

English as a Medium for the Globalization of Islamic Civilization Studies: Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications

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ABSTRACT

The growing internationalization of higher education has expanded the role of English in global knowledge production, yet its implications for Islamic civilization studies remain insufficiently examined. This study investigates how English can facilitate the globalization of Islamic civilization studies, the challenges it creates, and its implications for the field's future internationalization. employed. This study employed a qualitative research design, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 21 participants: seven English Language and Literature (ELL) faculty members, seven Islamic History and Culture (IHC) faculty members, and seven Islamic scholars. Thematic analysis identifies convergent and divergent perspectives across the three participant groups. Findings indicate that English creates significant opportunities for international visibility, scholarly dissemination, interdisciplinary collaboration, digital engagement, and institutional internationalization. However, participants also identified challenges involving limited English proficiency, translation and conceptual loss, linguistic inequality, epistemic imbalance, and the potential marginalization of Arabic and other Islamic scholarly languages. Comparative perspectives further suggest that ELL faculty generally emphasized English's communicative and international advantages, whereas IHC faculty and Islamic scholars placed greater emphasis on source-language preservation and epistemological integrity. The study concludes that English can effectively support the globalization of Islamic civilization studies when used as a complementary medium rather than a replacement for Islamic scholarly languages. It contributes to the field by proposing a multilingual and epistemically balanced approach that combines global accessibility with the preservation of Islamic intellectual traditions.

1. Introduction

English has increasingly become a central language in the training, evaluation, dissemination, and international recognition of academic knowledge as higher education internationalizes. English is viewed as the world's lingua franca, serving as a means of communicating knowledge worldwide, especially in non-Anglophone contexts, due to the growth of English-Medium Instruction (EMI), International Publications, Academic mobility, and international collaboration [1]. Nevertheless, internationalization in English is not neutral, as it is imbued in institutional, economic, and epistemological contexts that affect the visibility and recognition of whose knowledge [2].

The debates are of particular interest to the interdisciplinary study of Islamic civilization, which includes intellectual history, philosophy, science, literature, education, political thought, art, social institutions, and intercultural relations. Its core scholarship is still interspersed with elements of Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, and other scholarly languages [3]. English can support international publication, comparative study, interdisciplinary work, online dissemination, and communication with scholars outside these language groups. Nevertheless, translation loss, linguistic marginalization, and epistemic asymmetries can also occur in English-mediated globalization, especially when Islamic concepts are translated from the dominant academic discourse, which is mostly in English [4].

Existing research has explored EMI, internationalization, linguistic capital, linguistic imperialism, multilingualism, and epistemic justice in great detail. Research shows that having English as a language of study can offer opportunities for academic mobility, international networks, publications, or professional recognition [5]. However, EMI research has found ongoing issues, such as language proficiency, teacher preparation, institutional resources, and policy–practice gaps [6]. As critical scholarship shows, credibility deficits and epistemic exclusion can arise when English is dominant, affecting multilingual scholars who rely on other languages for intellectual resources. Multilingualism and translanguaging have thus been called for as ways of enabling more equitable knowledge participation [7].

Another dimension comes from Islamic epistemological scholarship, as Al-Attas frames the dilemma of contemporary knowledge as tantamount to the dilemma of Adab, extolling that reverting knowledge to the Islamic worldview can be achieved by addressing the secular assumptions that underlie modern disciplines [8]. Al-Faruqi is keen to systematically reconstruct academic fields around tawhid and connect them to the intellectual purposes of Islam [9]. Similarly, Nasr places knowledge and science in the metaphysical and civilizational bases of Islam, suggesting that, in globalizing Islamic civilization studies, it should be accessible in language but also conceptually pure and epistemologically plural [10].

Even with this scholarship, a significant research gap remains. Studies so far have tended to focus more narrowly on English in higher education generally and on international academic communication; to date, relatively few empirical studies have examined Islamic civilization studies as a multilingual, interdisciplinary, and source-dependent field. However, the overall perceptions of faculty members in ELL, Islamic History and Culture (IHC), and Islamic scholarship who experience the opportunities, challenges, and

epistemological implications of English-mediated globalization have received little attention.

This study explores the opportunities that English offers for the globalization of Islamic civilization studies in the following three questions:

(1) What opportunities does English offer for the globalization of Islamic civilization studies?

(2) What are the language, institutional, translation, and epistemological problems?

(3) What do participants' views on the matter imply for the creation of a multilingual and epistemically balanced model of internationalization? Rather than seeing English as good or bad, the study explores how English can circulate knowledge globally, while retaining the linguistic and epistemological tools of Islamic civilization scholarship.

2. Literature Review

Higher education has evolved into an international service avenue, and English is now a key language for creating, disseminating, and internationalizing academic knowledge. Thus, English as the language of non-Anglophone higher education has grown stronger, with the expansion of English-medium instruction (EMI), international publishing, transnational mobility of scholars, digital scholarship, etc [11]. However, English-mediated internationalization is not limited to pedagogical concerns; it is intertwined with other facets of the concept, such as linguistic capital, institutional prestige, academic mobility, and unequal access to global knowledge networks. Thus, English can enable international academic involvement while also reproducing linguistic hierarchies [12].

Recent studies of EMI show that English can promote internationalization and cross-border academic contacts, but its educational value is not self-evident. Systematic research has identified persistent issues, including language proficiency, pedagogical preparedness, institutional resources, and gaps between language policy and classroom practice, experienced by students and teachers [13]. Internationalization scholarship also highlights internationalization as an approach to curriculum development, research cooperation, institutional cooperation, and knowledge sharing, rather than merely increasing the use of English (Knight, 2004). In recent critical perspectives, internationalization is thus clearly separated from Englishization as an aim of language expansion, and it has been argued that international academic environments are not necessarily equitable and inclusive.

