THE UTILIZATION OF ISLAMIC-BASED TEXTS FOR CHARACTER INNOVATION: EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract: Law Number 20 of 2003 emphasizes character education in the Indonesian National Education System, which functions to develop competence and build the character of students who are devout and have faith in God Almighty. The material should be combined with a religious approach to fulfill these expectations. This research explores EFL students' perceptions of utilizing Islamic-based texts for teaching reading. The respondent was a Muhammadiyah University student, Prof. Dr. HAMKA. 36 students participated in responding to questionnaires and interviews. The results show that most EFL students benefit from using Islamic-based texts on their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. It has implications for using Islamic-based texts that can shape student character and behavior. With this method, in the end, students can read critically and understand the text, which also greatly influences their character and behavior.
Keywords: Islamic Text, Perception, Reading Instruction, Character

Abstrak: Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 menekankan pendidikan karakter pada Sistem Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia yang berfungsi untuk mengembangkan kompetensi dan membangun karakter siswa didik yang bertaqwa dan beriman kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa. Untuk memenuhi harapan tersebut seharusnya materi yang diberikan hendaknya dipadukan dengan pendekatan keagamaan. Dalam penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa EFL dalam memanfaatkan teks berbasis Islam untuk pengajaran membaca. Respondennya adalah mahasiswa Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA. 36 siswa berpartisipasi dalam menanggapi kuesioner dan wawancara. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa EFL mendapatkan dampak positif dari pemanfaatan teks berbasis Islam terhadap pengetahuan, sikap, dan keterampilan mereka. Hal ini berimplikasi pada pemanfaatan teks berbasis Islam yang dapat membentuk karakter dan perilaku siswa. Dengan metode ini, pada akhirnya siswa dapat membaca secara kritis, dan memahami teks dan juga sangat mempengaruhi karakter dan perilaku siswa dalam kehidupannya.
Kata Kunci: Teks Islami, Persepsi, Instruksi Membaca, Karakter

INTRODUCTION

The mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states the need to realize innovation in character education. Article 3 states that national education develops abilities and shapes an identified nation's character and civilization to make the nation's life more intelligent. The national education target is to expand students' potential to become human beings who believe in and are devoted to

God Almighty, have a lofty character, and are healthy, capable, knowledgeable, creative, responsible, independent, and democratic (UU RI, 2003).

However, with technological developments, much information can be accessed by all people, from the youngest to the oldest. The flow of information in this technology era cannot be fortified to reach everyone wherever they are. For this reason, it must be our concern to anticipate or filter inappropriate information to be consumed by young Indonesian students. The strategy taken by the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA is to integrate subjects with Islamic values in which the learning process can be linked to values, stories, or histories of Islam.

As one of the Islamic universities in Indonesia, of course, it tries to include great Islamic values in the learning process as knowledge and guides for future graduates. Therefore, critical reading subjects can utilize Islamic-based reading materials for learning, such as stories and the life of the prophet's journey, Islamic history, and moral values. Students are not only able to read the texts critically, they also get knowledge of Islamic values. Luke, O'Brien, and Comber (1994) examine functional and critical literacy, approaches to studying community texts, classroom explorations, and reading texts and culture. These critical methods can be used in classroom literacy programs by discussing and working with texts related to people's daily lives. Furthermore, this is intended to apply functional literacy by reviewing and criticizing, studying and approaching community texts, class exploration, and reading cultural texts.

Knowledge and noble values can be a provision for students in their personal and social lives. Therefore, to produce graduates with good character, based on the strategic plan and National Education System in Law No. 20 of 2003, Muhammadiyah University Prof. Dr. HAMKA tries to implement Islamic integration (AIK) in every course outlined in the Semester Learning Plan (RPS). Like the semester learning plan for the critical reading subject, the aim of the subject is for students to be able to read texts effectively and critically with an Islamic integration approach. This design aims to build students' understanding by extracting information from the activities they read or listen to (Carpenter and Just, 1977). The cognitive process of understanding is seeing what is in the listener or reader's mind when they hear a sentence during a conversation or read a passage in a book. For most adults, comprehension is quick, automatic, and straightforward.

In addition, based on BSNP's (2010) and Batubara's (2020) 21st Century Partnership Learning Framework, there are several competencies and/or skills that Human Resources (HR) must have, namely a) critical thinking and problem-solving skills; b) ability to communicate and collaborate skills; c) ability to create and innovate skills; d) information and communication technology literacy; e) have contextual learning skills; f) have information and media literacy skills.

