



Toward a Hybrid Behavioristic–Humanistic Framework for Islamic EFL Pedagogy: A Conceptual Literature Review

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Abstract

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy continues to evolve amid rapid digital transformation and shifting educational priorities. Classic learning theories such as behaviorism and humanism remain influential, yet they have traditionally been treated as competing paradigms rather than complementary foundations for instructional design. This conceptual literature review explores the theoretical duality between behavioristic and humanistic approaches in EFL learning and examines their intersection with Islamic educational philosophy. A systematic content analysis of recent scholarly publications (2019–2024) was conducted using thematic coding procedures to identify convergence, divergence, and emerging hybrid models. The findings reveal that behaviorism contributes significantly to linguistic accuracy, controlled practice, and measurable performance, whereas humanism supports intrinsic motivation, communicative confidence, and socio-emotional well-being. Increasingly, modern EFL classrooms, particularly digital and AI-assisted environments implicitly combine structured reinforcement with learner-centered engagement. Islamic pedagogy, through concepts such as *ta'dib*, *tarbiyah*, *tikrur*, and *tadabbur*, historically balances discipline and holistic growth, demonstrating strong alignment with an integrated theoretical stance. The study proposes a Hybrid Behavioristic–Humanistic EFL Pedagogical Framework emphasizing balanced development of accuracy and fluency grounded in ethical and cultural values. This framework advances theoretical discourse, offers practical guidance for EFL practitioners, and highlights implications for Islamic education settings. Future empirical studies are encouraged to validate and operationalize the model in real classroom contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction continues to evolve alongside rapid technological, pedagogical, and social transformations. Foundational learning theories such as behaviorism and humanism remain influential in shaping language pedagogy, each providing unique perspectives on how learners develop linguistic competence. The increasing complexity of education today driven by digital technologies, post-pandemic changes, and AI-assisted learning has renewed interest

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in integrating classic learning theories into modern EFL.

Behaviorism, rooted in the works of Skinner and Watson, views language acquisition as habit formation achieved through imitation, reinforcement, and repeated practice. These principles have long-shaped traditional EFL classrooms, especially in contexts that emphasize linguistic accuracy and measurable learning outcomes. Drills, repetition exercises, corrective feedback, and structure-based learning remain widely employed due to their effectiveness in improving essential language skills such as vocabulary retention, grammar accuracy, and pronunciation.

In contrast, the humanistic approach emphasizes the holistic development of learners by recognizing their emotional, psychological, and social dimensions. Humanistic pedagogy values motivation, self-expression, learner autonomy, and meaningful communication as central to successful language learning. Strategies such as collaborative learning, reflective activities, and learner-centered tasks help enhance communicative competence and effective well-being.

Within the context of Islamic education, the integration of both approaches aligns with the philosophy of *tarbiyah*, which emphasizes balanced development of intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects of learners. Islamic pedagogy values disciplined learning (*ta'dib*) while encouraging personal growth and meaningful engagement. Quranic learning traditions highlight repetition as a reinforcement strategy “*And remind, for indeed, reminder benefits the believers*” (QS. Adz-Dzariyat [51]: 55) which parallels the behavioristic concept of habit formation. Meanwhile, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, “*The best of you is those who learn and teach*” (HR. Bukhari), reflecting the humanistic focus on purposeful learning and personal development.

Theoretical Foundation: Behaviorism and Humanism in EFL Pedagogy

Behavioristic theory conceptualizes language learning as a mechanical process of forming linguistic habits. Reinforcement, imitation, error correction, and repetition are considered fundamental components of successful language acquisition. In many EFL environments particularly those with large class sizes, limited instructional time, or examination-oriented-goals behavioristic methods offer practical advantages. They provide structure, simplify teacher decision making and enable measurable outcomes that align with curriculum standards. Furthermore, recent educational technologies such as gamified vocabulary platforms, pronunciation software and AI-based drill systems demonstrate the adaptability of behavioristic principles to modern contexts.

Meanwhile, humanistic pedagogy insists that cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of learners cannot be separated from the learning process. Motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, and identity significantly influence learners' willingness to communicate and their overall progress in language acquisition (Nilawati et al., 2024). Humanistic teaching promotes a learning environment that is safe, supportive, and responsive to individual learners' needs. Activities often include group projects, personal expression tasks, reflective journals, self-evaluation, and learner-lead discussion, all of which aim to enhance intrinsic motivation and meaning engagement with the language.