English can also be understood from the viewpoint of world Englishes, based on the concepts of linguistic capital and linguistic imperialism. English proficiency can serve as symbolic and economic capital to access better education, work, professional advancement, publications, and international networks [14]. Concurrently, linguistic-imperialism scholarship situates English's international dominance within historically formed political, economic, and cultural power imbalances [15]. The dominance of contemporary English can be paradoxical: the language that allows scholars to access the

academic world can also be perceived as a mechanism for distributing academic “*legitimacy*.” This worry is especially applicable to subjects whose foundational scholarship is in languages other than English.

An additional analytical point of view is offered by the term epistemic justice. Epistemic injustice occurs when the credibility given to testimony is affected by linguistic or social prejudice, and when the conceptual resources considered legitimate are affected (Fricker, 2007). In a multilingual academic environment, the credibility deficit can disadvantage scholars whose intellectual work is produced predominantly in a language other than English (Piller et al., 2022; Zheng & Qiu, 2023). The inequalities also hold for international academic publishing, with peripheral multilingual scholars facing structural challenges to publication, knowledge dissemination, and recognition (Piller et al., 2022). An alternative is provided by multilingualism and translanguaging, which position the language(s) participants use in the entire language system as learning and knowledge-building resources instead of seeing the use of non-English language(s) as impediments (Ortega, 2019; Kerfoot, 2024). For instance, Zheng and Qiu (2023) show that translanguaging can help learners become more involved in acquiring knowledge and can challenge epistemic injustice in EMI contexts.

The theoretical discussions are of special interest to the study of Islamic civilization. This interdisciplinary subject involves intellectual history, philosophy, theology, science, literature, education, political thought, law, art, and intercultural relations. Much of its intellectual heritage remains intact in the languages of Muslim scholarly traditions, such as Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Urdu [16]. The spread of this scholarship around the world can be facilitated by publication in English, comparative studies, interdisciplinary research, scholar mobility, and new media. Globalization, however, might also lead to conceptual simplification if culturally and intellectually deep-rooted Islamic concepts are imported into another linguistic and epistemological system through English-mediated globalization. It is not just that Islamic scholarship cannot be translated into English, but that concepts, contexts, and meanings derived from a source language are not always translatable into the target language" (Piller et al., 2022; Zheng & Qiu, 2023).

Islamic epistemological thought becomes an imperative element in this debate. The secularization of modern knowledge is a concern shared by several scholars, including Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Isma’il Raji al-Faruqi, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, but they approach it differently [17]. The crisis is identified as the loss of the concept of *adab* and the displacement of the Islamic worldview, which is the aim of Al-Attas’ Islamization project: restoring the appropriate conceptual meaning and connecting knowledge with *tawhid*, revelation, and ethical formation, respectively. Al-Faruqi emphasizes the systematic integration and reconstruction of modern scientific fields under a Tawhidic system of thought [18]. However, Nasr criticizes a secular, purely empirical understanding of knowledge and stresses its sacred aspects from an Islamic perspective [19]. Together,

these viewpoints point to a need for more than linguistic translation: preserving the conceptual, moral, and metaphysical roots of Islamic intellectual traditions.

The literature suggests a fruitful but unfulfilled tension between global accessibility and epistemological integrity. English can serve as a link between the scholarship of Islamic civilization and other international academic communities. However, its supremacy can also favor English-language categories and disadvantage scholars whose knowledge is rooted in Islamic scholarly languages. A more just approach to multilingualism in the classroom would be to use English to communicate across languages and cultures, while also using Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, and other languages as needed for source analysis and conceptual interpretation [20]. This multilingual epistemic engagement approach to internationalization contrasts with “pure” Englishization.

Although significant research has examined EMI, internationalization, linguistic capital, linguistic imperialism, multilingualism, and epistemic justice, empirical studies on the English-mediated globalization of Islamic civilization studies remain limited. Existing studies have rarely brought together the perspectives of English-language specialists, Islamic History and Culture academics, and Islamic scholars to examine how opportunities, challenges, and epistemological implications are understood across disciplinary positions. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the issues and problems concerning the international visibility, dissemination, cooperation, and institutional positioning of Islamic civilization studies through English [21], as well as the issues and problems concerning the competence and skills of English in this regard, in addition to linguistic inequality and epistemic balance, and the preservation of Islamic intellectual traditions. In this way, it invites the ongoing discussion in the context of general higher education to shift towards a field that is multilingual, source-dependent, and epistemologically distinct.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research used a qualitative research design to explore the globalization of Islamic civilization studies through English as a medium, with special consideration of opportunities, challenges, and epistemological implications. A qualitative method was used because it best fit the study’s aim of exploring participants’ perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of a complex sociocultural and educational phenomenon [22]. The study employed an interpretivist lens and was informed by theories of English-medium instruction (EMI), internationalization, linguistic capital, linguistic imperialism, and epistemic justice [23].

3.2 Participants and Sampling

Using purposive sampling, the study recruited 21 information-rich participants from three relevant stakeholder groups—seven ELL faculty members, seven IHC faculty members, and seven Islamic scholars. Participants were chosen for their academic, professional, or scholarly knowledge related to English, Islamic civilization, higher education, or Islamic intellectual traditions. Adding these groups allowed the study to include linguistic, disciplinary, and Islamic scholarly viewpoints. The number of participants was deemed adequate for an in-depth qualitative inquiry, where information power, participant relevance, and thematic saturation are key dimensions to consider in addition to participant numbers (Robinson, 2014; Malterud et al., 2016).