The ability to read critically is essential based on human resources' skills to face the 4.0 to 5.0 era. For this reason, critical reading subjects will equip students to analyze, examine, and embed all information expressed implicitly or explicitly from the text provided. Understanding a text conceptually and linguistically is the starting point for all reading positions (Wallace, 2003). In this case, students must examine the text implicitly

and explicitly to capture information and ideas critically. So, for critical reading, it is very appropriate to integrate Islamic values into learning because it involves analytical skills and questions about the author's intentions, the structure and purpose of the text, the meaning of each word and phrase, and the message. Students are also encouraged to critically consider the context of how and where a text was written, resulting in students who can interpret the text differently. From the previous explanation, this article aims to explore the perceptions of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA in utilizing Islamic-based texts for teaching reading.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Critical Reading for EFL

In one education system, the learning process requires good reading skills, with fluent reading skills showing general intellectual indicators (Batubara, M. H., Herwanis, D., & Dharma, 2020). So far, many studies have been conducted concerning improving students' reading comprehension in the English Education Program. To improve students' reading comprehension, they certainly need many textbooks for learning. Generally, the textbooks used for higher education are usually those published in European countries such as England and America (Patterson et al., 2012).

A critical approach to reading books or journal articles is fundamental in reporting performance (Wallace & Wray, 2021). Skills in critical reading make it easier to summarize and evaluate what is read, resulting in the ability to connect the information held with what is being read. By applying these skills at the level of academic texts, one can see a text's weaknesses or strengths. Critical reading is an activity where readers examine, evaluate, and process reading material in depth. Critical reading does not mean looking for the writer's mistakes. Critical reading skills require focusing on part of a reading and involve reasoning, reflection, evaluation, and judgment (Cottrell, 2017). One of the things that defines this ability is identifying significant parts and seeing how these parts are related to each other (Wall & Wall, 2005).

Critical Approach To Islamic Integration

With technological advances, students are exposed to variousinformation in various social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Tok-tok, Internet, and others. With this environment, students can access all information from social media. They can access positive and negative information anytime and anywhere (Choi & Noh, 2020; Riedl, Whipple & Wallace, 2022). Supposedly, with the advancement of technology, many positive things can be utilized for the benefit of life. However, as seen in social media, students seem to absorb many negative things. Many teenagers do something terrible in their lives; they commit crimes easily without guilt and even suicide since there is no filter for accessing negative information.

As an educational institution, the step that can be taken is prevention through education with a religious approach. The education system prioritizes integrating science and religion as essential for shaping students' character into superior persons who can show their self-image (Sutarman et al., 2020). According to Vermeer (2012), acquiring meta-concepts and thinking skills to facilitate scholarly religious thought should be the

principal aim of religious education in schools. Therefore, providing learning materials that are integrated with religious values is required. In the process of learning reading, a religious approach can be implemented. Several benefits the students can get by reading Islamic texts are not only knowledge and useful information but also life insight, life values, and morals by which they become perfect human beings. The students can learn much knowledge, utilize technological advances for learning and working, experience education, learn culture, and many more.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design sets data collection and analysis conditions to be relevant to the research objectives (Kothari, 2004). Then, this study is aimed to explore students' perceptions of utilizingIslamic texts in reading instruction. In this research, the researcher conducted by giving the Islamic text. After that, the researcher asks questions for students about their perceptions.

Research Procedure

So, to get the data of students' perceptions, some steps are implemented: a) Preliminary activity: seeking and selecting suitable reading materials for critical reading about Islamic-based texts. b) Learning reading: reading, discussing, and doing assignments after learning. c) Collecting data: giving closed and open-ended questionnaires to students. d) Analyzing data: analyzing students' responses using descriptive qualitative. e) Concluding and interpreting data.

Before the reading lesson uses Islamic texts, there is a small discussion with students about the texts used for learning reading. It is explained to them that the materials given are about Islamic texts in the reading lesson. Fortunately, all students agree with the idea of reading lessons using Islamic texts such as Islamic history, journeys, and stories of prophets. During the learning process, 36 students participated in group discussions, working and learning together based on the materials given. They discuss the texts' contents, find the meaning of the unfamiliar words, and answer the questions given. The questions are related to the main idea of each paragraph, the message, the Islamic values, and the moral values they get from reading texts.

