

Integrating Islamic Values in English Learning through Islamic Stories: Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research was aimed to examine students' perspective in the integration of Islamic values into English learning through Islamic short-stories. This was an inferential quantitative method by using percentages in reporting the data. The participants were 31 grade X students from Islamic High School Al-Ghozali, Gunung Sindur, West java, Indonesia. In collecting the data, a 5-Likert Scale questionnaire ranging from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1) used as the instrument. This questionnaire was firstly validated through face-validity. There were 14 items consisted of 10 positive statements and 4 negative ones modified in this questionnaire. The data were analyzed quantitatively and then reported in narratives. The results of data analysis revealed that majority of the students gave positive perspective to the integration of Islamic values into English class through Islamic stories. Most of them agreed that the learning was fun, enjoyable, helped them to understand English better, enriched their vocabularies and made them able to differentiate between Western and Islamic cultures and apply all good lessons in their daily live.

Keywords: *English Learning; Islamic Values; Short Stories.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic values encompass principles outlined in the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). These values serve as the cultural foundation for the way Muslim communities live. They influence various aspects of life, including communication, interaction, and socialization with family, friends, neighbours, youth, older adults, and figures like teachers, employers, and leaders. Allah has specifically designed these values to foster spiritual well-being in individuals and society, and their realization depends on Muslims actively incorporating them into their lives (Downing, 2019).

In Indonesia, where Islam is the majority religion of the nation, the process of education should not be carried out against the values of Islam. Therefore, language teaching and learning of English --- as one of compulsory subjects taught at schools required the insertion of Islamic values to avoid any negative impacts of Western culture which is not appropriate with Islamic norms as learning a language means learning the culture of that language. The importance of English seen as it is an international communication language used by all countries around the world. According to

(Alkouatli, 2023) English has been being taught in Indonesia since a very long time ago with the purposes to make Indonesian future generations be able to speak, write, listen, and read in English. As Berlin (2022) said that since English is an international language, those who seek the most advantageous language for personal and professional development will obviously choose this language to master. However, the process of teaching and learning this subject does not integrate Islamic values despite the fact that Islamic subject is also a very important course needed to learn by the students.

Due to significant differences between Indonesian Islamic belief and English Western culture, introducing English to students without disrupting core elements of Islamic values should be considered. Braunack-Mayer (2023) gave his opinion that in regards to cultural differences and religious beliefs in English teaching materials and to enhance students' comprehension of the shared aspects between Western culture and Islamic values, it is highly recommended for teachers to provide clear explanations to students regarding the differences and similarities. At the same vein, Eltazarov (2023) said that incorporating Islamic values can serve as a means to enhance comprehension of cultural and belief distinctions. These two opinions implicitly explain that students' process of learning English should not neglect the Islamic culture which is totally different from English culture. At this stage, English teachers as the ones who are responsible for any English instructional activities are required to ensure that their students will only acquire English knowledge and understand its culture without adopting any cultural aspects against Islamic values.

According to Bradfer-Lawrence (2023), Islamic values should be taught to children as early as possible and in the context of learning a foreign language, giving students knowledge about the language with all its culture and at the same time, inserting Islamic learning will make them not only good at the language they learn but also able to select which cultures are appropriate with Islamic values and which are not.

Elton-Chalcraft (2017) defined Islamic values as a set of standards and judgements existing from Islam's worldview of Allah, the universe, life, and humanity. These values guide individuals in building interactions with society, determining goals and directions reflected in their actions; directly or indirectly. Ganassali & Matysiewicz (2021) described that Islamic values give impacts both to individuals and society. For individuals, Islamic values affect them in terms of: 1) human behaviour, i.e., to shape morality, positive deeds, and social harmony; 2) personal development, i.e., to ensure spiritual growth and self-advancement; 3) good conduct, i.e., to guide good behaviour, create a respectful and tolerant society; 4) balance and moderation, i.e., to promote moderation and balance in all aspects of life. For the society, Islamic values give impacts in terms of: 1) peaceful contexts and tolerance, i.e., to promote acceptance to other culture, religion, ethnics, and foster a harmonious society; 2) justice and equality, i.e., to encourage equality and fairness in treatment and resource distribution; 3) positive ethics, i.e., to serve any positive sources such as charity, honesty, humility, empathy, generosity, etc.; 4) social unity and solidarity, i.e., to encourage solidarity among society members, strengthen unity and social bonds; 5) sustainable development, i.e., to raise awareness of any charitable works such as supporting those in need and improving life

welfare; 6) peace and stability, i.e., to build stable and peaceful society through tolerance, justice and social harmony in order to encourage cooperation, fairness, and unity.

