

Functional Syllabus with Eco-Theological Focus: Language Use for Environmental Advocacy within Islamic Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a functional syllabus with an eco-theological focus to integrate language learning with environmental advocacy in Islamic contexts. Grounded in Islamic principles such as *khalifah* (stewardship) and *amanah* (trust), the study aims to show how communicative language functions like expressing concern, persuading, and proposing solutions can foster both linguistic competence and ecological awareness. The paper outlines theoretical foundations and practical applications of embedding Islamic environmental ethics into language teaching, suggesting that this approach promotes meaningful, value-based communication and strengthens learners' moral responsibility toward the environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating global environmental crisis has urged educational institutions and religious communities to reexamine their moral and pedagogical responsibilities toward the planet. Current global developments show a paradox in the world of education (Nagiya Nagiya, 2025). On the one hand, modern education has succeeded in increasing access and academic literacy (Iswandayani et al., 2025). However, on the other hand, ecological crises, moral degradation, and weak social concern are getting stronger (Gunawan & Tanjungpura, 2024). Across different faith traditions, the integration of eco-theology into education has emerged as a powerful framework for nurturing ecological consciousness grounded in spiritual and ethical values. Within the Islamic context, the potential of eco-theology rooted in the Qur'anic concepts of *tawhid* (oneness of God), *khalifah* (stewardship), and *mizan* (balance) offers a holistic perspective that connects human responsibility, divine creation, and environmental sustainability. However, despite its profound theological foundation, the practical translation of Islamic eco-theology into educational practices, particularly within language learning contexts, remains underexplored. While existing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)-based language curricula and faith-integrated models have

advanced environmental and values-based learning separately, none has systematically operationalized Islamic theological constructs—specifically *khalifah*, *amanah*, and *mizan*—as organizing principles for functional language teaching. This article addresses that gap by proposing a model in which communicative language functions (persuading, advising, reporting) are directly grounded in, and organized around, these Qur’anic concepts, offering a distinctively Islamic theological framework for advocacy-oriented language pedagogy.

Environmental education (EE) has long been recognized as a strategic response to global ecological degradation (Rohman et al., 2024). Yet, most existing environmental curricula tend to emphasize scientific and behavioral dimensions, often neglecting the ethical and linguistic tools necessary for environmental advocacy. In fact, education should not only function as an instrument for knowledge transfer, but also as a means of internalizing values and shaping students' personalities (Muthoharoh, 2024). A functional syllabus with an eco-theological focus seeks to bridge this gap by integrating language learning with faith-based environmental awareness, enabling learners to use language as an instrument of advocacy, reflection, and transformation. Through communicative functions such as describing environmental problems, expressing moral responsibility, persuading others to take eco-friendly actions, and interpreting religious texts about nature, students can cultivate both linguistic competence and ecological literacy.

Recent studies illustrate the promise of this approach. Suhadi and Parker (2021) demonstrated how Franciscan schools in Indonesia translated St. Francis of Assisi’s eco-theology into educational practice, blending spiritual reflection with environmental activism. Their research underscores that eco-theology can serve as a moral and pedagogical foundation for sustainable living. In a similar vein, Islamic institutions have begun to embed eco-theological principles into religious and character education, emphasizing humans’ sacred duty to preserve the environment as part of worship (*ibadah*) and stewardship (*amanah*) (Rohman et al., 2024). Furthermore, (Lutfauziah et al., 2023) developed an environmental education curriculum for *eco-pesantren* Islamic boarding schools that model ecological lifestyles showing that integrating environmental education with Islamic values effectively fosters environmental responsibility and sustainability-oriented behaviour.

Drawing inspiration from these models, this article proposes a pedagogical framework that situates eco-theology within a functional syllabus design for language education. The aim is to promote environmental advocacy through purposeful language use grounded in Islamic values. This approach aligns with the broader vision of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and recognizes language as a vehicle for moral reasoning, community engagement, and social change. By merging linguistic functions with eco-theological content, the syllabus aspires to form learners who are not only proficient communicators but also environmentally conscious believers capable of articulating, debating, and leading ecological movements within their communities.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative literature review method to synthesize recent scholarly works at the intersection of Islamic eco-theology, environmental ethics, and language or educational curriculum development. The review aimed to build a conceptual and pedagogical foundation for designing a *functional syllabus with an eco-theological focus* for

language education within Islamic contexts. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration of educational concepts, values, and practices derived from theological studies, environmental ethics, and Islamic education curriculum development. It is important to note that this paper is explicitly positioned as a conceptual-theoretical study. Rather than generating new empirical data from classrooms or field contexts, it synthesizes existing scholarship to construct a principled, theoretically grounded framework for eco-theological language teaching. The proposed syllabus model is thus offered as a design prototype to guide future empirical validation, needs analysis, and classroom implementation in Islamic educational settings.

