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Digital Meets Divine: Innovating Basic English Learning with Islamic Values for Students in Islamic Primary Education

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Abstract

As education continues to evolve in the digital era, English language learning in Islamic primary schools requires approaches that combine technological innovation with religious and cultural values. This study examines the integration of Islamic values in basic English learning at Islamic primary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) in Tuban. Using a qualitative method, data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation. The findings show that integrating Islamic values enhances students' engagement and supports a more meaningful understanding of learning materials. It also improves basic language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking. The study suggests that integrating Islamic values provides an effective instructional model and offers a conceptual foundation for innovative English learning in the context of digital education while maintaining the religious identity of Islamic primary schools.

Keywords: *basic English learning; integration of Islamic values; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*

Abstrak

Seiring dengan terus berkembangnya pendidikan di era digital, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar Islam memerlukan pendekatan yang mengombinasikan inovasi teknologi dengan nilai-nilai agama dan budaya. Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dasar di sekolah dasar Islam (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) di Tuban. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi kelas, wawancara dengan guru, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai Islam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa serta mendukung pemahaman yang lebih bermakna terhadap materi pembelajaran. Selain itu, pendekatan ini juga meningkatkan keterampilan dasar berbahasa Inggris, meliputi penguasaan kosakata, tata bahasa, keterampilan menyimak, dan berbicara. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai Islam tidak hanya memberikan model pembelajaran

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yang efektif, tetapi juga menawarkan landasan konseptual bagi pengembangan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang inovatif dalam konteks pendidikan digital, dengan tetap mempertahankan identitas keislaman sekolah dasar Islam.
Kata Kunci: pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dasar; integrasi nilai-nilai Islami; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed educational practices, creating new opportunities for innovative, interactive, and learner-centered instruction across all levels of education. Beyond the integration of technological tools, contemporary education increasingly emphasizes the importance of developing learning environments that foster critical thinking, ethical awareness, cultural identity, and social responsibility alongside academic achievement (UNESCO, 2021). This shift is particularly significant in language education, where learning is expected not only to develop communicative competence but also to cultivate learners' values and character within authentic social and cultural contexts (Banks, 2016). In Islamic educational institutions, these expectations resonate with the philosophical foundation of education, which views knowledge as a means of nurturing intellectually capable individuals with strong moral and spiritual character (Al-Attas, 1991). Consequently, the concept of *Digital Meets Divine* emerges as a relevant pedagogical perspective that advocates harmonizing educational innovation with Islamic values, ensuring that digital transformation serves as a catalyst for meaningful, value-oriented, and culturally responsive English language learning rather than merely introducing technological sophistication into classroom practices (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

The integration of Islamic values in basic education has become increasingly urgent in response to the growing moral and ethical challenges faced by young learners in the contemporary globalized era. In Islamic primary education, learning is expected to balance cognitive development with the cultivation of spiritual and moral character, reflecting the holistic philosophy of Islamic education (Azra, 2015; Halstead, 2004). However, in practice, English language teaching at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level often remains dominated by

conventional, skill-oriented approaches that neglect value integration. This pedagogical gap suggests a disconnection between the normative goals of Islamic education and the realities of classroom implementation. Moreover, the limited use of culturally responsive and engaging learning media further reduces students' motivation and meaningful participation. As a result, English is frequently perceived as an isolated subject, detached from students' religious and social contexts. This condition underscores the need for transformative pedagogical models that integrate linguistic competence with value-based education. Therefore, rethinking English instruction through an Islamic value-oriented framework becomes both relevant and necessary (Widodo, 2018).

A growing body of literature highlights the importance of integrating moral and religious values into educational practices to enhance both character development and learning engagement. Abdullah et al. (2019) argue that value-based education contributes significantly to students' moral awareness and behavioral development in primary education. Similarly, research in English language teaching suggests that embedding cultural and ethical dimensions into language instruction can foster more meaningful and contextually grounded learning experiences (Widodo, 2018; Yulia, 2014). Furthermore, Rohmah (2012) emphasizes that successful integration of Islamic values requires not only appropriate materials but also teacher competence and reflective pedagogical strategies. Despite these insights, existing studies tend to focus on general education contexts or secondary-level learners, leaving primary-level English education relatively underexplored. In addition, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on how Islamic values are operationalized in everyday classroom practices, particularly in diverse local contexts. This indicates a significant gap in both theoretical and practical dimensions of the field. Hence, there is a pressing need for context-specific research that examines the integration of Islamic values in primary-level English learning (Yulia, 2014).

