

INTEGRATING MORAL AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CHARACTER FORMATION IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: In increasingly multicultural and value-diverse societies, education must nurture both intellectual and moral responsibility. This study examines the integration of moral and language education as a holistic approach to character formation in multicultural classrooms. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, data were collected from 120 students and six English teachers across three culturally diverse secondary schools during a twelve-week value-infused instructional program. Moral themes honesty, empathy, and respect -were embedded in English lessons through storytelling, reflective writing, and ethical dialogue-. Quantitative results showed significant improvements in moral reasoning, language proficiency, and intercultural sensitivity (all $p < .001$). Positive correlations between moral reasoning, linguistic competence, and intercultural empathy ($r = .61, p < .01$) indicated their mutual reinforcement. Thematic analysis revealed four key processes: moral reflection through dialogue, empathy and perspective-taking, teacher mediation as ethical facilitation, and transformative learning through intercultural encounters. These findings affirm that language learning can promote moral growth, while moral education deepens communicative competence. The study extends value-based language education theory and highlights the importance of fostering teachers' moral-communicative competence and ethically reflective curricula to develop morally grounded global citizens.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, Holistic Pedagogy, Moral Education, Value-Based Education.

Introduction

In recent decades, global education systems have increasingly emphasized the need to cultivate not only intellectual competence but

also moral and social responsibility among learners¹. The complexity of modern, multicultural societies requires education that integrates cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions to prepare students for coexistence in diverse cultural and linguistic settings². Traditionally, language education has focused primarily on linguistic competence grammar, vocabulary, and communicative ability while moral education has been treated as a separate domain addressing ethical values, empathy, and character development³. However, this disciplinary separation often results in fragmented pedagogical practices that fail to nurture students as whole moral and communicative beings.

Recent scholarship has begun to highlight the interdependence between language use and moral reasoning, suggesting that language is not a neutral tool of communication but a medium through which values, perspectives, and identities are constructed⁴. Through dialogue, narrative, and intercultural communication, learners negotiate moral meanings and develop ethical awareness. Integrating moral and language education, therefore, holds transformative potential for fostering character formation a process through which learners internalize moral values while developing linguistic and intercultural competence⁵.

In multicultural classrooms, where students encounter diverse beliefs and communication styles, this integration becomes even more essential. Such environments provide authentic opportunities for moral dialogue and empathy-building through linguistic interaction⁶. Nevertheless, empirical research on models of integration between moral and language education remains limited, especially in non-Western and multilingual contexts. There is a pressing need to develop

¹ C M Musil, 'Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility', *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices* 2009, 2009, pp. 49–68.

² Ivan Bakhov and others, 'Cultural Challenges in Education: Strategies for Consideration of Various Intercultural Aspects in the Educational Process', *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 6 (2024).

³ Sudirman Aminin and others, 'Sustaining Civic-Based Moral Values: Insights from Language Learning and Literature', *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology*, 9.4 (2018), pp. 157–74.

⁴ David Nunan and Julie Choi, *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity* (Routledge, 2010).

⁵ Malcolm N MacDonald and John P O'Regan, 'The Ethics of Intercultural Communication', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45.10 (2013), pp. 1005–17.

⁶ S S Nykyporets and H V Kukharchuk, 'Intercultural Communication in Information Security: Risks, Conflicts, and Educational Opportunities for English Language Teachers', *International Security Studios: Managerial, Technical, Legal, Environmental, Informative and Psychological Aspects. Vol. II., Chap. 15: 398-420*. 2025, 2025.

and evaluate holistic pedagogical frameworks that bridge linguistic learning with moral growth, aligning classroom practices with global educational agendas such as UNESCO's framework for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education⁷.