Table 01: Participants' Profile

Identifier Code	Age	Gender	Position	Category	Educational Qualification
ELL01	39	Male	Associate Professor	ELL Faculty	PhD
ELL02	45	Female	Professor	ELL Faculty	PhD
ELL03	36	Male	Lecturer	ELL Faculty	MA
ELL04	42	Male	Associate Professor	ELL Faculty	PhD
ELL05	34	Female	Lecturer	ELL Faculty	MA
ELL06	48	Male	Professor	ELL Faculty	PhD
ELL07	38	Male	Lecturer	ELL Faculty	MA
IHC01	46	Male	Professor	IHC Faculty	PhD
IHC02	41	Male	Associate Professor	IHC Faculty	PhD
IHC03	37	Female	Lecturer	IHC Faculty	MA
IHC04	50	Male	Professor	IHC Faculty	PhD
IHC05	35	Male	Lecturer	IHC Faculty	MA
IHC06	44	Male	Associate Professor	IHC Faculty	PhD
IHC07	39	Female	Lecturer	IHC Faculty	MA
IS01	52	Male	Professor	Islamic Scholar	PhD
IS02	48	Female	Associate Professor	Islamic Scholar	PhD
IS03	55	Male	Professor	Islamic Scholar	PhD
IS04	47	Male	Muhaddith	Islamic Scholar	PhD
IS05	51	Male	Khatib	Islamic Scholar	MA
IS06	45	Male	Muhaddith	Islamic	MA

				Scholar	
IS07	45	Female	Assistant Professor	Islamic Scholar	PhD

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which provided a consistent framework while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives (Kallio et al., 2016; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interview protocol included discussions about the role of English in the internationalization of Islamic civilization studies, opportunities for international publication, collaboration, student engagement, and digital dissemination, challenges related to language, pedagogy, institutions, and technologies, implications for Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, and other scholarly languages, as well as issues of linguistic inequality, epistemic justice, and preservation of Islamic intellectual traditions. Key questions were posed to clarify imperative or emerging issues.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021), was used to analyze the interview data. The process involved multiple readings of the transcripts, coding, grouping similar codes, developing and refining candidate themes, and revising and interpreting the final themes. The study used inductive and deductive coding: inductive coding revealed patterns in participants' accounts, and deductive coding related these patterns to the study's theoretical framework. In addition, the study conducted comparative analysis across the three participant groups to reveal commonalities and differences.

3.5 Trustworthiness

The study addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as criteria for qualitative trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple interactions with the transcripts, probing during interviews, and systematic coding and comparison across participant groups added to credibility. The context, participants, and procedures were clearly described, helping with transferability. Systematic documentation of analytical decisions established dependability, and reflexive engagement and grounding interpretations in participants' accounts established confirmability. Perspective triangulation was also achieved through perspectives of three different stakeholder groups.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the study. The research goals, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and right to withdraw were explained to the participants. If participants did not give informed consent, their interviews were not quoted. For reporting

the findings, we obtained informed consent beforehand, and participants were anonymized. Data were stored safely and accessed only for research. Efforts were made to represent participants' religious, linguistic, and disciplinary viewpoints accurately and respectfully. Institutional ethics approvals were obtained as needed.

4. Findings

Opportunities

4.1: Enhancing the Global Visibility and Accessibility of Islamic Scholarship

Participants broadly considered English a strategically imperative language for increasing the visibility, accessibility, and circulation of Islamic civilization scholarship in an international arena. However, their evaluations varied by disciplinary and professional background. ELL faculty members, as a whole, highlighted English's communicative and internationalizing role, particularly its ability to support publication in international journals, engagement in international academic circles, and the spread of Islamic knowledge to non-Arabic speakers. For instance, ELL-01 stated that English could offer Islamic scholarship "*greater access to international academic communities,*" and ELL-05 linked English with better publication and opportunities for scholarly collaboration in the international sphere. Likewise, IHC faculty members considered English as a tool to situate Islamic history and civilization in the larger interdisciplinary conversation. IHC-02 and IHC-05 especially stressed that English-language scholarship would help Islamic civilization interact more with historians, philosophers, social scientists, and scholars in nontraditional Islamic academic settings.

Islamic scholars also saw the possibilities in English, but with a more qualified view based on their experiences. IS-01 and IS-03 found English useful for communicating Islamic intellectual tradition to an international audience, especially younger scholars and students who increasingly use English-language academic platforms for scholarship. English was also perceived as a "bridge " between the Islamic scholarly traditions and modern international academia, as IS-04 did. Nevertheless, these were the participants who warned of decreased engagement with Arabic and other main scholarly languages in the name of making it more accessible. IS-05 and IS-06 emphasized that many ideas, texts, and debates of Islamic civilization have deep roots in the Arabic language and its contexts that can only rarely be captured comparatively.

It is therefore useful to read the participants' accounts comparatively, from which an imperative point of difference emerged between English as a medium of dissemination and English as a medium of knowledge formation. ELL participants highlighted international communication and cultural accessibility, whereas IHC faculty members highlighted the need for greater disciplinary integration and source-based scholarship. Islamic scholars,

however, placed more weight on conceptual fidelity, mastery of the primary language, and maintaining the intellectual purity of Islamic traditions. The difference implies that participants did not see the use or misuse of English as a universal issue but rather as a context-dependent matter: in a wider multilingual scholarly ecology.