This study offers a novel contribution by situating the integration of Islamic values within basic English learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Tuban, a context that has received limited scholarly attention. Unlike prior studies that primarily emphasize theoretical discussions, this research adopts a qualitative approach to explore lived classroom experiences and teaching practices. It investigates how teachers incorporate Islamic values

into instructional design, learning activities, and student interactions. Additionally, the study examines the challenges teachers face in balancing language instruction with value integration. By focusing on primary education, this research addresses a critical gap in the literature and provides insights into early-stage language learning within Islamic contexts. It also highlights the importance of aligning pedagogical practices with students' cultural and religious identities. Furthermore, the findings are expected to inform the development of contextually relevant and pedagogically sound instructional models. Thus, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of Islamic education and English language teaching (Rohmah, 2012).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine how Islamic values are integrated into basic English learning and how such integration influences students' engagement and language development. It focuses on identifying teaching strategies, learning materials, and classroom interactions that reflect value-based education. The study also explores the impact of these practices on students' motivation, participation, and language acquisition. In addition, it seeks to identify enabling and constraining factors in implementing integrative learning approaches. By doing so, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of English learning dynamics in Islamic primary schools. The findings are expected to offer practical implications for curriculum development and teacher training programs. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader discourse on culturally responsive pedagogy in Islamic education. Ultimately, it aims to support the development of effective, meaningful, and value-integrated English learning in primary education contexts (Abdullah et al., 2019).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the integration of Islamic values in basic English learning at Islamic primary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) in Tuban. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as it aims to understand social phenomena, meanings, and experiences from the perspectives of participants within their natural context (Creswell, 2014; Aspers & Corte, 2019). This approach enables the researcher to examine how Islamic values are implemented in classroom practices and how they influence students'

engagement and learning experiences. The study adopts a case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within a specific educational setting. Through this design, the research focuses on real-life classroom situations, allowing for a holistic and contextual analysis of teaching and learning processes. The selection of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Tuban as the research site is based on its relevance to Islamic primary education and its representation of local educational practices. In addition, this approach allows flexibility in exploring emerging data and patterns throughout the research process. Therefore, a qualitative case study is considered the most suitable design for addressing the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data in this study were collected from two Islamic primary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) in Tuban using multiple data collection techniques, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The participants consisted of two English teachers, with one teacher selected from each school through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was employed because it enabled the researcher to select informants who possessed relevant knowledge and direct experience in integrating Islamic values into basic English instruction (Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection criteria included teachers who (1) actively taught English at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, (2) had experience in integrating Islamic values into English learning, and (3) were willing to participate in the study. Classroom observations were conducted to capture actual teaching practices, teacher–student interactions, and the integration of Islamic values in English learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the two English teachers to gain insights into their perspectives, teaching strategies, and challenges in implementing value-based instruction. In addition, relevant documents such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and school curricula were analyzed to support and triangulate the findings. The use of multiple data sources aimed to enhance the credibility and validity of the research through data triangulation. According to qualitative research principles, collecting rich and detailed data from various sources helps provide a deeper understanding of the research problem (Tenny et al., 2022). Furthermore, all data were collected in natural classroom settings without manipulation, ensuring the authenticity of the findings. This process allowed the researcher to capture both explicit and implicit aspects of teaching practices.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using thematic analysis, which involves organizing, coding, and interpreting data to identify patterns and themes related to the research focus. The analysis process followed several stages, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the collected data from observations, interviews, and documentation were transcribed and organized systematically. Next, the data were coded to identify key themes related to the integration of Islamic values and English learning practices. These themes were then interpreted to understand the relationships between teaching strategies, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Qualitative data analysis is inherently iterative and interpretative, allowing researchers to refine findings as new insights emerge (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2021). To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, transferability, and dependability criteria, including triangulation, member checking, and detailed description of the research context. Finally, the results were presented in a descriptive narrative form to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Results

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of Islamic values in basic English learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Tuban occurs through both explicit and implicit instructional practices. Classroom observations revealed that teachers explicitly incorporate Islamic expressions such as *"Assalamu'alaikum," "Bismillah,"* and *"Alhamdulillah"* during lesson openings and closings, reinforcing religious identity in daily communication. In addition, teachers integrate Islamic-related vocabulary into English lessons, such as terms associated with prayer, fasting, and charity, which helps contextualize language learning. This practice aligns with the concept of values-based education, where moral and religious elements are embedded within academic content (Halstead, 2007). Furthermore, documentation analysis shows that lesson plans often include objectives related not only to language skills but also to character and spiritual development. Implicitly, teachers model Islamic values through their behavior, such as demonstrating patience, respect, and discipline during classroom interactions. These practices are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of teacher modeling in value internalization (Lickona, 2012).

