

## **Inculcating Morality and Islamic Values in the Learners' Hearts through EFL/ESL Teaching**

**Abul Mobrur Mohammad Hamed Hassan**\*

**Abstract:** Innumerable books, articles and research papers have been created on the techniques and methodologies of teaching English language as a second or foreign language. The aim of all these techniques is to make the learners competent in communication. Following these methods teachers will be able to teach and the learners will be able to learn a language which they will use for various purposes, namely social dealings, business transaction and international communication. Thus this language would become a part of their lives. On the other hand if morality accompanies these social dealings, business transaction and international communication a man is bound to be an honest man for all those who might come in contact with him. This morality has to be inserted in the mind of the language learner. There are various Islamic teachings which provide this morality. This article deals with two prominent English language teaching methodologies/approaches and tries to show how morality based Islamic teachings can be juxtaposed with the activities of language teaching methodologies in order to inculcate morality in the minds of the language learners.

Since the dawn of civilization man has felt the necessity of learning language, not only the language of his own community and country, but also the language of other nations. This is because man has always tried to establish relationship with other societies. Because of this interest of man in learning other languages, many languages of the world have got global appeal. English is one of those global languages, which attracted the attention of the people of many countries all over the world. Many researches have been conducted and many books and articles have been written to provide the learners easy ways of absorbing English as L<sub>2</sub> or FL. By following these methods and ways the learners not only learn English but also know about the culture of native speakers, imbibe the aesthetic beauty of their literature and know about their history. But we need

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\* Assistant professor of English, Centre for university requirement courses (cenurc), International Islamic university chittagong.

to think whether knowing about various aspects of the lives of native speakers is the only objective of learning a language. The answer is clearly 'no'. It may be one of the purposes, not the only purpose. There may be other purposes as well, such as, introducing the learner's own culture to native speakers through this language, thriving in business and exchanging mutual cooperation and so on by using the language for communication. So while learning English as FL/SL we should not forget our own identity. We should not think that the culture of native speakers is our own culture. But it is really difficult to remain aloof from it, because while learning a language the subconscious mind of the learner unintentionally imbibes the culture associated with the language as culture is an integral part of language learning. (Freeman 2000, 101)

As culture is a part and parcel of language, a language learner gets introduced with the culture of native speakers of English language side by side learning this language. This proves that language learning is associated with the learning of many other things. Probably this led the thinkers to the development of English for Special Purpose (ESP). Since language learning can be associated with ideas about geography, history, economics, politics, religion and so on, the author of this article thinks that language learning can also be associated with learning of morality. The author of this article tries to explore the possibility as well as the way of imparting Islamic education and morality to the learners through ESL/EFL teaching.

Acquisition, i.e., a natural subconscious process in which users are not usually aware of acquiring a language is a proven way of language learning. This indicates that language is better learned when the learner's mind remains subconscious. While learning language in this process the subconscious minds of the learners can also absorb other matters besides the language. Islamic concepts about better ideas of life, morality, teachings about human traits, man's duties towards his fellow beings, his society and community can be inserted in the subconscious minds of the learners through acquisition process. These concepts will be inculcated in the minds of the learners in such a way that the learners themselves will not realize how they absorbed these ideas. This article examines the activities of two established methods/approaches of English language teaching; Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with a view to finding ways of imparting Islamic knowledge through these activities. The purpose is not to show which method is better, but to show that whatever method/approach the teacher uses, he/she can impart some Islamic thoughts and teachings in the subconscious minds of the learners through his/her teaching. The article also analyses a lesson from CLT based *Dakhil English for Today*

to show the possibility of inculcating Islamic thoughts through English language teaching.

One of the two methods/approaches to be delineated by this article is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). It is an old method, which has been used by the teachers of English language for many years. Once it was also termed as Classical Method as it was used for teaching the classical languages, Latin and Greek (11). In applied linguistics, the grammar translation method is a foreign language teaching method derived from the classical (sometimes called traditional) method of teaching Greek and Latin. The method requires students to translate whole texts word for word and memorize numerous grammatical rules and exceptions as well as enormous vocabulary lists. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammar\\_translation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammar_translation)) In this method the teacher selects a piece of literary work and translates it himself or asks the students to read it and to translate it from English into their native language. The purpose of translation is likely to enable the students to translate English into their native language, or help them understand the passage so that they can feel interested to read it. This translation may also help the students to be able to understand certain structures so that they can use them elsewhere. Whatever may be the purpose of this reading and translating, the students absorb some ideas from the passage. If the passage is taken from the famous literary piece of native speakers, the student will imbibe the beauty of literature through it. If the passage deals with some historical fact, the students will get to know that historical fact. Such as, the following text taken from an exercise book of English language deals with the freedom of press. "*The First Amendment to the American Constitution declares freedom of the press to all people. Although this right was not officially adopted until 1791,..... a lasting victory for the freedom of the press was gained by a young immigrant.*" (Complete passage is available in Appendix-1) (Pyle & Page, 1996, 480)

