



Translating Islamic Concepts and Local Wisdom in EFL Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Translation plays a central role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts where learners navigate linguistic and cultural differences between Islamic conceptual frameworks and English. This systematic literature review synthesizes research on the challenges, strategies, and cross-cultural approaches involved in translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom into English in EFL education. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search was conducted across five databases Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, Scopus, and Garuda/Sinta for studies published between 2014 and 2025. Of 915 records identified, 14 peer-reviewed articles met the inclusion criteria and were thematically synthesized. Four themes emerged: (1) challenges in translating Islamic concepts, particularly conceptual non-equivalence and epistemological asymmetry; (2) challenges in translating local wisdom, including cultural loss and semantic displacement; (3) translation strategies, including transference, descriptive equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and hybrid approaches; and (4) cross-cultural pedagogical approaches integrating Islamic values such as *al-bayan*, *tabayyun*, and *amanah*. Based on these findings, the review proposes *cross-cultural witnessing* as a conceptual contribution that frames translation as responsible and critically aware cultural representation. The findings have implications for EFL curriculum design, teacher education, and instructional materials in Islamic educational contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a system of communication; it is a vessel of culture, identity, and worldview. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, translation has long served as a bridge between learners' mother tongue and the target language, facilitating comprehension, meaning-making, and cross-cultural understanding (Buckledee, 2008; Snow & Matthews, 2016). However, translation is never a neutral or purely mechanical process. When learners are asked to render Islamic concepts such as *tawakkal* (complete reliance on God), *ikhlas* (sincerity of intention), or *taqwa* (God-consciousness) into English, they encounter a profound challenge because these concepts carry theological, spiritual, and cultural meanings that may resist direct equivalence within Western linguistic frameworks

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(Erlina et al., 2019; Karim et al., 2023; Rohmah & Wijayanti, 2023). Similarly, local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) embedded in indigenous proverbs, metaphors, and philosophical expressions particularly those rooted in Islamic traditions, such as the Minangkabau philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* presents translators with an equally complex challenge of preserving meaning across cultural boundaries (Albert et al., 2022; Mariana, 2024).

The intersection of translation, Islamic values, and local wisdom in EFL contexts has attracted growing scholarly interest in recent years. Researchers have documented the difficulties EFL learners face when translating culturally and religiously embedded expressions (Moybeka et al., 2023), while educators have explored how translation activities can function not only as a language-learning skill but also as a medium for cultural and moral education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Yet, despite this growing body of work, no systematic synthesis has specifically examined both the translation of Islamic concepts and the translation of local wisdom within EFL learning contexts. Most existing studies address these dimensions in isolation, leaving a critical gap in understanding how these two interwoven domains interact within translation pedagogy.

From an Islamic educational perspective, this gap is particularly significant. Islam places considerable value on clarity and precision in communication. The Qur'an itself emphasizes the faculty of *al-bayan* the capacity for eloquent and meaningful expression as a divine gift to humanity (Qur'an 55:1–4). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is also reported to have said, "Verily, some forms of eloquence are (a form of) magic" (Hadith narrated by Abu Dawud), underscoring the Islamic tradition's appreciation of language mastery. Within this framework, translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom is not merely a linguistic exercise; it is an intellectual and moral responsibility (*amanah*) that demands precision, cultural sensitivity, and scholarly integrity. The Islamic principle of *tabayyun* verifying and clarifying information before acting upon it further reinforces the imperative for rigorous and faithful translation practices (Dakake, 2019; EKOÇ, 2019; May et al., 2022; Skopečková, 2024).

Moreover, the challenge of translating local wisdom into English is deeply connected to broader questions of cultural identity and epistemic justice in EFL education. In the Indonesian context, particularly in communities where Islamic values and local traditions are closely intertwined such as the Minangkabau community of West Sumatra, with its philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* EFL learners are positioned at a complex crossroads between global linguistic demands and the preservation of local cultural and religious heritage (Mariana, 2024). How learners and educators navigate this crossroads through translation strategies has yet to be comprehensively reviewed.