After the learning process is complete, the students are given a questionnaire. It is used to know the impact of Islamic texts by exploring their perception of using them for reading lessons. Then, to learn more about the students' perception, an interview is managed to get more deeply about the impact of using Islamic texts for reading lessons.

Research Participants

Thirty-six students participated in this research and were fourth-semester students at Prof. Dr. HAMKA Muhammadiyah University for the 2022 – 2023 academic year.

Data Collection

The technique of data collection in this research used qualitative data. The respondents were English learners who learned English as a foreign language.

Data Analysis

The students' responses from the questionnaire are analyzed and calculated using percentage (%), and the student's responses from the interview are analyzed qualitatively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

As previously stated, this research aims to explore the students'perceptions of utilizing Islamic texts in reading lessons. The students' perceptions are mainly focused on the impact of reading Islamic texts on their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Twelve statements are provided for getting information from students' perceptions: four statements are related to students' knowledge, four statements about students' attitudes, and four statements about students' skills. The following is a description of the three aspects.

1. The Impact on Knowledge

The Students' perception of Islamic Text's impact on their knowledge can be seen in Table 1.

Table1. The impact on knowledge

No	Statement	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	After reading Islamic texts, it will increase my faith in Allah	72.2	27.8		
2	Reading Islamic texts is very interesting and teaches me morals and Islamic values.	66.1	31.1	2.8	
3	By reading Islamic texts, I gained much knowledge about my religion.	55.6	44.4		
4	I believe all deeds and behaviors will be accounted for in the Hereafter.	55.6	44.4		
	Total	249.5	147.7	2.8	0
	Average	62.375	36.925	0.7	0

Table 1, four statements ask about the impact of reading Islamic-based texts on students' knowledge: moral values, Islamic values, divinity, and good deeds. The percentage of student responses from the four statements given shows that 62,375% of students' responses strongly agree, 36,925% agree, and 0,7 neutral. It shows that the students' knowledge increases and affects their faith in Almighty God. After reading Islamic texts, it indicated that the students' faith in Allah is getting better. The result of the questionnaire given it showed that learning religion is very important for them. It is in line with the study by Francis & McKenna (2017), in which the data highlight religion's importance in Muslim students' lives.

2. The Impact on Attitude

The Students' perception of Islamic Text's Impact on their Attitude can be seen in Table 2.

Table2. The impact on attitude

No	Statement	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	After knowing more about my religion, I really considered my speech and behavior before speaking and behaving.	30.6	58.3	11.1	
2	After knowing Islamic values, I can accept and appreciate other people's opinions.	55.6	36.1	8.3	
3	I must be responsible for my behavior and actions in the Hereafter.	52.8	44.4	2.8	
4	Understanding the importance of moral values motivates me to be good and help people in need.	58.3	41.7		
	Total	197.3	180.5	22.2	0
	Average	49.325	45.125	5.55	0

The four questions concern the effect on students' attitudes (respecting other people's opinions, having good speech and action, being responsible, and being motivated to help others). The percentage of students' responses is 49.325% strongly agree, 45.125% agree, and 5.55% neutral. It indicates a positive effect of using Islamic-based texts in reading lessons, and only 5.5% chose neutral. From the students' responses, it can be inferred that reading Islamic texts encourages students to read critically and affects their attitudes in the social dimension. It strongly supports the government's program in which national education should produce students devoted to the Almighty God, have a lofty character, and are healthy, capable, knowledgeable, creative, responsible, independent, and democratic (Nasional, 2010). It means that integrating learning materials with religion can bring good deeds to anyone. Islamic religion tries to deliver goodness to all humanity (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). Therefore, In his article, Forster (2014) states that Islam is a fundamental source of creed, rituals, ethics, and laws for human life.

3. The Impact on Skills

The Students' perception of Islamic Text's Impact on their Skills can be seen in Table 3.

Table3. The impact on skills

No	Statement	Percentage (%)			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	I will use technology such as the internet and social media to understand more about religion and guide me in life.	36.1	61.1	2.8	
2	After understanding Islamic values, I became more responsible for myself, my parents, my duties, and my education.	33.3	66.7		
3	After reading Islamic texts, I feel more confident about being a preacher.	11.1	52.8	30.6	5.5

4	By understanding Islamic values, I am afraid of cheating or lying.	22.2	61.1	16.7	
	Total	102.7	241.7	50.1	5.5
	Average	25.675	60.425	12.525	1.375

Students' perceptions of the impact of using Islamic texts on their skills are related to utilizing technology for learning, self-responsibility, being a preacher in the future, and avoiding cheating or lying. The result shows that the student's responses from those aspects are 25.675% strongly agree, 60.425% agree, 12.525% neutral, and 1.3% disagree. It indicated that teaching reading lessons using Islamic texts can affect students' skills.

