



## Can Islamic Stories be Used as Supplementary English Materials at Islamic Elementary Schools?

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### Abstract

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Along with the Islamic schools' vision and mission, their curriculum generally integrates Islamic values with all subjects taught at schools including the English subject. However, the implementation of the integration is still considered a challenge. This research aimed at confirming the possibility of Islamic stories being used as supplementary materials for English teaching at Islamic elementary schools and give an analysis of how to develop Islamic stories for English teaching materials. This research was carried out at SD IT Insan Karim, Samarinda. Employing a qualitative design, this research used interviews, observation, and documentation to collect data. The interviews with the school principal, English teacher, and one of the parents were carried out to obtain data regarding the curriculum and policies, the target needs, and the learning needs of the English subject. Observation and documentation were managed to support and confirm the findings. Data collected was then analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results show that Islamic stories can be used as supplementary materials to integrate English teaching and Islamic values in the context of Islamic elementary schools. Islamic stories should be developed by considering several aspects and steps such as the curriculum, the language used, illustration and appearance, guidance for teachers, and moral lessons/values. The result of this research could serve as the basis for designing Islamic stories as supplementary materials and have implications for further research and development particularly in the context of Islamic elementary schools.

**Keywords:** Islamic stories, supplementary English materials, Islamic elementary school

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## **A. Introduction**

The fact that the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslims and religions play critical roles in Indonesian societies make the needs of Islamic education in Indonesia are high. Thus, many Muslim parents send their children to Islamic schools in which Islamic identity as their core value in their education system is integrated with the national education system determined by the government. Religious value and character building, and Islamic environment provided by Islamic schools are dominant factors influencing parents' decision in choosing Islamic schools in countries where Muslims are majority (D. Hidayati & Rifa'i, 2020; Islam et al., 2019), even in those where they are not (Musharraf & Nabeel, 2015).

Along with the vision and mission of Islamic schools, the Islamic school curriculum generally integrates religious values and characters with all subjects taught at schools including the English subject (Rohmah et al., 2019; Sari, 2019). In this context, English teachers are required to teach materials not only to make students skillful in English but also to build Islamic values and characters. In many cases, this task is still considered a challenge for them (Cahyo et al., 2019; Madkur & Albantani, 2017; Rohmana, 2020). They must be creative in selecting materials and implementing teaching methods, so that they can achieve both goals. However, the teachers still find it difficult to get suitable and standardized English teaching materials that specifically contain Islamic discourse. According to research by Cahyo et al. (2019), one of problems at Islamic schools is the limited resources of Islamic-based English teaching materials. On one hand, the available of English textbooks at Islamic Schools still lack context for Islamic value integration because it was first developed for general schools. The quality is standardized, but there are no specific themes in the textbook that support the goal of Islamic schools for integrating Islamic values. On another hand, the available English materials from the internet that may contain Islamic values are usually not well managed or structured.

Many English teachers at Islamic schools have not been able to integrate Islamic values with English teaching materials. They can only integrate Islamic values in English classrooms in particular activities such as praying before and after learning, and giving advice when students do inappropriate behavior, but not in the teaching materials. This condition is in line with the findings of a study by Zaitun & Wardani (2018) on Islamic Values in the Context of English Learning and Teaching at SD Labschool FIP UMJ, and a study by Rohmah et al. (2019) on The Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Islamic Values Integration in English lesson at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Rohmah et al. (2019) recommended that research on the development of an English teaching prototype which integrates Islamic values will be advantageous for English teachers at Islamic schools as well as the school stakeholders. A previous study by Madkur & Albantani (2017) mentioned that to find applicable and effective strategies for delivering Islamic values while administering English instruction is still hard. This study suggested that it is necessary for Islamic schools to provide English textbooks with Islamic values as the guidance for the English teachers to build Muslim students' religious characters through English lesson. According to Rohmana (2020), the English textbook with Islamic integration is necessary with some topics like teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith, traditional Islamic stories, life of Muslims around the world, and biography of the prophets, the companions, scholars and leaders.