Several scholars have proposed different strategies for addressing translation challenges in cross-cultural contexts. Temesgen & Hailu (2022) identified approaches such as transference, which involves borrowing the source-language term directly; descriptive equivalence, which explains the concept through paraphrase; and cultural equivalence, which seeks a functionally similar expression in the target culture. Herawati & Mawaddah (2023) concept of dynamic equivalence further emphasizes the importance of conveying meaning and effect rather than merely reproducing form. Wulandari et al. (2022) introduced the tension between foreignization, which preserves the foreignness of the source text, and domestication, which adapts the text to feel natural to target-language readers a tension that is particularly pronounced when translating Islamic and culturally specific expressions. Despite the availability of these theoretical frameworks, their application to Islamic concepts and local wisdom in EFL contexts has not been systematically mapped in the existing literature.

A review of available studies reveals that individual empirical investigations and

theoretical discussions exist, but they remain scattered across diverse journals, disciplines, and geographical contexts. To the researchers' knowledge, no published systematic literature review (SLR) has consolidated findings on the challenges and strategies related to translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom within EFL learning environments. This gap represents both a scholarly limitation and a practical concern for EFL educators working in Muslim-majority and culturally diverse contexts, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, and other parts of the Muslim world.

This study therefore aims to address this gap by conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 protocol Belle & Zhao (2023); Page et al (2021) to synthesize existing research on the challenges, strategies, and cross-cultural approaches involved in translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom into English within EFL education contexts. By bringing together these two dimensions the translation of Islamic values and the translation of culturally embedded local wisdom this review seeks to generate a comprehensive understanding of what the field currently knows, which strategies have been identified as effective, and what directions future research should pursue.

The findings of this review are expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature on translation pedagogy by bringing together an Islamic educational framework and cross-cultural translation theory. Practically, it offers guidance for EFL educators and curriculum designers working in Islamic educational institutions who seek to address English language proficiency while maintaining the integrity of Islamic and local cultural values. More broadly, the study provides a synthesized basis for understanding translation as a pedagogical space in which linguistic competence, cultural identity, and Islamic values can be negotiated simultaneously.

Guided by the identified research gap and the objectives of the review, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ 1: What challenges do EFL learners and educators encounter when translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom into English, as evidenced in the existing literature?
- RQ 2: What translation strategies have been identified in the literature to address these challenges in EFL contexts?
- RQ 3: What cross-cultural approaches have been proposed to bridge Islamic values and local wisdom in EFL translation pedagogy?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as its research design. A systematic literature review is a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible method of identifying, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing existing research studies relevant to specific research questions (Kitchenham et al., 2009; Toscano-Hernández et al., 2024). Unlike a conventional or narrative literature review, an SLR follows a structured, predefined protocol that minimizes selection bias and enhances the comprehensiveness and replicability of the review process. This design is appropriate for the present study because it enables a systematic synthesis of the existing yet scattered and fragmented body of literature on the translation of Islamic concepts and local wisdom in EFL contexts, allowing patterns, gaps, and convergences across studies to be identified with scholarly rigor.

The reporting of this SLR adheres to the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement, which comprises a 27-item checklist addressing the reporting of systematic reviews across the introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections (O'Dea et al., 2021). The PRISMA 2020 framework was selected because it represents a widely accepted standard for

transparent reporting of systematic reviews across disciplines, including education and applied linguistics. The database search was conducted between May and June 2026.

Search Strategy

A systematic database search was conducted across multiple academic databases to ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature. The databases searched included Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), Scopus, and Garuda/Sinta for Indonesian-language publications. These databases were selected based on their coverage of the fields of applied linguistics, translation studies, EFL education, and Islamic education.

The following Boolean search strings were used and adapted to the syntax of each database: “translation” AND “Islamic concepts” AND “EFL”; “translating Islamic terms” AND “English language learning”; “local wisdom” AND “translation” AND “EFL”; “cross-cultural translation” AND “Muslim learners”; “kearifan lokal” AND “terjemahan” AND “bahasa Inggris”; “pepatah” OR “proverb” AND “translation” AND “Malay” OR “Indonesian”; “foreignization” OR “domestication” AND “Islamic” AND “EFL”; and “translation pedagogy” AND “Islamic education”.

