

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING ISLAMIC TEXTS IN ENGLISH READING INSTRUCTION

Oktariyani

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Lampung, Indonesia
oktariyani@unulampung.ac.id

Ninin Herlina

Universitas Nasional, Indonesia
ninin.herlina@civitas.unas.ac.id

Ratna said

Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia
ratnasaidppsunj@gmail.com

Hyunbim Im

Seoul Technical High School, Korea, Republic of Korea
imhyunbim@gmail.com

Larra Semyanov

Yakutsk, Russian Federation
larrasemyanov49@gmail.com

** Corresponding Author*

Received: 29-04-2025

Revised: 06-08-2025

Accepted: 28-02-2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating Islamic texts into English reading instruction at an Islamic high school in Tangerang, Indonesia. Although religious texts have the potential to support literacy development and character education, current English learning materials lack such integration. To address this gap, the study explores how educators and learners perceive Islamic texts and identifies the benefits and challenges of incorporating them into English reading classes. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with three English teachers and three students, open-ended questionnaires administered to thirty students, four classroom observations, and document analyses of syllabi and lesson plans. The findings show that both teachers and students respond positively to using Islamic texts: teachers regard them as effective tools for promoting moral values and enhancing reading skills, while students report increased engagement, motivation, and a stronger connection to the content. However, challenges include sourcing level-appropriate materials, managing linguistic complexity, and ensuring inclusivity in diverse classroom contexts. The study recommends careful material selection, collaboration between English and Islamic education teachers, and the use of varied multimodal resources aligned with the CEFR to integrate language instruction and character development effectively.

Keywords: *Character Education, English Learning Materials, Multimodal, Perceptions*

How to Cite Oktariyani, Herlina, N., Said, R., Im, H., & Semyanov, L. (2026). Teachers' And Students' Perceptions of Using Islamic Texts in English Reading Instruction. *INTIHA: Islamic Education Journal*, 3(2), 500–514. <https://doi.org/10.58988/intiha.v3i2.472>

INTRODUCTION

Learning English at the Islamic high school plays a strategic role in enhancing students' language skills and shaping their character by integrating positive values. This aligns with a modern view of teaching a foreign language, which is aspect-oriented linguistics and includes affective, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects (Richard, 2001; Brown, 2007). In Indonesia's education context, the value of Islam as part of local culture becomes an important aspect that can be integrated into learning, especially in schools with strong religious backgrounds. This emphasizes the importance of differentiated, contextual, and reinforcement-oriented learning, characterizing students through the Profile Pancasila Students. One of the indicators in the profile is "faithful, pious" to God Almighty and has noble morals, which opens room wide for integrating religious values, including Islam, in various lessons, including English (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). This strategy reflects a holistic approach to education that encourages integration between knowledge mastery and character development (Samuels & Casebeer, 2005).

Reading skill is a crucial aspect of building literacy for students when studying English. The Independent Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum establish competency in reading as part of increasing the ability to grasp text in context, different social and culture (BSNP, 2016). The reading text used in reading learning is a tool for practicing literal and inferential understanding and can also become a medium for internalizing certain values. According to (Ivey & Broaddus 2007), selecting relevant and meaningful text for students is one of the key successes in learning to read. In this context, Islamic texts such as stories of prophets, hadiths, and verses of the Koran in translation can be used as a reading and learning medium that educates spiritually. According to (Jin, 2024), (Banegas 2019) uses contextual and relevant teaching materials with life students capable of increasing motivation, learning, and engagement in learning. In addition, the text is full of spiritual values that can also push the formation of character, religious and ethical participants, and education.

In the context of learning a foreign language such as English, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach integrates relevant local or religious knowledge with language instruction. This method has successfully improved language proficiency while expanding knowledge content (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula 2014). In practice, Islamic texts can be used to practice skills in reading while still noticing aspects of appropriate Language and content with religious and cultural values and by students. Moreover, perception is a cognitive process that enables individuals to catch, understand, and give meaning to the stimulus from the environment surrounding areas. According to Dhingra & Dhingra (2011), perception is crucial in education since it forms the basis for students' methods, materials, and learning environment in the classroom and teachers' responses and behavior. Perception is how individuals organize and interpret information to give meaning to the environment.

