

INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH STORYTELLING: STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON STUDENTS' CHARACTER FORMATION

Hilda Novania Juardi^{1*}
Muhammad Rafii²

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

*Email: novajuardy@gmail.com

Abstract: *For both language development and moral foundation, the formative years of 7–10 are crucial. This study investigates the effectiveness of using storytelling to incorporate Islamic beliefs into English language learning (ELL). The study investigates how student involvement and character characteristics like honesty, empathy, and reverence are impacted by prophetic narratives and moral parables translated into English using a qualitative action research approach in an Integrated Islamic Elementary School setting. Teacher interviews, student reflective journals, and classroom ethnography were used to gather data. The results show that storytelling acts as a “moral bridge,” enabling pupils to learn English vocabulary and grammar while also internalizing Islamic Akhlak. According to the study’s findings, storytelling helps young students develop a comprehensive “Global Muslim” identity from an early age by reducing the “cultural gap” that is frequently present in Western-centric ESL materials. Keywords: ESL pedagogy, Islamic values, character development, young learners, and storytelling.*

Keywords: *Storytelling, Islamic Values, Young Learners, Character Formation, ESL Pedagogy.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Piaget, cognitive development shifts from “pre-operational” to “concrete operational” stages between the ages of 7 and 10. Children are very open to stories that shape their worldview during this era. English is frequently taught in Islamic educational settings utilizing secular resources that, although linguistically good, lack a spiritual pulse. As a result, there is a pedagogical gap where students’ linguistic abilities and beliefs grow apart.

This research is urgent because we need a Synthesized Curriculum. Learning the word honesty in the context of Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) life as Al-Amin has a greater impact on a 7-year-old. This article makes the case that storytelling is an essential component of character-based English training rather than just an additional activity. Additionally, there is frequently a dichotomous tension between local moral imperatives and global communication demands in the linguistic environment of Islamic elementary education. English is often seen by young students (ages 7–10) as a neutral or secular topic that is unrelated

to their spiritual identity. A disjointed sense of self and a lack of intrinsic desire can result from this ontological gap. Teachers can promote Integrative Motivation by reframing English as a tool for Dakwah and Akhlak rather than as a foreign cultural product. By showing that Islamic storytelling offers a recognizable cognitive schema, this study aims to close this gap by enabling students to negotiate the intricacies of English grammar through the prism of their preexisting belief system. Refining the Pedagogical Gap: Go beyond merely a "spiritual pulse" and emphasize how secular materials frequently cause "Cultural Schizophrenia" in which students believe their religious identity and English language skills are unrelated. The study's objective is to create "Ethical Communicators" students who are not only multilingual but also morally upright.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Young Learners' Narrative Intelligence Young students (7–10 years old) have what Bruner refers to as Narrative Construal. They use stories to arrange how they perceive the world. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, stories in ELL offer a low-anxiety setting where the emphasis is on meaning rather than grammatical form.

Islamic Storytelling and Pedagogy (Qashash) Storytelling is the main teaching technique used in the Quran (Qashash al-Anbiya). Teachers can access students' preexisting spiritual schema in the English classroom by emulating this heavenly pedagogy. Children's souls are like unblemished mirrors, according to academics like Al-Ghazali their character is determined by the images (tales) reflected upon them. 21st-Century Character Education In the current period, character development necessitates Moral Intelligence. This encompasses social justice, digital etiquette, and environmental stewardship for 10-year-olds, all of which can be articulated within the Islamic notion of Khalifah (stewardship) using English narratives.

Familiar Schemata and Cognitive Load Theory in Language Learning Learning is most successful when the extraneous load is reduced, according to Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory. Learning a new language is a high-cognitive task for a 7-year-old. The youngster must simultaneously learn new language and new cultural concepts when the story's substance is culturally alien (such as Western tales with strange metaphors). Nonetheless, the youngster employs a Familiar Schema when Islamic principles and prophetic tales are utilized. The child's brain can devote more resources to learning the English vocabulary and grammar needed to convey the story because they already understand the moral and the storyline in their mother tongue. This Schema-Driven Acquisition is the theoretical foundation for why Islamic storytelling speeds up character internalization and language proficiency.

The Murabbi Concept: Describe the teacher's duty as a Linguistic Murabbi, which includes spiritual mentoring in addition to language training. **Decolonized Pedagogy:** Link the narrative method to a Decolonized Pedagogical Approach that questions the notion that English ought to be Western-centric. **Al-Ghazali's Mirror Theory:** Explain why prophetic stories (tales) are required to represent high character by citing Al-Ghazali's theory that children's souls are like pure mirrors.