The search was limited to publications from 2014 to 2025, a 12-year publication window selected to ensure relevance and currency while capturing a sufficient breadth of scholarly work. Both English-language and Indonesian-language publications were included to ensure representation of research from Muslim-majority national contexts, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to the screening process, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication year	2014–2025	Before 2014
Language	English and Indonesian	Other languages
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles (empirical and conceptual)	Theses, dissertations, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, opinion pieces
Topic focus	Translation of Islamic concepts and/or local wisdom in EFL/language education contexts	Studies unrelated to EFL or language learning, including studies on translation in non-educational contexts
Accessibility	Full text available	Abstract-only articles
Relevance	Directly addresses challenges, strategies, or cross-cultural approaches in translation	Peripherally mentions translation without substantive discussion

Study Selection Process

The PRISMA flow diagram illustrates how studies were identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included or excluded in the review. It maps the flow of information through the research process, showing how the number of records initially identified through database searches was narrowed to the final collection of studies included in the review. The selection process followed four sequential stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion, as illustrated in Figure 1.

During the Identification stage, an initial search of all selected databases using the keyword combinations described above yielded a total of 915 records across the

five databases: Google Scholar ($n = 320$), ERIC ($n = 45$), Scopus ($n = 90$), DOAJ ($n = 180$), and Garuda/Sinta ($n = 280$). After 200 duplicate records were removed, 715 unique records remained for the screening stage.

During the Screening stage, the titles and abstracts of all 715 records were assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies that focused on literary translation, professional translation outside educational contexts, or Islamic concepts without a substantive connection to EFL or language learning were excluded. This stage resulted in 33 records being retained for full-text eligibility assessment.

During the Eligibility stage, the full texts of the 33 retained records were assessed in detail. Nineteen articles were excluded for the following reasons: publication type not meeting the inclusion criteria, including conference proceedings and opinion pieces ($n = 6$); topic focus outside EFL or language education ($n = 5$); full text not accessible ($n = 4$); and insufficient relevance to the study's research questions, including studies that mentioned translation peripherally without substantive analysis ($n = 4$). The final corpus consisted of 14 peer-reviewed journal articles included in the thematic synthesis.

During the Inclusion stage, the 14 eligible studies were subjected to a final quality appraisal to ensure methodological soundness and relevance to all three research questions. The final corpus comprised 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, which formed the basis of the thematic synthesis presented in the Findings and Discussion section. The relatively limited number of studies identified reflects the nascent and highly specific nature of this sub-field the intersection of Islamic concept translation, local wisdom, and EFL pedagogy and further highlights the research gap that this review seeks to address.