Importantly, previous studies suggest that both behavioristic and humanistic approaches contribute valuable but different dimensions to successful language learning. While behaviorism supports foundational linguistic accuracy and procedural fluency, humanism enhances communicative confidence, autonomy and socio-emotional resilience. This complementarity indicated that the two approaches, though rooted in different assumptions, need not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

A substantial body of research has investigated behavioral strategies in EFL, highlighting their effectiveness for vocabulary retention, pronunciation training, error minimization, and grammar accuracy. Studies have also explored the role of

reinforcement, gamified learning platforms and drilling activities in improving learner outcomes. However, these studies generally focus on one aspect of language learning, rarely considering the broader implications for learner identity, autonomy, or communication confidence (Denis et al., 2025; Madhakomala et al., 2025).

Across the literature, one consistent pattern emerges: most studies examine behaviorism and humanism separately, not as interconnected or complementary paradigms. There is a lack of research analyzing how the strengths of one approach can compensate for the limitations of the other, how dual application may function in actual classroom scenarios, how teachers navigate the tension between structure (behaviorism) and autonomy (humanism), and how the integration of these theories aligns with emerging digital and hybrid learning environments. This gap indicated a need for studies that go beyond simple comparison and instead examine the duality, interplay, and potential integration between behavioristic and humanistic perspectives.

This study contributes to EFL pedagogy by offering a novel integrative framework that synthesizes behavioristic and humanistic learning theories within the context of Islamic education. Unlike prior research that treats these paradigms separately, it demonstrates their complementary strengths and proposes a balanced pedagogical model responsive to contemporary digital learning environments and culturally specific educational values. The findings provide both theoretical enrichment and practical guidance for educators seeking to implement holistic, effective language instruction.

In the digital era, these discussions become even more urgent. Modern learning platforms often incorporate behavioristic reinforcement mechanisms such as immediate feedback, badges and progress tracking (Armanda & Priyana, 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Rabi'ah et al., 2025). At the same time, emerging pedagogical trends project-based learning, learner agency, reflective digital portfolios, collaborative online learning draw from humanistic principles. This convergence highlights the need for theories that can explain and guide the integration of structured learning and meaningful engagement.

A conceptual exploration that integrates behavioristic and humanistic approaches is increasingly recognized as both timely and necessary within contemporary EFL discourse, as classrooms become more diverse and pedagogical expectations continue to evolve, teachers face ongoing challenges in balancing structured skill development with the effective and social-cognitive needs of learners (Dzauharoh et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). These realities underscore the need for a more holistic perspective that not only contributes to theoretical design. Examining the duality between these two influential paradigms provides an opportunity to bridge the longstanding divide between performance-driven learning and learner-centered development, thereby responding to both traditional and modern demands of EFL pedagogy (Hanelt et al., 2021).

Existing research tends to position them as oppositional paradigms rather than frameworks that may complement one another. Moreover, discussion on the potential integration of these perspectives are notably environments, student diversity, multimodal literacy demands, and the push toward more flexible and personalized instruction. This gap highlights the need for renewed theoretical inquiry that reflects the realities of the modern EFL classroom.

Intersection with Islamic Educational Philosophy

Islamic pedagogy aims for a balanced development of intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions (*insan kamil*). Tarbiyah emphasizes structured guidance and discipline, aligning with the behaviorist focus on gradual performance improvement and habit formation. Repetition is deeply rooted in Quranic learning: “*And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers*” (Quran 51:55), which parallels

reinforcement principles.

Meanwhile, Islamic education also prioritizes emotional well-being, ethical interaction, and purposeful learning, resonating with humanistic principles. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged active learning and teaching: “*The best of you is those who learn and teach*” (Sahih Bukhari), reflecting motivation and learner agency.

Contemporary Islamic educational theorists argue that effective pedagogy must nurture both discipline (*ta’dib*) and personal development (*taẓkiyah*), promoting a holistic view that synthesizes knowledge, character, and communication (Al-Attas, 1999; Engkizar et al., 2024). Thus, integrating behaviorism and humanism aligns with Islamic education’s mission to develop competent and ethically grounded EFL learners.

