

Title: Challenges in Integrating English as a Medium of Instruction in Islamic Studies at the University of Batna 1

Student: Ahmed Ramzeddine Bahloul

Department: Language and Civilization

Faculty of Islamic Sciences

University of Batna 1

In this presentation, I will address some of the key challenges faced by doctoral students in the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at the University of Batna 1 as they strive to integrate English into their academic studies. The growing use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education globally presents both opportunities and obstacles. However, for students in Islamic Studies, where Arabic is traditionally the language of instruction and religious study, the integration of English poses unique challenges. Some of the primary issues they face include:

1. Linguistic Challenges Specific to Islamic Studies Students

Students in Islamic Studies, whose primary language of instruction is classical Arabic, face significant challenges when learning English. The grammatical structure of English is very different from that of Arabic, particularly in fields like Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and Qur'anic studies. These differences make the acquisition of English more complex, especially when dealing with specialized topics. As English becomes more integrated into academic research in these fields, students may struggle with both vocabulary and the technical language necessary for these advanced topics.

2. The Impact of Religious and Cultural Traditions

Arabic has a deep connection to Islamic religious texts, as it is the language of the Quran and other foundational religious works. For many students and faculty members, Arabic is not just a language but a cultural and religious symbol. Introducing English into the teaching of Islamic subjects may be perceived by some as a challenge to this tradition. While English is seen as a global academic language, its use in religious studies can raise concerns regarding the preservation of cultural and religious identity. Balancing the need for global engagement in academic discourse with respect for religious traditions is a delicate issue.

3. **Lack of Specialized Resources and Materials**

There is a shortage of academic resources in English that are specifically tailored to the study of Islamic texts and traditions. Many of the key texts in Islamic Studies are in Arabic, and the materials available in English often fail to cover the intricacies of the religious and historical context. This lack of specialized English-language resources in fields such as Islamic jurisprudence, hadith, and Quranic studies can hinder the effective integration of English as a medium of instruction, making it difficult for students to study advanced topics in their field.

4. **Non-Immersive Learning Environment**

One of the challenges faced by students at the University of Batna 1 is that they are learning English in a non-English-speaking environment. While English is used in academic contexts, it is not a part of daily life for most students. This lack of immersion makes it difficult for students to practice English in natural contexts outside of the classroom. For Islamic Studies students, the challenge is even more pronounced, as many of their academic discussions and research rely on Arabic and French. Without real-world opportunities to use English, students struggle to make the transition from classroom learning to practical, fluent use.

5. **Training and Support for Teachers**

While many professors in Islamic Studies are highly skilled in their areas of expertise, some may not have sufficient training in teaching English, particularly when it comes to specialized religious vocabulary. Teachers who are comfortable in their subject matter may still face challenges in explaining complex theological or legal concepts in English. To facilitate the integration of English into the curriculum, it is important to provide teachers with additional training in teaching English for academic purposes, especially in subjects that require precise and accurate language use.

6. **Cultural Perceptions of English**

In the Arabic-speaking world, English is often viewed as a language of globalization and Western influence. For some students and teachers, this can lead to a reluctance to embrace English as a medium of instruction, particularly in religious fields.

There is a need to address these perceptions by emphasizing that learning English is not about losing one's cultural identity but rather about expanding access to global academic resources, networking opportunities, and research collaborations. English should be presented as a tool for enhancing Islamic scholarship and broadening its impact on the international academic community.

7. **Balancing Grammar Instruction with Practical Language Use**

One of the ongoing challenges in teaching English to students in Islamic Studies is the balance between teaching grammar and providing opportunities for students to actively use the language. While understanding grammatical rules is important, students in Islamic Studies need more opportunities to practice their English in contexts related to their academic work. Activities such as discussing research topics, presenting academic papers, and engaging in debates or discussions in English could help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use. Developing students' vocabulary in their specific field, such as religious terminology and academic discourse in English, is essential for their success.

Conclusion:

The integration of English as a medium of instruction in Islamic Studies at the University of Batna 1 presents several challenges, particularly given the strong cultural and religious ties to Arabic. However, by addressing these challenges—such as improving access to specialized resources, providing language immersion opportunities, offering teacher training, and fostering positive attitudes toward English—students and faculty can work together to enrich their academic experience. With careful planning and support, the integration of English can open up new opportunities for students in Islamic Studies, enabling them to engage with global academic scholarship while preserving their cultural and religious heritage.

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