Although the prime purpose of assigning the above passage for reading is not providing to the learner the knowledge of the history of the freedom of press, after reading the above passage the inquisitive mind of the learner will automatically be familiar with the early history of the freedom of press, will know about John Peter Zenger and the political problem existed in the colonies during his days. The learner will rather feel interested to know about that history and will read the passage again and again until he fully comprehends the content. Thus this passage will serve two purposes simultaneously; providing the history of the freedom of press and developing the comprehending capability of the learner. This proves that language teaching, especially activities of reading skill development can be juxtaposed with imparting other ideas and

information. Thus we find it an excellent opportunity for a teacher to insert some Islamic knowledge and thinking in the learners' hearts through this kind of reading assignments. The teacher can prepare a passage with some Islamic teachings and can assign this to students for reading. The passage can also be from a literary work of native speakers. In that case the passage may either contain an idea which has a close affinity to some Islamic thoughts or a wide difference from Islamic thoughts. Then the teacher may highlight the idea contained in the passage to show its affinity to or difference from Islamic teachings.

Here is a passage from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress*, which conations a didactic attitude having closeness to Islamic viewpoints. "Now, as Christian was walking solitarily by himself, he espied one afar off, come crossing over the field to meet him..... I care not what I meet with in the way, if so be I can also meet with deliverance from my burden." (Complete passage is available in Appendix-2) (Bunyan, 1853, 14-16)

The passage has been taken from a famous literary work *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. If this passage is chosen for reading assignment the students will enjoy reading it. The students will realize how a pious man who always wants to go on the path of righteousness faces temptations from worldly pleasures which always try to deviate him from the right path and how he always has to face troubles and sorrows in the way of righteousness. Although the passage is taken from a writer who is Christian, the information provided here has close affinity to the teachings of Islam. Here the teacher can point out some similarities and also can give the students briefing on early Islamic history when the Muslims had to suffer a great deal for taking shelter under the shadow of Islam.

The teacher may also select a passage, which contains an idea contrary to Islamic belief and try to present Islamic view points in this respect. Here is a passage from V.S. Naipaul's *Beyond Belief, Islamic Excursions among Converted Peoples*. "Islam in its origin is an Arab religion. .... in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on boil." ((Complete passage is available in Appendix-3) Naipaul, 1994, 1)

After assigning this passage to the students for reading the teacher may indicate that Islam is not the religion of Arabians, it is a religion of human beings prescribed for them by their creator. Since this is his original religion a man accepting Islam can't be termed as a convert. By accepting Islam he has actually returned to his originality. Islam is a universal religion. The universality of Islam is an undeniable fact, a character-

istic peculiar to Islam. Almighty Allah has assigned Muhammad (SM) as Prophet and Messenger to the entire mankind, revealing to him His Holy Book to serve as a means of guidance and a reminder to all humanity. Being the final incarnation of the divine ordinance to mankind, this universal religion makes no distinction among humans as to gender, race, color, language, economic level or social caste. Islam has made all humans equal in terms of duty assignment and the legal capacity as well as in terms of rights and duties. This is why the character of the Islamic message is universal and perennial. It is a divine Message addressed to mankind wherever they are and in whichever epoch they live, a beacon that invariably guides them to the right path in this world and in the Hereafter.

In the GTM it is not extremely necessary that the passage be from some works of literature of target language. The teacher may write a passage carefully designed to include particular grammar rules and vocabulary. The translation may be written or spoken or both. Students should not translate idioms and the like literally, but rather in way that shows that they understand their meaning. (Freeman, 2000, 19) Here also the teacher can get a chance of imparting some Islamic ideas in the minds of the students. He/she can do it by preparing a passage, which contains some Islamic thoughts. Such as the passage may be on the value and necessity of truthfulness in the life of human beings.

GTM implies that learning grammatical rules of the target language is important for the students. In this method grammar is taught explicitly. Here the teacher gets an opportunity to present some Islamic ideas in the class. For example while teaching grammar and making sentences to apply grammar if some examples are made in such a way that they convey some Islamic teachings the students will get to know both grammatical structure and Islamic knowledge. For example for teaching structure of sentences with modals like 'can' and 'could' a teacher can use both secular examples like 'We can see the lake from our bedroom window.' 'My grandfather could speak five languages.' and also some other examples reflecting Islamic activities, such as, 'My younger sister can read the Quran.' 'My grand father could guide the people to the right path with excellent Quranic teachings'. If the teacher, instead of using secular examples, uses Islamic examples the subconscious minds of the learners will imbibe those teachings. Thus the activities of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) can be infused with some teachings of Islam and Islamic ideas and values can be inserted in the minds of the learners through this.