Overall, the integration of Islamic values is not treated as a separate component but as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

These findings were further corroborated by the interview data, which provided deeper insights into teachers' perspectives on integrating Islamic values into English learning. Teacher 1 emphasized the importance of establishing Islamic classroom routines by stating, *"I always begin and end my English lessons with Islamic expressions such as Assalamu'alaikum, Bismillah, and Alhamdulillah because these routines help students strengthen their religious identity while creating a respectful and positive classroom atmosphere"* (Teacher 1). Similarly, Teacher 2 highlighted the integration of Islamic content into language instruction, explaining, *"I integrate Islamic-related vocabulary, such as prayer, fasting, and charity, into English lessons because students can understand the language more easily when it is connected to their daily religious experiences. At the same time, I aim to develop not only their English skills but also their character and spiritual values"* (Teacher 2). These interview findings reinforce the classroom observations and document analysis, demonstrating that Islamic values are systematically embedded in English instruction through classroom routines, contextualized learning materials, and instructional objectives that promote both language proficiency and students' moral and spiritual development.

The study also found that teachers employ various pedagogical strategies to support the integration of Islamic values in English learning. One of the dominant strategies observed is contextualization, where teachers relate lesson topics to students' everyday religious experiences, making the content more meaningful. For example, when teaching descriptive text, students are asked to describe mosques, Islamic events, or family members in ways that reflect moral values. This approach supports meaningful learning, as students can connect new knowledge with their prior experiences (Ausubel, 1968). In addition, teachers frequently use interactive methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and speaking exercises to encourage active participation. These strategies not only enhance students' language skills but also promote cooperation, responsibility, and respect among peers. Interview data further indicate that teachers intentionally design lessons that combine linguistic objectives with character education goals. However, teachers also reported challenges, including limited access to teaching materials that integrate Islamic values and

time constraints in balancing curriculum demands. These findings highlight the need for more structured support and resources for implementing integrated value-based instruction (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The integration of Islamic values in English learning also has a noticeable impact on students' engagement and learning experiences. Classroom observations show that students are more enthusiastic and actively participate when the learning content is relevant to their daily religious and social lives. Students demonstrate increased confidence during speaking activities, particularly when discussing familiar topics such as daily routines and religious practices. This finding supports the idea that culturally relevant pedagogy can enhance student engagement and motivation (Gay, 2018). Moreover, the classroom atmosphere becomes more supportive and respectful, as students practice positive behaviors encouraged by Islamic teachings. Teachers reported that students tend to be more cooperative and respectful during group activities, which contributes to a more effective learning environment. The integration of values also helps reduce anxiety in speaking activities, as students feel more comfortable expressing themselves. This aligns with research suggesting that positive classroom environments can improve language learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001). Overall, the findings suggest that integrating Islamic values not only supports language acquisition but also fosters students' character development and meaningful learning experiences.

Another important finding relates to the role of instructional materials in facilitating the integration of Islamic values in English learning. The analysis of teaching documents indicates that most teachers adapt existing materials rather than using specifically designed value-integrated textbooks. Teachers often modify examples, exercises, and texts to include Islamic contexts, such as inserting names, places, or situations relevant to students' religious lives. This practice reflects the flexibility of qualitative classroom practices in responding to contextual needs (Tomlinson, 2013). However, the absence of standardized materials creates inconsistencies in how Islamic values are presented across different classrooms. Some teachers are able to integrate values creatively, while others rely on limited and repetitive examples. Interviews reveal that teachers express a need for structured teaching resources that systematically combine English skills with Islamic values. This finding is

consistent with previous studies highlighting the importance of well-designed instructional materials in supporting effective teaching (Richards, 2015). Therefore, the development of integrated teaching materials is essential to ensure consistency and quality in value-based English learning.