Most Islamic Elementary schools now still use English textbooks published by the general publishers as the main learning source. The textbooks do not specifically contain Islamic stories as one of teaching materials. Therefore, the researcher believes

that the Islamic stories could take the position as supplementary materials that will help English teachers in implementing the integration of Islamic values and English teaching. According to Karki (2018), using supplementary materials is necessary because it is almost impossible to have one ideal textbook which can meet the needs of all learners. Therefore, the presence of supplementary materials is significant to provide alternatives and makes the learning activities in the classroom more varied.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted research to confirm the possibility of Islamic stories being used as supplementary materials for English teaching and give an analysis about how to develop Islamic stories for English teaching materials. The results of this research will lead to bigger research for research and development particularly teaching materials development.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. Islamic Stories as English Teaching Materials**

The Islamic stories for story telling or story reading activities in the classroom could be one of alternative materials for the integration of Islamic values and English teaching. Teaching foreign language through stories or narratives, both for storytelling and as reading materials is considered to have many benefits (Arvizu, 2020; Erkaya, 2003; Handayani, 2013; N. N. Hidayati, 2019; Nasir & Inayah, 2019). Stories do not only provide a comprehensive language input for both listening and reading, but also engage students and make them enthusiastic, motivated and more focused in learning. Stories also provide a bunch of vocabularies that students can learn and acquire during their process of listening or reading. A previous study by Nasir & Inayah (2019) suggested the use of storytelling as a method to develop young learners' language proficiency as well as motivate them in learning. Besides, storytelling is considered as an interactive method for learning language authentically and naturally. For young learners, stories are engaging and make them enthusiastic. Handayani (2013) in her study mentioned some benefits displayed by the use of children's short stories in English classrooms, those are facilitating the learners to improve their vocabulary, encouraging the learners to develop critical thinking, motivating the learners, and accommodating the learners in practicing their language skill.

Several studies recommend the use of stories in English classroom for teaching English vocabulary (Arvizu, 2020; Handayani, 2013; Nazara, 2019; Siahaan, 2012), Listening (Jaya et al., 2018), Grammar (Kahraman & Şentürk, 2020), and Speaking (Ompusunggu, 2018). A study by Arvizu (2020) found that narratives or stories generally support the vocabulary learning for EFL young learners. They tend to be liked by learners, particularly the young ones as well as provide context for meaningful foreign language learning. Another study by Siahaan (2012) also recommended the story reading technique as a beneficial alternative to be used by EFL teachers for young learners to boost the vocabulary development because it has high effectiveness. The research findings by Kahraman & Şentürk (2020) found out that teaching by using short stories has a contribution to the students' grammar success. Furthermore, the study recommended to English teachers or textbook designers that inclusion of literary texts to the curriculum, textbooks or lessons, can optimize language learning.

From the students' perspective, learning by using stories is mostly liked by students. Research by Nazara (2019) on students' perception of the use of short stories in English learning found that the majority of respondents had a positive

view of the use of short stories to improve vocabulary. The majority of them discovered short stories useful and interesting, and approximately 80% of them were open to accepting reading short stories for learning purposes. Because the context of the story provides reliable hints to the meaning of new vocabulary, short stories allow them to develop vocabulary more easily. They became even more active, encouraged, and excited about learning vocabulary through stories because they discovered short stories fascinating.

## **2. Integrating Islamic Values in English Teaching Activities by Using Islamic Stories**

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. In the context of Islamic schools, Islamic stories from Qur'an and hadith are prioritized to be taught to students to give Islamic knowledge on Qur'an-hadith and also teach Islamic characters contained in the stories. According to Saugi (2020), the teachers at Islamic education institutions use stories from Quran-hadith and other Islamic stories to give understanding on particular manners or characters to students because stories are also considered more effective rather than giving materials or lectures to students about manners. Students of Islamic schools are expected to master knowledge not only in a general education setting, but also to have religious knowledge and practice religious and moral values based on the Islamic principles. Therefore, the use of Islamic stories powerfully facilitates students to have a good ability in English reading as well as a deep understanding and knowledge of Islamic principles. Thus, the benefits of Islamic stories for teaching English, especially reading cannot be neglected (Sari, 2019). Jaya et al. (2018) mentioned that there are four primary reasons that promote students' interest in English learning by using Islamic storytelling at Islamic schools. These are: learning by using Islamic storytelling is an enjoyable and fascinating activity, the selected Islamic stories meet the student's needs, the stories contain meaningful messages that are relevant to their daily life as a Muslim, and the presence of pictures as illustrations.

Considering the benefits of stories in learning English and Islamic stories in building Islamic values and characters, it is highly possible for English teachers to use Islamic stories for teaching English in the classroom. Therefore, English teachers need to select or develop appropriate Islamic stories written in English. This research aimed to give an analysis on how Islamic stories can be used as English supplementary teaching materials at Islamic elementary schools.