Prior studies typically discuss behavioristic and humanistic theories in isolation, focusing either on structural linguistic outcomes Budiman, (2017) or affective-social growth Amini et al., (2025), rather than exploring how the complementary strengths of both paradigms may be intentionally unified in instructional design. Research in Islamic contexts shows behavioristic approaches aligned with Quranic learning principles Dariyanto et al., (2025) and humanistic value integration (McDonald, 2009), yet few efforts combine both theories in a coherent pedagogical framework for EFL within Islamic education. Indeed, reviews of Islamic-perspective EFL pedagogy note a need for “innovative strategies” Faradisa, (2023) but stop short of specifying hybrid theoretical models.” Guiding this inquiry are the following research questions:

1. How do behavioristic learning techniques (such as drills, repetition, and reinforcement) contribute to foundational linguistic skill development in EFL classrooms?
2. In what ways do humanistic teaching approaches (including learner autonomy, emotional engagement, and collaborative activities) influence motivation and communicative confidence among EFL learners?
3. How are hybrid models that integrate behavioristic and humanistic principles currently practiced in modern EFL settings, especially within digital and AI-supported learning environments?
4. What are the perceived strengths and limitations of behavioristic and humanistic methods from the perspectives of EFL educators and learners?
5. How can an integrated behavioristic-humanistic pedagogical model be effectively implemented to balance linguistic accuracy and communicative fluency in diverse EFL classrooms?

By exploring these questions, this study aims to address these theoretical limitations by conducting a conceptual literature review that examines the duality between behaviouristic and humanistic learning theories and identifies their points of convergence in contemporary EFL contexts. Anchored within Islamic educational philosophy, this paper proposes a Hybrid Behaviouristic Humanistic EFL Pedagogical Framework designed to balance linguistic accuracy and communicative fluency while grounding instruction in ethical and holistic learning values. This conceptual contribution is expected to reinforce theoretical discourse and provide practical guidance for teachers in Islamic educational institutions.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative systematic conceptual literature review using content analysis to examine the duality between behavioristic and humanistic learning theories in EFL pedagogy within Islamic education contexts (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Eltoukhi et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2023, 2025; Han & Abdrahim, 2023; Meylani et al., 2024; Song et al., 2024). This approach enables the synthesis of theoretical

perspectives from multiple scholarly sources and supports the development of a new integrative pedagogical framework.

Data sources and Research Strategy

A structured search was conducted in the following academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, ERIC, SpringerLink, Sinta (1–4 indexed journals), Google Scholar (controlled for peer-reviewed output).

The literature search targeted studies published between January 2019 and December 2024. Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR) were applied to combine keywords such as behaviorism, humanism, EFL pedagogy, and Islamic education to ensure systematic and comprehensive retrieval of relevant sources.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Included	Excluded
Publication year 2019–2024	✓	✗ older works (unless theoretically foundational)
Peer-reviewed journals or books	✓	✗ non-academic blogs, opinion pieces
Focus on behaviourism/humanism/EFL pedagogy/Islamic education	✓	✗ topics outside educational scope
Written in English or Indonesian	✓	✗ other languages without translation
Empirical or conceptual relevance	✓	✗ duplicate publications

Screening Result

The literature selection followed a modified PRISMA flow: Initial search results: 127 publications. After title/abstract screening: 72 retained. After full text suitability screening: 38 retained. After quality and relevance review: 22 documents were included in the final analysis. These consisted of:

Table 2. Screening Result

Type of Source	Count
Empirical journal articles	8
Conceptual/theoretical articles	9
Islamic pedagogical sources	5

Data Analysis

A three-stages thematic content analysis was used:

1. Initial coding. Key ideas were extracted, including learning focus, pedagogical strategy, learner outcomes, and theoretical alignment.
2. Cross-theoretical comparison. Behavioristic and humanistic contributions were contrasted to identify convergence, divergence, and complementarities.
3. Integrative synthesis. Themes were mapped to Islamic pedagogy concepts forming the basis for the hybrid behavioristic-humanistic EFL Pedagogical

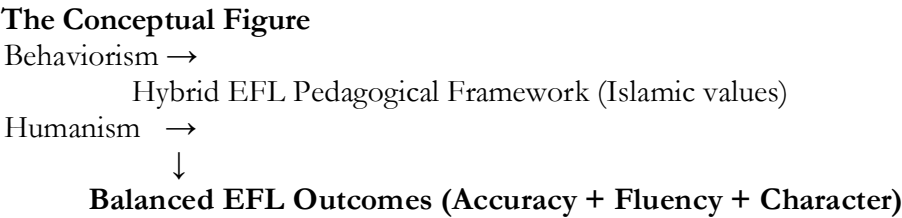
Reliability of analysis was strengthened through: source triangulation, iterative coding refinement, critical checking against existing ELT theory.

