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ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY AT SD HAFIZH AL QURBAH PAREPARE

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ABSTRACT

English is taught to children in Indonesian elementary schools, including Islamic schools, where parents and teachers expect learning to remain consistent with Islamic values. This qualitative case study examines how Islamic identity is reflected and maintained in the process of English language learning among elementary school students at SD Hafizh Al Qurbah Parepare. The participants were Grade 4 students, and the English teachers. Data were collected over one month through classroom observation in Grade 4, semi-structured interviews with three English teachers and three Grade 4 students selected through purposive sampling, and analysis of lesson plans and the printed English textbook. The data were analyzed thematically. Three themes emerged: (1) Islamic values are integrated into English learning materials, (2) Qur'anic verses serve as learning references that reinforce values, and (3) Islamic expressions such as Assalamu'alaikum Alhamdulillah, masya Allah are used in classroom communication. Together, these practices show that English is learned as a skill that is carried out within, rather than apart from, students' Islamic identity. The study contributes by shifting attention from teaching materials alone to everyday classroom practices through which Islamic identity is maintained, and it offers implications for teachers and material developers in Islamic elementary schools.

Keywords: Islamic identity, English language learning, Islamic elementary school

A. Introduction

English has become a compulsory or widely taught subject in many Indonesian elementary schools because of its role as a language of global communication, education, and technology. For Muslim families, however, the arrival of a foreign language in the classroom raises a question that is not only linguistic but also moral: can children learn English without losing the religious values and habits that shape who they are? Language is not a neutral tool. It carries ways of speaking, example situations, and cultural assumptions that can either support or compete with learners' existing commitments.

Islamic schools in Indonesia have responded to this concern by

integrating Islamic values into every subject, including English. Previous studies show that this integration is widely regarded as important by teachers, yet it is not always translated into practice (Alfian et al., 2022). Researchers have examined Islamic values in English teaching at the elementary level (Putri et al., 2024), Islamic stories as supplementary materials (Maesaroh et al., 2022), students' needs for Islamic-oriented English materials (Amalia et al., 2025; Rahmadany et al., 2021), and the broader literature on integrating Islamic education into English language teaching (Djamdjuri et al., 2023).

Most of this work, however, concentrates on teaching materials, teachers' perceptions, or the design of integrated content. Less attention has been paid to the question of how a learner's Islamic identity is *reflected and maintained* in the ordinary, daily routines of English learning, such as greeting a friend, expressing gratitude, being reminded of manners, or connecting a vocabulary topic to a Qur'anic verse. This matter because identity is formed and negotiated through repeated social practice, particularly in the early school years (Norton, 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995).

This study addresses that gap through a case study at SD Hafizh Al Qurbah Parepare. It is guided by one research question: *How is Islamic identity reflected and maintained in the process of English language learning among elementary school students?* The study does not claim that Islamic identity has never been examined in English teaching. Rather, it contributes a close description, from a specific school, of the concrete practices of material, text, and language use through which Islamic identity is sustained in an English classroom for young learners.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how Islamic identity is reflected and maintained in English language learning (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The bounded case was the Grade 4 English class at SD Hafizh Al Qurbah Parepare, and the research was conducted over one month. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research question concerns meanings, practices, and

experiences rather than numerical relationships.

The participants were Grade 4 students and English teachers, and three teachers and three students were interviewed. They were selected through purposive sampling. Teachers were chosen because they design lesson plans that integrate Islamic values and decide how the printed textbook is used, while students were chosen because they directly experience the lessons. Grade 4 was selected because these students have had enough exposure to English lessons and can answer short, concrete interview questions. A small, information-rich sample was considered more suitable than a large random sample for in-depth description within a single school and a limited time frame (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2015).

Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis of lesson plans and the printed English textbook. Interview recordings and field notes were transcribed and analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014), combined with thematic coding. Codes were grouped into three themes that answer the research question, and data from observation, interviews, and documents were compared to check for consistency.

C.Findings and Discussion

Three themes emerged from the observation, interviews, and document analysis. First, Islamic values are integrated into English learning materials. Teachers deliberately connected English topics to Islamic teachings so that students learn values as well as vocabulary. In the body parts lesson, for example, students were taught that every part of the body is a blessing from Allah to be used for good. Teachers also linked classroom conduct, such as polite language, respect for friends, and not making fun of others, to Islamic teaching, and students described the same links in their own words. Second, Qur'anic verses and hadith serve as learning references. The teacher used Q.S. At-Tin verse 4 to encourage students to appreciate themselves and respect others. This was a planned practice rather than an occasional addition, since the lesson plans and the printed English textbook

also contain verses or hadith. Third, Islamic expressions are used in classroom communication. Students greet friends with *Assalamu'alaikum* before saying good morning and say *Alhamdulillah* when grateful, so Arabic-origin expressions coexist with English in a bilingual classroom repertoire. Teachers explained that their purpose is to show students that learning English does not mean leaving their Islamic identity, although this is the teachers' own account rather than measured evidence of identity change.

The findings are consistent with Putri et al. (2024), Amalia et al. (2025), and Djamdjuri et al. (2023) on the use of Islamic content in elementary English teaching and on students' positive response to materials connected to their daily lives. They differ from Alfian et al. (2022), where teachers' support for integration was not firmly reflected in lesson plans. Here, teachers' statements, lesson plans, the textbook, and student accounts were aligned. They also go further than Maesaroh et al. (2022), where integration was limited to activities such as prayer. The study extends earlier work by showing that identity is carried not only by content but also by everyday greetings and expressions.

In the discussion, Islamic identity is reflected at three levels: in what is taught, in what is referred to, and in how people speak. From the perspective of identity as social practice (Norton, 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), the daily use of Islamic expressions is especially telling because students enact membership in a religious community through repeated language choices. Identity is maintained through regular, shared practices and through the match between teachers' intentions and students' reports, which suggests the practices are both planned and received. This offers a practical response to concerns that English may bring competing cultural assumptions (Phillipson,1992; Pennycook, 1994): in this classroom, English is presented as a language Muslim children can use while keeping their values.

D. Conclusion

This study asked how Islamic identity is reflected and maintained in the process of English language learning among elementary school students. At SD Hafizh Al Qurbah Parepare, Islamic identity is reflected

through the integration of Islamic values into English materials, the use of Qur'anic verses as learning references in lessons, lesson plans, and the printed textbook, and the use of Islamic expressions such as *Assalamu'alaikum* and *Alhamdulillah* in classroom communication. It is maintained through teachers' explicit purpose that English learning should not mean leaving Islamic identity and through repeated everyday practices that students also describe. By concentrating on daily practice rather than materials alone, the study adds a focused, school-level description to research on Islamic values in English teaching and suggests that, in this setting, learning English and keeping an Islamic identity were treated as compatible.

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