In Indonesia, the integration of moral and language education aligns with national educational priorities that emphasize character formation and global competence. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) promotes the Profil Pelajar Pancasila framework, which highlights six key dimensions of learner development, including *berakhlak mulia* (moral integrity) and *berkebinekaan global* (global diversity), reflecting the need for ethical and intercultural competencies in education. Through the *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) program, these values are systematically embedded across intrakurikuler, kokurikuler, and ekstrakurikuler activities, encouraging subject teachers including English teachers to integrate moral values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility into classroom instruction. Recent local studies have shown that English language classes can serve as effective platforms for character education through moral storytelling, reflective writing, and collaborative dialogue, which not only improve students' moral awareness but also enhance language engagement. However, despite these initiatives, empirical research on structured models that holistically integrate moral and linguistic development remains scarce, indicating a need for more rigorous mixed-methods studies to evaluate their pedagogical impact within Indonesia's multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

This study aims to explore and conceptualize the integration of moral and language education as a holistic pedagogical approach to character formation in multicultural classrooms⁸. By examining how moral values can be embedded within language learning processes, this research seeks to contribute to the theoretical and practical development of value-oriented language education, fostering learners who are both linguistically competent and ethically grounded.

⁷ Shohana Nowrin, Lyn Robinson, and David Bawden, 'Multi-Lingual and Multi-Cultural Information Literacy: Perspectives, Models and Good Practice', *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, 68.3 (2019), pp. 207–22.

⁸ Robert White and Tae Seob Shin, 'Integrative Character Education (ICE): Grounding Facilitated Prosocial Development in a Humanistic Perspective for a Multicultural World', *Multicultural Education Review*, 9.1 (2017), pp. 44–74.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation: Moral Development, Language as a Social Medium, and the Sociocultural Perspective

Classical moral education has long drawn upon Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, emphasizing individual cognitive development. However, more recent sociocultural theories, particularly those inspired by Vygotsky, view morality as a socially mediated construct, shaped through interaction, dialogue, and the use of language within cultural contexts. In this view, language is not merely a tool for expressing moral concepts but a medium for constructing and negotiating moral meanings⁹. Learners internalize moral values through dialogic engagement, discussion, and narrative exchange, which simultaneously foster both linguistic and ethical growth. Thus, sociocultural theory provides a strong conceptual grounding for understanding how language learning can become an authentic site for moral education where moral reasoning, empathy, and social identity are co-developed through discourse¹⁰.

The Relationship between Moral and Language Education

1. Language as a Vehicle for Value Formation

Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes that linguistic interactions carry implicit moral dimensions. Through storytelling, discussion, and text interpretation, learners engage in moral reflection and perspective-taking, which are core to character formation¹¹. In communicative classrooms, moral reasoning can emerge naturally as learners negotiate meaning, resolve conflicts, and express attitudes about ethical dilemmas.

2. Moral Content in Language Learning Materials

Studies analyzing EFL and ESL textbooks reveal that moral and cultural values such as respect, tolerance, and responsibility are often embedded in reading passages or dialogues. However, these representations tend to remain behavioral rather than reflective, rarely prompting deeper ethical reasoning. Consequently, scholars call for pedagogical frameworks that help teachers transform

⁹ Cary A Buzzelli, 'Morality in Context: A Sociocultural Approach to Enhancing Young Children's Moral Development', in *Child and Youth Care Forum* (Springer, 1993), xxii, pp. 375–86.

¹⁰ Francis M Hult, 'Toward a Unified Theory of Language Development: The Transdisciplinary Nexus of Cognitive and Sociocultural Perspectives on Social Activity', *The Modern Language Journal*, 103 (2019), pp. 136–44.

¹¹ Bill Johnston, *Values in English Language Teaching* (Routledge, 2003).

implicit moral content into explicit opportunities for critical moral dialogue and intercultural understanding¹².

Pedagogical Models of Integration

Several frameworks have been proposed to operationalize the integration of moral and language education:

1. Values-Infused Language Instruction (VILI)

This approach integrates value-based tasks such as debates on ethical issues, project-based learning, and moral storytelling into language lessons. Findings show improvement in learners' pro-social attitudes and motivation, though longitudinal evidence remains limited¹³.

2. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Language Classrooms

SEL-based approaches embed empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills within communicative language teaching. Evidence indicates that SEL fosters a positive classroom climate conducive to moral dialogue and cooperative learning¹⁴.