### **C. Method**

SD IT Insan Karim is one of Islamic elementary schools in Samarinda that integrate Islamic values with all aspects at school. However, this school has not integrated Islamic values with the English teaching materials used in the classroom teaching. Therefore, this school was chosen as the research location. This research used a qualitative research design and focused on the description of the need analysis on Islamic Stories as Supplementary English Materials at Islamic Elementary Schools, a case study of SD IT Insan Karim Samarinda. Therefore, this research was a type of need analysis research.

The first step to identify students' needs and select appropriate teaching materials and methods is conducting needs analysis or needs assessment. According to Brown (1994) need analysis is defined as a systematic collection and analysis of both subjective and objective information required to determine and verify defensible curriculum aims that meet the students' language learning requirements within the context of specific institutions that affect the learning and teaching situation. In brief, it can be defined as procedures applied to gather information about learners' needs (Richards, 2001). The results of needs analysis will serve as the basis for designing tests, materials, teaching-learning activities, evaluation strategies, and etc.

Needs analysis is essential in material selection and development. By carrying out needs analysis, teachers could select suitable materials for teaching their students and implement suitable methods that can motivate and engage the students in the learning process of English classrooms (Sunengsih & Fahrurrozi, 2015). There are two categories of needs analysis, as developed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), those are target needs and learning needs. Target needs refer to what students require to do, while learning needs refer to what students require to do to learn. The target needs are categorized into three parts: necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities are related to what students have to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Lacks are related to the necessities that the students lack in connection to what they already know. Wants refer to students' view about what they need. These aspects of needs will be explored while carrying out the need analysis.

In this research the needs analysis focused on confirming the needs of Islamic elementary schools on Islamic stories as supplementary materials for English teaching and giving an analysis about the target and learning needs related to developing Islamic stories as supplementary English materials. As Islamic schools have specific goals in integrating Islamic values in all aspects of school life including in teaching English subjects, specified English materials need to be developed to answer the needs of achieving the Islamic schools' goals. This research could serve as the basis for designing Islamic based English teaching materials, particularly the Islamic stories as English teaching materials at Islamic Elementary schools.

The research data collection used in-depth interviews with three subjects: those were the school principal, the English teacher, and one of the parents. Three subjects consisted of two females and one male. The interview with the school principal was carried out to obtain information regarding the curriculum of Islamic school and the school policies for the English subject. The researcher also carried out an in-depth interview with the English teacher to support the data collected from the school principal. It was aimed to confirm the data obtained from the school principal and specific data about the needs of English learning. The in-depth interviews with one of the parents was also carried out to provide data related to the needs of English learning from the parents' perspectives. Documentation was also managed to support the findings in this research specifically regarding vision and mission, and curriculum instruments such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and learning sources (textbooks). The observation was done in terms of examining previous documents or teaching materials (textbooks) which were used in teaching English. Data collected from the interviews, observation, and documentation was then analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as theories of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Miles et al., 2019).

## **D. Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Policy of English Teaching at Islamic Elementary Schools**

According to the Curriculum of 2013, English is only a mandatory subject for junior and senior high schools, but it is not included in the curriculum for elementary schools. However, many private schools such as many Islamic schools still teach English as a local content subject. According to an interview with the principal, SD IT Insan Karim is one of schools that teach English as a local content from grade 1 to 6. Based on the document of the school's Vision and Missions, SD IT Insan Karim has Vision and Missions that lead to the integration of Islamic values with all aspects at school. The vision and missions in details are shown in the following table 1:

**Table 1 Vision and Missions of SD IT Insan Karim**

<b>Vision</b>	Mumtaz (Excellent) school based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, Smart, Noble Characters and Environmentally Friendly
<b>Mission</b>	1. To carry out the Qur'an learning by using the method of Ummi
	2. To carry out the Tahfidz Qur'an and hadith learning
	3. To carry out the creative and innovative learning
	4. To carry out the monitoring of worship and discipline
	5. To carry out the Dhuha prayer practice
	6. To carry out the Zuhur prayer together
	7. To carry out the monitoring of classroom and school environment cleaning picket
	8. To carry out the Cleaning Friday Activities