Teacher and student perceptions of an approach to learning significantly influence the success of its implementation. Teachers who positively perceive a method or material for learning will apply it with more enthusiasm, creativity, and consistency (Horng et al., 2005). Students who have a positive perception of the materials used will show higher motivation to learn more, more active participation, and deeper emotional involvement in the learning process (Greene et al., 2004). In this regard, perception is important in determining an effective approach to Islamic texts in English learning. Suppose teachers and students see Islamic text as something relevant, meaningful, and

supportive of the values they obey. In that case, they will be more open to accepting it and actively participate in the learning process. This is supported by the results study conducted by (Klassen et al. 2018) found that school teachers intermediate on show enthusiasm to use English teaching materials containing Islamic values since they are considered capable of building religious character at a time increasing students' language skills.

Additionally, children will comprehend content reading more readily when they have a connection to the culture and spirituality of the materials being used, such as Islamic texts. In theory, proposed by (Krashen 2004), It is stated that the attitudes and emotions of students are the highly influential levels of openness when they receive language input. Suppose the student feels comfortable and appreciated in a culturally appropriate way, and the materials align with their values. In that case, the affective will be low so that the language input can be accepted optimally. Further, the perception of material learning is also related to cultural relevance. According to (Aronson & Laughter , 2016), it is stated that culturally relevant material learning will strengthen the connection between students and classroom materials and enable them to identify more with the learning topic. The use of Islamic books can be viewed as an attempt to achieve learning that is not only academic but also grounded in a cultural and spiritual sense in a school where the majority of the students are Muslims.

Perception, however, is not necessarily beneficial. For instance, a negative perception of Islamic literature can hinder their acceptance since they are considered inadequate by the generally neutral and worldwide English learning context. To determine how widely the approach is accepted and how well the development strategy can be implemented, it is crucial to examine teacher and student perceptions thoroughly. However, academic research on incorporating Islamic texts into English instruction is still lacking. Prior research has concentrated more on using textual narratives, authentic texts, or content from book lessons. Previous research has focused more on using authentic, narrative, or material from book lessons. While utilizing Islamic texts in reading learning has not been done yet, it has not received concern from the teacher and students. Perception is replaced as important for determining the effectiveness and acceptability of the material in the teaching-learning process (Richards, 2001).

Thus, this study aims to investigate how instructors and students at the Madrasah Aliyah perceive incorporating Islamic texts into reading instruction for English language learners. This study also seeks to determine the advantages and difficulties of implementation. This study is also expected to contribute to developing English teaching materials that are communicative and academic and moral and religious values in context local education context in Indonesia. As for the questions, the proposed research is as follows: (1) How do teachers perceive the use of Islamic texts in learning English reading?; (2) How do students perceive to use of Islamic texts in learning English reading?; and (3) How do the obstacles and benefits experienced by teachers and students using Islamic texts in learning English reading?.

METHOD

The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This research was carried out at one of the Islamic High Schools in Tangerang Regency, Banten, which is known as a school that integrates Islamic values into the learning process. This study took two

months, February-March 2024. The data source of this research consists of English teachers who teach reading in grades X/XI/XII and Islamic High Schools and the students from classes that have been or currently use Islamic texts in reading material. The number of informants was determined with a purposive sampling technique, namely choosing the informant who has considered their knowledge, experience, and involvement directly in the intended learning. Researchers notice the principal ethics with request agreement from party schools and respondents before the study is carried out, and researchers also maintain the confidentiality of the identity informant.