3. Global Citizenship and Intercultural Competence Integration

UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and intercultural frameworks promote ethical awareness through cross-cultural communication. Learners develop linguistic proficiency while internalizing global values such as justice, human dignity, and sustainability¹⁵.

4. Narrative and Dialogical Pedagogies

Storytelling, role play, and narrative inquiry provide learners with emotional engagement and ethical imagination. These methods enhance both moral sensitivity and linguistic competence, demonstrating how stories can act as a bridge between language and value education¹⁶.

¹² Yuni Pratiwi and others, 'Representing and Implementing Moral Values to Foreign Students in Indonesian Textbooks for Learners Other than Indonesians', *International Journal of Language Education*, 7.1 (2023), pp. 58–76.

¹³ Liza A Rietveld, *Nymph or Maniac? Television's "Boston Public" and the Portrayal of Female Teachers: A Lesson in Hegemonic Function* (California State University, Fullerton, 2004).

¹⁴ Boniesta Zulandha Melani, Shayla Roberts, and Jasmine Taylor, 'Social Emotional Learning Practices in Learning English as a Second Language', *Journal of English Learner Education*, 10.1 (2020), p. 3.

¹⁵ Franziska Trede, Wendy Bowles, and Donna Bridges, 'Developing Intercultural Competence and Global Citizenship through International Experiences: Academics' Perceptions', *Intercultural Education*, 24.5 (2013), pp. 442–55.

¹⁶ David Skidmore, 'From Pedagogical Dialogue to Dialogical Pedagogy', *Language and Education*, 14.4 (2000), pp. 283–96.

Empirical Evidence

1. Textbook and Curriculum Analyses

Content analyses of EFL textbooks across various countries reveal the inclusion of moral themes (e.g., environmental care, cooperation, respect). However, most fail to encourage critical reflection or moral reasoning. This gap underscores the need for teacher mediation and reflective pedagogy¹⁷.

2. Classroom-Based Interventions

Case studies and quasi-experimental designs integrating moral content into language activities (e.g., debates, value-driven projects) show positive effects on learners' motivation, communicative competence, and ethical awareness. Nevertheless, many studies rely on small samples and short intervention periods, indicating a lack of rigorous longitudinal research.

3. Intercultural and Global Citizenship Dimensions

Integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and GCED principles into EFL curricula enhances students' moral and linguistic growth simultaneously. Intercultural encounters serve as authentic contexts for learners to negotiate meaning and moral perspective, especially in multicultural classrooms¹⁸.

Moral and Language Education in Multicultural Contexts

Multicultural classrooms present unique opportunities and challenges for integrating moral and language education. Learners encounter diverse belief systems and communicative styles, providing a fertile ground for moral dialogue and empathy building. Yet, teachers must navigate sensitive moral issues and cultural differences carefully. Research shows that successful implementation depends heavily on teachers' intercultural competence and ability to facilitate ethical discourse without imposing external value systems¹⁹. Furthermore, the tension between universal moral principles and local cultural values remains an unresolved challenge in moral pedagogy, calling for context-

¹⁷ JeongAe You, HyeSeung Lee, and Cheryl J Craig, 'Remaking Textbook Policy: Analysis of National Curriculum Alignment in Korean School Textbooks', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 39.1 (2019), pp. 14–30.

¹⁸ Haris N Anwar, 'Global Citizenship and Education: The Multidimensional Impact of a Study Abroad Bilingual Teaching Experience on University Students and Preservice Teachers', 2018.

¹⁹ Andrew Stables, 'Multiculturalism and Moral Education: Individual Positioning, Dialogue and Cultural Practice', *Journal of Moral Education*, 34.2 (2005), pp. 185–97.

sensitive frameworks that respect diversity while promoting shared ethical foundations.