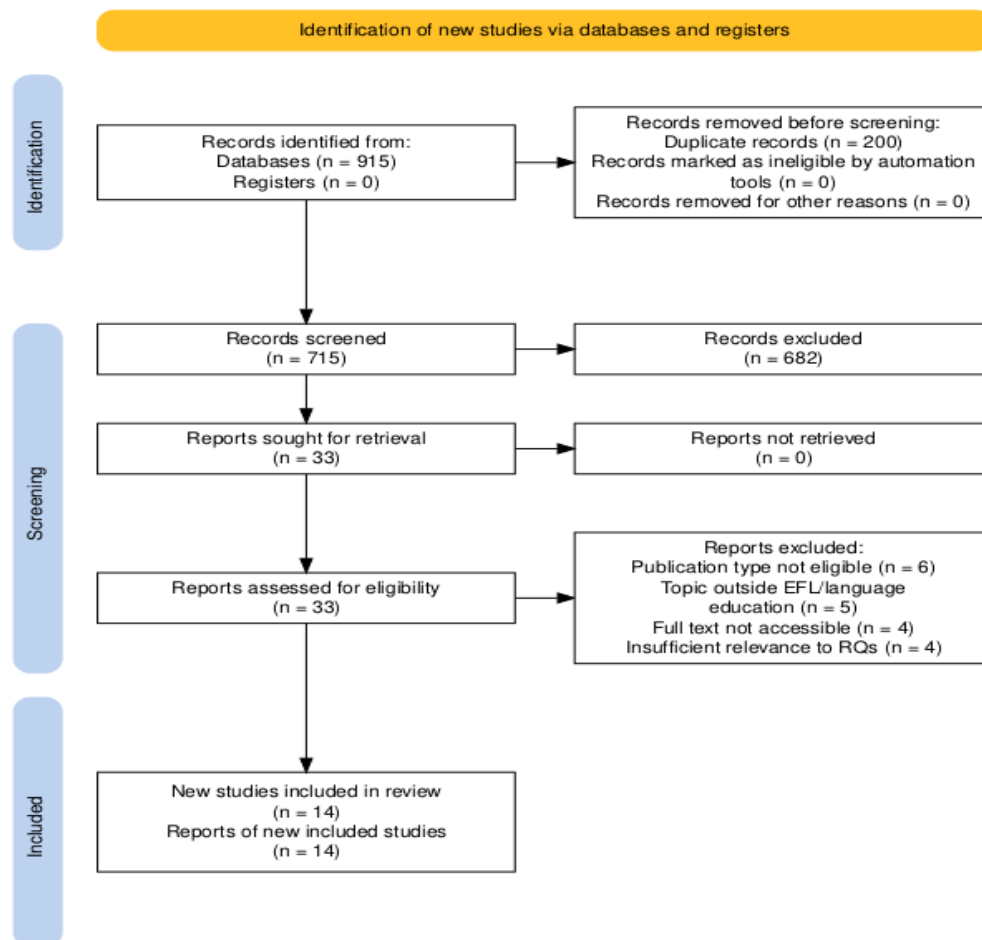


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process
Data Extraction

Data were extracted from each included article using a standardized extraction form. The extracted information included author(s) and year of publication, country of study, research design (empirical or conceptual), participant profile where applicable, key findings related to challenges in translation, strategies employed, and cross-cultural approaches discussed. This structured extraction process ensured consistency and transparency in how data from diverse studies were organized and compared.

The use of a standardized extraction form helped ensure consistency across empirical and conceptual studies. The extracted data were subsequently organized into a study characteristics table and used as the basis for thematic synthesis.

Table 2. Characteristics of the 14 Included Studies

No	Author(s) & Year	Title	Focus	Database
1	Sidqurrahman (2024)	<i>Integration of Islamic Perspectives in EFL: SLR</i>	Analyzes how faith-based values can be incorporated into pedagogy while addressing challenges in balancing curriculum with Islamic principles.	Google Scholar
2	El Haj Ahmed & Shammala (2020)	<i>Foreignization & Domestication in Al-Nisaa' Sura</i>	Examines Islamic translation strategies.	AWEJ
3	Frihatmawati, Yuskar, Yastanti, & Nurmalia (2024)	<i>The Procedures in English-Indonesian Translation of Reclaim Your Heart Islamic Terms</i>	Examines the procedures used to translate Islamic terms from English into Indonesian in <i>Reclaim Your Heart</i> using Newmark's theory.	Google Scholar / Garuda
4	Moeis et al. (2022)	<i>Intercultural Values in Local Wisdom: Minangkabau Ethnic</i>	Analyzes how traditional Minangkabau proverbs, grounded in nature and Islamic principles, function as an intercultural code of conduct emphasizing empathy, justice, and adaptability.	Cogent A&H
5	Septiyana et al. (2024)	<i>Integrating Islamic Values & Lampung Local Wisdom in EFL</i>	Develops contextualized literal reading materials for EFL university students by integrating Islamic historical values and Lampung local wisdom.	JIECR
6	Djamdjuri et al. (2021)	<i>Multimodal Approach in EFL Using Islamic Learning Materials</i>	Examines how combining varied sensory channels and familiar religious topics enhances student engagement and motivation in language acquisition.	IJoLE
7	Siahaan et al. (2025)	<i>Integrating Indonesian Local Wisdom into Tertiary EFL Writing</i>	Explores how tertiary-level EFL lecturers implement culturally responsive writing instruction by embedding Indonesian local wisdom into academic writing tasks.	Garuda
8	Hasibuan et al. (2025)	<i>Integrating Islamic Culture in English as a</i>	Examines how to reconcile Western cultural bias in English materials with the religious	Jurnalshub

		<i>Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching: Importance and Implications</i>	identity of Muslim learners, focusing on the integration of Islamic moral values into EFL curricula to improve engagement and character development.	
9	Deiniatur & Hasanah (2024)	<i>Multicultural Education in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education: Challenges and Strategies</i>	Investigates practical challenges and pedagogical strategies for implementing multicultural education in Indonesian Islamic higher education EFL classrooms.	Google Scholar
10	Murtisari (2021)	<i>Use of Translation Strategies in Writing: Advanced EFL Students</i>	Examines the use of translation strategies in EFL writing by advanced-level students in Indonesia.	Scopus / Google Scholar
11	Kurniawan et al. (2024)	<i>Translation of Indonesian Proverbs into English</i>	Analyzes the structural, semantic, and cultural dimensions of translating Indonesian proverbs into English, utilizing the Matti Kuusi system to identify cross-cultural equivalents.	Lingua Cultura
12	Ebrahimi et al. (2020)	<i>Domestication & Foreignization: Islamic Key Cultural Text</i>	Analyzes the translation of Islamic cultural terminology from Persian to English, identifying the dominant use of domestication to enhance accessibility for foreign readers.	IJCLTS
13	Pintado Gutiérrez (2018)	<i>Translation in Language Teaching (TILT): Distinctions from Pedagogical Translation and Code-Switching</i>	Distinguishes between pedagogical translation and code-switching and promotes the use of L1 as a structured learning tool.	International EFL
14	Pratiwi et al. (2025)	<i>Exploring the Role of Online Machine Translation in EFL Classroom at Islamic University</i>	Examines the role and ethical implications of using online translation tools in EFL classes at an Islamic university in Indonesia.	Google Scholar / Garuda