2.1. Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The review used peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers published between 2020 and 2025, emphasizing recent research trends. Sources were selected from the uploaded journal articles, including *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* (Hajar, 2024), *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* (Elihami & Pajarianto, 2025), *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* (Rohman et al., 2024), *TESOL Journal* (Warren et al., 2025), *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama* (Sayem, 2021), and *Eco-theology and Quran: A Reading of Select Ayat of Quran from Eco-Theological Point of View* (Parray & Magray, 2022). Articles were included if they met the following criteria: 1) Published in reputable academic or peer-reviewed journals; 2) Focused on Islamic environmental ethics, eco-theology, or integration of sustainability in Islamic education; 3) Discussed pedagogical implications, curriculum innovation, or advocacy-based language education; and 4) Written in English or provided English abstracts for conceptual synthesis. Non-peer-reviewed materials and non-academic reports were excluded to ensure scholarly reliability. One postgraduate thesis (Khosru et al., 2022) was used only for conceptual clarification of *Islamic environmental ethics* but not as primary data.

2.2. Review Process

The literature review followed a systematic qualitative synthesis approach. First, all journal articles were screened by title and abstract to ensure relevance to eco-theological and pedagogical themes. Full-text reading was then conducted to extract recurring concepts such as *khalifah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), *mizān* (balance), advocacy in education, and curriculum-based environmental engagement. Data were organized into four analytical categories: 1) Islamic eco-theological foundations for environmental ethics; 2) Integration of sustainability into Islamic education; 3) Pedagogical and advocacy perspectives in language teaching; and 4) Curriculum innovation and challenges in implementation. Each article was critically examined for its theoretical framework, methodological clarity, and educational implications. Themes were compared, contrasted, and synthesized to develop a holistic understanding of how Islamic eco-theology can inform functional syllabus design.

2.3. Findings

The reviewed literature revealed strong theological foundations within Islam that align with environmental ethics. Parray and Magray (2022) emphasized that Qur'anic verses concerning balance (*mizān*) and stewardship provide a moral basis for ecological responsibility. Similarly, Sayem (2021) advanced an eco-theological framework highlighting *bio-centric* ethics and divine trust (*amānah*) as the foundation of sustainable

living. Educational studies further support integrating these principles into Islamic learning contexts. Hajar (2024) and Elihami and Pajarianto (2025) demonstrated how Islamic education can promote sustainability through *eco-pesantren* initiatives and curriculum alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rohman et al. (2024) proposed a practical model for incorporating eco-theology into Islamic Religious and Character Education (IRCE), showing improved student awareness of environmental stewardship.

In relation to language education, Warren (2024) provided a relevant pedagogical link by conceptualizing the role of teachers as advocates who foster ethical and socially responsible communication. This aligns with the objective of designing a functional syllabus that trains students to use language for environmental advocacy. Collectively, these works establish a strong foundation for integrating communicative functions (such as persuading, advising, and reporting) with eco-theological values.

2.4. Analytical Framework

The integration of eco-theological perspectives into a functional syllabus draws upon the thematic synthesis from these studies. The analytical framework combines: 1) Theological constructs (stewardship, trust, and balance) from Islamic eco-theology (Parray & Magray, 2022; Sayem, 2021). 2) Educational transformation and curriculum development principles (Hajar, 2024; Rohman et al., 2024). 3) Advocacy-oriented pedagogy from language education research (Warren et al., 2025). 4) This framework guided the conceptual design of the proposed syllabus model, ensuring that it is both communicatively effective and theologically grounded.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The literature review yielded five major thematic findings that form the conceptual foundation for designing a *functional syllabus with an eco-theological focus*. These themes demonstrate the interconnectedness between Islamic environmental ethics, curriculum innovation, and advocacy-oriented language pedagogy.

Theological Foundations of Eco-Theology in Islam

The reviewed studies consistently affirm that the Qur'an and Sunnah provide a robust theological basis for ecological ethics. Parray and Magray (2022) emphasized that verses referencing *khalifah* (human stewardship), *mizān* (balance), and *fasād* (corruption on earth) establish humanity's divine duty to maintain environmental harmony. Similarly, Sayem (2021) identified *amānah* (trust) and *tawhīd* (unity of creation) as key theological pillars linking environmental care to faith and moral accountability. These principles position environmental preservation not merely as an ethical choice but as a spiritual obligation central to Islamic worldview.

This theological grounding provides a moral framework for developing language materials that reflect environmental consciousness. For example, syllabus themes such as "*Protecting Allah's Creation*" or "*Maintaining the Earth's Balance*" can embody these theological ideas in communicative language lessons.

