Bahasa*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.26499/rnh.v12i2.6840>; Ade U Amin, Syafruddin Syam, and Imam Yazid, "Islamic Law Perspective: The Issue of Interfaith Marriage and Its Impact on Society in Indonesia," *Journal of World Science* 2, no. 8 (2023): 1268–79, <https://doi.org/10.58344/jws.v2i8.410>; Mohamad A Nasir, "Negotiating Muslim Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia: Integration and Conflict in Islamic Law," *Mazabib* 21, no. 2 (2022): 155–86, <https://doi.org/10.21093/mj.v21i2.5436>.

²⁵ Habib Ismail, "Relevansi Konsep Hukum Islam Dalam Menyikapi Isu-Isu Sosial Kontemporer: Sebuah Tantangan Moderasi Beragama," *Moderasi Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2025): 259–78, <https://doi.org/10.54471/moderasi.v5i1.100>.

²⁶ Ido Shahar and Karin Carmit Yefet, "Rethinking the Rethinking of Legal Pluralism: Toward a Manifesto for a Pluri-Legal Perspective," accessed December 23, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248023000184>.

educational practices operationalize constitutional, Sharia-ethical, and international rights frameworks in a multireligious democracy.

This study draws on a combined socio-legal and normative framework to explain how classroom practices can function as interfaith legal formation in plural societies. First, the analysis is grounded in legal pluralism and law-and-society perspectives that view law not only as state legislation but as a field of overlapping normative orders. Classic formulations emphasize that pluralism is present whenever multiple legal or quasi-legal systems coexist and interact, shaping how citizens and institutions define rights, responsibilities, and legitimate authority.²⁷ From this view, legal education becomes an institutional space where students are socialized into particular legal sensibilities—how to recognize conflicts, interpret norms, and justify positions in ways that are publicly intelligible and institutionally actionable.²⁸ In multireligious contexts, such socialization is unavoidably interfaith in character because it requires competence in engaging normative diversity without collapsing religious commitments into exclusionary reasoning.

Second, the framework incorporates Islamic ethical–legal principles that are frequently invoked in contemporary Muslim legal education to support coexistence and public justice. Justice ('*adl*) functions as a core moral and legal value that demands impartiality and protection against harm; *tasāmūh* (tolerance) provides an ethical orientation for living with difference without negating religious convictions; and *wasatiyyah* (moderation) offers a practical stance against extremism by promoting balance, deliberation, and public responsibility.²⁹ These principles are widely discussed in modern Islamic legal thought as compatible with the higher objectives of Sharia (*maqāṣid al-shari‘ah*), which foreground the safeguarding of essential human interests and the

²⁷ James Kirunda, Helen Nabirye, and Ronald Muwanguzi, “Legal Pluralism in Postcolonial Nations: Reconciling Customary, Religious, and State Norms in Judicial Practices,” *Rechtsnormen J. Of Law* 3, no. 2 (2025): 199–208, <https://doi.org/10.70177/rjl.v3i2.2217>; Susanne Epple, “1. Introduction,” 2020, 11–40, <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839450215-002>.

²⁸ Supriya Routh, “Examining the Legal Legitimacy of Informal Economic Activities,” *Social & Legal Studies* 31, no. 2 (2021): 282–308, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639211020817>.

²⁹ Muhammad Z H Wahab and Asmadi M Naim, “The Reviews on Sustainable and Responsible Investment (SRIs) Practices According to Maqasid Shariah and Maslahah Perspectives,” *Etikonomi* 20, no. 2 (2021): 397–412, <https://doi.org/10.15408/etk.v20i2.18053>.

prevention of injustice.³⁰ When treated pedagogically, these concepts can shape professional dispositions—fairness, empathy, and responsibility—while also providing a moral vocabulary through which Muslim law students interpret rights-based dilemmas involving religious difference.

Third, the framework explicitly situates Sharia ethics within constitutional and international rights regimes that structure contemporary legal reasoning in plural states. Indonesia's constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and equal citizenship provide the baseline normative environment in which socio-legal disputes involving religious rights and minority protections are adjudicated and debated.³¹ At the international level, human-rights instruments such as the UDHR and the ICCPR codify freedom of religion or belief and principles of non-discrimination that frequently inform both public policy discourse and legal advocacy.³² These instruments do not replace religious norms, but they shape institutional expectations for publicly defensible reasoning, especially when disputes involve competing religious claims. In this study, therefore, interfaith competence is conceptualized as the capacity to translate between normative vocabularies—namely, Islamic ethical reasoning, constitutional commitments, and international rights language—so that students can communicate legal arguments and engage in disagreement without “othering” religious minorities.³³

Taken together, these three strands allow the classroom activities examined here—debates on minority rights, role-plays of interfaith mediation, and textual engagement with constitutional and international rights documents—to be interpreted as more than pedagogical techniques. They function as micro-sites of socio-legal formation where students rehearse rights-aware legal communication and develop dispositions for interfaith justice within a plural legal order.³⁴ This

³⁰ Sayid Anshar, “Negara Hukum Dan Pluralisme Agama; Tinjauan Terhadap Perlindungan Hak Minoritas Beragama Di Indonesia,” *Ensiklopedia Sosial Review* 7, no. 2 (2025): 5–11, <https://doi.org/10.33559/esr.v7i2.3108>.

³¹ Anshar.

³² Haroon Khalid, “Family Rights in Pakistan: Intersecting International Obligations and Plural National Legal Frameworks,” *Ijss* 3, no. 2 (2025): 320–40, <https://doi.org/10.59075/ijss.v3i2.1219>.

³³ Mohammad Muzwir Luntajo and Faradila Hasan, “Inheritance across Faiths in Muslim Minahasa Families: Legal Pluralism and Cultural Adaptation in Manado, Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba* 11, no. 1 (June 30, 2025): 617–44, <https://doi.org/10.20885/JIELARIBA.VOL11.ISS1.ART24>.