To obtain valid and in-depth data, researchers using 4 four techniques: In-depth interviews were conducted to gain teachers' and students' perceptions. An Open-Ended Questionnaire was given to students as a complement to gather more data about their experiences and views. Observation was also done during the learning process in progress. Lastly, the Documentation Technique collects additional data such as syllabi, lesson plans, and examples of Islamic texts used in learning.

According to (ruru & Rios, 2021), data analysis uses qualitative data analysis techniques, which include three main steps: data reduction, sorting, and simplifying the resulting data, interviews, questionnaires, and relevant documentation. Data presentation: compiling data in a narrative, table, or chart to make interpretation easier. Interviews were conducted with three English teachers and three students of the XI class in an Islamic High School. The aspects that are asked consist of 7 questions, such as the response of students, the use of Islamic text, the opinion about the integration of Islam, the development strategy material, the challenges of using Islamic text, and the formation of Islamic characters and texts to help understanding. At the same time, a questionnaire was opened and given to 30 students as an interview data supplement. Questions in the questionnaire focus on students' experience reading Islamic texts in English class. Observation was done during four meetings, reading, and learning with Islamic text material. Documentation obtained from the teacher in the form of copy syllabus, lesson plans, and several example Islamic texts used in learning.

For data validity, researchers use the technique of triangulation, sources, and methods, namely, comparing data from various sources (teachers and students) and multiple methods (interviews, questionnaires, documentation, observation).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Interview results for 3 English teachers are as follows:

Table 1. Answer Teacher Interview

| Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 |
|--|--|--|
| I strongly support integrating Islamic values Islam in English learning, especially in reading texts. This can become an effective way to shape moral values at once increase students' literacy skills. | Integration of Islamic values in English learning is a form of approach to replace effective contextual approach, especially in schools based on Islam. This strengthens the identity student and increases the sense of responsibility for spiritual answers. | This is innovative learning that is academic and spiritual. In vocational schools, students are closer to material with values and life. |

Oktariyani, Ninin Herlina, Ratna said, Hyunbim Im, Larra Semyanov

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Using Islamic Texts in English Reading Instruction

| Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 |
|--|--|--|
| Yes, I once used text about the story of the Prophet Yusuf and quotes from hadith, simple. I usually insert it as a material reading in a narrative text topic. After reading, students were asked to analyze the structure story and determine his morals. | Yes, I often use texts such as translated verses of the Koran in English and stories companions of the Prophet as material for reading. I combine vocabulary and summarizing tasks. | I have used Islamic text as an article, short about ethos, Work in Islam, and hadith about honesty in expository text material. I ask the student to make a summary and explain the message of his morals. |
| Response student: Enough positive. They feel nearer to material things since the context is relevant to life, everyday day, and the background of their culture. Even though some students become more Spirit Study since they feel the material is "meaningful". | The students are replaced well. They so more Spirit since material reading is not only for studying Language but also adds religious knowledge. Often discussions to more life since students are interested in discussing the meaning behind the story. | Students feel more connected in an emotional way. They feel valued since the background behind their religion is part of learning. |
| Yes, since students are more familiar with the Contents story or the context they can focus on aspects of Language. New words are also more easily understood since they have already been previously to the content story. | Replace helpful. Islamic texts usually have a clear structure and flow strong story. This makes it easier for students to identify text structure, such as orientation, complication, and resolution. | Yes, since they understand the context. Even students who are usually passive So more active when reading Islamic texts. They feel more believe self-conveying their opinion. |
| Replace supportive. Frequently used values are patience, honesty, and guarding trust. This usually appears the moment students reflect on the content text | Yes, character traits such as trust, patience, and empathy often appear. Even though some students write reflections, the story they read makes them want to become more personally Good | Yes, character, religious, responsible, and work hard often appear in discussions. They also learn a method to connect religious values with life work, an important thing in vocational school. |
| The challenge is finding an Islamic text in English suitable for the student level. Sometimes the Language is too difficult or too long. In addition, there is concern that non-Muslim students may not feel sufficiently involved if the material is not customized with context-inclusive content. | The biggest challenge is adapting between national curriculum to the content. Not all Islamic texts can be directly made into teaching materials without adaptation and simplification processes. | Challenge technical limitations, teaching materials, and time for short lessons. Sometimes, there is also resistance from other teachers who are not used to this approach |
| Think the strategy must be gradual: start from simple text, use illustrations or supporting videos and combine them with activity and reflective discussion. Teachers must also be given training and resources in Islamic reading in proper | The material must be developed based on CEFR levels and made into textbooks or thematic modules with relevant Islamic texts. A multimodal approach (combining text, audio, and visual) is also helpful. | Collaboration with cross-teachers (English and Islamic Religious Education) and compilation material based on the project. For example, students create an "Islamic English Reading Stories " booklet group. |

| Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| English for the high school level. | | |

Questionnaire Result

The results of the distributed questionnaire to 30 students are displayed on the Open Questionnaire Results Diagram below:

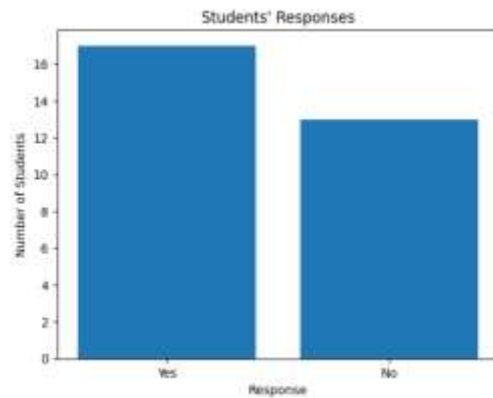


Figure 1. Ever Read Islamic Text

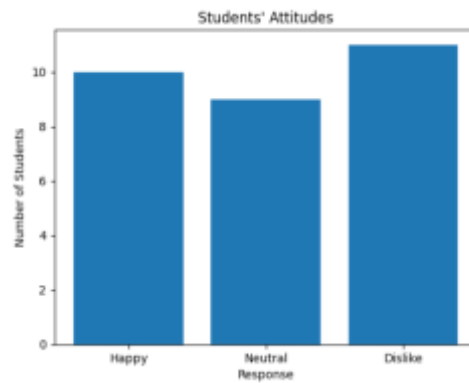


Figure 2. Feelings When Reading

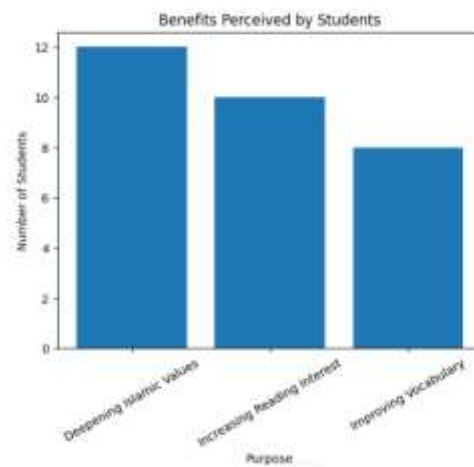


Figure 3. Benefits of Islamic Text

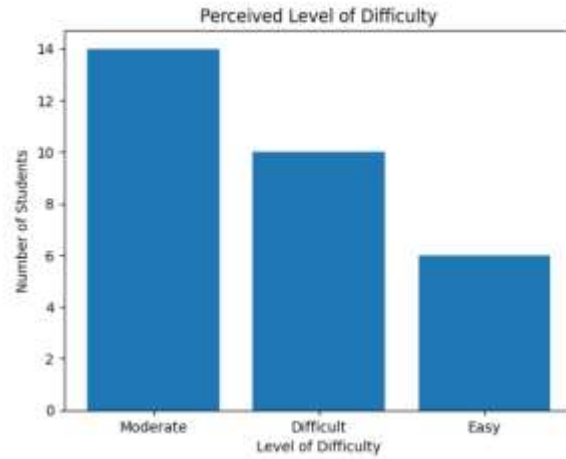


Figure 4. Level of Difficulty

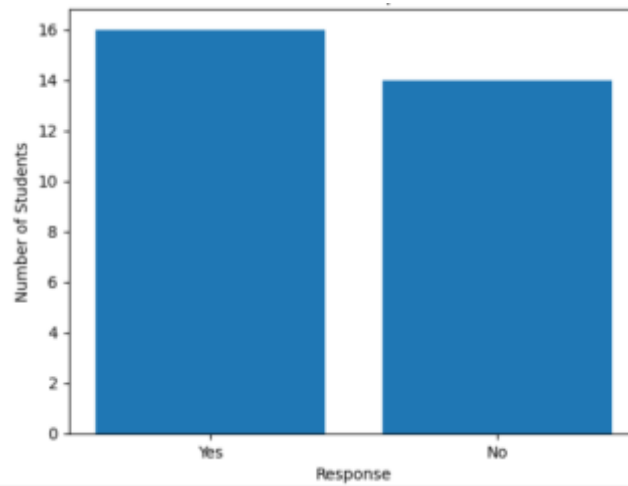


Figure 5. Interest in Learning to Read

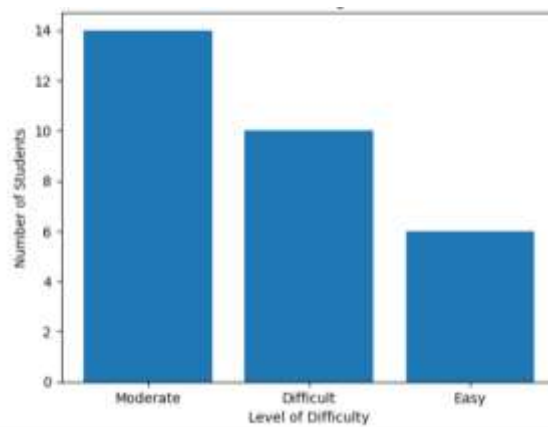


Figure 6. Islamic Values Help

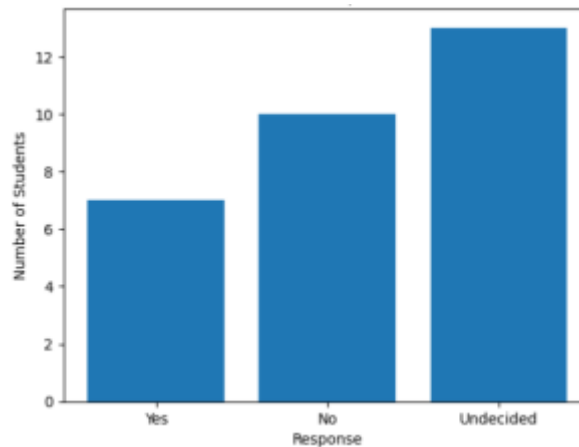


Figure 7. Continued Use of Islamic Text

Results of observations in class

The aspects observed are as follows:

Table 2. Aspect Observation in Class

| Observed Aspects | Indicator |
|---|---|
| Use Islamic texts in the material. | The teacher uses Islamic texts (Prophet stories, verses, hadiths, etc.) in reading. |
| Delireplace of material by the teacher | The teacher explains the context of Islam from the text clearly and interestingly. |
| Involvement student | Student actively reads answers questions, or discusses Contents of Islamic text. |
| Response to student's text | The student looks interested, enthusiastic, or curious as soon as they read the Islamic text. |
| Integration of Islamic values | The teacher emphasized Islamic values in the text (morals, honesty, perseverance, etc.) |
| Use of supporting media | Teachers use visual/audio media that support the understanding of Islamic text. |
| Compliance with Islamic texts with ability levels for students | Islamic texts are used for a level of knowledge of the English language |
| Reflection or conclusion containing Islamic values and Language | Teachers and students reflect on the content and value the text after learning is finished |

Documentation Results

This step covers a copy syllabus, lesson plans, and several examples of Islamic texts used in learning.