One participant captured this possible, yet limited, vision:

“Use the actual words of the participant to quote them about making Islamic scholarship available to the academic world around the world using the English language.” (ELL-03)

Overall, the results suggest that the study of Islamic civilization can be significantly broadened through English, as it makes it possible to publish in English, digitize and spread it internationally, engage in intercultural dialogue, and conduct interdisciplinary collaboration. However, participants’ experiences indicate that global accessibility does not mean linguistic substitution. Instead, English can best be understood as an international language that complements other languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, etc., which are used for scholarly communication. English must be seen as a complementary international language that can extend the circulation of scholarship. In contrast, other languages (Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, etc.) continue to provide the foundational language and epistemology for scholarly communication. In doing so, the international intelligibility of Islamic civilization studies should be balanced with intellectual authenticity, rather than a sole shift toward English-medium knowledge production.

4.2: Expanding International Academic Collaboration

Participants consistently mentioned English as a key facilitator of transnational academic collaboration in the study of Islamic civilization. The importance of having a common language of instruction in the ELL and IHC disciplines was highlighted in terms of the potential for fewer communicative barriers, co-authored publications, joint research, International Conferences, and Scholarly networks. ELL participants specifically linked their English proficiency to improved access to interdisciplinary collaborations, international research communities, and databases. For instance, ELL-03 expressed that.

“English can serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas, and for the development of collaborative research, among scholars from diverse linguistic backgrounds.”

Likewise, IHC-05 pointed out that translations and presentations in English may lead to a greater interaction with scholars from Islamic civilization in other areas of research, including history, anthropology, religious studies, philosophy, political science, and others.

Islamic scholars were also aware of the cooperative benefits of using English, but were more circumspect about its role. Prof. (PhD) IS-02 highlighted the importance of English as a language for bridging Islamic scholarship with other academic communities, where researchers are not familiar with Arabic or other Islamic scholarly languages. However, IS-04, another senior academic, emphasized that *“International collaboration should not be based on English alone, and the knowledge of one should not be deemed academically valuable to the exclusion of the others.”* This statement contrasts with the more instrumental view of some ELL participants, who saw language proficiency as strictly facilitating greater opportunities for researchers to expand their international networks and publication opportunities.

In comparison, IHC participants emphasized disciplinary and source-based cooperation, and ELL participants emphasized linguistic accessibility and communicative competence. Islamic scholars sat in the middle, believing that English was essential for collaboration, albeit Arabic and other major scholarly languages would remain imperative. Therefore, participants’ narratives suggest that English can serve as an imperative bridging language for interdisciplinary and international work, but this depends on multilingualism, disciplinary knowledge, and acceptance of other epistemological traditions. The results thus confirm the need to move beyond a purely English-oriented vision of internationalization and adopt an alternative understanding that sees English as a means to foster international scholarly dialogue without eroding the underlying linguistic underpinnings of Islamic civilization studies.

4.3: Facilitating Knowledge Dissemination and Digital Engagement

The participants agreed that English is an imperative medium to broaden the dissemination, discovery, and digital access to Islamic civilization scholarship. ELL teachers highlighted the importance of English-language publications to access international journals, academic databases, institutional repositories, open access platforms, and international scholarly networks. In particular, English makes research on Islamic history, philosophy, science, literature, and culture more accessible for international researchers and students to access, retrieve, and engage with. For instance, ELL-02 and ELL-06 connected English to opportunities for scholarly publication and engagement in digitally mediated academic communities.

IHC faculty also saw English as a means for research in Islamic civilization to go beyond traditional linguistic and disciplinary lines. IHC-01 and IHC-04 noted that English-language digital resources can help engage researchers and students who may not be proficient in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, or other languages of Islamic scholarship. This was especially significant in interdisciplinary research, where Islamic civilization is increasingly entwined with history, political thought, philosophy, cultural studies, and the social sciences.

However, the Islamic scholars voiced a more conservative stance. IS-01 and IS-03 recognized English's significant potential to broaden the reach of Islamic knowledge on the international stage, especially among younger scholars and the international online community. However, IS-05 and IS-07 warned that primary-language sources could be marginalized in the process of becoming accessible. They suggest that greater attention to English-language scholarship does not necessarily mean that Islamic intellectual traditions are better understood, especially when the material has been translated or is second-hand.

A comparative analysis then shows a difference between digital accessibility and epistemological access. For ELL participants, the main factors mentioned were discovering the content, international readership, and digital engagement; for IHC participants, international readership was a factor; and for Islamic scholars, source authenticity and linguistic competence were mentioned more. The world has access to our scholarship through English. However, the sources in their original language remain the basis of our scholarship, as one Islamic scholar said, *"English can make our scholarship accessible to the world, but the sources must remain the basis of our scholarship"* (IS-03). This aligns with a broader view that English should serve as a bridge or stepping stone to the languages of Islamic scholarship, not as a language in itself.

Overall, the results indicate that English can enhance the digital globalization of Islamic civilization studies by making it easier to publish internationally, be indexed in databases, share open-access research, conduct online teaching, and support transnational scholarly exchanges. Concurrently, the different experiences of the participants make clear that digital internationalization has to take a multilingual and complementary approach that emphasizes English as a means to broaden access to the Internet. Simultaneously, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, and other scholarly languages relevant to the region continue to play an imperative role in source verification, conceptual interpretation, and maintaining epistemological integrity.

4. 4: Strengthening the Internationalization of Islamic Civilization Studies

Participants generally viewed English as a tool to promote the internationalization of Islamic civilization studies at the institutional and disciplinary levels, such as by offering courses in English, publishing in English, academic mobility, research co-operation, and curricular orientation. ELL faculty members' perceptions of this potential were more positive than average. ELL-01 and ELL-05 highlighted that using English as the language of academic activities could help expand the international profile of Islamic civilization studies and facilitate scholars' access to global academic conferences, publications in international journals indexed in international databases, and transnational academic networks. This view of English, then, was considered a significant infrastructure that would enable studies of Islamic civilization to take place beyond the nation's scope.

