



## Students' Perception of Basic Reading Teaching Materials Integrated Islamic Values

Syamsiah Depalina Siregar

<sup>1</sup>STAIN Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

e-mail: [syamsiahdepalina@stain-madina.ac.id](mailto:syamsiahdepalina@stain-madina.ac.id)

**Abstract** The primary aim is to enhance reading comprehension while simultaneously instilling Islamic moral and ethical values through the learning process. A qualitative descriptive method was employed using a case study approach involving students enrolled in the Basic Reading course. Data were collected through questionnaires, in-depth interviews and classroom observations. Thematic analysis was used to identify emerging patterns and themes from the data. The findings reveal that most students have a positive perception of Basic Reading materials infused with Islamic values. They found that the integrated content not only facilitated better reading comprehension but also provided meaningful insights into Islamic teachings applicable to daily life. This study concludes that students' positive perceptions indicate significant potential for implementing Islamic value-integrated teaching materials as an effective approach to teaching Basic Reading in Islamic higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Students' Perceptions; Basic Reading; Islamic Values; Teaching Materials; Islamic Higher Education.

**Abstrak** Tujuan utama studi ini untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca sekaligus menanamkan nilai-nilai moral dan etika Islam melalui proses pembelajaran. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus yang melibatkan mahasiswa yang terdaftar dalam mata kuliah Membaca Dasar. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, wawancara mendalam dan observasi kelas. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema yang muncul dari data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap materi Membaca Dasar yang diintegrasikan dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Mereka menemukan bahwa konten yang terintegrasi tidak hanya memfasilitasi pemahaman membaca yang lebih baik tetapi juga memberikan wawasan yang bermakna tentang ajaran Islam yang dapat diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa persepsi positif siswa menunjukkan potensi yang signifikan untuk mengimplementasikan pembelajaran yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam.

**Kata kunci :** Persepsi Mahasiswa; Membaca Dasar; Nilai Keislaman; Bahan ajar Pendidikan Tinggi Islam

## **INTRODUCTION**

In many classrooms across Islamic higher education institutions, students are learning English not just as a global language, but as a key to unlocking broader knowledge and future opportunities. At the same time, they carry with them a strong sense of cultural and religious identity shaped by Islamic values. For students in programs like Tadris Bahasa Inggris at STAIN Mandailing Natal, this intersection between learning a foreign language and maintaining faith-based values is not only natural—it's essential.

Reading, as one of the foundational skills in language learning, plays a vital role in helping students develop comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking. But often, the materials used to teach basic reading are disconnected from students' lived realities and spiritual worldview. They may contain interesting stories or relevant grammar, but they lack the values and context that resonate with students' daily lives and beliefs.

Reading is a basic skill that cannot be ignored in the process of learning a language, including English. At the tertiary level, Basic Reading is the foundation for students to understand simple texts before moving on to more complex reading. Anderson (2021) explains that reading is not simply saying words, but rather how one grasps the meaning of the text. In other words, reading is a process of understanding, not just reciting. In practice, the teaching of Basic Reading usually emphasizes on vocabulary recognition, sentence structure, as well as understanding the content of the text. However, learning will feel more alive and meaningful if it is linked to values that are already familiar to students. This is where the importance of presenting teaching materials that are not only linguistically functional, but also touch the value and spiritual aspects.

Teaching materials are at the heart of the teaching-learning process. They are not just a collection of materials or reading texts, but a medium that carries messages, meanings, and even values. Tomlinson and Mashuara (2010) assert that good teaching materials are those that can arouse interest in learning, are appropriate to students' needs, and are relevant to their lives. When students feel that the material they learn is close to their daily lives or beliefs, the motivation to learn will naturally arise. Therefore, in the context of Islamic education, teaching materials that contain Islamic values not only strengthen language understanding, but also strengthen students' identity and character.

Everyone learns in different ways, depending on how they see and perceive the material being learned. It is this perception that plays an important role. Washington (2023) mentions that perception is influenced by one's experience, motivation and values. Students who see the teaching material as something that is in line with their personal or religious values tend to feel more comfortable, enthusiastic and motivated. In many cases, they even feel more valued. Emilia (2022) in her research found that students show a positive attitude towards teaching materials that contain religious values because they are considered not only academically educating, but also building character.