Data Analysis: Thematic Synthesis

The method of data analysis employed in this study was thematic synthesis, as developed by Thomas and Harden (2008). Thematic synthesis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis in literature reviews that involves three stages: (1) line-by-line coding of findings from individual studies, (2) development of descriptive themes, and (3) generation of analytical themes that extend beyond the

individual findings to produce new interpretive insights relevant to the review's research questions. This method is well suited to the present SLR because the included studies are heterogeneous in design and context, and the aim is to produce an interpretive synthesis rather than a statistical aggregation of findings across the literature (Triandini et al., 2019; Winnaandhini & Santosa, 2025).

The thematic synthesis process was guided by the three research questions, ensuring that the emerging themes mapped directly onto the challenges, strategies, and cross-cultural approaches that constitute the analytical focus of this review. The synthesis generated four overarching themes: (1) challenges in translating Islamic concepts into English in EFL contexts, (2) challenges in translating local wisdom, (3) translation strategies employed by EFL learners and educators, and (4) cross-cultural approaches and the integration of Islamic values in EFL translation pedagogy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the systematic literature review in accordance with the three research questions guiding the study. The 14 included articles were analyzed using thematic synthesis, resulting in four interrelated themes: (1) challenges in translating Islamic concepts into English in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, (2) challenges in translating local wisdom into English, (3) translation strategies employed by EFL learners and educators, and (4) cross-cultural approaches and the integration of Islamic values in EFL translation pedagogy. The first two themes address the challenges identified in the first research question, the third theme addresses the translation strategies examined in the second research question, and the fourth theme addresses the cross-cultural approaches considered in the third research question. Each theme is discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and the broader implications for EFL education in Muslim-majority contexts.

RQ1. What challenges do EFL learners and educators encounter when translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom into English, as evidenced in the existing literature?

Challenges in Translating Islamic Concepts into English

The most consistently reported finding across the reviewed literature concerns the difficulty EFL learners and educators encounter when attempting to render Islamic concepts into English. This challenge is fundamentally rooted in what Baker et al (2020) terms conceptual non-equivalence, referring to the absence of direct target-language equivalents. Concepts such as *tawakkal* (complete reliance and trust in God), *ikhlas* (purity of intention and sincerity), *taqwa* (God-consciousness and piety), *ihsan* (excellence in worship and conduct), and *sabr* (patient perseverance) carry layered spiritual, psychological, and ethical meanings that are deeply embedded in Qur'anic semantics and the accumulated tradition of Islamic scholarship. These concepts do not map onto any single English word or phrase without substantial semantic loss.

The reviewed studies document several dimensions of this translational challenge. First, there is the problem of semantic condensation. Islamic concepts frequently function as dense semantic packages in which a single Arabic term carries meanings that would require several sentences to approximate in English. For instance, while *tawakkal* is sometimes glossed as "reliance on God" or "trust in God," neither rendering fully captures the active dimension of the concept, namely the combination of wholehearted effort (*ikhtiar*) and subsequent surrender of outcomes to divine will that is central to its Islamic meaning. Similarly, *ikhlas* is often translated as "sincerity," yet English sincerity does not inherently carry the specifically theological dimension of performing deeds solely for God's sake, free from any desire for social recognition or worldly reward. As studies on the

integration of Islamic values in EFL teaching have demonstrated, learners who encounter English glosses of these terms may develop reductive or misleading understandings of the underlying concepts, which in turn affects their ability to communicate Islamic ideas authentically in English (Alian, 2024; Kusuma, 2022; Wibowo, 2021).