IHC faculty members also identified opportunities for the institution to benefit from English, but focused more on the need for interdisciplinary integration. IHC-02 and IHC-05 recommended that English can make it easier to collaborate with scholars and researchers in history, philosophy, political science, culture, and related subjects. They also recommended that curricula that focus on internationalism might foster comparative scholarship and provide students with a breadth of theoretical and methodological approaches. IHC participants tended to view internationalization as more than the number of publications in English; they saw it as a deeper entanglement of the study of Islamic civilization in broader academic discourse.

Islamic scholars took a more nuanced stance, arguing that it was permissible. IS-01 and IS-04 recognized that English would enhance the international image of Islamic civilization studies and create opportunities to engage with researchers outside the Muslim-majority world. IS-05 and IS-06 alerted to the danger of an uncritical shift towards English as a language of education, however, as a way of replacing Arabic and other major languages of scholars in the field of studies. As IS-04 rightly noted,

“Internationalization should not be an invitation to Islamic scholarship to reject its very foundations of intellectual and linguistic frameworks, but to make Islamic scholarship available to the world.”

This view reveals a central paradox of open access to global academe and epistemological independence.

A comparative analysis thus indicates a certain emphasis that is found in one group as opposed to another, as the primary issues identified in responses to internationalization were global communication, visibility, and academic mobility for the ELL group; interdisciplinary integration and curricular development for the IHC group; and epistemological continuity, linguistic authenticity, and intellectual sovereignty for the Islamic group. Nevertheless, participants as a whole agreed that internationalization should be an effective exchange of ideas, not just a process of learning English.

Overall, the results indicated that English serves as a supportive language for the international engagement of Islamic civilization studies, which can improve the position of Islamic civilization studies in the world. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed in the process of internationalization, where English enables participation in the global community. At the same time, Arabic and other Islamic scholarly languages continue to play a role in engaging with primary sources, building concepts, and maintaining the disciplines' identity.

5. Challenges

5.1 Linguistic and Epistemological Loss in Translation

The participants reported that language and epistemological losses are among the main problems in the globalization of Islamic civilization studies through English media. ELL teachers recognized the challenges of transferring culturally based religious concepts into English but believed it was imperative to communicate with the outside world in the language of the countries. ELL-02 and ELL-05 pointed out that contextualized translation can not only support cross-cultural communication but also maintain conceptual integrity.

This was a more critical stance among IHC faculty members, who observed that many Islamic scholarly terms, whether in Arabic or other languages, have theological, philosophical, historical, and contextual significance that cannot be translated exactly. IHC-01 and IHC-04 suggested that translation can simplify ideas into familiar Western categories, making them more generic or obscuring their historical and intellectual specificity. The greatest concern voiced was the danger of using English translations that could lead the researchers away from the primary sources: IS-01 and IS-03 stated that too much dependence on English translations could cause the researcher to lose touch with primary sources, and IS-06 pointed out that some concepts needed to be approached in the original linguistic and scholarly context to avoid semantic distortion. One participant said that some Islamic concepts are not just words but require an intellectual tradition to interpret the concepts (IS-03).

Overall, ELL participants highlighted the importance of accessibility and communicability, IHC participants highlighted conceptual and historical accuracy, and Islamic scholars highlighted the authenticity of the sources and epistemological continuity. Although opinions differed, participants agreed that English should serve as an enabling tool for entering primary scholarly languages, not as an exclusive one. The results therefore validate a multilingual translation model in which English opens a new line of access to Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, Persian, and other languages, while preserving conceptual nuance and epistemological integrity.

5.2 Linguistic Imperialism and Epistemic Inequality

The participants recognized language imperialism and epistemic inequality as structural problems in the globalization of Islamic civilization studies in English. ELL faculty recognized the benefits of using English for international publication and academic mobility; however, they noted that English-dominant journals, indexing systems, and evaluation processes may benefit highly proficient scholars. ELL-01 and ELL-06 noted that English proficiency can become a criterion for worldwide recognition, and that expertise in a discipline may be at the mercy of the English language.

IHC faculty were more likely to have concerns regarding unequal epistemic authority. IHC-02 and IHC-05 contended that while scholars with expertise in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and other Islamic scholarly languages have extensive expertise, their representation in

global knowledge networks is less. That is why, in the context of English-mediated globalization, the problem of international visibility of Islamic civilization as a whole, and Islamic civilization studies in particular, may be a paradox, in that some of the most language-based knowledge producers of Islamic civilization are marginalized.

Islamic scholars offered the most significant stance. IS-01 and IS-04 pointed out that reliance on English-language publication and recognition systems could promote the reformulation of Islamic scholarship based on the dominant academic system. IS-06 also recommended that such processes could lead to an "epistemic hierarchy": interpretations in English are deemed more academically legitimate than those in the primary languages of Islam. The quote by one of the participants,

"If international recognition is primarily based on English, scholars might be assessed according to their language, not their understanding" (IS-04).

In comparison, access and academic competitiveness were the concerns of ELLs, structural exclusion and unequal recognition of IHCs, and epistemic autonomy and linguistic justice of Islamic scholars. However, none of the three groups denied that English could serve as a vehicle for accessing the world's scholarship and also as a tool of exclusion. The results thus indicate that linguistic pluralism, an equitable form of recognition of multilingual scholarship, and more institutional support for translation and multilingual publication, instead of an uncritical prioritization of English, are needed in order to internationalize Islamic civilization studies.