Integration of Sustainability in Islamic Education

Several studies highlighted a growing movement toward sustainability-focused Islamic education. Hajar (2024) explored how Islamic schools and universities embed environmental ethics into their curricula through *eco-pesantren* and green campus initiatives. Elihami & Pajarianto (2025) linked Islamic education to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), arguing that Islamic values naturally align with global sustainability targets such as responsible consumption and climate action. Rohman et al. (2024) further demonstrated how integrating eco-theology into *Islamic Religious and Character Education (IRCE)* encourages students to apply Qur'anic ethics in real-world environmental actions. Together, these studies affirm that Islamic educational frameworks can effectively nurture ecological awareness through curriculum design. This finding directly supports embedding eco-theological themes into a functional syllabus to contextualize language learning with sustainability goals.

Advocacy-Oriented Pedagogy in Language Education

The review revealed that language education can serve as a powerful platform for social and environmental advocacy. Warren (2024) conceptualized the language teacher as an *advocacy-oriented educator*, emphasizing ethical identity formation and social engagement in pedagogy. By applying this concept, a functional syllabus can train learners not only to use language for communication but also to mobilize change—through persuasive speeches, campaigns, and community-based projects addressing environmental issues. This approach aligns with communicative functions central to a functional syllabus, such as *expressing concern, persuading others, proposing action, and reporting environmental issues*. It demonstrates how linguistic competence can coexist with ethical consciousness, fulfilling both educational and moral aims.

Curriculum Innovation and Implementation Challenges

Although the literature showcases successful cases of environmental integration in Islamic education, it also identifies implementation barriers. Studies by Hajar (2024) and Rohman et al. (2024) noted limited teacher training, lack of standardized eco-theological materials, and insufficient institutional support as major obstacles. Moreover, Elihami and Pajarianto (2025) observed that while many Islamic institutions adopt sustainable practices, formal curricular integration remains fragmented and often depends on individual teacher initiatives. These findings underscore the necessity of developing structured, adaptable syllabuses that combine communicative and theological objectives. Such a framework would support teachers in delivering lessons that are linguistically, spiritually, and environmentally coherent.

Conceptual Implications for Functional Syllabus Design

Synthesizing the findings from all reviewed works, the proposed model of a functional syllabus with eco-theological focus should integrate: 1) Theological content (Qur'anic verses, hadith, and Islamic values) contextualized within real communicative tasks. 2) Functional language objectives that promote advocacy-oriented communication (e.g., persuading, advising, suggesting, reporting). 3) Sustainability themes aligned with Islamic

ethics and global ecological goals. 4) Reflective assessment encouraging students to express moral reasoning through language use. Collectively, these implications demonstrate how eco-theological perspectives can transform language education into a site for both communicative competence and ethical formation. To make this synthesis more concrete and operationally transparent, Table 1 below presents the proposed conceptual framework, mapping each Islamic theological principle to specific language functions, illustrative learning activities, and suggested evaluation strategies.

Table 1. Conceptual Framework: Eco-Theological Functional Syllabus Design

Theological Principle	Language Function	Sample Learning Activity	Assessment Strategy
<i>Khalifah</i> (Stewardship)	Expressing responsibility; proposing action	Draft a community pledge to protect local rivers, referencing Qur'anic verses on stewardship	Rubric assessing clarity of moral argument and theological accuracy
<i>Amānah</i> (Trust)	Persuading; expressing concern; advising	Role-play an environmental advisory council discussing waste management as a moral obligation	Peer evaluation of persuasive coherence and ethical reasoning
<i>Mizān</i> (Balance)	Reporting; describing environmental problems; comparing	Write a report comparing a degraded and a preserved ecosystem, linking findings to Qur'anic concepts of balance	Portfolio with reflective journal entry linking linguistic analysis to spiritual reflection

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this review show that integrating Islamic eco-theology into a functional language syllabus offers a transformative approach to education by linking communicative competence with environmental and spiritual responsibility. Islamic theology provides a strong moral foundation for ecological ethics, as reflected in the Qur'anic principles of *khalifah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), and *mizān* (balance), which define humanity's role as caretakers of creation (Parray & Magray, 2022; Sayem, 2021). When these values are embedded into communicative lessons, language learning becomes an act of ethical reflection and advocacy rather than a purely linguistic exercise. To illustrate their pedagogical operationalization: the principle of *khalifah* can anchor a learning objective such as "Students will be able to write a persuasive letter to local authorities proposing environmental action, using Qur'anic references to stewardship as moral warrants." The principle of *amānah* can underpin an oral advocacy task in which students assume the role of community advisors presenting eco-friendly waste management solutions to a simulated village council. The principle of *mizān*, in turn, can be operationalized through a comparative writing task in which learners analyze environmental imbalance using both ecological data and selected Qur'anic verses. Assessment rubrics for such tasks would evaluate not only linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness but also the depth of theological reasoning and moral reflection demonstrated by students.