Second, the reviewed literature highlights the problem of epistemological asymmetry. The English language, shaped by particular philosophical and cultural traditions, does not always possess conceptual structures that directly accommodate the Islamic worldview. The reviewed studies note that dominant frameworks of English conceptual vocabulary are rooted in Greco-Roman philosophical categories and Judeo-Christian theological traditions, which may diverge from Islamic ontological and ethical assumptions. Translating Islamic concepts into English, therefore, is not merely a linguistic exercise but also an intercultural and intercivilizational encounter. This asymmetry is especially pronounced in EFL classrooms, where learners are simultaneously acquiring English as a communicative tool and navigating the challenge of expressing their faith identity through a language whose conceptual resources may not correspond directly to Islamic meanings. These findings resonate with Ahmed (2018) concern about the Islamization of knowledge, particularly the imperative to ensure that the transmission of knowledge, including through language and translation, does not inadvertently distort or displace the Islamic epistemological framework.

Third, several studies in the corpus document affective and identity-related challenges. EFL learners in Muslim-majority contexts report feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and cultural displacement when they are unable to find English equivalences that faithfully represent their religious concepts. These affective responses have pedagogical implications because they can reduce learners' motivation and confidence in engaging with English as a medium for religious and cultural self-expression. The integration of Islamic-based EFL approaches has been shown to enhance student engagement by fostering ethical awareness and respect for diverse cultures while simultaneously achieving language proficiency goals. Nevertheless, challenges such as balancing religious content with secular learning objectives and adapting materials for global contexts persist (Afriadi, 2021).

Challenges in Translating Local Wisdom into English

Alongside the challenges of translating Islamic concepts, the reviewed literature documents a distinct but related set of difficulties associated with rendering local wisdom, particularly in the form of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and culturally embedded philosophical statements, into English. In the Indonesian and Malay contexts that dominated the literature, local wisdom is not merely a cultural artefact but a living repository of communal values, ethical norms, and philosophical worldviews that have been shaped over centuries by the interplay of indigenous traditions and Islamic teachings.

The reviewed studies identify cultural loss as the most pervasive challenge in translating local wisdom into English. Proverbs in Indonesian and Malay languages, including those from the Minangkabau tradition such as “*Alam takambang jadi guru*” (the unfolding world becomes the teacher) and the philosophical principle “*Adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah*” (customs are founded on an Islamic view, and Islamic principles are founded on the Quran), carry meanings that are inseparable from their cultural and Islamic contexts. When rendered into English, these expressions risk being either reduced to their surface-level propositional content, thereby losing their philosophical and spiritual depth, or domesticated into Western cultural equivalents that displace the original referent entirely (Triana & Zulaiha, 2025).

The reviewed literature consistently highlights the tension identified by Afriadi (2021) between domestication and foreignization as particularly acute in the translation of local wisdom. Domesticated translations make texts more accessible to English-speaking audiences but risk erasing the distinctive cultural identity of the source expression. Meanwhile, foreignized translations preserve cultural authenticity but may be incomprehensible to target readers without additional contextual explanation. Studies analyzing the translation of Indonesian proverbs into English demonstrate that translators tend to adopt domestication strategies more frequently, resulting in translations that are linguistically fluent but culturally impoverished. The loss of the Islamic dimension is particularly pronounced: proverbs that encode distinctly Islamic values, such as the importance of consultation (*musyawarah*), gratitude (*syukur*), and communal responsibility (*gotong royong*) framed within Islamic brotherhood, frequently emerge from the translation process stripped of their religious resonance.

Furthermore, the reviewed literature documents what might be termed the hierarchy of cultural loss. Local wisdom that operates at the intersection of indigenous traditions and Islamic values, as is characteristic of Minangkabau cultural philosophy, faces a compounded translational challenge because it carries two layers of cultural specificity simultaneously. Translating such expressions into English requires not only finding lexical equivalence but also negotiating between three distinct cultural systems: the source indigenous tradition, the Islamic framework within which it has been interpreted and transmitted, and the target English-language cultural contexts. This tripartite negotiation typically yields a compromise product that satisfies none of the three systems fully.

Taken together, the findings for RQ1 indicate that the challenges are not limited to the absence of lexical equivalents. Translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom involves simultaneous negotiation of semantic meaning, epistemological frameworks, cultural identity, religious significance, and communicative accessibility. The difficulties become particularly complex when local cultural expressions are themselves closely intertwined with Islamic values.