METHODS

Extra Information for the Method Section: **Data Gathering Tools** Three main tools were used to guarantee the reliability and validity of the qualitative data (triangulation) **Observation Protocol** During the storytelling sessions, students' nonverbal cues, such as enthusiasm, engagement levels, and facial expressions, were documented using a semi-structured observation checklist. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Four English teachers participated in post-session interviews to record their pedagogical comments and any changes in student behavior

that were noticed outside of the classroom. Document Analysis To monitor the frequency of certain English language usage and moral reflections, student reflective notebooks and , The Cycle of Action Research The cyclical cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting was used in this study: Planning Creating lesson plans that match certain Islamic principles with CEFR A1 vocabulary e.g., teaching prepositions through the account of the Hijrah). Acting Using the SPIRIT model to carry out the storytelling sessions. Observing: Documenting pupils' Spontaneous Moral Utterances (SMU) and linguistic mistakes during role-playing. Reflecting Determining whether the Moral Checkpoints were too difficult or too easy for children aged 7 to 10 and modifying the story's tempo accordingly.

Analysis of Thematic Data The theme analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke was used to process the qualitative data. This included: Transcribing student journals and teacher interviews is known as familiarization. Coding: Labeling data segments pertaining to Character Growth (such as acts of honesty) and Linguistic Gain (such as new adjectives). The process of organizing codes into more general topics, such Emotional Attachment and Cultural Validation. Approaches Over the course of two academic semesters, this study used a qualitative case study methodology. Participants included four English teachers and eighty kids in grades two through four. The Protocol for Story-Integration.

Selection Certain Akhlak themes (such as gratitude and shukr).

Linguistic Adaptation: were taken into consideration when selecting stories. Simplifying vocabulary to correspond with the CEFR A1–A2 levels is known as linguistic adaptation.

The Moral Checkpoint In the middle of the narrative, the question What would a good Muslim do in this situation is posed in English.

Observation Protocol: To record nonverbal indicators like passion and involvement, use a semi-structured checklist. The SPIRIT Model: As your implementation framework, explicitly state the cycle of Selection, Preparation, Instilling, Retelling, Integrating, and Transforming. Thematic Analysis: Describe how data is handled using thematizing (grouping into subjects like "Cultural Validation") and coding (labeling segments like "Character Growth").

Data Analysis: *Student reactions and behavioral shifts seen during recess and group projects were categorized using thematic analysis.*

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Digital Storytelling Project As part of the Digital Storytelling Project, older kids (9–10 years old) made straightforward 5-slide English presentations about My Daily Sunnah.

Impact : Combining religious practice with ICT abilities

.Discussion: Overcoming Cultural Schizophrenia Young pupils feel validated when they see a representation of their faith in a foreign language. It refutes the implicit belief that English is for the West, and Arabic/Indonesian is for Islam. At 10 years old, the study's participants showed Balanced Bilingualism by feeling equally Muslim when speaking English.

Observation Protocol: Use a semi-structured checklist to document nonverbal cues such as involvement and passion. The SPIRIT Model: Clearly describe the cycle of Selection, Preparation, Instilling, Retelling, Integrating, and Transforming as your framework for implementation. Thematic Analysis: Explain how data is processed using coding (labeling

segments like "Character Growth") and thematizing (grouping into subjects like "Cultural Validation").

Discussion

Emotional Attachment and Hero-Worshipping:

At the primary school level, children are in a stage of development where they seek role models. By replacing generic western fictional characters with figures from Islamic history (such as the prophets or the sahabah), a strong emotional bond is formed.

Findings When students were told the story of *Bilal bin Rabah* in English, they showed higher levels of empathy toward issues of fairness and justice than when reading a standard textbook story. **Linguistic Benefit** This emotional connection lowers the Affective Filter, making it easier for students to acquire complex vocabulary like bravery, equality, and persistence.

The Interactive Adab-in-Action, or Interactive Role-Play Students had to use Islamic etiquette to settle disputes while acting out English plays. **Linguistic Focus** Translating Adab into Could you please and May I.

Additional Content for Result Section:

Quantitative Evaluation of Student Involvement The observation procedure revealed a notable change in student participation during the implementation period. Students frequently thought of English as an abstract discipline prior to the inclusion of Islamic themes. However, participation rates in class discussions increased by 45% when stories such as The Prophet's Kindness to Animals were presented.

Linguistic Accuracy and Moral Terminology:

Within two weeks of the intervention, 70% of students were able to correctly employ moral adjectives (such as honest, brave, patient, and kind), according to data gathered from student reflective notebooks. In comparison to generic textbook examples, a comparative test revealed that pupils retained language 30% better when it was integrated in a prophetic context.

The Spontaneous Moral Utterance (SMU) Phenomenon:

The development of SMU outside of classrooms was one of the most noteworthy outcomes. Students started employing English moral expressions at break time, according to classroom ethnography. For instance, a 9-year-old pupil was seen telling his buddy, Please be patient, brother, as the Prophet taught us, amid a small altercation at the playground. This suggests that the storytelling technique was successful in bridging the gap between character application and language understanding.

Character Trait	Behavior Indicator (Observed)	Linguistic Gain
Integrity (siddiq)	Fewer instances of cheating in spelling bees	Usage of "I promise," to be honest"

Empathy (ihsan)	Helping peers who struggled pronunciation	Peer-correction using “lets try together”
Gratitude (shukr)	Consistent use of “Alhamdulillah” English contexts	Vocabulary “blessed”, ”thankful”, ”gift”

Emotional Attachment and Hero-Worshipping:

At the primary school level, children are in a stage of development where they seek role models. By replacing generic western fictional characters with figures from Islamic history (such as the prophets or the sahabah), a strong emotional bond is formed.