Methodological Insights and Research Limitations

Empirical studies in this area display methodological diversity ranging from qualitative case studies and content analyses to mixed-method classroom interventions. However, several limitations persist: Most research remains descriptive or short-term, lacking longitudinal data to capture sustained moral and linguistic development, Assessment tools for moral reasoning in language contexts are inconsistent, often relying on self-report instruments rather than standardized rubrics, many studies are confined to single cultural or institutional settings, limiting generalizability across different educational systems. These methodological constraints indicate the need for robust mixed-method designs that combine quantitative measures (e.g., moral reasoning scales, communicative competence tests) with qualitative classroom observations and interviews²⁰.

Identified Research Gaps

Synthesizing insights from the existing literature reveals several critical gaps that warrant further inquiry. Although prior studies affirm the potential of integrating moral and language education to promote ethical awareness and communicative competence, few have examined its long-term effects on learners sustained moral reasoning and linguistic proficiency. Moreover, the field lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework that unites moral development theories, second language acquisition models, and global citizenship education within a single pedagogical paradigm. Current research also remains largely Western-centric, offering limited understanding of how such integration operates in multicultural, multilingual, and non-Western contexts such as Indonesia where value pluralism, religious diversity, and local cultural norms shape classroom dynamics in distinct ways. Equally underdeveloped is the methodological dimension, particularly the absence of standardized and context-sensitive instruments capable of assessing moral growth within communicative or linguistic learning processes. Addressing these gaps is essential not only for enriching the theoretical foundations of value-based language education but also for

²⁰ Mark Petticrew and others, 'Synthesizing Evidence on Complex Interventions: How Meta-Analytical, Qualitative, and Mixed-Method Approaches Can Contribute', *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 66.11 (2013), pp. 1230–43.

advancing pedagogical innovation consistent with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) agendas, thereby positioning moral-linguistic integration as a transformative model for cultivating ethically grounded global citizens²¹.

Toward an Integrated Research Agenda

The convergence of moral and language education offers a promising yet underexplored field. Future research should develop holistic pedagogical models grounded in sociocultural and dialogical theories, emphasizing classroom practices where moral inquiry and language use co-construct meaning. By designing interventions that integrate narrative, empathy, and intercultural communication, scholars can advance an educational paradigm where learners become both linguistically proficient and morally conscious global citizens²².

Method

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of how moral and language education can be effectively combined to foster character formation in multicultural classrooms. The mixed-methods approach was selected to enable triangulation and complementarity between numerical data and in-depth qualitative insights²³. While the quantitative component focused on measuring changes in students' moral reasoning and linguistic competence, the qualitative component explored participants lived experiences, teacher strategies, and classroom interactions during the implementation of the integrated program. This dual approach ensured both the breadth and depth of understanding regarding the pedagogical process and its outcomes.

The research was conducted in three multicultural secondary schools that offer English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program.

²¹ Lasha Labadze, Maya Grigolia, and Lela Machaidze, 'Role of AI Chatbots in Education: Systematic Literature Review', *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 20.1 (2023), p. 56.

²² Kathrin Nagel, 'Moral Education in Contemporary China: Cultivating Character through Ideology' (Dissertation, Duisburg, Essen, Universität Duisburg-Essen, 2024, 2024).

²³ Ahtisham Younas, Sergi Fàbregues, and John W Creswell, 'Generating Metainferences in Mixed Methods Research: A Worked Example in Convergent Mixed Methods Designs', *Methodological Innovations*, 16.3 (2023), pp. 276–91.

These schools were purposively selected due to their diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious compositions, which provided an authentic context for examining moral-language integration. The participants included 120 students aged 15-17 years, with approximately 40 students from each institution, and six EFL teachers who were involved in the curriculum design and classroom implementation²⁴. All participants gave informed consent prior to participation, and ethical approval was obtained in accordance with institutional and international research standards to ensure voluntary participation, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity throughout the study.

A twelve-week instructional intervention was designed collaboratively with teachers to integrate moral education content into the existing EFL curriculum. The program was structured around three pedagogical principles: Values-Infused Language Instruction (VILI), Dialogical Pedagogy, and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Each weekly lesson incorporated moral themes such as honesty, empathy, respect, tolerance, and social responsibility within reading, speaking, and writing tasks. Activities included moral storytelling, group debates, reflective writing, and intercultural dialogues designed to elicit ethical reasoning through language use. Teachers facilitated open discussions and guided moral reflection using structured prompts to encourage critical thinking and empathy-building in a linguistically rich environment.