Summary of Included Literature

Table 3. Thematic Classification of Reviewed Literature (n=22)

Focus Area	Sample Sources	Key Contributions
Behaviourism in EFL	(Armanda & Priyana, 2023; Madhakomala et al., 2025; Rianto, 2025)	Strengthens linguistic accuracy through reinforcement, drills, repetition, error correction
Humanism in EFL	(Denis et al., 2025; Mumtaza et al., 2025; Nilawati et al., 2024)	Enhances learner autonomy, motivation, communicative confidence, and reduced anxiety

Islamic Pedagogy & Language Learning	Al-Attas (1999); Al-Ghazali (2011); Azis et al. (2023); Jannah et al. (2025)	Balance between discipline (<i>ta'dib</i>) and holistic development (<i>tarbiyah</i> , <i>tazkiyah</i>), Quranic repetition practices
Hybrid / Digital Integration	Dzauharoh et al. (2024); Putri et al. (2024); Rabi'ah et al. (2025)	Implicit blended integration of behaviouristic reinforcement and humanistic learner-centered tasks



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Findings from the Literature Analysis

The analysis of selected scholarly works reveals several significant patterns regarding the dual application of behaviouristic and humanistic learning theories in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Both theories remain influential and continue to adapt to contemporary pedagogical needs. Behaviouristic approaches effectively enhance linguistic accuracy, controlled practice, and measurable learning outcomes. In contrast, humanistic approaches foster learner autonomy, emotional engagement, and communicative confidence.

Three major themes emerged across the literature. The first, behaviorism remains foundational for structured skill development, especially in vocabulary building, pronunciation training, and grammar accuracy. The second, humanistic principles enrich the affective and psychological dimensions of learning, promoting motivation, engagement, and learner identity. The third, although a dual or hybrid model is increasingly evident in modern EFL contexts, it is seldom explicitly conceptualized in prior research. These findings suggest that rather than functioning as competing paradigms, behaviorism and humanism serve more effectively within a complementary framework.

Thematic Findings

Behaviouristic Techniques Support Foundational Linguistic Skills

The literature consistently acknowledges that behaviouristic drills, repetition, and reinforcement contribute to the formation of stable linguistic habits. Numerous studies report significant improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary recall, and sentence structure accuracy when behaviouristic methods are incorporated into regular classroom instruction. This confirms that structured practice remains indispensable, particularly for beginner learners and in contexts involving high-stakes assessments.

Humanistic Pedagogy Enhances Motivation and Communicative Confidence

Humanistic approaches strongly influence learners' emotional preparation and willingness to communicate by reducing anxiety and fostering supportive learning environments. The literature emphasizes meaningful interaction, personal expression, and collaborative learning as critical to developing communicative competence. These findings reinforce that emotional factors impact EFL learning outcomes, especially among adolescent and adult learners.

Emerging Integration of Behaviouristic and Humanistic Approaches

A noteworthy trend identified is the growing implicit use of hybrid models where teachers integrate behaviouristic drills targeting accuracy with humanistic activities promoting fluency and communication. This dual approach is particularly

prominent in blended learning environments, mobile-assisted learning, AI-supported tools, and communicative task-based instruction. However, few studies explicitly theorize or define this integration, suggesting an area ripe for further scholarly exploration.