5.3: Limited English Proficiency and Institutional Capacity

Participants recognized that while Islamic civilization studies are becoming more internationalized, limited English proficiency and a lack of institutional support remain challenges. ELL participants felt that international journals, presenting research in English, attending conferences, and interacting with international scholarly networks were becoming increasingly necessary to improve their English. ELL-03 stated that "English proficiency has become a necessity for scholars to enter into international academic discourses through their research," and IHC-05 pointed out that stronger academic English skills can help researchers reach beyond Bangladesh.

Islamic scholars, however, had a more conservative outlook. IS-04 noted that many scholars have strong knowledge of primary sources in Arabic and Islamic studies but limited academic English; thus, there is a gap between intellectual and international knowledge. Another issue mentioned by participants was the lack of specialized English training, translation services, academic-writing assistance, and funding to publish research in foreign journals and participate in conferences. ELL faculty acknowledged the need for language development, while IHC academics prioritized interdisciplinary integration and

academic-English development, and Islamic scholars focused on translation and mediation in collaboration.

Overall, the findings show that internationalization cannot be considered equitable unless English is used. Effective participation requires academic English training, professional translation, publication assistance, digital tools, and bringing together language experts and Islamic civilization scholars. Linguistic competence should thus be viewed not only as a personal competence but also as an institutional environment conducive to access to the global knowledge network.

5.4: Tension between Global Accessibility and Scholarly Authenticity

The participants recognized a ‘conflict’ between the ‘worldly’ nature of the scholarship of Islamic civilization, which was accessible to everyone, and the ‘authentic’ conceptual and epistemological nature of that same scholarship. For English Learners (ELL-2 and -6), English served as a vehicle for cross-cultural dialogue and for making the teachings of Islam available to international scholars who lack knowledge of Arabic and other Islamic scholarly languages. At the same time, for IHC participants, English was used to reinforce the role of Islamic civilization studies in international academic discourse (IHC -3 and -7).

Islamic scholars, however, voiced more anxiety about using conceptual frameworks developed outside the Islamic world. IS-2 and IS-5 pointed out that certain concepts like ‘Aqīdah (Islamic Creed), Sharī’ah (Islamic Law), ummah (Islamic Nation), ‘Ilm (Islamic Knowledge), and Adab (Islamic Etiquettes) have historical connotations, which Western academic classifications are bereft of, and certainly oblivious to the crux of this discussion. The answer is that English can convey our scholarship to the rest of the world, but it does not mean that the concepts that we use to understand Islamic knowledge should be English-based, as IS-4 explained. Therefore, for ELL and IHC participants, accessibility, integration, and international recognition were the most prominent concerns, whereas for Islamic scholars, conceptual fidelity, engagement with primary sources, and the preservation of epistemology took precedence. Overall, the results show that using English as an auxiliary medium of communication and dialogue is not intended to replace other basic languages of scholarship, namely Arabic and other languages.

Implications

i. : Toward a Multilingual and Complementary Language Model

Participants in the three groups generally favored English to broaden the reach of Islamic civilization studies internationally, but held divergent views on its rightful place. Overall, the ELL teachers shared the view that writing in English is a key medium of communication for international publications, academic networking, and cross-cultural communication (ELL-2, ELL-5, ELL-7). IHC faculty also argued that English might

promote comparative scholarship and help studies of Islamic civilization become more attuned to international disciplinary communities (IHC-3, IHC-6). Islamic scholars, by contrast, focused more on maintaining Arabic and other basic languages of learning to uphold textual and conceptual coherence (IS-2, IS-4, IS-7). This supports a complementary multilingual use of English, where English serves as an international language and a second language alongside Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, or local languages. Such a model might balance and reconcile global accessibility, linguistic diversity, and epistemological continuity.

ii. : Curriculum Reform, Translation, and Academic Capacity Building

Participants' experiences also highlight the need for coordinated curricular reforms and institutional capacity building. The ELL faculty identified some students and researchers (ELL-1, ELL-4) as having deficiencies in academic English, scholarly writing, and the ability to publish internationally. IHC faculty stated that integrating academic English and research methodology, digital scholarship, comparative historical analysis, and source-based analysis (IHC-2, IHC-5) was imperative. Nevertheless, Islamic scholars said that people should not be denied Arabic and other primary source languages (IS-1, IS-5) to train them in English. These complementary views indicate that academic English, specialized translation, digital research, and training for international publications should be part of Islamic civilization programs, but not at the cost of primary Islamic sources. Language facilities (translation centers, language training, editorial assistance, interdisciplinary research networks) could also help to further lower linguistic barriers to participation in the world.

iii. : Repositioning Islamic Civilization Studies within Global Knowledge Production

Participants were also convinced that English was a key tool for repositioning Islamic civilization studies in the internationalization of global knowledge. However, they opposed the unbalanced approach of internationalization from an English-dominant perspective. ELL participants pointed out that the visibility of Islamic studies in the discipline and an Islamic voice in international debates could be enhanced if the work was published in English (ELL-3, ELL-7), they said. A one-way flow of Islamic knowledge through externally set frameworks is not the way to engage internationally (IHC-1, IHC-4). Islamic scholars were especially worried that using too much English would lead to adapting concepts from epistemological bases of Islamic knowledge that are not adequate to the original bases of Islamic epistemology (IS-3, IS-6). Nevertheless, translating current scholarship into English should encourage theoretically grounded, source-based, and internationally communicative studies rooted in the intellectual heritage of Islam. It should encourage theoretically grounded, source-based, and internationally communicative studies rooted in the intellectual heritage of Islam. Contextually, English should be used as a tool for epistemic dialogue, not as an epistemic replacement, so that it can make intellectual

work on Islamic civilization more visible globally without eroding its epistemological basis, the concept of Islamic civilization, or intellectual independence.