Hefner (2016) argued that “Islamic values are significant to be incorporated into all subjects in schools, including English” (p. 97). To support this opinion, he proposed several reasons, namely: First, to minimize any disruptive moral actions in Indonesia such as bullying, intolerance, violence, corruption, juvenile, and many others by implementing value education. Second, to build students’ religious and spiritual characters as their guidance to behave and develop abilities coloured by Islamic nuances and ethics. Third, to build students’ character as the description of core competence in English subject and strengthen their Islamic spirit behaviour. Integrating local cultures and religious values would make English teaching be more meaningful, for example using Islamic topics to ask students to practice their speaking or writing skills (Kline & Fischer, 2023). To respond to this opinion Kolb (2023) argued that teachers’ lack of Islamic knowledge becomes one of the issues to integrate Islamic values into English language and learning. Teachers will only be able to design learning activities and materials properly only if they have sufficient understanding of the values of Islam (Lundeto, 2021).

There were several ways to integrate Islamic values into English teaching and learning proposed by Raymond (2019) and one of them was through Islamic stories. Students generally appreciate stories due to their remarkable ability to capture listeners’ attention and facilitate quick retention of events narrated in a story (Schrum, et.al., 2020). Stories offer a good understanding of language for listening and reading, making students excited, motivated, and more focused on learning. As Yulizar & Hasibuan (2022) said that stories provide much vocabulary that students can learn and grasp while listening or reading.

In line with this, Tikhonova & Raitskaya (2023) reported in their study that short stories made students eager to assimilate and commit new words to memory, hence, they acquired and retained vocabulary while learning through short stories. Yaacob & Haron(2024) also expressed that applying stories in language classroom encourage students to link listening with enjoyment which enhance their ability to focus on and retain information while also enriching their bank of words. Learning through stories is a practical approach to strengthen language skills and ignite learning motivation authentically and naturally (Tran & O’Connor, 2024).

Having understood how importance Islamic values are to be instilled into English teaching and learning and how short stories give benefits to students to support their English learning, this research proposed an idea to integrate Islamic values into English teaching and learning through short stories. There were big numbers of previous studies which investigated the use of short stories in English learning and teaching (Ghafar & Zubaedah, 2023; Kasap, et.al., 2022; Pardede, 2021), or descriptively reported the examination of integrating Islamic values in TEFL (Astuti, Mustofa, Nisak, 2024; Safitri, Jabu, Samtidar, 2023; Alfian, Yusuf, Nafiah, 2022) , but the ones that scrutinized Islamic values integration in English teaching and learning through short stories from the perspective of the students were still limited. Thus, this research fulfilled this scarcity

by shaping the focus on finding out students' perspectives on the integration of Islamic values into English learning through short stories. The researchers believe that this research work will give valuable contribution to the theories of EFL particularly in terms of teaching and learning strategy. Besides, it is also expected that the results of this study give beneficial knowledge to English practitioners to gain insights on how to blend the values of Islam into English subject through stories.

METHOD

This research employed quantitative method with descriptive statistics approach. This research design uses data description of the chosen sample that can be classified into ordinal, numerical, and or nominal variables (Muñoz, 2024). The experimental research itself was conducted in the even semester of academic year 2023/2024 at Islamic High School Al-Ghozali, Gunung Sindur, Bogor, West Java. The researchers chose this school because in their pre-liminary study, they found out that this school has been applying the integration of Islamic values into English teaching and learning and mostly use Islamic stories to boost students' English comprehension.

There were 31 students of grade X participated in this study. These students were occupied in one class and randomly selected from totally 5 classes of grade X through cluster random sampling. Simkus (2023) explained that cluster random sampling refers to a sampling technique in which the researches split a large population into smaller groups called as clusters and then choose those clusters randomly. By referring to this definition, the researchers considered all 5 classes of grade X as the clusters and then selected 1 class as the sample. In collecting the data, the researchers used questionnaire which was made and modified by the researchers in 5 Likert Scale ranging from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1). There were 14 statements consisting of 10 positive statements and 4 negative ones comprised this questionnaire. As McDowell (2021) said that a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of statements to collect data from respondents. In order to ensure its validity, this questionnaire was firstly validated by the expert judgement before being distributed to the students. The data of the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively and then reported descriptively in the form of percentages.

This research work was guided by a research question of: "What are the students' perspectives on the integration of Islamic values into their English learning through short stories?"