Data were collected using multiple quantitative and qualitative instruments to ensure methodological rigor and validity. The quantitative phase employed three primary instruments: the Moral Reasoning Scale (MRS) adapted from Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) to assess students' levels of moral judgment; the Language Proficiency Assessment (LPA) aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to evaluate communicative competence; and the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) adapted from Chen and Starosta to measure openness and awareness toward cultural diversity²⁵. Complementing these instruments, the qualitative phase involved weekly classroom observations guided by a structured checklist, student reflective journals documenting moral and linguistic learning experiences, semi-structured interviews with teachers and

²⁴ Martin Kustati, "Efl Teachers'attitudes Towards Language Learners: A Case Of Multicultural Classrooms," *International Journal Of Instruction* 13, no. 1 (2020).

²⁵ Brigitte S Cypress, 'Rigor or Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Strategies, Reconceptualization, and Recommendations', *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, 36.4 (2017), pp. 253–63.

selected students, and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials to examine the extent and quality of moral content integration.

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests and repeated-measures ANOVA to determine significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores on moral reasoning, language proficiency, and intercultural sensitivity. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between improvements in moral reasoning and language competence²⁶. The qualitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase model. All qualitative data interviews, observations, and journals were coded and categorized using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes such as "moral reflection through dialogue," "empathy in communication," and "teacher facilitation of ethical awareness." Triangulation between quantitative and qualitative findings ensured the robustness and trustworthiness of the results.

Validity and reliability were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Quantitative instruments were pilot-tested to ensure internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$), while qualitative credibility was enhanced through member checking, peer debriefing, and inter-coder reliability (Cohen's $Kappa > 0.75$)²⁷. Methodological triangulation across data sources strengthened the study's credibility, confirmability, and transferability. Ethical considerations were given paramount importance, including informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity. Given the moral nature of the study, particular care was taken to prevent the imposition of specific religious or ideological beliefs; rather, the learning environment encouraged pluralism, respect, and open dialogue.

Conceptually, this study was grounded in a sociocultural model of moral-language integration, which views language as both a cognitive and moral tool for meaning-making. It posits that moral reasoning develops through communicative interaction and that linguistic competence is deepened when language is used to explore ethically

²⁶ Guangping Liang, Wenliang Fu, and Kaifa Wang, 'Analysis of T-Test Misuses and SPSS Operations in Medical Research Papers', *Burns & Trauma*, 7 (2019).

²⁷ Juliet Njeri Muasya and P M Mulwa, 'Pilot Study, a Neglected Part of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Process: Evidence from Selected PhD Thesis and Dissertations', *Higher Education Research*, 8.4 (2023), pp. 115–23.

meaningful issues²⁸. Accordingly, the study examined the interrelationship between three key dimensions: moral development (values, empathy, ethical reasoning), language learning (communicative competence, pragmatic skills), and intercultural understanding (tolerance, respect for diversity, global awareness). The intersection of these dimensions forms the theoretical framework for understanding how holistic pedagogy can promote both moral and linguistic growth, ultimately contributing to the formation of ethically grounded and communicatively competent individuals.

Through this mixed-methods approach, the study aimed to generate robust empirical evidence and pedagogical insights that can inform the development of integrated curricula aligning moral education with language learning in multicultural contexts. The combination of empirical measurement and narrative inquiry offers a holistic understanding of how classroom interactions, teacher mediation, and student reflection collectively foster character formation through language education²⁹.