In the 1970 educators found that being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence. It required communicative competence, i.e., knowing when and

how to say what to whom. This contributed to a shift in the field in late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a communicative approach. (121) and hence Communicative Language Teaching method came into existence. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign language that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is also referred to as “communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages” or simply the “communicative approach”. (Wikipedia)

Communicative language teaching sets as its goal the teaching of *communicative competence* which includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- ⇒ Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions
- ⇒ Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
- ⇒ Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- ⇒ Knowing how to use different kinds of communication strategies to maintain communication despite having limitations in one’s language knowledge. (Richards, 2006, 3)

To achieve the goals mentioned above the advocates of communicative approach suggest various classroom activities. Now we’ll see how some class room activities suggested by them can be utilized to impart Islamic knowledge to the minds of the learners.

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns. There can be various activities for developing the fluency. A group of students may be engaged to carry out a role-play in which they have to adopt specified roles and personalities provided for them on cue cards. For example, the students can act out a dialog in which a customer returns a faulty object to a department store from where he has purchased it. The clerk asks what the problem is and promises to get a refund for the customer or to replace the item. In groups, students now try to recreate the dialog using language items of their choice. They are asked to recreate what happened preserving the meaning but not necessarily the exact language. They later act out their dialogs in front of the class. (15) This is an excellent opportunity for a teacher to inculcate Islamic teachings in the hearts of the language learner. Here the teacher can provide the students a text containing some Islamic teachings so that the students can have some ideas and information. The students thereafter will make a dialogue based on that information using the language of their own choice and act it out in pair or in group. The teacher can also provide a model dialogue for role play. (A model text and model dialogue are available in Appendix-4) The model text thus provided will help the students to get some ideas and the model dialogue will help them know some model sentences to express those ideas. When the students will finish reading the text and dialogue they will be set in a group of four/five persons to act out similar dialogue, for example, to play the role of one shopkeeper and three customers. The Shopkeeper is dishonest. He tries to conceal the defects of the goods and sometimes gives underweight to the customer. He doesn't know that these are serious crimes in the light of Islam. The affected customers come to him with objections of defective goods and underweight. He denies the misdeeds. One of the customers advises him to fear Allah and tells him the teachings of Hadith. The shopkeeper becomes afraid and promises to mend his habit.

The kind of tasks mentioned above can be termed as fluency tasks which can be followed by some accuracy tasks, i.e., tasks of providing the correct grammar points. Students in groups of three or four complete an exercise on a grammatical item, such as choosing between the past tense and the present tense, singular and plural number of verbs and nouns and such other grammatical points. The teacher has previously presented and practiced these grammar points in the whole class. Together students decide which grammatical form is correct and they complete the exercise. (15) In the group the students talk with each other in English about the reason of certain choice.

These activities can also be infused with some Islamic knowledge. (An example of such exercise is available in Appendix-5)

Some advocates of CLT proposed that there should be three different kinds of practices in CLT classroom. These are: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practices. *Mechanical practice* refers to a controlled practice activity, which students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using. Examples of this kind of activity would be repetition drills and substitution drills designed to practice use of particular grammatical or other items. *Meaningful practice* refers to an activity where language control is still provided but where students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice. For example, in order to practice the use of prepositions to describe locations of places, students might be given a street map with various buildings identified in different locations. They are also given a list of prepositions such as *across, from, on the corner of, near, on, next to*. They then have to answer questions such as “Where is the book shop? Where is the café?” etc. The practice is now *meaningful* because they have to respond according to the location of places on the map. *Communicative practice* refers to activities where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable. For example, students might have to draw a map of their neighborhood and answer questions about the location of different places, such as the nearest bus stop, the nearest café, etc. (16) Exercise sequences in many CLT course books take students from mechanical, to meaningful, to communicative practice. For example, the following exercise aimed at teaching the students the use of superlative adjectives is found in *Passages 2* (Richards and Sandy, 1998).

(A grammar box contains the following discussion)

Superlative adjectives usually appear before the noun they modify.

*The funniest* person I know is my friend Bob.

*The most caring* individual in our school is the custodian.

They can also occur with the noun they modify

Of all the people in my family, my Aunt Ruth is *the kindest*.

Of all my professors, Dr. Lopez is *the most inspiring*.