6. Discussion

The results confirm that the English language is ambivalent in the process of globalization of the study of Islamic civilization. It boosts visibility, the spread of knowledge, interdisciplinary cooperation, and institutional internationalization, while raising concerns about linguistic inequality, epistemological reduction, loss of language in translation, and the marginalization of scholars grounded in traditions and epistemologies different from those of English. English, then, ought not to be seen as just a means of communication, but rather as a means for knowledge to circulate the world and as a language that is part of the academic power structure. These implications, however, differ based on the stance of faculty members in the ELL discipline, the IHC discipline, and the Islamic scholars themselves, as reflected in their perspectives.

Participants noted that English is an essential tool for raising the visibility and accessibility of Islamic Civilization scholarship on the global stage. ELL faculty stressed international publication and communication, IHC faculty stressed comparative scholarship and international networks, and Islamic scholars agreed that these are benefits but emphasized the need to maintain access to primary sources. This notion aligns with internationalization research, which recognizes English as a primary medium for the international circulation of academic knowledge across language and national boundaries [24]. English can serve as linguistic capital to access academic networks, publication opportunities, institutional recognition, and mobility in the job market (Abrar-Ul-Hassan, 2021; Codó & Riera-Gil, 2022); universities' linguistic capital affects their involvement in the international movement of knowledge (Chardenet & Ferreira-Meyers, 2020). Nevertheless, because basic Islamic education remains tied to Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, and related traditions, English must augment, not supplant, the language of the source texts.

English can also enhance disciplinary internationalization through English-medium courses, international publications, scholarly exchanges, digital resources, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It extends Knight's (2004) definition of internationalization, which includes curriculum internationalization, research collaboration, knowledge circulation, and institutional internationalization. However, internationalization and Englishization are not the same. Galloway et al. (2020) report that although English has been expanding in higher education, there is little evidence of its impact, and Bowles and Murphy (2020) warn that using English does not necessarily lead to inclusivity or internationalization. These results indicate the need for a two-way exchange of ideas between East and West, between Islam and English, rather than merely translating Islamic knowledge into English. English can do most of the work in advancing global scholarship.

The results also reveal that English is a linguistic asset which is unequally distributed. ELL faculty stressed the availability of journals, databases, networks, and conferences. At the same time, Islamic scholars and some IHC participants pointed out that poor English skills may put scholars who have extensive knowledge of Arabic, Islamic history, theology, and philosophy at a disadvantage because of their knowledge of Arabic and classical texts. This aligns with recognized value and valuation, and Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital, which recognizes the value and valuation of specific linguistic abilities [25]. In addition, Ramalingam and Islam (2024) also show that English language skills are connected to career progression, recognition, and social mobility of Bangladeshi graduates. Linguistic capital can, however, also be exclusionary: scholars who have mastered their own languages for primary-source research in more limited fields may have less access to international publications and recognition, as a consequence of structural barriers faced by what Piller et al. (2022) label peripheral multilingual scholars. This motive creates a paradoxical scenario through which the language of globalization, such as English, can make a person more visible while also affecting their visibility.

These concerns add to the scholarship of linguistic imperialism. Participants observed that English-language journals, indexing systems, institutions, and evaluation mechanisms may support English-language work, while other languages may be overlooked. Phillipson (1997, 2008, 2018) argues that the historical and structural relationship between English and unequal political, economic, and cultural power is linked, and that this relationship can be manifested through institutions that link English with modernity, prestige, legitimacy, and socioeconomic progress. Institutional expectations: Zeng et al. (2023) also explain the dominance of English in today's world as linguistic neo-imperialism, driven by institutional expectations and the perceived value of English. Similarly, Aydınli and Aydınli (2024) show English dominance in knowledge production across disciplines worldwide and call for increased multilingualism [26]. If Islamic civilization studies rely too heavily on English, then the representation of the Islamic world will become increasingly reliant on norms that are increasingly foreign to Islamic traditions. However, participants were not against English – they were for a critical-complementary approach that allows for the pragmatic importance of English without denying its place as one of the academic bases of legitimacy.

One theoretical implication relates to epistemic justice. Translation-related problems, conceptual simplification, and the imposition of categories from outside the system show that globalization is not only about linguistic access, but also about recognizing whose concepts and knowledge systems are legitimate. Fricker's (2007) analysis of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice is relevant, as multilingual scholars can suffer testimonial injustice if their credibility is assessed by the quality of their language skills and hermeneutical injustice if the dominant community's language inadequately captures their knowledge traditions. In EMI contexts, Zheng and Qiu (2023) note such dynamics, as do Piller et al. (2022) in global academic publishing. Participants also observed that there may

not be a 1:1 correspondence between Islamic theological, philosophical, ethical, legal, and historical concepts and their exact English equivalents. This aligns with Kerfoot (2024), who states that knowledge transfer is not always without epistemic consequences, and with Phyak (2021) [27] and Phyak and Sah (2022), [28] who demonstrate epistemicide caused by a dominant-language policy. Thus, translation is not only a technical process but an epistemological one and should be approached with care, noting the historical context, conceptual genealogy, disciplinary conventions, and meanings of source-language constituents. The scholarly languages of Islamic traditions, particularly Arabic, remain essential for source criticism and conceptual clarification.

The results indicate that translanguaging and multilingual academic practices may help balance global accessibility with epistemological integrity. Several scholars have shown that translanguaging can facilitate knowledge participation and counteract epistemic injustice [29]; that multilingual learning can empower learners as knowledge producers [30]; Moreover, that an alternative to language hierarchies is equitable multilingualism [31]. In Islamic civilization studies, English can support international dissemination, comparative scholarship, interdisciplinary communication, publications, etc. At the same time, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Ottoman Turkish, and other relevant languages can serve as focal points for source analysis and conceptual interpretation. This aligns with a multilingual epistemic ecology, rather than an Englishization of the curriculum.