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

As it was previously explained, the data were collected by using questionnaire. The following Table 1 presents the summary of students' responses to 14 statements in the questionnaire:

Table 1. Students' responses to questionnaire

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1 I enjoy learning English through stories with Islamic values	19%	49%	29%	0%	3%
2 The integration of Islamic stories into English makes the learning more enjoyable	10%	48%	42%	0%	0%
3 The integration of Islamic stories into English makes the learning more boring	0%	3%	26%	58%	13%
4 Stories with Islamic elements help me understand English better	10%	30%	48%	12%	0%
5 Learning English through Islamic stories make me closer to the religious values	16%	42%	32%	10%	0%
6 Stories in English learning can build positive characters to students and teachers	10%	68%	22%	0%	0%
7 Stories in English learning do not build positive characters to students and teachers	0%	0%	9%	61%	30%
8 The use of Islamic stories in English learning enriches my vocabulary a lot	3%	45%	42%	10%	0%
9 The use of Islamic stories in English learning does not enrich my vocabulary	0%	10%	10%	64%	16%
10 I am happy if English learning also pays attention to Islamic values	13%	49%	32%	6%	0%
11 I do not care if English learning does not pay attention to Islamic values	6%	3%	39%	46%	6%
12 English stories focusing on Islamic values help me able to differentiate between English and Islamic cultures	13%	45%	42%	0%	0%
13 I believe that learning English through Islamic stories provides a unique view of religious values	17%	53%	30%	0%	0%
14 The integration of Islamic values in English learning through stories allows me to apply good lessons in my daily life	13%	58%	29%	0%	0%

Based on the findings above, it can be descriptively explained as follows:

[1] I enjoy learning English through stories with Islamic values.

There were 49% of the students 'agreed' to this statement. It showed that using stories with Islamic values build fun learning atmosphere for the students. It was a positive attitude in which while the students enjoy the learning, they will become more motivated, then the learning objective can be well-achieved. This finding was in line with the study of Li, (2024). who reported that the students became more encouraged, excited, and active learning through short-stories because they found out that these short-stories were fascinating.

[2] The integration of Islamic stories into English makes the learning more enjoyable.

Like the statement number 1 above, at this statement, majority of the students (48%) also 'agreed' that Islamic stories integration makes the learning more enjoyable for them. This also revealed that by having Islamic stories in their English learning, the students felt more enjoyable. This finding supported what By-nc, (2022). discovered in their study in which the learning by using Islamic stories is a fascinating and enjoyable activity.

[3] The integration of Islamic stories into English makes the learning more boring.

On the contrary, students' responses toward this statement were mostly 'disagreed' (58%). This finding indicated that the students did not feel bored in English learning activities when Islamic stories were being inserted.

[4] Stories with Islamic elements help me understand English better.

The was a total of 48% of the students 'agreed' with this statement. This indicated that learning English by using Islamic stories gave benefits for the students in terms of their understanding. In terms of English understanding, students' response to this statement was similar with the research findings of Kahraman & Səntürk (2020) who reported that using short stories in English teaching was proven to give contribution to grammar's success of the students.

[5] Learning English through Islamic stories m0akes me closer to the religious values.

The responses of the students to this statement were mostly 'agreed' (42%). This showed that integrating Islamic stories did not only make the students master English but they also learn religious aspects. In relation to this finding, McDowell, (2022). said that "Stories are considered powerful in promoting values and character building. Stories give sharper effects for instilling values towards students rather than lecturing or giving advice on what students must and must not do" (p. 148).

[6] Islamic stories in English learning can build positive characters to students and teachers.

This statement got the highest response to 'agree' (68%). This revealed a very positive attitude of the students who confirmed that their characters were affected also in good sides. Rozelin et al., (2024) said that teachers are role models and concrete examples for students in practicing Islamic values in their daily live. His research work also revealed that integrating Islamic values in learning improved students' discipline, honesty, and responsibility. Besides, his observation deduced that students had deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and be more religious.

[7] Islamic stories in English learning do not build positive characters to students and teachers.

At this statement, students' responses were dominated by 'disagree' (61%) and 'strongly disagree' (30%) which meant that Islamic stories in their English learning affected their characters positively.

[8] The use of Islamic stories in English learning enriches my vocabulary a lot.

Students' responses to this statement were quite interesting in which most of them (45%) 'agreed' while the second majority of them (42%) preferred to be 'neutral'. This point should be further studied to confirm whether or not using Islamic stories enrich students' vocabulary. This finding was in line with By-nc, (2022). who claimed that stories or narratives support EFL learners' vocabulary enrichment in general.

[9] The use of Islamic stories in English learning does not enrich my vocabulary.

In relation to the previous statement, students' response that dominated by the answer of 'disagree' towards this statement was confusing. Before, most of them preferred to be 'neutral' asking if Islamic stories enriches their English vocabulary, but then they said 'disagree' when they were asked if Islamic stories do not enrich their English vocabulary.

[10] I am happy if English learning also pays attention to Islamic values.

This statement was responded 'agree' by most of the students (49%). This indicated that the students also concern a lot to their Islamic knowledge even when they were studying English.

[11] I do not care if English learning does not pay attention to Islamic values.

The highest percentage for this statement was in 'disagree' (46%) which also revealed that the students put their focus also on the teaching of Islamic values.