Based on the Vision and Mission, it seems that the Qur'an and Sunnah (Hadith) as the sources of Islamic teaching are the fundamental of all school's policies and programs. The missions in detail also show that most school programs relate to Islamic teachings. According to data, the school principal confirmed that all aspects of school life must be based on the Islamic way of life including the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The principal also confirmed that ideally the English teaching and learning could integrate Islamic values to the materials and activities in the classroom. This finding is in line with Rohmah et al. (2019) and Sari (2019). However, the implementation is still difficult as supported by many research findings (Cahyo et al., 2019; Madkur & Albantani, 2017; Rohmana, 2020). First, the curriculum for the English subject still uses the general curriculum without any modification related to the integration of Islamic values. Therefore, the syllabus and lesson plans do not explicitly mention the integration of English teaching with Islamic values in terms of learning objectives, materials, or activities. Second, the textbooks used as the main learning sources are also published by a general publisher and assumed to be developed for general schools, so they do not specifically contain Islamic values.

This is also supported by the English teacher that the English subject at this time does not integrate Islamic values in terms of learning objectives, materials or activities. The Islamic values can only be implemented by minor activities such as

opening and closing the meetings with prayer. Therefore, the English teacher confirmed that the English supplementary materials that integrate English teaching and Islamic values are needed by the school and the teacher. This need is also confirmed with the result of the interview with one of parents who believe that integrating Islamic values with English teaching materials would meet the parents' expectation of sending their kids to an Islamic school.

## **2. Needs of English Language Teaching at Islamic Elementary Schools**

According to the interview with the principal and the English teacher of SDIT Insan Karim, the objectives or targets of English teaching at school could be divided into two: those for lower graders (grade 1-3) and higher graders (grade 4 to 6). For lower grades, the objective or target of English teaching is to introduce English vocabulary and simple expressions related to students' daily life at an early age, while for higher grades, it is to make students able to communicate in English in simple communication and understand simple grammar. These findings are supported by Sunengsih & Fahrurrozi (2015) that found the objectives of the English subject at Elementary level are introducing English and developing the students' competence on simple communication in English orally in the school context.

The lack of English teaching in terms of the integration of Islamic values are the limitation of the available learning sources. The textbooks used as the main learning resources do not specifically contain English teaching materials that integrate Islamic values. These findings are in line with previous research by Cahyo et al. (2019) and Rohmana (2020). In relation to the Islamic stories as English teaching materials, the English teacher said that she has not used those kinds of stories to teach English. Finding stories that meet the needs of the curriculum and suitable for elementary students is not easy. However, the English teacher confirmed that supplementary materials such as Islamic stories are needed for the purpose of the integration of Islamic values.

Islamic stories as supplementary materials for storytelling or story reading activities are believed to be a good idea according to the interviews with the school principal, English teacher and parent. Islamic stories are also believed to have many benefits for the purpose of the integration of English teaching and Islamic values (Jaya et al., 2018; Sari, 2019). Students are enthusiastic when listening to stories. Therefore, they want the Islamic stories to consider the students' interest and have themes such as animals, nature, miracles, the prophets' stories and Islamic humor stories. They also want the stories to be in the forms of books with many colorful pictures or illustrations. The parents also suggested that the stories could be developed in the forms of videos like cartoon movies as the moving images would help students to understand English. If the stories are developed in the forms of books or written materials, the parents suggested providing colorful pictures and maybe translation in L1 of particular vocabulary to help students understand the stories. In relation to the Islamic values to be contained in the stories, the school principal emphasizes the needs of the values of noble characters to others to be taught through the stories. The parents also expect that Islamic

stories for teaching English could give students knowledge and lesson from the history of Islam through meaningful stories.

### 3. How should Islamic Stories as English Supplementary Materials at Islamic Elementary Schools be Developed?

Based on the results of data collected, in developing Islamic stories as English supplementary materials at Islamic Elementary Schools, there are some steps and aspects to be considered:

#### a. The curriculum

The development of Islamic stories as English supplementary materials must refer to the curriculum used at school. It means that the development must consider the use of vocabulary, language functions and grammar as the target of the curriculum. Generally, it can be done by selecting the themes for the development of Islamic stories by referring to the topics in the syllabus. The following table 2 is the list of topics for the English subject from grade 1 to 6.