RQ2. What translation strategies have been identified in the literature to address these challenges in EFL contexts?

Translation Strategies Employed by EFL Learners and Educators

The reviewed literature documents a range of strategies that EFL learners and educators employ in response to the translational challenges identified in RQ1. These strategies broadly correspond to Newmark's (1988) taxonomy of translation procedures for culture-specific items, although the literature reveals important patterns in how learners select and apply these strategies in EFL contexts.

Transference, or the direct borrowing of the source-language term into the target text, emerges as the most frequently used strategy for translating Islamic concepts, as evidenced across multiple studies in the corpus. Terms such as *tawakkal*, *ikhlas*, *taqwa*, *jihad*, *zakat*, and *hijab* are routinely transferred directly into English-language texts without translation, often accompanied by parenthetical glosses or footnotes explaining their meanings. Research on the translation of Islamic terms in Indonesian-English research papers confirms that foreignization through transference was the dominant strategy, with translators preferring to preserve the Arabic form of Islamic terms to maintain semantic and theological precision. This strategy aligns with the Islamic educational principle of *tabayyun*, the obligation to verify and preserve the integrity of meaning, because it ensures that the distinctive meaning of the Islamic concept is not dissolved into an approximate English equivalent. However, the literature also notes that transference alone, without adequate contextual explanation, can render texts inaccessible to non-Muslim readers

and even to Muslim EFL learners who are not familiar with the technical vocabulary of Islamic scholarship (Masruroh & Kusuma, 2018).

Descriptive equivalence represents the second most frequently reported strategy, particularly in educational contexts where the goal is to facilitate learners' comprehension of Islamic concepts while simultaneously developing their English language skills. This strategy involves paraphrasing or describing the meaning of the source concept in English rather than providing a single-word equivalent. For example, *taqwa* may be rendered as "a stage of heightened awareness of God's presence that guides a believer's thoughts, intentions, and actions," while *ihسان* may be described as the standard of excellence in worship and moral conduct that requires one to act as though one can see God and, if not, to know that God sees all. While descriptive equivalence sacrifices conciseness, it serves a valuable pedagogical function in EFL settings by deepening learners' conceptual understanding of Islamic terms and encouraging them to reflect on the relationship between linguistic form and theological meaning (Iswati, 2019; Kuluşaklı et al., 2018).

Dynamic equivalence, informed by Moybeka et al (2023) framework, is employed predominantly in the translation of local wisdom, where the goal is to convey the functional meaning and pragmatic effect of a proverb or cultural expression rather than its literal form. The reviewed studies show that EFL educators who use local wisdom in translation tasks often encourage learners to find English expressions that communicate a similar moral message or cultural function, even when no direct equivalent exists. This strategy encourages cross-cultural empathy and creativity, but it also carries the risk of semantic drift, referring to the gradual displacement of the original cultural meaning by the target cultural equivalent.

The literature also documents a significant pattern of hybrid strategy use. Experienced EFL educators and translators tend to combine multiple strategies within a single translation task, using transference to preserve the Islamic term, followed by descriptive equivalence or footnoting to explain its meaning, and then offering a dynamic equivalent for pragmatic clarity. This layered approach is consistent with the Islamic educational value of *taysir*, facilitating ease of understanding without sacrificing the integrity of meaning, and represents a sophisticated pedagogical response to the inherent tension of cross-cultural translation in Islamic EFL contexts.

The findings for RQ2 therefore suggest that the reviewed literature does not support a single translation procedure as universally appropriate. Instead, the choice of strategy depends on the conceptual density of the source expression, the cultural specificity of the material, the intended audience, and the pedagogical purpose of the translation task. Combining strategies can provide a means of maintaining cultural and religious specificity while simultaneously supporting comprehension and communication in English.

RQ3. What cross-cultural approaches have been proposed to bridge Islamic values and local wisdom in EFL translation pedagogy?

Cross-Cultural Approaches and the Integration of Islamic Values in EFL Translation Pedagogy

The fourth theme synthesizes findings related to broader cross-cultural approaches and pedagogical frameworks proposed for navigating the translation of Islamic concepts and local wisdom in EFL education. Across the studies, several convergent recommendations emerge that collectively constitute the beginnings of an Islamic-informed cross-cultural translation pedagogy.