Subject: English

Grade/Semester: XI / Odd Semester

Basic Competencies:

Analyzing meanings in spoken and written recount, narrative texts related to daily life, and Islamic texts in short and simple forms.

Oktariyani, Ninin Herlina, Ratna said, Hyunbim Im, Larra Semyanov

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Using Islamic Texts in English Reading Instruction

Composing spoken and written recount and narrative texts related to daily life and Islamic texts in short and simple forms.

Table 1 Copy of Syllabus

| Week | Main Material | Supporting Text | Learning Activities | Assessment |
|------|----------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1-2 | Narrative Text | The Story of Prophet Yunus (in English) | Reading, identifying story elements, and discussing Islamic values | Reading tests, individual assessment |
| 3-4 | Recount Text | The Story of a Companion of the Prophet (Abu Bakar) | Listening and rewriting the story, text-based Q&A | Writing rubric, attitude observation |

The following is the RPP used by teachers in learning.

School : MAN 1 Tangerang
 Subject : English
 Class /Semester : XI / Odd
 Semester Main Material : *Narrative Text – The Story of Prophet Yunus*
 Time Allocation : 2 x 45 minutes

A. Learning Objectives

1. Students can identify the structure of text Islamic narrative.
2. Students can find moral messages and values in Islam from the text.
3. Students can tell the return Contents text in the Language they Alone.
4. B. Steps Activity Learning:

B. Learning Activities

Introduction (10 minutes):

1. The teacher gives greetings and appreciation for the story of the Prophet.
2. Convey the objectives and benefits of learning.

Activities (60 minutes):

1. The student read the text "The Story of Prophet Muhammad".
2. Discussion of meaning vocabulary, difficult structure, and text.
3. Questions and answers about moral values and messages preached in the text.
4. Students tell the return Contents story in a group.

Closing (20 minutes):

1. Reflection together about the Islamic values obtained.
2. Assignment: writing a short Islamic story version alone.

C. Assessment

1. Attitude: Participation and work are the same.
2. Knowledge: quiz, short, and discussion. Contents text.
3. Skills: storytelling/writing, repeating text.

DISCUSSION

This section answers the question of the proposed research, namely: (1) How do teachers perceive the use of Islamic texts in English reading learning?; (2) How perception students perceive to use of Islamic texts in English reading learning?; and (3) Anything obstacles and benefits felt by teachers and students moment using Islamic texts in reading learning?.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Islamic Texts in English Reading Learning

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Interview results with three English teachers show that, in a general way, they have a positive perception of integrating Islamic texts into reading and learning. Third participants state that this approach not only increases students' literacy skills in the English language, but also as a platform for moral and spiritual values. This is in line with the idea of learning based on values (*value-based education*) that places education as a means to form the character and personality of students not only from the side of cognitive but also the affective and spiritual aspects. Teacher 1 emphasized that using Islamic texts can be an effective strategy to add moral values while practicing reading critically. Teacher 2 highlighted the importance of strengthening students' spiritual identity. In contrast, Teacher 3 sees this as innovative, relevant learning with the need for character and the world of work, especially in vocational schools.

In practice, the three teachers have implemented Islamic texts through various types of appropriate reading text curricula, such as narrative and expository texts. Teacher 1 uses the story of the Prophet Yusuf and quotes hadith for practice students to understand the structure text and dig into the moral message. Teacher 2 combines translations of Al-Qur'an verses and stories of companions of the Prophet with vocabulary and summarizing exercises. In contrast, Teacher 3 uses Islamic articles on ethics and hadith about honesty. (O'Sullivan 2006) stated that Islamic texts bridge the target language and the values, culture, and living religion daily.