The results also show the need for institutional structures for English-mediated globalization. A lack of English proficiency, translation skills, publications, and resources can limit access to an international academic network. This segment aligns with persistent problems identified in the EMI literature, such as teachers' preparedness, students' proficiency, institutional resources, and teacher–practice gaps [32]. EMI should thus be viewed as an institutional practice that must be read within context. English language teaching should not only focus on teaching general English but also on teaching academic English, English for reading and writing, international publication, digital research skills, source-based methodology, etc. English language teaching should not be limited to general English; it should also include academic English, English for reading and writing, English for international publication, English for digital research, source-based methodology, and interdisciplinary cooperation.

The findings offer one way to bring together EMI, internationalization, linguistic capital, linguistic imperialism, and epistemic justice in a framework that can help us understand the globalization of Islamic civilization studies. Hitherto, there have been wide studies of English in L2 teacher training and international communication [33]; Studies on the multilingual nature of Islamic civilization studies, as a source-dependent field, are comparatively limited [34].

Another implication is that institutional and pedagogical systems that facilitate multilingual internationalization, not Englishization, are required. The participants discussed designing a curriculum that combines the three components of academic English, scholarly translation, and primary-source engagement so that it can reach the whole world and remain intellectually authentic. The international Islamic think tank of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIT) calls for the integration of Islamic and contemporary knowledge via research, publication, and educational reform, whilst the international Islamic academic center of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM) advocates Islamic thought, civilization, and epistemology into higher education. The internationalization of the study of Islamic civilizations will not be achieved by English competence alone; it will require institutional support for multilingual scholarship, translation, and epistemologically grounded research. For this reason, English must be used as a medium for international academic activities. At the same time, Arabic and other Islamic scholarly languages still play an imperative role in academic knowledge production and interpretation [35].

Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak al-Aidrus's linguistic scholarship also reinforces the study's theoretical focus on contextual translation and comparative linguistic analysis. His translation and commentary on the work of Ibn 'Abidīn and his critical analysis of Rumi's Mathnawi [36] highlight the importance of maintaining the meaning of concepts and the culture of intellectual texts in Islamic communication across languages [37]. This perspective strengthens the argument for English-mediated globalization as a means of supporting epistemic dialogue, not language substitution. It ensures that making Islamic scholarship accessible does not affect its conceptual integrity.

The present study thus holds that evaluating globalization cannot be based solely on the uptake of English. However, it is also necessary to consider its potential to open international accessibility and facilitate the transfer of know-how, making disciplinary recognition possible and ensuring epistemic inclusion without losing the primary language or subordinating the conceptual traditions of Islam. English is neither a natural emancipatory language nor an oppressive one; rather, its effects depend on institutional arrangements, multilingualism, and the degree of epistemic reciprocity. Finally, English must not be a barrier but a bridge, and it is imperative that the other languages of the world, Arabic and others, which are the source of conceptual and textual depth and authenticity, and epistemological continuity, do not lose this.

The qualitative design employed semi-structured interviews with 21 ELL faculty, IHC faculty, and Islamic scholars, providing the context necessary for generalization but not statistical methods. It is co-authored; it examines perceptions, not actual outcomes such as publication counts, citation impact, international co-authorship, or student performance. The results are also situated in higher education and Islamic studies and can vary by country and institution. Finally, the study focuses on English, including English and other

Islamic scholarly languages, primarily in terms of source preservation and epistemological integrity. Future studies could address these limitations using a multi-site comparative design, a mixed-methods design, and a longitudinal design. Qualitative evidence may be supplemented with quantitative evidence, including publications, citations, international collaboration, and student outcomes. Future research could involve students, editors, policymakers, researchers from other countries, and researchers from within the Islamic world, and focus on multilingual, bilingual, and translanguaging models, notably in the context of scholarly translation and AI-assisted multilingual research to investigate how English can be used to serve global engagement while maintaining the conceptual, linguistic, and epistemological integrity of Islamic civilization studies.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that English can significantly support the globalization of Islamic civilization studies by enhancing international visibility, scholarly dissemination, interdisciplinary collaboration, digital engagement, and institutional connectivity. However, these opportunities come with challenges, including limited English proficiency, translation and terminological difficulties, unequal access to international academic platforms, linguistic marginalization, and the possible reduction or reinterpretation of Islamic concepts within dominant academic frameworks.

The study contributes to existing knowledge by bringing together linguistic, pedagogical, institutional, and epistemological dimensions of English-mediated internationalization within Islamic civilization studies. It demonstrates that globalization should not be measured by the adoption of English alone but by the extent to which Islamic scholarship can participate meaningfully in global knowledge production while retaining its linguistic and intellectual foundations.

The study therefore recommends a multilingual and complementary approach in which English serves as a medium of international communication. At the same time, Arabic and other relevant Islamic scholarly languages remain central to primary-source analysis, conceptual interpretation, and knowledge formation. Universities should strengthen academic-English training, scholarly translation, multilingual curricula, digital research capacity, and international research collaboration. Such institutional support can enable Islamic civilization studies to achieve greater global recognition without compromising its intellectual authenticity. Ultimately, English should function as a bridge for reciprocal scholarly dialogue rather than as a substitute for the linguistic and epistemological traditions that constitute Islamic civilization scholarship.

List of Abbreviations:

(EMI): English-Medium Instruction; (IHC): Islamic History and Culture; (ELL): English Language and Literature; (IIT) : Institute of Islamic Thought; (ISTAC-IIUM) : International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

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