³⁴ Sekar A G Pinilih, Ramadhoine Ali, and Aditya P Pratama, “Realizing Ecological Justice: An Analysis of the Role of the Constitutional Court in Environmental Protection in Indonesia,” *Iop Conference Series Earth and Environmental Science* 1537, no. 1 (2025): 12059, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1537/1/012059>.

integrated framework also clarifies the article's fit with interfaith law and society by connecting educational practice to the normative and institutional structures through which interreligious tensions are negotiated and resolved.³⁵

This article contributes to the field of interfaith law and society in two ways. Conceptually, it frames interfaith competence as a socio-legal capacity required for rights-based legal communication in plural normative environments, rather than as a purely attitudinal outcome of tolerance education. Empirically, it demonstrates how English for Sharia Purposes can function as a site of interfaith legal formation, where Muslim law students practice translating Sharia-grounded ethics of justice and moderation into professional legal argumentation, mediation, and rights-aware reasoning that can engage with religious difference without exclusion.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how English for Sharia Purposes can serve as a platform for cultivating interfaith competence among students in the Sharia Faculty of UIN Salatiga.³⁶ The research site was the English for Sharia Purposes course within the Constitutional Law study program, taught by two lecturers, Mrs. Farah and Mrs. Nurul. This setting was purposively selected due to the faculty's explicit integration of Islamic moderation into its academic mission and the compulsory nature of the course for students in this field of law. Data were collected from three primary sources: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with both lecturers and students, and document analysis of teaching materials and institutional policy statements. The classroom observations focused on capturing language activities, interaction patterns, and instances where intercultural or interfaith themes emerged in instruction. Interviews were conducted with two lecturers responsible for English for Sharia and twenty-eight students, selected to reflect gender balance and academic performance variation. Interview questions were designed to elicit participants' perceptions of the course's relevance to intercultural and interfaith competence, as well as their experiences in applying these skills beyond the classroom.

Document analysis included syllabi, lesson plans, and institutional policy documents related to the vision and mission of the university as well as the

³⁵ Yulia Sariwaty et al., "Communication Inter-Religious in the Tolerance Life of Jamika Society - Bandung City," *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Bisnis* 10, no. 2 (2022): 199–210, <https://doi.org/10.46806/jkb.v10i2.902>.

³⁶ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018).

faculty. These materials were examined for explicit and implicit references to intercultural engagement, tolerance, and ethical values. Data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach: familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.³⁷ To ensure trustworthiness, triangulation across data sources was employed, and member-checking was conducted with selected participants to validate interpretations. Ethical approval was obtained from the UIN Salatiga Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection.

Result & Discussion

A. Intercultural Communicative Competence in Legal Contexts

Intercultural communicative competence, as conceptualized by Michael Byram, refers to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds.³⁸ In this study, this concept is used to frame not only intercultural interaction but also interfaith legal communication in Indonesia's plural legal order. It is not merely a matter of mastering a foreign language but of cultivating the intercultural sensitivity and ethical judgment necessary to navigate complex social realities and socio-legal challenges involving religious diversity (e.g., minority rights, religious freedom, and interreligious dispute management). Intercultural communicative competence involves five interrelated components: attitudes (openness, curiosity, and willingness to suspend judgment), knowledge (of social groups, cultural products, and practices, both one's own and others'), skills of interpreting and relating (ability to compare, contrast, and mediate between perspectives), skills of discovery and interaction (capacity to acquire new cultural knowledge and apply it in real-time communication), and critical cultural awareness (ability to evaluate, critically and ethically, cultural perspectives and practices, including one's own). It also encompasses openness and curiosity toward others, awareness of social groups and their practices, the ability to interpret and relate perspectives, the capacity to engage in discovery and

³⁷ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

³⁸ Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited*.

interaction, and the critical awareness to evaluate different viewpoints. These components are especially relevant when legal actors must communicate across religious difference while remaining attentive to rights-based norms and institutional expectations.

Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) complements Byram's work by describing intercultural growth as a progression from ethnocentric stages—denial, defense, and minimization—to ethnorelative stages—acceptance, adaptation, and integration.³⁹ The acceptance stage is marked by recognition and respect for cultural differences, even when one disagrees with them; adaptation involves adjusting one's behavior and communication style to interact more effectively across cultures while maintaining one's own identity; integration represents the ability to shift fluidly among cultural frameworks and to serve as a bridge between them. In legal education, a movement toward adaptation and integration is particularly valuable for future practitioners who must mediate between parties of different faiths or operate in international legal arenas, and who must translate arguments between Sharia-informed ethical reasoning, constitutional commitments, and international human rights discourse in legally intelligible ways.⁴⁰

In the context of English for Sharia Purposes, intercultural communicative competence functions as both a pedagogical aim and a professional imperative. In this article, it is further specified as a form of interfaith competence relevant to legal pluralism, where state law interacts with Sharia-based norms and diverse religious communities. Embedding intercultural communicative competence into language learning ensures that legal English instruction does not remain purely technical but becomes a venue for ethical and intercultural formation with socio-legal significance.⁴¹ Activities such as structured legal debates on minority rights, mediation simulations in interfaith disputes, and interpretation of international legal instruments on religious freedom can simultaneously develop students' linguistic precision and their ability to relate to multiple perspectives. This is consistent with Byram's *savoir comprendre* (interpreting and relating) and Bennett's adaptation stage, where learners demonstrate not only linguistic competence but also the ability to adjust communicative behavior in

³⁹ Milton J Bennett, *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Paradigms, Principles, and Practices* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ Susan V Bennett et al., "Religiously Diverse Multicultural Literature for Early Childhood," *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01180-7>.

⁴¹ Walead Etri, "Employing Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) to Understand Intercultural Sensitivity in ELT," *World Journal of English Language [Online]* 13, Number (2022), <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n1p39>.

light of cultural and religious diversity in ways that support fairness and rights-aware reasoning.