The study also highlights the significant role of teacher beliefs and understanding in implementing Islamic value integration. Interview data show that teachers who have a strong understanding of Islamic education principles tend to integrate values more effectively in their teaching practices. These teachers consciously connect language learning objectives with moral and spiritual outcomes, ensuring that both aspects are addressed simultaneously. This supports the argument that teacher cognition influences classroom practices and instructional decisions (Borg, 2003). Conversely, some teachers perceive value integration as an additional component rather than an integral part of the lesson, which affects the depth of implementation. Differences in teaching experience and educational background also contribute to variations in how values are incorporated. Teachers with more experience tend to demonstrate greater confidence and creativity in integrating Islamic values. Moreover, professional development opportunities are found to be limited, which restricts teachers' ability to enhance their pedagogical skills. These findings suggest that strengthening teacher training programs is crucial for improving the implementation of integrated learning approaches (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

In addition, the findings reveal that classroom interaction plays a crucial role in reinforcing Islamic values during English learning activities. Observations show that teacher-student and student-student interactions are often guided by principles such as respect, cooperation, and mutual support. Teachers frequently use positive reinforcement, such as praise and encouragement, to promote good behavior and active participation. This aligns with social constructivist perspectives, which emphasize the importance of interaction in learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Students are also encouraged to help each other during tasks, creating a collaborative learning environment. Such interactions not only facilitate language practice but also strengthen social and moral values among students. Furthermore, teachers often use questioning techniques that prompt students to reflect on both linguistic and moral aspects of the lesson. This approach helps students internalize

values while developing their communication skills. Overall, classroom interaction serves as an effective medium for integrating Islamic values into everyday learning activities.

Finally, the study identifies several contextual factors that influence the success of integrating Islamic values in English learning. School culture and policies play a significant role in supporting value-based education, as Islamic practices are embedded in daily routines such as prayers and greetings. This environment provides a strong foundation for integrating values into academic subjects, including English. According to educational research, a supportive school culture enhances the effectiveness of instructional practices (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Parental involvement is also found to contribute positively, as parents reinforce similar values at home. However, challenges such as limited instructional time and curriculum demands can hinder the depth of value integration. Teachers must balance language objectives with character education within a restricted timeframe. Additionally, variations in student backgrounds and abilities affect how values are understood and practiced. Despite these challenges, the overall findings indicate that contextual support plays a crucial role in sustaining the integration of Islamic values. Therefore, collaboration between schools, teachers, and families is essential to optimize the outcomes of value-based English learning.

Discussions

While previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrating Islamic values into English language teaching, the present study offers several distinct contributions. Rohmah (2012) primarily discussed the conceptual foundations of Islamic values in English language education, whereas the current study provides empirical evidence of how these values are enacted in everyday classroom practices at the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* level. Similarly, Widodo (2018) emphasized contextual and culturally responsive approaches to English language teaching in Indonesia, but did not specifically examine the integration of Islamic values within Islamic primary education. In contrast, this study demonstrates how religious values are embedded through classroom routines, contextualized learning materials, teacher modeling, and instructional planning. Furthermore, although Yulia (2014) explored English language teaching in Indonesian educational settings, the present study extends this

discussion by focusing on value-based instruction within Islamic schools and illustrating how English learning can simultaneously promote language competence and character development. Therefore, this study advances current knowledge by providing a contextualized model of integrating Islamic values into basic English learning, showing that English instruction can function not only as a means of developing linguistic competence but also as a vehicle for fostering students' moral and spiritual development in Islamic primary education.

The findings of this study confirm that the integration of Islamic values in English learning is effectively implemented through both explicit and implicit instructional practices. This result is consistent with the concept of values-based education, which emphasizes embedding moral and spiritual elements within academic content rather than treating them as separate subjects (Halstead, 2007). The use of Islamic expressions and value-laden vocabulary demonstrates how language learning can be contextualized within students' cultural and religious backgrounds. Furthermore, the role of teacher modeling highlights the importance of educators as moral agents who shape students' character through daily interactions. This supports Lickona's (2012) argument that character education is most effective when values are consistently demonstrated rather than merely taught. The integration observed in this study suggests that English learning can serve as a medium for both linguistic and moral development. In addition, the findings reinforce the idea that contextualized learning enhances relevance and meaning for students. Therefore, integrating Islamic values within English instruction can be considered a holistic approach to education.