Student response to integrating Islamic texts in reading learning is replacing positive. The teachers observed that students show improvement, enthusiasm, participation, and involvement compared to when using text conventions. Connectedness between content text and with background of cultural and religious students makes them feel more appreciated and included in the learning process, which is a deep perspective of *critical literacy* viewed as an effort to empower students through reading meaningful and reflective text. (Janks, 2013) . Some students who previously tended to be passive become more active, convey their opinions, and show trust in a better self.

Apart from the cognitive aspects, learning with Islamic texts also impacts the realm of effective students. After reading the text, the three teachers reported that values such as patience, honesty, working tough, empathy, and responsibility often appear in discussion classes. In this case, his reading learning is not only an event for understanding the structure of Language but also a means of internalizing values and reinforcing character. This aligns with the principal education character according to (Lickona, 2006), who emphasized that learning must be designed to develop moral knowing, feeling, and action simultaneously. Several students reflect on how their reading Islamic stories motivate them to become more personal.

However, the implementation of Islamic texts in English learning still faced challenges. Among them are limitations in the availability of appropriate teaching materials with level ability Language students, particularly in matter complexity structure, and the length of the text. In addition, the adjustment process of Islamic material with the national curriculum needs careful adaptation not to contradict standard applicable learning. The teacher also expressed the existence challenge in a guarded atmosphere and inclusive classes, especially if there are non-Muslim students who need to be involved appropriately. Regarding technical constraints, it covers limitations, time, and resistance from other teachers who are not used to teaching with the approach.

In response to the challenge, the teachers proposed various implementation strategies. The recommended strategies cover selection, simple and relevant Islamic text with students' skill level, use of supporting visual and audiovisual media, and a task to write a reflection. Collaboration between teachers, especially English teachers and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, is crucial for designing thematic and contextual materials. In addition, developing teaching materials based on the CEFR framework and a multimodal approach is considered a solution for the present learning experience more interesting and meaningful. One of the proposed innovative strategies is a project making a *booklet* containing Islamic stories in English, composed by students collaboratively, which not only increases language skills but also strengthens social and character competence.

Perception of students to use Islamic texts in English reading learning

The questionnaire results showed that most (around 17 students) had experience reading Islamic texts in English learning. This indicates that the Islamic value-based learning approach is not foreign to students and can be a potential medium for increasing their involvement. As expressed by (Husnul Amin, 2024), character education that is contextually integrated into learning will be more easily accepted by students since it touches on the affective aspects and values already inherent in their lives. Students' emotional responses when reading Islamic texts show a positive tendency, where more than half of the students stated "happy" or "less such as" (in the context of this graph, "less such as" has the largest number of students, which is around 11 people). However, the group of students who are "neutral" is also quite significant. This shows that the integration of Islamic values in the text is not yet fully optimal in arousing emotional interest, so it needs to be improved in selecting more relevant content or interesting presentation methods, such as a multimodal approach (Jewitt, 2006).

Regarding the benefits experienced by students, the majority stated that Islamic texts assisted them deepen Islamic values (around 13 students), increased reading interest (around 11 students), and enriched vocabulary (around nine students). This finding aligns with (Lantolf, J & Pavlenko's, 1995) idea of sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social and cultural context in language learning. When students face culturally familiar content and values, the language acquisition process will be more effective since personally meaningful meanings are internalized.

In terms of difficulty level, most students considered that the Islamic texts they read were at a "moderate" level, with a small number of students finding them "difficult" or "easy." This shows that, generally, the language level in Islamic texts can be reached by students. However, attention is still needed to simplify the lexical and syntax so that all levels of ability can access the material equally. In line with the comprehensible input approach of (Crossley et al., 2012), material that is too difficult can reduce motivation, while material that is too easy can make students less challenged. Meanwhile, in terms of engagement, around 16 students stated that Islamic texts increased their interest in reading and learning. This confirms that value-laden content has the potential to increase engagement, as explained by (Deci & Ryan, 1985) in the Self-Determination theory, where relatedness is one of the basic needs that drives intrinsic motivation.