Moreover, intercultural communicative competence in legal contexts requires a heightened level of critical cultural awareness. Lawyers must be capable of evaluating legal norms and cultural practices against shared standards of justice, fairness, and human dignity. In Islamic legal education, this involves aligning Sharia principles with constitutional guarantees and global human rights frameworks without diluting the integrity of the Islamic legal tradition. This rights-aware orientation is consistent with scholarship demonstrating that effective counterterrorism governance necessitates regulatory coordination while upholding human rights safeguards, particularly in addressing cyber-enabled threats.⁴² This alignment is central to legal practice in plural societies, particularly when disputes implicate religious freedom, equality before the law, and minority protection. This evaluative capacity is essential for ensuring that tolerance is not treated as an externally imposed ideal but is understood as an intrinsic component of Islamic ethics—echoing Qur'anic guidance toward moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and fairness (*'adl*).

Thus, intercultural communicative competence serves as the bridge between linguistic mastery and ethical legal practice in plural societies. For Muslim law students in Indonesia, where Islamic, national, and customary laws coexist, intercultural communicative competence-oriented English instruction provides a powerful means of preparing for a professional reality in which cross-cultural engagement is not the exception but the norm. Accordingly, ESP is positioned here as an instrument for socio-legal formation, preparing future Sharia lawyers to communicate professionally across religious differences within rights-based institutional settings. In an era of increasing legal globalization, the ability to articulate Sharia-based reasoning in an internationally intelligible manner, while demonstrating cultural empathy and ethical integrity, is not only advantageous but necessary for effective legal practice.

B. Interfaith Competence as Socio-Legal Capacity in a Plural Legal Order

While intercultural communicative competence addresses interaction across cultural differences in a broad sense, interfaith competence focuses more

⁴² Ali Masyhar and Silaas Oghenemaro Emowwodo, "Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System Techno-Prevention in Counterterrorism: Between Countering Crime and Human Rights Protection" 3, no. 3 (2023): 625–55, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v3i3.176>.

precisely on the capacity for constructive, respectful, and effective engagement across religious boundaries within institutional and legal settings. It is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Cognitively, it involves a substantive understanding of the beliefs, practices, historical experiences, and internal diversity of other faith traditions.⁴³ This is not limited to surface-level knowledge but includes awareness of theological frameworks, religious law, and socio-political contexts in which those traditions operate. Such knowledge allows legal practitioners to interpret and respond to religiously grounded arguments with nuance and accuracy when legal claims implicate religious freedom, non-discrimination, or minority protection.⁴⁴

Affectively, interfaith competence entails dispositions of empathy, respect, and humility—qualities that enable individuals to listen actively, appreciate the sincerity of beliefs different from their own, and resist the temptation to reduce religious difference to stereotypes or adversarial positions.⁴⁵ In the legal profession, such dispositions underpin the trust and credibility necessary for representing clients from different faith backgrounds, adjudicating disputes involving religious issues, or mediating conflicts with religious dimensions in ways that uphold equality before the law.

Behaviorally, interfaith competence is expressed through consistent, intentional actions that embody fairness, inclusivity, and the ability to facilitate dialogue even in settings marked by deep doctrinal or ideological divergence.⁴⁶ For lawyers and legal educators, this includes employing neutral, respectful language in proceedings, structuring negotiations in ways that give equal voice to all parties, and designing legal solutions that protect religious freedoms while maintaining public order and institutional legitimacy.

Scholars of interreligious dialogue have emphasized that interfaith competence extends beyond the passive virtue of tolerance toward active engagement—a process that seeks common ground without erasing or

⁴³ Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding: Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping Institutions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁴⁴ Rohmat Mulyana Sapdi and Nur Ali, “Counterradicalism Through Religious Education Curriculum: Solution to the Religious Literacy Crisis in Indonesian Islamic Universities,” *Tadris Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v17i2.7055>.

⁴⁵ Irfan Tamwifi, “Early Childhood Multicultural Education in the Islamic Sharia Area,” *Jpub-Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.21009/jpub.172.03>.

⁴⁶ Ji Ying and Dala Duo, “Conceptions of Global Competence Among Local University Students in Hong Kong: A Prototype Study,” *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.70019>; Suud Sarim Karimullah, “The Implications of Islamic Law on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority Countries,” *Milrev Metro Islamic Law Review*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v2i2.7847>.

compromising doctrinal distinctions. Leonard Swidler, for example, frames this engagement as a mutual learning process in which both sides are willing to be transformed by the encounter, while still maintaining the integrity of their own traditions.⁴⁷ Such engagement is not about relativism, but about developing the ability to hold firm commitments alongside a genuine openness to dialogue and to justify decisions in publicly accountable terms.

For Sharia law students, cultivating interfaith competence in an English-language learning environment offers a unique dual advantage.⁴⁸ First, it equips them to navigate Indonesia's multi-religious legal reality, where constitutional guarantees, statutory provisions, and Sharia-based norms intersect in cases involving parties of different faiths in a plural legal order where state law interacts with Sharia-informed reasoning and community norms. In such contexts, interfaith competence is indispensable for ensuring that legal advocacy and judicial decision-making are both procedurally fair and substantively just and aligned with rights-based standards. Second, it opens access to the broader arena of global legal discourse, where English functions as the principal medium for professional communication, academic exchange, and negotiation in transnational legal matters. The ability to articulate Islamic legal reasoning in English while demonstrating sensitivity to interfaith considerations enables these future practitioners to participate credibly in international law forums, intergovernmental negotiations, and cross-border legal collaborations where religious-rights language and human-rights norms frequently shape legal argumentation.

Conceptually, locating interfaith competence within legal pluralism clarifies why it matters for law and society: religious identities do not remain in the private sphere but are mediated by legal institutions, policy choices, and rights-adjudication processes. In plural societies, lawyers routinely encounter competing sources of authority (constitutional rights language, statutory regulation, Sharia reasoning, and community norms) and must communicate across them without escalating doctrinal difference into legal inequality.⁴⁹ Interfaith competence in this sense supports rights-protective lawyering—

⁴⁷ Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding: Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping Institutions*.

⁴⁸ Jamaludin Hadi Kusuma and Sugeng Hadi Susilo, "Intercultural and Religious Sensitivity Among Young Indonesian Interfaith Groups," *Religions*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010026>.