The most widely advocated approach in the reviewed literature is culturally responsive translation pedagogy, involving the deliberate integration of learners' cultural and religious identities into the design and implementation of translation tasks. Studies consistently demonstrate that EFL learners in Muslim-majority

contexts engage more deeply and productively with translation tasks when those tasks draw on materials and concepts that are meaningful within their own cultural and religious frameworks. Incorporating translated Islamic texts, proverbs, and local wisdom into EFL translation activities not only improves learners' linguistic competence but also strengthens their cultural pride, reflective thinking, and sense of identity as Muslim learners of English. This finding resonates with Kramsch's (1993) argument that language learning is inherently a process of cultural identity negotiation and with Al-Attas's (1979) vision of an Islamic education that cultivates not merely intellectual competence but *adab*, the right orientation of the self in relation to knowledge, language, and the world (Alzi'abi & Ibrahim, 2023; Feng et al., 2023).

A second convergent finding concerns the pedagogical potential of translation as a bridge between cultural worlds. Several studies in the corpus propose that translation tasks involving Islamic concepts and local wisdom can serve as a site of what Nudin et al (2024) calls "cultural emergence," a stage where learners encounter the linguistic limits of English, reflect on the cultural assumptions embedded in their target language, and develop a more critical and nuanced perspective on cross-cultural communication. This pedagogical reframing transforms translation from a mechanical linguistic exercise into an act of critical cultural inquiry, deeply consonant with the Islamic principle of *tabayyun* and with the broader goals of intercultural competence in EFL education.

Third, the reviewed literature highlights the importance of educator preparation and awareness as a prerequisite for effective cross-cultural translation pedagogy. Studies document that many EFL teachers in Muslim-majority contexts lack the specialized knowledge required to guide learners through the complexities of translating Islamic concepts and local wisdom (Merç & Subaşı, 2015; Umaemah et al., 2026). Fewer than half of EFL teachers surveyed in relevant studies successfully incorporated Islamic values into their teaching materials in a substantive and consistent manner. This gap points to the need for teacher education programs that equip EFL educators with both translation theory and Islamic cultural competence, preparing them not only as language teachers but also as culturally and theologically informed facilitators of cross-cultural meaning-making.

Finally, the synthesis of findings across all four themes suggests a theoretical contribution that extends beyond the individual studies. The translation of Islamic concepts and local wisdom in EFL contexts is most productively understood not merely as a problem of linguistic equivalence but as a practice of *cross-cultural witnessing*. This term captures the moral and communicative responsibility of representing one's faith and cultural heritage faithfully and intelligibly to a world-language audience (Nuraeni et al., 2025). This reframing, grounded in the Islamic concept of *al-bayan* and the ethical imperative of *amanah*, offers a distinctive contribution to translation pedagogy that is both theoretically coherent and practically generative for EFL education in Muslim-majority contexts (Ilma & Rohmah, 2025; Nayernia et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings for RQ3 indicate that cross-cultural translation pedagogy can position Islamic values and local wisdom not as peripheral cultural content but as meaningful resources for language learning, intercultural understanding, and identity development. Within this perspective, translation becomes a space in which learners negotiate linguistic meaning while also engaging with cultural, religious, and ethical dimensions of communication. The proposed concept of *cross-cultural witnessing* consequently extends the pedagogical role of translation toward a more responsible form of cultural representation.

CONCLUSION

This study employed a systematic literature review using the PRISMA 2020 framework and thematic synthesis to examine the translation of Islamic concepts and local wisdom into English in EFL contexts. The review provides a synthesized perspective that positions translation as an important space for connecting language learning with cultural, religious, and educational dimensions. Rather than treating translation solely as linguistic transfer, the study highlights its potential to support culturally responsive and context-sensitive EFL education.

Theoretically, the study proposes *cross-cultural witnessing* as a conceptual perspective for understanding translation as a form of responsible cultural representation. This perspective provides a basis for connecting translation pedagogy with Islamic educational values while maintaining the communicative purposes of English language learning. Practically, the study offers a foundation for developing EFL curricula, learning materials, and teacher education that engage with Islamic values and local wisdom in meaningful ways. The review is limited by the relatively small body of literature and the predominance of studies from Indonesia and Malaysia, which may constrain the applicability of the synthesis to other Muslim-majority EFL contexts. Future research should therefore investigate translation practices empirically across more diverse educational settings and examine how the proposed perspective can be developed and evaluated through classroom-based research.

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