However, the questionnaire results also revealed diversity in perceptions of how Islamic values help understand the text. Around 13 students chose the answer "not helpful," while the rest were divided between "helpful" and "not felt yet." This finding

indicates that the meaning of Islamic values in the text is not homogeneous among students, which may be influenced by the level of personal religiosity, depth of understanding of values, or previous learning experiences. Finally, in a follow-up question regarding whether Islamic texts need to continue to be used in learning, it was found that the majority of students were in the "undecided" position (around 13 students), with the rest divided between "yes" and "no." This attitude indicates the need to evaluate and improve learning designs that integrate Islamic texts. For example, adjusting the theme to students' interests, enriching the text types (narrative, descriptive, expository), and using more varied media to increase the appeal of learning.

Obstacles and benefits felt by teachers and students while using Islamic texts in reading learning

Integration of Islamic texts in reading and learning in English classes gives teachers and students various benefits. From the results of interviews with the teachers, one of the main benefits is increasing the emotional proximity of the student to the material. The teacher states that the student looks more enthusiastic and feels the reading material becomes more meaningful since they load appropriate values with the background behind culture and beliefs. This aligns with findings from a questionnaire demonstrating that part big students feel happy and connected emotionally as soon as they read Islamic texts. They also mention that Islamic texts help them delve deeper into religious values, fostering an interest in reading and adding treasury vocabulary.

The teacher also highlighted that Islamic texts replace potent values such as patience, honesty, trust, responsibility, and working hard. These appear in the discussion student moment, they requested to reflect moral message from the text. This strengthens the idea of education character based on the mark. (Walker et al. 2015) emphasized the importance of aligning academic learning with moral character formation. Islamic texts allow students to understand the structure of texts, such as in the narrative or expository text, and internalize ethical and spiritual messages contained therein.

However, besides the several benefits faced by teachers and students. One of the main challenges for teachers is the limited availability of Islamic texts in English that are suitable for the student's abilities, such as the difficulties in understanding the text. This requires teachers to adapt text, simplify Language, or look for alternative relevant sources. Challenges are covered, especially in schools that have non-Muslim students. This has become an important issue.

For students, the difficulties felt is a level of understanding of Language in Islamic texts, especially if the text uses religious terms or narratives unfamiliar in a modern context. The questionnaire result shows the need to design the materials in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In addition, some students admit to being hesitant to continue using Islamic texts in learning, which indicates that this approach still needs to be perfected in content, methods, and media.

Strategies the teacher proposes for overcoming constraints include using simple text, supporting visual media such as videos and illustrations, and reflection such as discussion value. Collaboration between English teachers and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers was also assessed as important for creating thematic material from both sides: Language and value. In the long term, developing teaching materials based on projects such as making booklets or Islamic comics in English can become a

creative solution to increase the involvement and understanding of students in a sustainable way.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that integrating Islamic texts into English reading learning at the Islamic High School positively influences the development of literacy students, at a time strengthening character values. Both teachers and students respond with enthusiasm. The teacher feels that using Islamic texts not only enriches teaching materials but also becomes a means to shape moral values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, and working hard. Students also feel more connected in an emotional way with material learning since the material reflects relevant values in life and the background behind the culture. Other benefits students feel include increasing interest in reading, comprehension of vocabulary, and a chance to delve deeper values of Islam in context, learning a language. Most of the students also stated that Islamic values conveyed through text help them understand content reading more deeply.

However, research also identifies several obstacles that need to be overcome. The main challenges are covering limitations, sourcing appropriate Islamic texts at a level suitable for Language students, and difficulties understanding the term religious in English. Therefore, there is a need to develop contextual teaching materials according to CEFR and accompanied by supporting media such as images, videos, and reflective activities. Collaboration between English teachers and Islamic Religious Education teachers is also assessed as important to ensure the integration of values and Language in a balanced way. This approach aligns with the principle of learning based on values and educational character that places the student as the subject and active in a meaningful learning process. With proper development, Islamic texts in English have their potential.

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