⁴⁹ Zaenul Mahmudi, "The Status of Children Born Out of Wedlock in Indonesian Context with Special Reference to Their Inheritance Right Perspective of Maqasid Al-Shariah" (Atlantis Press, 2018), 113–17, <https://doi.org/10.2991/ICILS-18.2018.21>.

especially in cases touching freedom of religion or belief, nondiscrimination, and minority access to justice—by equipping practitioners to argue, negotiate, and mediate with accuracy, restraint, and empathy across religious boundaries while maintaining fidelity to Sharia ethical commitments such as *'adl* (justice), *tasāmūh* (tolerance), and *wasatiyyah* (moderation).

When embedded in English for Sharia Purposes pedagogy, interfaith competence becomes more than an abstract ethical aspiration; it becomes a professional skill set that is practiced, evaluated, and refined through authentic legal tasks. Activities such as debating the constitutional rights of religious minorities, role-playing mediation in interfaith disputes, or interpreting international human rights instruments through both Islamic and secular legal lenses provide concrete opportunities for students to apply interfaith principles in practice and to translate ethical commitments into institutionally intelligible legal communication.⁵⁰ This integration ensures that their legal English proficiency is inseparable from their readiness to serve as fair and competent practitioners in both domestic and international contexts within rights-based, multireligious societies.

C. Islamic Ethical Principles of Moderation and Coexistence

The ethical tradition of Islam reinforces the values embedded in both intercultural communicative competence and interfaith competence, offering a theological and normative foundation for Muslim professionals navigating multi-religious societies. The principle of *ta'āruf* (mutual acquaintance), articulated in Qur'an 49:13—"O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another"—frames diversity as divinely ordained rather than socially accidental. This verse has long been interpreted by Muslim scholars as an injunction to approach difference with curiosity, humility, and a willingness to learn, creating an epistemological space for dialogue. For law students, particularly those preparing to serve in constitutional and Sharia legal systems, *ta'āruf* becomes not only a moral imperative but also a professional tool: it underlines the capacity to

⁵⁰ Jenn Lindsay, "Creative Dialogue in Rome, Italy: Thinking Beyond Discourse-Based Interfaith Engagement," *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.55207/etfl3799>.

understand the perspectives of clients, colleagues, and counterparts across religious and cultural boundaries.⁵¹

Closely connected is the principle of *tasāmuh* (tolerance), which calls for peaceful coexistence and respect for plurality. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, *tasāmuh* has found expression in historical practices of pluralism, such as the cohabitation of diverse religious communities under Islamic governance, albeit with varying degrees of institutional recognition.⁵² In the contemporary Indonesian legal system, where Islamic law operates in parallel with national and customary laws, *tasāmuh* acquires renewed significance. It demands that Muslim lawyers act as bridge-builders, ensuring that religious difference does not translate into legal inequality. In the classroom, *tasāmuh* can be cultivated through interactive tasks—debates on minority rights, role-plays simulating mediation, or comparative readings of Islamic and international legal texts—that allow students to embody tolerance in professional communication.

The principle of *'adl* (justice) operates as the ultimate anchor of Islamic ethics. Justice in Islam is both procedural and substantive, encompassing fairness, impartiality, and the safeguarding of rights without favoritism. Qur'anic injunctions such as Surah An-Nisa' (4:135), which calls believers to "*stand firmly for justice, even if it be against yourselves or your kin*," establish justice as a transcendent obligation that surpasses personal, communal, or sectarian interests. For aspiring Muslim legal practitioners, this principle directly aligns with professional codes of ethics, which emphasize impartiality, integrity, and accountability.⁵³ Integrating *'adl* into English for Sharia Purposes not only enhances students' awareness of fairness in communication but also ensures that their language use reflects professional responsibility. Arguing a case in English, for instance, becomes an act of demonstrating *'adl* by presenting evidence clearly, respecting opposing counsel, and recognizing the equal rights of all parties involved.

⁵¹ Hamza R'boul, "Alternative Theorizing of Multicultural Education: An Islamic Perspective on Interculturality and Social Justice," *Journal for Multicultural Education* 15, no. 2 (August 9, 2021): 213–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-07-2020-0073>.

⁵² Noorhannah Noorfuad and Saodah Wok, "The Mediating Effect of the Islamic Religious Personality on the Relationship Between the Islamic Worldview and Intercultural Sensitivity Among Students," *Jurnal Komunikasi Borneo (Jkob)*, 2018, 50–61, <https://doi.org/10.51200/jkob.v0i0.1578>.

⁵³ Kresnawidiansyah Agustian et al., "Comparative Analysis of Ethical and Legal Principles in the Islamic Business Management Model," *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (Adman)*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.52>.

These Islamic ethical principles also converge with the broader values of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), which has been promoted in Indonesia as a paradigm for religious life in a plural society. Moderation in this sense entails balance, avoidance of extremism, and a willingness to uphold harmony while remaining grounded in one's faith.⁵⁴ For Sharia law students learning English, moderation offers a framework through which they can confidently maintain Islamic legal identity while engaging with global legal discourses. Rather than perceiving intercultural and interfaith engagement as a dilution of religious commitments, moderation encourages students to approach it as a form of professional excellence and civic contribution.

From a pedagogical standpoint, embedding these values into English for Sharia Purposes links linguistic competence with moral formation. Students are not only trained to express themselves in precise legal English but also guided to infuse their discourse with principles of *tasāmūh*, *'adl*, and *wasatiyyah*. In this way, professional identity is shaped in tandem with ethical awareness, producing graduates who can engage persuasively in both domestic and international legal contexts.⁵⁵ For instance, when interpreting international human rights documents, students can highlight points of harmony between Islamic jurisprudence and universal human rights norms, thereby demonstrating how Islamic ethics enriches global legal discourse.

Ultimately, integrating Islamic ethical principles into language learning represents an innovative model of professional education. It positions tolerance, moderation, and justice not as abstract ideals, but as operational skills indispensable for effective lawyering in plural societies. For journals of interfaith law, this approach underscores how Islamic pedagogy can contribute to the global conversation on intercultural and interreligious competence, demonstrating that the ethical values of Islam are not obstacles to pluralism but valuable resources for building inclusive legal orders.