**Table 2 List of Topics of English Materials at Elementary Schools**

Grade	Topics	Grade	Topics
<b>First</b>	My Friends and Teacher "Hello"	<b>Fourth</b>	How do you Spell Your Name?
	My Classroom		Schedule
	My Face		It's a Tidy Living Room
	My Family		In the Garden
	My House		My Big Family
	My Pets		Food and Drink
	My Toys		Toys
<b>Second</b>	At the Playground	<b>Fifth</b>	Weather
	A New Friend		All about Me
	May I Borrow Your Pencil?		School (direction)
	Wash Your Hands		At the Doctor's
	I Want Some Noodles		Describing People
	A Blue Shirt		At the Clothes shop
	Where is the Chair?		Farm Animals
My Neighborhood	Leisure and Sports		
<b>Third</b>	At the Zoo	<b>Sixth</b>	Places to Go
	My Name's Made		Holiday
	Sports and Leisure		Narrative
	Time		Narrative: Fables
	At the Party		At the Shop
	Jobs		Going Green
	Break Time		Technology around Us
Going Shopping			
Transportation			



As the examples, for the topics “My Pet”, “At the Zoo”, “Farm Animals” and “Narrative: Fables”, the development of Islamic stories for supplementary materials could be based on the stories of “the prophet Sulaiman who had ability to understand the animal’s language” or other animal stories from the Qur’an and hadith. For the topic “My Family”, the development of Islamic stories could be based on the story from the hadith “Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father”. For the topic “Food and Drink”, the Islamic story could be based on the story of “Abu Hurairah and A Bowl of Milk” from hadith. For the topic “In the Garden”, the story could be based on the story of “the owner of a garden” from hadith. Since in one level/ grade there are 6 to 8 topics, as supplementary materials, Islamic stories could be developed for 3 to 4 topics in each level.

Selecting the themes and developing Islamic stories that are related to the topics taught at the classroom are required to ensure that the materials developed will meet the needs of the curriculum. Howard & Major (2004) mentioned that the curriculum is one of factors to consider when designing materials because many teachers are bound by a mandated curriculum defining the content, skills and values to be taught.

#### **b. The Language Used**

As English materials should help learners to develop confidence (Tomlinson, 1998), the language used in the stories need to be understandable and meet the students’ level of English, needs and interests (Nazara, 2019). Besides, they also need to be challenging and help students to improve their proficiency. Therefore, the Islamic stories must contain vocabulary that students have already mastered as well as new vocabulary that students need to master. Dealing with young learners, developing Islamic stories must also consider the use of short and simple sentences more than complex or compound ones. Young learners also highly need repetition during the learning, so it is one of the aspects of language used in the stories that are most helpful. As an example, for the topics “My Family”, developing stories from the hadith “Your Mother, Your Mother, Your Mother and then Your Father” would be good because it provides repetition of phrases such as “who next?” and “your mother” three times within the story.

#### **c. Illustrations and Appearance**

The illustrations and the appearance of Islamic stories are also crucial things. Young learners will like colorful pictures that represent the content of the stories. When the stories are about animals, some animal pictures would be best to be presented together with the texts. When the stories are about food and drink, some pictures of food and drink should be presented too. In order to make sure that students can also read the stories by themselves with ease, the font size must be calculated to be readable by children. Besides, the layout of the stories should provide enough blank space and not too much writing put together in one page. This is important because materials should help learners to feel at ease (Tomlinson, 1998).

#### **d. Guidance for teachers**

As the Islamic stories are developed for English teaching, there are some aspects to be considered in addition to the stories itself. The stories must include aspects such as guidance for teachers, pre-taught vocabulary, grammar focus, the values or messages from the stories, alternative activities to follow up learning after the story time, and etc. The guidance for teachers includes how to use the stories for a variety of activities, the media or tools that teachers can use such as puppets, pictures, whiteboard and marker, etc.

#### **e. Moral lessons/ values**

Moral lessons or Islamic values contained in the stories are the key of the integration. In addition to selecting stories by referring to the topics as the content of the curriculum, the values such as honesty, discipline, helping each other, respecting each other, politeness, love and peace based on Islamic teachings should be considered when developing the stories.

This research used a case study of SD IT Insan Karim Samarinda, so the results might be not completely relevant to other contexts or institutions. However, based on the discussion above, the researchers assumed that the results of this research could be a picture of other Islamic elementary schools in Indonesia.

### **E. Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that Islamic stories can be used as supplementary materials to integrate English teaching and Islamic values in the context of Islamic elementary schools. Islamic stories should be developed by considering several aspects and steps such as the curriculum, the language used, illustration and appearance, guidance for teachers and moral lessons/values. The results of this research can serve as the basis for designing Islamic stories as supplementary materials and have implications for further research with the design of research and development particularly in the context of Islamic elementary schools.

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