[12] English stories focusing on Islamic values help me able to differentiate between English and Islamic cultures.

This can be seen that most of the students (45%) 'agreed' to this statement. It is a good fact for the objective of teaching and learning Islamic religion where the students should be able to know the values of Islam and hence, will not be easy to adopt other cultures different from Islamic taught such as English cultures. According to Kolb, (2023)., Islamic principles integrated in language learning will not only make the students acquire foreign language appropriately, even more, they will be able to filter out which cultures that are not relevant to Islam.

[13] I believe that learning English through Islamic stories provides a unique view of religious values.

This statement gained the highest response on 'agree' which can be interpreted that most of the students got a good view about religious values through Islamic stories given to them in English class.

[14] The integration of Islamic values in English learning through stories allows me to apply good lessons in my daily life.

At this statement, majority of the students 'agreed' that by learning English with Islamic stories they could absorb meaningful lessons to be applied in their daily lives. McDowell, (2022) said that Islamic stories are referred to Quran-hadith, thus, students who are taught with Islamic stories will not only gain knowledge but also practice religious knowledge based on the principles of Islam.

Discussion

According to the findings above, the perspectives of the students could be classified into four: 1) the enjoyment of learning; 2) the improvement on English learning aspects (comprehension and vocabulary enrichment); 3) the ability to differentiate between Islamic and Western cultures; 4) the impacts on religious and moral values. The enjoyment of learning. **The enjoyment of learning.** As comprised on the statements number 1, 2, 3 in the questionnaire, the students perceived that they enjoyed learning English through Islamic short stories, hence the process of the learning is not boring. "Creating a positive learning environment in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms is fundamental for fostering effective language acquisition and enhancing overall student well-being" (<https://eflcafe.net>). Thus, having the students enjoy the learning experience will positively supports their academic growth, at this point was their English learning process. In line with this, Zhang (2023) opined that relaxing and enjoyable learning experience has a significant impact on students' English learning in which they will have a good mood and motivation, hence promoting their active learning.

The improvement on English learning aspects (comprehension and vocabulary enrichment). From the statements number 4, 8, 10 in the questionnaire, the students perceived that they had a better understanding of English through Islamic stories. Besides, they also said that their vocabulary was enriched through the employment of Islamic short stories in their English learning. This finding was also proven by Rohmani, Muhsinin, Rahmat (2023) in their quantitative research which concluded that the use of short stories improved vocabulary mastery of the students examined from the results of their vocabulary post-test which was higher than their vocabulary pre-test. The researchers believed that students' improvement on English learning aspects in this study was highly correlated with the enjoyment of their learning. It is undoubtful that the students who are motivated and interested in learning will actively engage in the learning activities which then affects their learning objective well.

The ability to differentiate Islamic and English cultures. As seen from the findings above, majority of the students said that they were able to differentiate both Islamic and Western culture (statements number 12 and 13 in the questionnaire). Levine (2022) claimed that "learning a language means learning the culture of that language".

In relation to the ability of the students to understand the difference between Islamic and Western cultures through Islamic stories, it could be said that by using Islamic English short stories in their English learning, the students got the ideas on how these two cultures are different. Thus, it was a positive result to anticipate Islamic values degradation. The students were getting understand that they study English and its culture due to the pivotal position of English as an international language, thus, any Western culture contradicts Islamic thoughts and values should not be adopted.

The impacts on religious and moral values. Based on the students' responses on the statements number 5,6,7,10, 11, 14 in the questionnaire, it could be clearly explained that from the learning process which integrated Islamic values into English learning through Islamic short stories, the students were influenced positively in terms of moral and Islamic values, besides, they were encouraged to apply good values in their daily live. As Astuti, Mustofa, Nisak (2024) said that by incorporating Islamic values in teaching and learning, it is expected that the students will be able to develop their deep understanding of Islam to be implemented in their everyday life. This opinion is also in line with what Rahmadany, et.al., (2021) argued that integrating Islamic values in the process of teaching any subject is one of the efforts to enhance students' character and behavior according to the principle of Islam.

CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perspectives on the use of Islamic stories integrated in their English learning. The analysis of students' responses to the questionnaire revealed positive perspective in which majority of them 'agreed' with the statements stated in the questionnaire. The integration of Islamic values into English teaching and learning through Islamic stories made them enjoy the learning, understand English better, master more vocabulary, able to differentiate between Western and Islamic cultures, and able to apply and practice any good lessons in their daily lives.

SUGGESTION

This research work suggests further studies to explore more on other teaching mediums that might give more positive contributions in the integration of Islamic values in ELT, such as using Islamic songs in listening class or using Islamic figures in descriptive writing class and others by involving more participants as the samples such as teachers and students' parents. Besides, adding more variables in the study might also give broader perspectives, such as teachers' teaching method or students' learning styles.

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