D. Alignment with Institutional Vision and Mission

The theoretical frameworks discussed above align closely with the institutional direction of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga and its Faculty

⁵⁴ Maryam Jamilah Asha'ari and Salina Daud, "Sustainable Transport and Corporate Sustainability Performance: Mediating Role of Islamic Work Ethics," 2018, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2018.07.02.57>.

⁵⁵ Mohammad Elius, "Interfaith Dialogue: An Islamic Framework," *J. Asiat. Soc. Bangladesh, Humi*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3329/jasbh.v68i2.70363>.

of Sharia. UIN Salatiga's vision to become a center of excellence in Islamic moderation by 2045 is not merely aspirational but functions as a guiding principle for curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and research orientation.⁵⁶ The emphasis on Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*) as a distinctive paradigm situates the university within Indonesia's broader agenda of promoting religious harmony, pluralism, and civic peace.⁵⁷ In this regard, English for Sharia Purposes is not an isolated course in linguistic proficiency but an integral component of the university's mission to cultivate graduates capable of bridging religious commitments with civic responsibilities in both national and international legal arenas.

The Sharia Faculty's mission to foster a peaceful and dignified civilization through competitive and ethically grounded legal education provides the pedagogical and ethical scaffolding for this endeavor. Constitutional law students, as future legal practitioners, are trained not only to master doctrinal Sharia jurisprudence but also to internalize values of justice, tolerance, and coexistence. Embedding intercultural communicative competence, interfaith competence, and Islamic ethical principles within the English classroom thus becomes a strategic response to this mission. It equips students with the discursive tools to articulate Islamic legal perspectives in English while simultaneously engaging in respectful dialogue with diverse religious and cultural counterparts. These institutional aspirations also reflect a wider dynamic in Indonesian Islamic education, where commitments to equity and moral formation are increasingly negotiated alongside market-oriented pressures and global competitiveness.⁵⁸

Positioning English for Sharia Purposes within this institutional alignment transforms the classroom from a site of language instruction into a space where professional legal identity, intercultural awareness, and interfaith ethics are jointly cultivated. For instance, when students debate constitutional protections for minority communities or interpret international human rights instruments, they enact the university's vision of moderation in a tangible, practice-oriented manner. The classroom thereby functions as a microcosm of Indonesia's pluralistic society and, more broadly, of the global legal community in which these students will one day participate.

⁵⁶ Salatiga, "Visi Dan Misi," 2024.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Moderasi Beragama: Penguatan Peran Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

⁵⁸ M. Falikul Isbah and Zulfa Sakhiyya, "Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia: Negotiating Between Equity and the Market," *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region* 70 (2023): 137–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1878-2_8.

Importantly, this alignment does not occur in isolation but resonates with global educational frameworks. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 emphasizes the role of education in fostering global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, and the appreciation of cultural diversity.⁵⁹ Similarly, UNESCO's initiatives on intercultural dialogue stress that higher education should prepare learners to act as mediators across cultural and religious divides.⁶⁰ By embedding tolerance and moderation within English for Sharia Purposes, UIN Salatiga contributes directly to these international agendas while simultaneously affirming Islamic ethical commitments. This dual orientation, local authenticity and global relevance, strengthens the university's profile within the global interfaith law and education discourse.

In this sense, the present study does not merely document a pedagogical experiment but demonstrates how institutional vision and mission can be operationalized through curriculum design in ways that contribute substantively to both Indonesian nation-building and international interfaith dialogue. The classroom becomes a site where theory meets practice, where institutional goals intersect with global needs, and where Muslim legal education can embody both religious authenticity and international relevance.

E. Classroom Activities as Foundations for Interfaith Legal Discourse

The English for Sharia Purposes classes at Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga, facilitated by Mrs. Farah and Mrs. Nurul, were designed not merely as language courses but as pedagogical platforms for instilling values of tolerance and justice, the two cornerstones of Indonesia's pluralistic legal framework. These values resonate strongly with contemporary scholarship that underscores the role of Islamic education in fostering respect for diversity and countering exclusivist tendencies within religious learning.⁶¹ By embedding justice and tolerance into the structure of legal English instruction, the classes echoed national priorities of strengthening social cohesion and advancing religious

⁵⁹ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations, 2015).

⁶⁰ UNESCO, *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013).

⁶¹ Semiyu Adejare Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education," *Religions* 2023, Vol. 14, Page 212 14, no. 2 (February 3, 2023): 212, <https://doi.org/10.3390/REL14020212>.

moderation as a guiding principle in higher education.⁶² Drawing upon pedagogical expertise and practical knowledge of Sharia legal contexts, the lecturers carefully selected reading materials and facilitated guided discussions that blended linguistic proficiency with interfaith legal reflection.

Students, all enrolled in the Constitutional Law study program under the Sharia Faculty, engaged with texts that tackled complex legal issues involving both Muslim and non-Muslim relations. These ranged from constitutional protections for religious minorities to real-life interfaith dispute resolution cases in Indonesian courts, reflecting Indonesia's broader struggles and achievements in legal pluralism. Such exposure has been shown to strengthen students' preparedness to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in relation to peace, justice, and strong institutions.⁶³ Integrating these legal case studies into English-medium learning encouraged technical mastery of legal vocabulary and deeper reflection on pluralism as a principle embedded in Indonesia's democratic constitutional framework.

This dual focus—language mastery and ethical orientation—resonates with the principles of intercultural communicative competence, which advocates embedding ethical and cultural dimensions within language curricula so that professional communication reflects both accuracy and moral responsibility. Research on Islamic education emphasizes that tolerance and interfaith understanding must be approached as skills developed through repeated intercultural encounters, rather than as abstract ideals.⁶⁴ Within this framework, English for Sharia Purposes classes were not simply about grammar or vocabulary but about shaping law students' dispositions toward fairness, openness, and interfaith dialogue through structured pedagogical encounters.