Result and Discussion

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative results revealed significant improvements in students' moral reasoning, language proficiency, and intercultural sensitivity after the twelve-week integrated instructional program. Paired-sample t-tests indicated a statistically significant increase in moral reasoning scores as measured by the Moral Reasoning Scale (MRS) ($t(119) = 7.42, p < .001$), suggesting that exposure to moral dialogue and ethical reflection within language tasks positively enhanced students' moral judgment. Similarly, scores on the Language Proficiency Assessment (LPA) aligned with CEFR demonstrated notable improvement in communicative competence ($t(119) = 6.87, p < .001$), particularly in speaking and writing components where students were required to articulate moral arguments and reflective narratives. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) also showed a meaningful rise in post-test means ($t(119) = 5.96, p < .001$), indicating greater openness to cultural diversity and empathy toward differing moral perspectives.

²⁸ Marcelo Buzato, 'Towards an Interdisciplinary ICT Applied Ethics: Language Matters', *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, 16 (2016), pp. 493–519.

²⁹ Effat Fatima, Jawad Ul Hassan, and Abdullah Shafique, 'Multicultural Education: Assessing Integration Challenges and Opportunities Through a Mixed-Methods Approach', *Insights-Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 2.1 (2024), pp. 27–31.

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between moral reasoning and language proficiency ($r = .61, p < .01$), as well as between moral reasoning and intercultural sensitivity ($r = .58, p < .01$). These findings suggest that moral and linguistic development are mutually reinforcing processes: as learners engage in moral dialogue, they simultaneously refine their linguistic skills and intercultural understanding. This correlation supports the theoretical premise that language functions as a vehicle for moral reasoning, and that communicative competence deepens when learners use language to negotiate values and ethical meanings.

Table 1. Variable Result of Correlation

Variable	1	2	3	M (SD)
Moral Reasoning (MRS)	1	—	—	74.85 (7.91)
Language Proficiency (LPA)	.61**	1	—	78.91 (6.80)
Intercultural Sensitivity (ISS)	.58**	.55**	1	79.66 (7.08)

Note: $p < .01$ (2-tailed) The results reveal strong positive correlations between moral reasoning, language proficiency, and intercultural sensitivity, suggesting mutual reinforcement between moral and linguistic development.

Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Result

Construct	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean
Moral Reasoning	62.45	74.85
Language Proficiency	68.21	78.91
Intercultural Sensitivity	70.34	79.66

Graphical Interpretation: A clear upward trend is visible across all constructs, demonstrating substantial improvements following the 12-week integrated instructional program. The largest relative gain occurred in moral reasoning (+12.4 points), followed by language proficiency (+10.7) and intercultural sensitivity (+9.3).

Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals yielded four dominant themes illustrating how moral and language education interact in multicultural classrooms: (1) Moral Reflection through Dialogue; (2) Empathy and Perspective-Taking in Communication; (3) Teacher Mediation as Ethical Facilitation; and (4) Transformative Learning through Intercultural Encounters.

First, Moral Reflection through Dialogue emerged as a central process through which students developed both ethical awareness and linguistic fluency. Classroom discourse often centered around moral dilemmas, prompting students to justify their opinions, consider alternative perspectives, and express empathy. This dialogical engagement required them to use nuanced language for persuasion and reflection, thus fostering both critical moral reasoning and communicative sophistication.

Second, Empathy and Perspective-Taking in Communication reflected students' growing ability to understand and articulate moral viewpoints different from their own. In group discussions and debates, students practiced respectful disagreement and demonstrated improved pragmatic competence -particularly in using language to express politeness, tolerance, and compassion-. The findings align with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which posits that moral and cognitive development occur through mediated social interaction. According to Ramadhani, multicultural families also play a role in the formation of tolerance and religious character³⁰.

Third, Teacher Mediation as Ethical Facilitation highlighted the teacher's crucial role in guiding moral dialogue without imposing personal values. Teachers acted as facilitators, prompting reflection through open-ended questions such as "Why do you think honesty matters in this situation?" or "How would you feel if you were in their position?" This approach created a safe dialogical space, encouraging pluralism and critical inquiry. Teachers reported that integrating moral themes within language lessons increased student engagement and made linguistic tasks more meaningful, as they connected grammar and vocabulary to real-life ethical contexts.