The study also reveals that teaching strategies play a crucial role in facilitating value integration. The use of contextualization, interactive learning, and student-centered approaches aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active engagement and meaningful learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). By connecting English materials to students' daily religious practices, teachers help learners build stronger cognitive and emotional connections to the content. This finding is in line with Ausubel's (1968) theory of meaningful learning, which highlights the importance of linking new information to prior knowledge. Moreover, interactive strategies such as role-playing and group discussions not

only develop language skills but also foster collaboration and responsibility. However, the challenges reported by teachers indicate that effective implementation requires adequate support and resources. The lack of structured teaching materials suggests a gap between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities. Consequently, there is a need for curriculum development that systematically integrates language and values education. This would enable teachers to implement value-based instruction more consistently and effectively.

Another important discussion point relates to the impact of value integration on student engagement and learning experiences. The findings show that students are more motivated and confident when learning activities are relevant to their cultural and religious contexts. This supports the concept of culturally responsive teaching, which argues that learning becomes more effective when it reflects students' identities and lived experiences (Gay, 2018). The increase in student participation and reduced anxiety in speaking activities indicate that a supportive and value-oriented classroom environment enhances language acquisition. In addition, the emphasis on respect, cooperation, and positive behavior contributes to a more conducive learning atmosphere. This aligns with Dörnyei's (2001) assertion that motivation and classroom climate significantly influence language learning outcomes. The integration of Islamic values appears to create a sense of familiarity and comfort that encourages students to express themselves more freely. As a result, students not only improve their speaking skills but also develop positive attitudes toward learning. These findings highlight the dual benefits of integrating values in language education.

The role of instructional materials and teacher beliefs also emerges as a significant factor in the implementation process. The reliance on adapted materials indicates that teachers demonstrate creativity and flexibility in integrating Islamic values into English lessons. However, the lack of standardized resources may lead to inconsistencies in instructional quality across different classrooms. This finding is consistent with Richards (2015), who emphasizes the importance of well-designed materials in supporting effective teaching practices. Additionally, teacher beliefs and understanding significantly influence how values are integrated into classroom instruction. Borg (2003) argues that teachers' beliefs shape their pedagogical decisions and classroom behaviors. In this study, teachers with stronger knowledge of Islamic education principles were more effective in integrating

values meaningfully. The limited availability of professional development opportunities further highlights the need for teacher training programs. Therefore, enhancing teacher competence and providing appropriate resources are essential for improving the quality of value-based education.

Finally, the findings emphasize the importance of contextual and institutional support in sustaining the integration of Islamic values in English learning. School culture, policies, and daily practices play a crucial role in reinforcing value-based education within the learning environment. This aligns with Deal and Peterson (2016), who argue that a positive school culture strengthens instructional effectiveness and student outcomes. The involvement of parents also contributes to reinforcing values beyond the classroom, creating consistency between school and home environments. However, challenges such as limited instructional time and diverse student backgrounds may affect the depth of value integration. These constraints highlight the complexity of implementing holistic education in real classroom settings. Despite these challenges, the overall findings suggest that value integration is both feasible and beneficial when supported by strong institutional frameworks. Collaboration among teachers, schools, and families is therefore essential to maximize the impact of value-based learning. In conclusion, integrating Islamic values into English education offers a meaningful approach to developing both language competence and character education.

Consclusions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Islamic values in basic English learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Tuban is effectively implemented through both explicit and implicit instructional practices. Teachers incorporate Islamic expressions, value-related vocabulary, and moral messages into classroom activities, making learning more meaningful and contextually relevant. In addition, teacher modeling plays a significant role in reinforcing values such as respect, discipline, and cooperation during classroom interactions. The use of contextualized and interactive teaching strategies further supports the integration of language skills and character education. As a result, English learning is no longer perceived as an isolated subject but as part of students' holistic development. The findings also reveal that integrating Islamic

values positively influences students' engagement, motivation, and confidence in speaking activities. Students become more active participants when learning materials are connected to their daily religious and social experiences. Therefore, the integration of Islamic values contributes to both language acquisition and character formation in primary education.

However, the findings also reveal several challenges in implementing value-based English learning, including limited instructional materials, insufficient teacher professional development, and curriculum time constraints. These findings imply that schools and curriculum developers should provide structured teaching materials and continuous training to support the effective integration of Islamic values into English instruction. This study is limited to two *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* and two English teachers in Tuban, which may limit the transferability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more schools and participants, incorporate students' perspectives, and employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of value-based English learning. Overall, this study demonstrates that integrating Islamic values into English learning contributes to both language proficiency and students' moral and spiritual development.

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