Furthermore, integrating such themes within an English-medium environment ensured that students were trained using professional legal terminology while engaging with substantive values from Indonesian constitutional law and Islamic jurisprudence. In an increasingly globalized legal landscape where bilingual or multilingual proceedings are the norm, this

⁶² Mochamad Syaifudin, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education in Indonesia," *An-Nuha : Jurnal Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Budaya Dan Sosial* 11, no. 2 (2024): 157–71, <https://doi.org/10.36835/annuha.v11i2.744>.

⁶³ Abdullah Mahmud, Zamroni, and Hamim Ilyas, "Islam and Tolerance Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 25, no. 02 (2025): 387–404, <https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v25i02.8510>.

⁶⁴ Khalid D. Daud, "The Islamic Ethos of Interfaith Socialization: Strengthening Community Harmony," *ASEAN Journal of Community Service and Education* 4, no. 1 (2025): 43–58, <https://ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajcse/article/view/644>.

approach provides students with strategic competencies for participating in international forums. Scholars have noted that legal practitioners in Muslim-majority countries must now articulate Sharia-informed perspectives in languages accessible to international arbitration, comparative law, and mediation settings.⁶⁵ Thus, by aligning linguistic training with interfaith legal issues, the classes anticipated professional challenges awaiting graduates and bridged local values with global discourses.

Observations confirmed that these classroom activities had a transformative impact. Students not only expanded their legal vocabulary but also developed the ability to navigate complex ethical considerations in dialogue across religious and cultural divides. Guided discussions prompted them to juxtapose Islamic legal principles with constitutional norms, fostering nuanced understandings of how Sharia-based justice can coexist with universal human rights. This finding aligns with scholarship that emphasizes the need for religious moderation in Indonesia's legal education, ensuring that Islamic legal reasoning does not stand in opposition to but in dialogue with secular principles of justice.⁶⁶ Through this dialogic process, the students demonstrated an increased readiness to function in legal environments where multiple frameworks of law and ethics intersect.

Pedagogically, the approach reflects the Qur'anic injunction to engage others with mutual respect and furthers the operationalization of the Islamic ethic of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) within professional education. This grounding in Islamic ethical values strengthens the legal profession's contribution to societal harmony, as tolerance and justice are not merely aspirational but become a professional imperative. Modern Islamic legal scholarship has consistently emphasized that Sharia should not be viewed solely as doctrinal rigidity but as a living moral compass adaptable to pluralistic and interfaith realities. By connecting Qur'anic principles to modern educational practice, the classes highlighted the continued relevance of Islamic ethics in addressing contemporary legal challenges.

Notably, this classroom design also aligns with international trends in legal education that highlight the importance of cultivating interfaith competence among law students. Legal systems worldwide increasingly recognize that interfaith dialogue and intercultural sensitivity are professional necessities, not electives, for practitioners who operate in plural societies. In this sense, the English for Sharia Purposes curriculum at UIN Salatiga contributes not only to

⁶⁵ Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education."

⁶⁶ Syaifudin, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education in Indonesia."

language training but also to shaping future legal professionals as bridge-builders capable of reconciling diverse traditions within shared legal frameworks.

F. Legal-English Tasks as Catalysts for Tolerance-Oriented Thinking

Three pedagogical strategies emerged as particularly effective in anchoring tolerance within English for Sharia Purposes instruction: debates on minority rights, role-playing mediation, and interpreting international legal texts. Each of these tasks demonstrated that tolerance can be taught not as a mere abstract value but as a professional legal competency with practical applications in both domestic and international contexts. Recent studies in Islamic and comparative education affirm that legal training is most effective when abstract values are operationalized through authentic and practice-oriented tasks.⁶⁷

Debating Legal Rights of Religious Minorities. In classroom debates, students argued cases in English that required drawing on Sharia jurisprudence, Indonesian statutory law, and constitutional protections for religious minorities. These debates were not only linguistic exercises but also simulated courtroom advocacy, where students learned to substantiate claims with authoritative sources and to respect opposing perspectives. This echoes findings that Islamic higher education must intentionally incorporate discussions on pluralism and diversity to shape graduates' professional ethics in line with national and global legal standards.⁶⁸ By rehearsing minority rights advocacy in English, students internalized the principle of justice ('*adl*') as integral to their role as future Muslim legal practitioners.

Role-Playing Mediation in Interfaith Disputes. Role-play activities asked students to assume the position of mediators in hypothetical cases involving Muslim and non-Muslim disputants. In doing so, they had to employ neutral, inclusive, and respectful language, reflecting impartiality both in speech and demeanor. This aligns with Daud's findings that interfaith socialization through education fosters empathy and community trust across religious lines.⁶⁹ It also resonates with Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, where adaptation entails shifting communicative behaviors while preserving one's

⁶⁷ Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education"; Lindsay, "Creative Dialogue in Rome, Italy: Thinking Beyond Discourse-Based Interfaith Engagement."

⁶⁸ Syaifudin, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education in Indonesia."

⁶⁹ Daud, "The Islamic Ethos of Interfaith Socialization: Strengthening Community Harmony."

identity. In practice, such simulations cultivated future lawyers who can build credibility among diverse clients and stakeholders while remaining anchored in Islamic ethics of fairness.

Interpreting International Human Rights Documents. Students also analyzed provisions from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, especially those relating to freedom of religion and non-discrimination. This task required students to develop linguistic precision in parsing complex legal English, while simultaneously grappling with questions of compatibility between Islamic jurisprudence and international human rights frameworks. Recent scholarship has shown that this kind of integrative approach, teaching global norms through Islamic ethical lenses, enhances students' capacity to engage confidently in international legal arenas without perceiving global human rights discourse as threatening to Islamic identity⁷⁰

In all three cases, tolerance was operationalized not as a moral afterthought but as a practical legal skill. Students were trained to view tolerance alongside technical competencies such as cross-examination or contract drafting. As Mahmud et al. argue,⁷¹ sustainable development in legal education requires tolerance and pluralist values to be embedded within professional tasks, not siloed as extracurricular or moral lessons. This pattern aligns with studies showing that democratic education in Indonesia is often constructed through locally grounded, embodied, and spiritual orientations, which shape how learners internalize justice, respect, and social responsibility in practice.⁷² This pedagogical strategy demonstrates how English for Sharia Purposes can become a transformative site for producing Muslim legal professionals who are both linguistically competent and ethically grounded in interfaith contexts.