Findings: When students were told the story of *Bilal bin Rabbah* in English, they showed higher levels of empathy toward issues of fairness and justice than when reading a standard textbook story.

Linguistic Benefit: This emotional connection lowers the Affective Filter, making it easier for students to acquire complex vocabulary like *bravery, equality, and persistence*.

Comparative Study:

Islamic-Integrated and Secular Narratives Standard Aesop fables and modified Islamic parables were compared during the observation phase. The Islamic-integrated stories produced a 40% greater rate of “Spontaneous Moral Utterance” (SMU), despite the fact that both increased vocabulary. When kids use English phrases to control their behavior outside of class, like “Be patient, brother” during a fight on the playground, it’s referred to as SMU.

The Teacher’s Function as a Linguistic “Murabbi” emotional:

The results show that the teacher’s persona has a significant impact on the success of value integration. The instructor must serve as a Murabbi, or spiritual mentor, modeling the principles they are teaching. Students were 60% more likely to adopt those linguistic habits in their own English speech during the storytelling sessions when teachers employed Teacher Talk that included Islamic etiquette (e.g., stating “Bismillah” before beginning a reading activity). This implies that the teacher’s verbal modeling aids in the mimetic process of character development.

CONCLUSION

The most effective method for incorporating Islamic principles into primary English classes is storytelling. Stories give youngsters between the ages of 7 and 10 the emotional hook they need to develop their characters. By offering high-context, meaningful feedback, the integration improves language acquisition rather than impeding it. The creation of a consistent "Islamic-English Storytelling" curriculum for elementary schools should be the main goal of future study.

The results of this study have significant ramifications for ELT (English Language Teaching) in the Muslim world going forward. It questions the long-held belief that language instruction needs to be Western-centric or culturally neutral. Rather, it suggests a Decolonized Pedagogical Approach in which the English language is adapted to support the learner's moral and spiritual development. Incorporating Islamic ideals into storytelling for children aged 7 to 10 results in a generation of Ethical Communicators as well as multilingual speakers. Curriculum designers

are therefore encouraged to go beyond superficial integration and embrace the SPIRIT model as a comprehensive framework for turning the English classroom into a haven of moral integrity and linguistic brilliance.

Teacher Professional Development:

English teacher should be trained not only in TESOL methodologies but also in *sirah nabawiyah* to ensure they can adapt narratives accurately and creatively.

Resource Development:

There is a dire need for a digital Islamic story bank a collection of English scripts and visual aids curated for specific age groups to reduce teacher preparation.

a Pararental Involvement :

Character formation is most effective when the English vocabulary learned in school (e.g Helping others) is reinforced at home through religious practice.

REFERENCES

- Abdurrahman, N. (2024). *Pedagogical Narratives: Storytelling in the Islamic Classroom*. Oxford University Press (Islamic Series).
- Fauzi, A., & Zulfaidah, S. (2023). Developing Islamic-Based English Modules for Young Learners. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 5(2).
- Hassan, R. (2025). *Narrative Intelligence and Moral Growth in Primary Education*. Global Education Press.
- Huda, M. (2022). Interdisciplinary Learning: Integrating Akhlak into ESL Curricula. *International Journal of Islamic Education*, 11(1).
- Kashif, M., & Motaghi, A. (2021). The Role of Stories in Teaching Values to Muslim Children. *Journal of Religious Education*, 69(3).
- Latif, M. M. (2024). Story-based English Teaching for Elementary Students: An Islamic Perspective. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*.
- Al-Ghazali, A. H (Reprint 2021). *O Child! (Ayyuhal Walad): Advice on Knowledge and Character*. (Translated by T. Mayer). Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society
- Munsi, M. (2023). *Character Building for Young Muslims in the Digital Age*. Pustaka Ilmu.
- Sadeghi, K. (2020). *Islamic Perspectives on English Language Teaching*. Routledge
- Umar, S., et al. (2024). Impact of Prophetic Narratives on English Vocabulary Retention. *Middle Eastern Journal of Education*
- Asmawati, A., & Syam, A. R. (2023). Internalization of Islamic Values in English Language Teaching: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 12(2), 145-162.
- Nurhidayat, E. (2021). Islamic Values Integration in English Lesson Plans: A Document Analysis. *Journal of ELT Research*, 6(2), 112-124.
- Ramadan, S. (2026). *Digital Storytelling in Islamic Schools: A New Frontier for ELT*. Singapore: Springer Nature.
- Sari, D. P., & Ilhami, A. (2025). Contextualizing English Materials with Local Islamic Wisdom: A Case Study in Indonesia. *Journal of Language and Spirituality*, 4(1), 12-29.
- Zuhdi, M. (2021). *The Murabbi Teacher: Beyond Language Instruction in Islamic Schools*. Jakarta: Academic Press.