4. Students' Responses from The Interview

The following result is acquired from the interview. The question is: What is your impression after reading Islamic texts, and Is it necessary or exciting? The results of the student's responses can be seen in the table below. There are some responses for the interview. It can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' responses from the interview

Questions	Summary of Students' responses
What is your impression after reading various Islamic texts? Is it important or interesting?	- Get more knowledge they never read before - Know Islamic values and moral message - Become closer to Allah - Get lots of new vocabulary - Make them stronger in life - Motivated to do good things - Be good to another - Increase their critical reading

The students' responses are summarized in the table above using open questions. The students' responses said that they are motivated to do good things. It is supported by Trigg (2014) that religious education is vital so that the students hold belief about the nature of the world and know what is right and wrong. So they will be kind and do good things to others. It leads them to be good in character and tolerant of other people. Jackson (2012) stated that religious education would benefit from pedagogical strategies.

Discussion

Based on the findings above, it was concluded that most students or respondents were attracted to Islamic texts. It can be seen from the students' responses toward the impact of using Islamic texts on their knowledge, attitude, and reading skills.

Table5. The impact in every category

No	Category	Percentage (%)			
		SA	A	N	D
1	The Impact on Knowledge	62.38	36.93	0.7	0

2	The Impact on Attitude	49.325	45.125	5.55	0
3	The Impact on Skills	25.675	60.425	12.525	1.375

From the responses, the impacts of utilizing Islamic texts in reading lessons show that 62.38 % of respondents strongly agree, 36,93% agree, and 0.7 % are neutral about the positive impact on their knowledge. They think they know more about moral and Islamic values they can apply in their life (Francis & McKenna, 2017). Then, 49.325 % of respondents stated strongly agree, 45.125% agree, and 5.55 % were neutral about the impact on their attitude. They can be more responsible, motivated, and sociable (Nasional, 2010). Last, 25,675 % of respondents stated strongly agree, 60.425% agree, 12.525% neutral, and 1.375 disagree, in which utilizing Islamic texts impacts their skills.

One exciting thing in Homan's article's statements is improving English standards through the *Literacy Across Curriculum* (LAC). From his statements, it can be explained that English language learning cannot beseparated from religious education to achieve learning objectives in English. English education does not merely aim to teach linguistic skills or words for speaking or dialog (Homan, 2004). Patterson, Cormack, and Green (2012) describehow teachers use reading materials to develop a specific religious understanding according to the structure of the time and, second, a moral reading practice that provides the child with a guide to secular conduct. It implies that religious education cannot be separated from any education. Concerning teaching English in higher education, Homan's ideas seem to be worth considering for educators to provide the highest quality of higher education. Supported by Horace Mann in (Watz, 2011), one of America's most influential figures in character development, he was highly concerned with the quality andreform of education to promote well-developed students physically, mentally, and spiritually. It aligns with Indonesia's National Education System, in which students are educated to become human beings who believe in and are devoted to the Almighty God, have a lofty character, and are healthy, capable, knowledgeable, creative, responsible, independent, and democratic (Nasional, 2010). Even the teachers get his attention, so they must be qualified, knowledgeable, responsible, and virtuous (Watz, 2011).

So, this research explores the impact of using Islamic-based texts on students' perceptions of the benefits of reading texts. Reading activity is a mental process that makes a person sad, angry, afraid, happy, or excited. Students' perceptions of exploring and reading Islamic texts positively affect physical interactions (Pecher & Zwaan, 2005). Islamic-based texts are rarely used to teach EFL reading in higher education, especially in English study programs (Homan, 2004).

CONCLUSION

It has been stated that the purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions regarding the utilization of Islamic-based texts in critical reading lessons. We want to explore the students' perceptions of using Islamic texts in critical reading lessons. The perception we will explore is the impact of using Islamic texts on students' knowledge, self-attitude, and reading skills after reading Islamic-based texts. Based on the study's

results, perceptions of the impact of Islamic-based texts on their knowledge, attitudes, and skills are pretty significant. The majority of students have positive responses to the 12 statements given. In a sense, their reading competence increases, their reading more critically, and their faith in Almighty God improves. It affects their character and behavior in their life. This research can contribute to making a good student character by reading.

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