Viewed through an interdisciplinary lens, these tasks functioned as socio-legal 'boundary work': students practiced translating between Sharia-ethical concepts and public legal vocabularies of rights, equality, and non-discrimination, while also learning the communicative discipline expected in

⁷⁰ Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education"; Daud, "The Islamic Ethos of Interfaith Socialization: Strengthening Community Harmony."

⁷¹ Mahmud, Zamroni, and Ilyas, "Islam and Tolerance Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

⁷² Teguh Wijaya Mulya et al., "Locally-Grounded, Embodied, and Spiritual: Exploring Alternative Constructions of Democratic Education with/in Indonesian Schools," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 00 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2022.2142840>.

institutional settings (argumentation, neutrality, and justificatory reasoning).⁷³ This helps explain why interfaith competence emerged as a professional skill rather than as a generic attitude, aligning language pedagogy with the law-and-society concern for how norms are learned, enacted, and contested in everyday institutional life.

G. Students' Reflections on Professional Identity and Tolerance

Student reflection journals and interviews revealed significant transformations in how participants perceived their future role as Muslim legal practitioners in Indonesia's plural society. Prior to the course, many students admitted that they viewed non-Muslims primarily as "the other," an outlook shaped by personal experience, community narratives, and prevailing socio-religious discourse. Similar challenges have been identified in wider Islamic higher education, where attitudes toward religious diversity are often framed by community boundaries rather than structured academic engagement.⁷⁴

Through role-play, debates, and document analysis, students began to reframe these perspectives by grounding them in constitutional rights, human dignity, and Sharia's ethical imperatives of justice ('adl) and tolerance (*tasamuh*). Reflection essays frequently indicated that students came to see non-Muslim clients, witnesses, and legal counterparts not as outsiders but as fellow citizens entitled to the same standards of fairness. As one student emphasized during an interview:

"Before this class, I thought tolerance was something we only practice socially. Now I realize it is part of my responsibility as a Muslim lawyer when I argue in court or advise a client."

Another student explained:

"I understand now that being a Muslim lawyer means giving the same justice to non-Muslims, and I can explain this in English for an international audience."

⁷³ Mahrus Ali et al., "Protecting the Religious Belief: A Study on the Blasphemy Laws Across Jurisdictions and Religions," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 4, no. 1 (June 27, 2025): 45–86, <https://doi.org/10.15294/CIILS.V4I1.25521>.

⁷⁴ Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education."

These statements echo Mahmud, Zamroni, and Ilyas's findings that tolerance education is most effective when professional ethics are explicitly linked to both national obligations and global development goals.⁷⁵

Interviews also highlighted the students' recognition of English as a bridge to international legal discourse. Several students explained that learning legal terminology in English helped them understand how to frame Islamic arguments in ways that would be intelligible in international contexts. One male student remarked:

"When I read human rights documents in English, I was surprised that many principles are not contradictory with Sharia, but actually confirm our values of justice and fairness."

A female student added:

"If I work later in international mediation, I want to show that Muslim lawyers can argue strongly while also respecting the dignity of people from other faiths."

Such reflections confirm Daud's argument that interfaith socialization equips Muslim professionals with communicative tools to build trust across religious divides, particularly in sensitive legal contexts.⁷⁶

The reflections further suggested progression along Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Several students articulated that they had moved from an ethnocentric perspective—where religious difference was considered threatening—to an ethnorelative stance, where such difference was viewed as an opportunity for dialogue and professional growth. A student with an Islamic boarding background explained:

"I used to avoid discussion with my non-Muslim friends about religion because I thought it would create conflict. After these debates and mediations, I realize that respecting different perspectives does not weaken my faith—it strengthens my ability to be just."

This self-reflection demonstrates the "adaptation" stage in Bennett's model, where students retained their Islamic identity while acquiring communicative and ethical flexibility. As Syaifudin notes in the Indonesian context, religious moderation requires not the abandonment of faith but its enactment in ways that advance social harmony and civic trust.

⁷⁵ Mahmud, Zamroni, and Ilyas, "Islam and Tolerance Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

⁷⁶ Daud, "The Islamic Ethos of Interfaith Socialization: Strengthening Community Harmony."

Overall, student reflections revealed that tolerance was no longer treated as an abstract moral lesson but as a concrete professional identity marker. By embedding tolerance within authentic legal-English tasks, the course helped students internalize that justice in plural societies requires both legal competence and intercultural sensitivity. This reinforces the conclusion that when tolerance is practiced as a lived reality, through specific exercises, dialogues, and professional tasks, it becomes foundational for legal and social cohesion in Muslim-majority contexts, navigating pluralism.⁷⁷

H. Toward an Interfaith-Oriented Legal Education for Sharia Students

This discussion interprets the findings as a form of socio-legal formation within Indonesia's legal pluralism, where state law interacts with Sharia-informed norms and diverse religious communities. Classroom tasks are therefore understood not only as pedagogical activities but also as rehearsals of rights-aware legal communication relevant to religious freedom, minority protection, and interreligious dispute resolution.

The findings affirm that embedding tolerance within English for Sharia Purposes is not merely a pedagogical innovation but a strategic alignment with the institutional mission of UIN Salatiga and the Sharia Faculty. Both explicitly emphasize the production of graduates who embody professional legal expertise while being ethically grounded in Islamic moderation. In Indonesia's complex legal landscape, where Islamic, national, and customary laws intersect, future Muslim legal practitioners must be prepared to advocate for justice across religious boundaries, as this is both a constitutional mandate and a moral imperative in Islam.⁷⁸

Byram's intercultural communicative competence framework clearly shows how students develop skills across multiple domains. Classroom debates, mediation role-plays, and analysis of international documents facilitated growth in "*savoir être*" (openness to otherness) and "*savoir comprendre*" (interpreting and relating perspectives). These activities also nurtured critical cultural awareness, enabling students to reconcile Sharia-based reasoning with secular constitutional principles. Such outcomes echo broader scholarship in legal education

⁷⁷ Nora Hamdiui et al., "The Development of a Culturally Sensitive Educational Video: How to Facilitate Informed Decisions on Cervical Cancer Screening Among Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch Women," *Health Expectations*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13545>.