Superlatives are often followed by relative clauses in the present perfect.

My cousin Anita is *the most generous* person *I've ever met*.



*The closest friend I've ever had* is someone I met in elementary school.

The discussion is followed by these exercises:-

A. Complete these sentences with your own information, and add more details.

Then compare with a partner. An example has been shown in No. 1.

1. One of the most inspiring people I've ever known is ...

*One of the most inspiring people I've ever known is my math teacher. She encourages students to think rather than just memorize formulas and rules.*

2. The most successful individual I know is ...

3. Of all the people I know .... is the least self-centered.

4. The youngest person whom I consider to be a hero is ...

5. The most moving speaker I have ever heard is ...

6. The most important role model I've ever had is ...

7. Of all the friends I've ever had .... is the most understanding.

8. One of the bravest things I've ever done is ...

B. Use the superlative form of these adjectives to describe people you know. Write at least five sentences.

*Brave, honest, interesting, smart, generous, inspiring, kind, witty*

C. Group work

Discuss the sentences you wrote in Exercises A and B. Ask each other follow-up questions.

A. My next-door neighbor is the bravest person I've ever met.

B. What did your neighbor do, exactly?

A. She's a firefighter, and once she saved a child from a burning building ...

If students read and practice aloud the sentences in the grammar box, this constitutes mechanical practice. Exercises A and B can be regarded as meaningful practice since students now complete the sentences with their own information. Exercise C is an example of communicative practice since it is an open-ended discussion activity. Now if the examples provided in the above discussion of mechanical, meaningful and communicative exercises are based on some moral lesson the whole practice will be Islamized. Such as instead of saying, 'The funniest person I know is my friend Bob, if the teacher says, 'The most authentic book I know is the holy Quran.' the purpose of teaching superlative degree will in no way be marred. (An example of this kind of mechanical, meaningful and communicative exercise is available in Appendix-6)

Many other activity types have been used in CLT, including the following:

*Task-completion activities:* puzzles, games, map reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

*Information-gathering activities:* student-conduct surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

*Opinion-sharing activities:* activities in which students compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance that they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.

*Information-transfer activities:* These require learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

*Reasoning-gap activities:* These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

Most of the above activities can be juxtaposed with Islamic thoughts by planning the materials carefully and selecting the items from Islamic resources, such as, for opinion sharing activities, the students can have debate and opinion sharing on whether or not some Islamic values like showing honesty in activities, refraining from falsehood, respecting the elders, spreading Salam, paying Zakat, praying five times a day, observing fasting in Ramadan, refraining from interest and bribe, keeping up good relation with neighbors and relatives can play an effective role in formation of ideal society. In the opinion sharing some of the students may have negative attitude and comments while the others will try to correct their mistakes.

The above discussion shows that if the activities of CLT are infused with some Islamic ideas and values the ESL/EFL learners will be benefited in two ways; they will get some Islamic ideas subconsciously inculcated in their hearts and they will have some language practices for developing their communicative competence.

The idea of CLT activities combined with Islamic ideas is no longer an odd idea. It has come from those who are working with CLT in Bangladesh. With a view to implementing CLT in Bangladesh a new text book for English language, 'English for Today' was prepared and prescribed at schools, colleges and madrasahs of Bangladesh. The activities of this textbook are set in such a way that real communication occurs in the class and students can develop their four skills of English language as well as develop their grammatical competence. The communicative activities used in this text book

include talking on picture, listening to a dialogue, producing similar dialogue with a partner, talking about someone or something, talking about oneself, writing letter or paragraph following models provided in the texts, working in pair and group on gap filling, information transfer, substitution table, matching words and pictures, rearrangement of sentences and open-ended sentences. It is notable that 'English for Today' prepared for madrasah students have slight differences from that prepared for schools and colleges. These textbooks are infused with some Islamic thoughts and teachings. A notable example is 'English For Today' (for class 9-10) where the UNIT-1 entitled: Sources of Islam and Personality' contains such lessons as 'Al- Kitab, Sura-e-Fatiha, Sources of Islam: Al Hadith, Personality: Hazrat Abu Bakr (R), Personality: Hazrat Khan Jahan Ali (R).

