ISSUES IN TESL

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IIUM Press
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ELT AND ISLAM: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Abdul Shakour Preece

When considering the status of English and ELT in the Muslim world, we notice that there are two main groups or opinions: those in favour of Muslims learning English and those against. The group who argue against Muslims learning English claim that ELT materials and practices may be unsuitable or even harmful for Muslim learners because they are Anglo-centric in nature and promote 'linguistic imperialism' (Qiang and Wolff, 2005; Adamo, 2005; Pennycook, 1994; and Argungu, 1996).

The opposing group support the idea of Muslims learning English, contending that English is a useful and essential part of life in the 21st Century. The latter group hold that inappropriate ELT content and practices can be adapted to suit the needs and culture of Muslim learners (Ratnawati, 2005).

After an elaboration of the views of these two viewpoints, we will consider some important developments in Muslim education, as a result of the World Conferences on Islamic Education, and in particular, the intellectual movement known as 'Islamization of knowledge' (IOK). This will be followed by examples of the problems inherent in existing ELT materials. Lastly, an analysis of some recent attempts to develop ELT materials for Muslim learners will be conducted to identify their strengths and weaknesses.