⁷⁸ Syaifudin, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education in Indonesia"; Mahmud, Zamroni, and Ilyas, "Islam and Tolerance Education for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

emphasizing intercultural sensitivity as a professional requirement for law graduates entering global practice.⁷⁹

From Bennett's developmental perspective, the students demonstrated movement toward the "adaptation" stage of intercultural sensitivity. They learned to reframe legal disputes in ways that could foster trust across religious divides, an essential skill for lawyers working in interfaith mediation, legislative drafting, or even transnational commercial disputes. This ability to flexibly adapt communication without compromising one's Islamic identity is precisely what Daud identifies as the foundation of interfaith socialization for professional harmony.⁸⁰ In this sense, tolerance is not about diluting faith commitments but about embodying the Islamic principle of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) in ways that sustain justice in plural contexts.

Swidler's principles of interfaith dialogue are also reflected in the classroom.⁸¹ The course created a microcosm where respectful and informed engagement across religious perspectives was normalized, echoing the broader demand for interreligious literacy in global lawyering. Comparative studies have shown that legal professionals who lack interfaith competence are often ill-equipped to handle disputes involving religious freedom, minority protections, or transnational family law.⁸² By embedding these competencies at the undergraduate level, UIN Salatiga's Sharia Faculty is positioning its graduates ahead of international trends in legal education.

A crucial insight from these findings is that tolerance is most effectively cultivated when embedded in authentic professional tasks rather than isolated as an abstract moral lesson. When law students debate minority rights in English or mediate interfaith disputes in simulated environments, tolerance becomes a skill akin to statutory interpretation or cross-examination. This approach resonates with calls in interfaith law scholarship that view tolerance and interreligious

⁷⁹ Abdullahi Ahmed An-na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia*, *Choice Reviews Online*, vol. 46 (Harvard University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.46-1147>; Ahmad Hoiri, "Religious Pluralism and Legal Dimensions of Interfaith Living in Besuki Village Situbondo" 8, no. 2 (2024): 187–97, <https://doi.org/10.35719/rch.v5i3.355>.

⁸⁰ Daud, "The Islamic Ethos of Interfaith Socialization: Strengthening Community Harmony."

⁸¹ Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding: Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping Institutions*.

⁸² Hoiri, "Religious Pluralism and Legal Dimensions of Interfaith Living in Besuki Village Situbondo"; Jr. W. Cole Durham, Javier Martínez-Torrón, and Donlu D Thayer, *Law, Religion, and Freedom: Conceptualizing a Common Right* (New York, 2021).

literacy as hard skills, indispensable to the professional portfolio of contemporary lawyers.

Furthermore, the integration of tolerance into English for Sharia Purposes prepares graduates for international engagement. It is also argued that fostering respect for diversity within Islamic education contributes directly to sustainable peace and global cooperation.⁸³ Muslim legal professionals trained in such contexts are therefore not only equipped for domestic practice but are also positioned to enter international forums where they must articulate Sharia-informed perspectives in dialogue with global human rights norms. This dual competence strengthens their credibility as both faithful Muslims and responsible global citizens.

The English for Sharia Purposes course at UIN Salatiga illustrates how ESP can bridge three domains: linguistic mastery, legal competence, and interfaith ethical capacity. Its design offers a replicable model for other institutions in Muslim-majority contexts that aspire to produce graduates who are simultaneously confident in their Islamic identity and committed to justice for all. By anchoring tolerance education in professional legal tasks, the program demonstrates that interfaith competence is not peripheral but central to the identity of future Muslim legal practitioners.

Viewed from an interfaith law-and-society lens, these findings suggest that ESP can function as an institutional mechanism that socializes future Sharia lawyers into publicly accountable legal reasoning across religious difference. This strengthens the manuscript's contribution beyond language education by showing how interfaith ethics can be translated into practical legal communication capacities for plural, rights-based contexts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that when intentionally designed and implemented, English for Sharia Purposes can function as a powerful pedagogical platform for cultivating tolerance and interfaith competence among Muslim law students. The experience of the Constitutional Law study program at UIN Salatiga, guided by two dedicated lecturers, illustrates how language education can be transformed into an ethical space where professional skills, religious values, and intercultural awareness intersect.

Findings show that classroom activities such as structured debates on minority rights, mediation role-plays in interfaith disputes, and the

⁸³ Aderibigbe et al., "Fostering Tolerance and Respect for Diversity through the Fundamentals of Islamic Education."

interpretation of international human rights documents did more than expand students' legal-English proficiency. They created opportunities for students to engage directly with principles of justice ('*adl*), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*) in both national and international contexts. Student reflections confirmed a shift from perceiving non-Muslims as "the other" to recognizing them as equal subjects of justice. This transformation reflects progression in intercultural communicative competence and the development of interfaith literacy. Theoretically, integrating intercultural communicative competence, interfaith competence, and Islamic ethical principles provided a coherent framework for embedding tolerance into professional legal formation. Practically, the study confirms that tolerance is most effectively cultivated when taught as a legal skill, on par with advocacy, negotiation, and statutory interpretation, rather than as an abstract moral lesson.

This research contributes to demonstrating that English for Sharia Purposes is not merely an auxiliary language subject but a strategic component of interfaith law-and-society formation in Islamic legal education. It shows how tolerance and interfaith competence can be operationalized as rights-aware legal communication skills, enabling Sharia graduates to navigate plural normative orders and to engage credibly with constitutional and international religious-freedom discourses. By foregrounding this socio-legal dimension, the study strengthens an interdisciplinary understanding of how interactions between religious communities are shaped within law and policy contexts.

Future studies might extend this inquiry by comparing how English for Sharia courses are implemented across different Islamic universities in Indonesia and beyond, or by examining long-term impacts on graduates' professional practice. What is clear from this study is that the cultivation of tolerance and interfaith competence must not be treated as optional, but as integral to the very identity of Muslim legal professionals in the twenty-first century.

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