Comparative Synthesis of Behaviouristic and Humanistic Contributions

Table 4. Comparative Synthesis of Behaviouristic and Humanistic Contributions

Aspect	Behaviouristic Contribution	Humanistic Contribution
Learning Focus	Habit formation, accuracy	Autonomy, meaningful engagement
Methods	Drills, repetition, reinforcement	Collaboration, reflection, expression
Strengths	Structured, measurable, efficient	Motivational, communicative, affective support
Limitations	Mechanical, low creativity	Less structured, challenging in large classes
EFL Benefits	Pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar accuracy	Fluency, confidence, learner identity, reduced anxiety
Contemporary Role	Strong presence in digital & AI-assisted tools	Strong presence in project-based learning and learner-centered models

Interpretive Discussion

The results demonstrate that behaviouristic and humanistic theories contribute distinct yet equally vital elements to EFL learning. Behaviourism lays a structured foundation essential for linguistic accuracy and procedural fluency. Humanism enriches the learning experience by fostering affective engagement, learner autonomy, and meaningful communication. Together, these perspectives support the development of balanced linguistic competence, enabling learners to build accuracy through controlled practice while achieving fluency and communicative confidence via learner-centered activities. This integration suggests that these approaches, rather than being opposing paradigms, complement one another in addressing the multifaceted demands of modern EFL pedagogy.

These findings align with prior research highlighting the necessity of both structure and emotional engagement in language learning. For instance, (Wulandari et al., 2024) emphasize the value of repetition and reinforcement for vocabulary and grammar mastery, while other studies underscore the critical role of emotional support and learner autonomy in sustaining motivation and communication willingness (Mumtaza et al., 2025; Rianto, 2025). Puspitasari & Syafitri, (2025) advocates for a classroom approach harmonizing structured learning with creative benefits deriving from mechanical practice and meaningful humanistic engagement, reaffirming the dual-theory perspective adopted in this study.

Further, this study advances theoretical development in English Language Teaching (ELT) by illustrating that behaviourism and humanism are not mutually exclusive but complementary frameworks within a broader pedagogical continuum. The results indicate that a dual or hybrid theoretical model better captures the realities of contemporary EFL classrooms, which increasingly blend digital reinforcement systems, collaborative learning structures, and learner-centered methodologies. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive explanation for how learners progress toward accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative

competence, thereby enriching the current theoretical discourse in applied linguistics and language pedagogy.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest practical strategies for educators: initiating lessons with behaviouristic drills can effectively strengthen foundational accuracy, while humanistic tasks can follow to promote learner autonomy, creativity, and communicative fluency. AI-driven applications may enhance behaviouristic reinforcement by providing immediate feedback and structured practice. Concurrently, reflective, and collaborative activities align with humanistic goals. Such an integrated approach aligns well with twenty-first-century learning demands and accommodates diverse learner preferences, fostering a holistic language learning environment.

Alignment with Research Objectives

Finally, these findings directly address the study's aims to analyse the duality of behaviouristic and humanistic theories, evaluate their application in EFL pedagogy, and propose an integrated theoretical model. The evidence confirms that both theories remain relevant, with complementary strengths and manageable limitations through thoughtful integration. This provides a solid theoretical foundation for advocating hybrid pedagogical approaches capable of enhancing EFL instruction in contemporary educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the duality between behaviouristic and humanistic learning theories within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, with a particular focus on its integration into Islamic educational contexts. The findings demonstrate that behaviouristic approaches provide essential structure and measurable accuracy through drill-based and reinforcement techniques, while humanistic approaches foster learner autonomy, motivation, and meaningful communication. Together, these theories offer a complementary framework that effectively meets the multifaceted demands of modern EFL classrooms.

The hybrid pedagogical model proposed here advances both theoretical understanding and practical application. It reconciles traditionally distinct paradigms by balancing structured skill acquisition with affective and sociocultural learner needs, especially in digitally enhanced and culturally diverse learning environments. This integrative perspective lays a robust foundation for adaptive, learner-centered instruction aligned with Islamic educational values.

While conceptually rigorous, this study acknowledges the need for empirical research to validate and operationalize the proposed framework. Future studies should explore the effectiveness and feasibility of this hybrid model through classroom-based, experimental, and qualitative research across diverse settings. Exploring the roles of AI and digital tools in facilitating this integration is a promising avenue for further investigation.

In sum, synthesizing behaviourism and humanism provides a promising pathway to enrich language education theory and practice. This study contributes a timely, culturally grounded framework that supports the holistic development of competent, motivated, and ethical EFL learners, positioning the hybrid model as a vital direction for future EFL pedagogy.

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