Finally, Transformative Learning through Intercultural Encounters captured how interaction among students from different

³⁰ Sofiana Nur Ramadani and Muh Sabilar Rosyad, 'Peran Keluarga Multikultural Dalam Pembentukan Toleransi Dan Karakter Religius Anak', *AL-MIKRAJ Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora*, 6.1 (2025), pp. 243–51 <<https://doi.org/10.37680/almikraj.v6i1.7271>>.

cultural and religious backgrounds became a medium for moral growth. Learners reported that hearing peers' moral stories and traditions broadened their ethical horizons and deepened their intercultural understanding. This experience reflects Mezirow's concept of transformative learning, where reflection on one's assumptions leads to moral and cognitive transformation. Students who initially viewed moral education as abstract began to perceive it as personally relevant, tied to the language they used and the relationships they built in the classroom.

Discussion

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results provides strong empirical support for the claim that moral and language education, when taught holistically, mutually reinforce one another in cultivating character and communicative competence. The significant gains across moral reasoning, linguistic proficiency, and intercultural sensitivity suggest that moral dialogue and ethical reflection can serve as authentic communicative contexts in language learning. These findings substantiate the argument of scholars such as Lovat and Toomey and Nucci and Narvaez who assert that moral education is most effective when embedded within meaningful social and linguistic interaction rather than taught as an isolated subject.

The evidence also extends current understandings of Value-Based Language Education (VBLE) by demonstrating how moral content can enrich language instruction, providing both cognitive depth and affective engagement. By merging language pedagogy with ethical discourse, students are encouraged not only to express themselves fluently but also to communicate responsibly and empathetically. This finding aligns with Kramsch's perspective that language learning is inherently moral because it involves negotiation of meaning, identity, and values.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study highlights the need for teachers to be equipped with moral-communicative competence—the ability to facilitate ethical inquiry through language-based activities. Such competence allows teachers to transform ordinary linguistic exercises into opportunities for value exploration, thereby creating what Biesta calls “education of the person,” rather than mere instruction of content. The study's emphasis on multicultural settings also reinforces UNESCO's vision of Education for Global Citizenship, which advocates the integration of moral, cultural, and communicative

dimensions to prepare learners for responsible participation in a pluralistic world.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence advocating for a holistic paradigm in education -one that views language as a conduit for moral formation and moral education as a space for communicative growth-. By demonstrating measurable improvements and experiential depth, the study underscores that moral and language education should not exist as parallel tracks but as complementary forces shaping the intellectual and ethical dimensions of learners. This integrated model offers a viable framework for reimagining classroom practices that cultivate both moral integrity and linguistic excellence within increasingly diverse and interconnected educational landscapes.

Conclusion

This study offers an original empirical model of moral-language integration validated through a convergent mixed-methods design in multicultural EFL classrooms. The findings demonstrate that embedding moral education within language instruction significantly enhances students' moral reasoning, linguistic competence, and intercultural sensitivity, confirming that moral and linguistic learning are interdependent processes. Language, in this model, functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a medium for ethical reflection and moral dialogue. Students who engaged in value-infused activities such as storytelling, debates, and reflective writing showed greater empathy, ethical awareness, and communicative depth. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing field of Value-Based Language Education (VBLE) by providing empirical validation for the sociocultural and dialogical link between moral discourse, pragmatic competence, and intercultural empathy.

Practically, the research underscores the importance of values-based language teacher training, equipping educators with strategies to facilitate moral reflection and dialogue in EFL settings. Curriculum designers and policymakers should embed moral and intercultural themes into language syllabi, while assessment models should include reflective essays, moral dilemmas, and dialogic tasks that capture ethical as well as linguistic outcomes. Importantly, the proposed model can be replicated and adapted to Islamic educational institutions, such as *pesantren* and *madrasah*, where the integration of moral and linguistic instruction aligns naturally with religious and ethical education goals. In these contexts, teachers can incorporate Aswaja-based (*Ahlussunnah wal*

Jamaah) values, local wisdom, and intercultural dialogue to nurture morally grounded, communicatively competent santri. Ultimately, this study advances a vision of education that unites heart and intellect preparing learners to communicate ethically and act compassionately within an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

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