Studies in Islamic education confirm that sustainability and environmental ethics can be effectively integrated into religious learning. Hajar (2024) highlighted the success of *eco-pesantren* in fostering students' environmental awareness through experiential learning, while Elihami and Pajariato (2025) demonstrated how Islamic education aligns naturally with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Similarly, Rohman et al. (2024) showed that integrating eco-theological values into Islamic Religious and Character Education (IRCE)

enhances students' ecological consciousness and faith-based motivation to act. In addition, the concept of Green Latte is in line with eco-theology theories that place humans who have moral and spiritual responsibilities towards nature (Cahya Ramadhani Setya Rini1)*, 2023). These findings support the idea that Islamic education provides fertile ground for combining moral instruction and communicative learning. In the field of language education, Warren (2024) proposed that teachers should act as advocates who use language teaching to inspire ethical engagement. Applying this view within Islamic contexts allows communicative functions such as persuading, advising, and proposing solutions to serve as tools for environmental advocacy rooted in Islamic values. Through debates, campaigns, and reflective writing, students learn to use language not only to communicate but also to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

However, the literature also identifies challenges such as insufficient teacher training, limited curriculum support, and the lack of standardized materials (Hajar, 2024; Rohman et al., 2024). These practical constraints deserve closer attention. First, many language teachers in Islamic educational institutions possess strong linguistic competence but may have limited familiarity with Islamic environmental theology, while Islamic studies teachers familiar with eco-theological concepts may lack language pedagogy training. This dual competency gap suggests that professional development programs should be interdisciplinary and team-taught. Second, institutional resistance may arise in mainstream language programs where stakeholders perceive advocacy-oriented or theological content as peripheral to core communicative goals. Addressing this requires framing eco-theological content not as a replacement for communicative objectives but as a meaningful context through which language skills are authentically developed and practiced. To support feasible implementation, a phased approach is recommended: Phase 1 involves raising teacher awareness through short professional workshops integrating eco-theological themes with communicative language teaching principles; Phase 2 involves piloting selected syllabus units in willing classrooms with ongoing mentoring support; and Phase 3 involves full institutional integration with co-designed assessment tools and inter-departmental collaboration between language faculties and Islamic studies departments. A well-designed functional syllabus with eco-theological content, introduced through such a staged process, can bridge these gaps by linking communicative objectives with Islamic ethical principles while remaining responsive to real-world institutional constraints. In essence, the integration of eco-theology within a functional syllabus transforms language education into a form of spiritual and moral practice. It unites communicative purpose, environmental awareness, and Islamic ethics, creating a holistic learning framework where students use language to express, defend, and live out the Qur'anic vision of stewardship and balance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a functional syllabus with an eco-theological focus represents a holistic and innovative approach to language education within Islamic contexts. The synthesis of peer-reviewed literature shows that Islamic theology through the principles of *khalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (trust), and *mizan* (balance) provides a strong moral foundation for environmental awareness and responsibility (Parray & Magray, 2022; Sayem, 2021). When these values are embedded into communicative language teaching, learners are not only developing linguistic competence but also cultivating ethical

consciousness and spiritual reflection. The reviewed studies affirm that Islamic education systems are increasingly receptive to sustainability initiatives and that integrating eco-theology into the curriculum enhances students' ecological and moral awareness (Hajar, 2024; Rohman et al., 2024; Elihami & Pajarianto, 2025). Meanwhile, insights from language pedagogy emphasize that teachers play a critical role as advocates who facilitate transformative communication (Warren, 2024). Together, these perspectives illustrate that language learning can function as a bridge between faith, ethics, and environmental advocacy.

However, the integration of eco-theological perspectives into language teaching also presents challenges, particularly in teacher preparation, curricular design, and the development of authentic materials. Therefore, institutions should invest in professional development programs that equip educators with both linguistic and theological competence. Collaborative curriculum design between language experts and Islamic scholars is essential to ensure that the content remains communicatively effective and theologically accurate. For future research, empirical studies should explore the implementation and outcomes of eco-theological functional syllabuses in classroom practice. Researchers could investigate how such syllabuses influence learners' motivation, environmental behavior, and spiritual growth. In addition, comparative studies across diverse Islamic educational contexts could provide deeper insight into how language and faith-based environmental advocacy interact.

In summary, integrating Islamic eco-theology into functional language teaching transforms the classroom into a space for ethical action and reflection. It empowers learners to use language not merely to communicate but to embody their moral responsibility toward God's creation. By aligning communicative practice with spiritual values, this model promotes education that speaks to both the mind and the soul, uniting faith, language, and sustainability in one meaningful framework.

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