Lesson-1, Al-Kitab has five sections, A, B, C, D, E. Section A requires a student to ask his/her partner to look at the picture of a man who is reading the Quran sitting in a mosque and ask his/her partner questions like, 'What is the picture about? What is the man reading? Where is he reading? It is to be mentioned that this type of questions before a lesson is helpful in several ways. It prepares the students for the lesson to come. It arouses their attention and wakes up their brain. It develops students' speaking capability. Although a few questions are given here, the teacher can form other questions to establish real communication, such as the students can ask each other, 'Do you read the Quran? Can you read the Quran? Do you go to mosque everyday? How many times a day do you say your prayer? and so on. Section-B contains a dialogue between two students about the importance of Al-Kitab. The section reads: "*Man is created and Allah is the creator.....It is evident that we depend on the fundamental principles of Islam that we get from the Quran.*" (Ali, et al, 2003, 21)" (The whole text is available in Appendix-7)

The book map of this book sets the aim of this lesson as developing the listening, reading and writing skills of the students. It is expected that two students will act out the dialogue contained in this lesson and others will listen to it. The teacher will help the students understand the meanings of new words and the students will read the passage silently while the teacher will monitor their reading and give them necessary help. Thus their listening and reading skills will develop. At the same time the students will imbibe some Islamic knowledge also from the passage.

Section: C asks the students to read the conversation in section B and write another dialogue between a student and his partner on the Holy Quran using some clues like-'A Divine Book-teaches us full code of life-helps us keep away from evil deeds-teaches us

to be honest and noble. The aim of this section is to develop the writing capability of the students. This is a meaningful exercise where the students have their choice of producing sentences. This exercise will help the students utilize their creative faculty and at the same time will help them refresh their knowledge of the Quran and other divine books. Since a model of the dialogue has been provided in the text the task will not be so difficult. This exercise can also be done in the group work, where a group of four/five students will work together to write the dialogue. This dialogue can also be used for talking. Two students will demonstrate the dialogue. Thus this exercise will develop both writing and speaking skills of the students.

Section: D requires that the students will ask each other and answer the following questions: 1. Who is the first man created by Allah? 2. What do you know about Al-Kitab? 3. How many are the main divine books? 3. Who are the men on whom the main divine books were revealed? 4. What do you understand by Khalik and Makhluk? While the students will do these asking and answering the teacher will monitor the class and provide necessary cooperation to the students. He/she will correct students' mistakes gently and won't do anything which might hamper the students' fluency. This exercise will develop the speaking skill as well as reading skill, as the students will have to revise the text for answering the questions.

Section: E requires that the students will read the text once more and then write another paragraph in their own language. Since the students will have to write it in their own language they will have to exercise their own writing capability as well as their own knowledge of the subject. This will develop their writing skill.

It is notable that most of the activities here are to be done by the students and the teacher will monitor the activities walking through the class and extending necessary cooperation to the students. The remarkable feature of this CLT based UNIT is that it will play an important role, if the activities are done properly, in developing students speaking, listening, reading and writing skills and at the same time it will enrich their knowledge of Islam and the students will acquire new knowledge of Islam by sharing ideas. Taking it as a model texts class room activities infused with Islamic thoughts and values can be planned with a view to inculcating these ideas in the subconscious minds of the ESL/EFL learners.

To conclude we can say that although it is quite possible to teach English in an Islamic way, it will have to overcome some problems. It is very natural that an English language teacher may not have appropriate knowledge of Islam to conduct the class. This problem may be overcome if the institutions working for Islamization of

knowledge formulate texts with the help of language experts and also prepare teachers' guide with necessary materials and guidance to conduct the classes. Secondly an English language class may have non Muslim students to whom the teachings of Islam may not sound good. To overcome this problem only those Islamic teachings, which have same appeal in other religions as well, should be chosen. For example truthfulness is such an Islamic quality which is honored in every religion. So if a lesson is prepared to show the value of truthfulness in Islam as well as in other religions, the lesson would never be boring to any student irrespective of religion. Thirdly a class working with a lesson infused with Islamic teachings may seem to some students similar to that of Islamic studies. Thus the classes may seem monotonous to some of the students. To avoid the monotony it can be suggested that all ESL/EFL lessons should not be prepared in the above manner. Side by side with Islamic lessons there should be lessons focusing on some current issues, games and sports, interesting matters, learners' native cultures and literary pieces of native speakers. Moreover a lesson thus prepared can be used only in those institutions where the students are given orientation that while studying at those institutions they will have to face Islamic knowledge, work in Islamic environment and try to practice Islamic way of life. It is natural that the students coming to those institutions are mentally prepared to find Islamic attitude in all subjects of their study. So the lessons prepared in the manner discussed might not be unacceptable to them. Probably for this reason only 'English for Today' prepared for madrasah students have lessons infused with Islamic teachings. Finally if the concerned teacher has sincerity, Islamic mentality as well as the skill to make the classes interesting, inculcating Islamic thoughts and ideas in the hearts of the learners through EFL/ESL teaching will no longer remain impossible or unrealistic.

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