Islamic education from the beginning has not only aimed to educate the mind, but also to purify the soul. This concept is affirmed by Al Attas in Abdullah (2024) that Islamic education is actually a process of *ta'dib*, which is to form civilized human beings - intellectually intelligent and morally noble. When values such as honesty, responsibility, helping, or patience are inserted into reading texts, students not only learn to understand the language, but also reflect on the messages of life. For example, reading texts about inspirational Muslim figures or stories of Islamic history in the form of short narratives will feel more relevant and touching than random texts that are not related to their values or culture.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach emphasizes the importance of linking subject matter with students' life experiences. Johnson (2002) states that contextualized learning helps students see that what they learn has real meaning and benefits. In this case, teaching materials that raise Islamic values are a real form of contextual learning. Students are not only learning to read, but also strengthening their beliefs, reflecting on life values, and shaping their worldview.

The idea of integrating Islamic values into English reading materials offers a compelling approach to bridge this gap. Several studies have shown that when students see their own values reflected in learning materials, their motivation and engagement tend to increase. Rohmatillah et al. (2020), for instance, found that students responded more positively and showed better comprehension when reading texts included moral and Islamic messages. Likewise, Maula and Fatmawati (2021) revealed that students felt more connected to English materials that incorporated familiar religious themes, which helped foster critical thinking and moral reflection. Supporting this, Sharabi (2023) and Siregar et al (2022) emphasized the role of culturally relevant texts in enhancing both language proficiency and spiritual identity among students in Islamic higher education.

These findings suggest that incorporating Islamic values into reading instruction is not only pedagogically sound, but also emotionally and culturally affirming for learners. It creates a space where students can grow intellectually while staying grounded in their religious identity. However, before educators can effectively design and implement such materials, it is important to understand how students perceive them.

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of basic reading teaching materials that integrate Islamic values. By listening to students' voices, this research seeks to provide insights that can guide English educators in designing learning materials that are both linguistically enriching and spiritually meaningful—helping students become competent English readers while staying true to who they are.

Reading is one of the basic skills that is very important in learning English, especially for first-year students. At the Basic Reading stage, students are invited to recognize common vocabulary, understand simple sentence structures, and capture explicit meaning from reading texts. The purpose of this learning is not only to train technical reading skills, but also to foster interest and positive reading habits. Brown (2011) mentions that basic reading skills are an important foundation for the development of language skills as a whole.

In the process of learning to read, the role of teaching materials becomes very decisive. Teaching materials that are interesting, relevant, and in accordance with the needs of students will help them more easily understand the material being studied. Tomlinson (2018) states that good teaching materials should be able to build learners' emotional and intellectual engagement. If the reading material feels close to students' lives, they tend to be more interested and motivated to learn. This shows that the development of teaching materials cannot be separated from the social, cultural and spiritual context of learners.

One approach that is now widely developed is to integrate Islamic values into teaching materials, including in English language learning. This integration aims to make the learning process not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also touch the affective and spiritual sides. Al-Attas dalam Hafid (2022) explains that Islamic education actually aims to form a civilized person - a person who has knowledge, morals, and spiritual awareness. Thus, the reading texts in Basic Reading learning can be designed in such a way that they contain Islamic messages, such as honesty, trustworthiness, enthusiasm for learning, and gratitude. Of course, the presentation still maintains the linguistic aspects in accordance with the language learning objectives.

In addition, it is also important to understand how students interpret the teaching materials they use. Students' perceptions are an important part of evaluating the effectiveness of a medium or learning strategy. Sanches et al (2018) mentions that a person's perception is influenced by their personal experience, cultural background, and expectations. In this context, how students respond to teaching materials that contain Islamic values will show whether the approach is relevant and well accepted in their learning process.

A number of previous studies have shown that the integration of Islamic values in teaching materials has a positive impact on learning processes and outcomes, especially in the context of Islamic higher education. Boda (2019) found that students are more motivated when learning using reading texts that contain Islamic messages. The same thing was expressed by Wibowo et al (2022), who noted that contextual and religious teaching materials can increase students' reading interest and emotional closeness to the material. However, not many studies have specifically highlighted students' perceptions of Basic Reading teaching materials integrated with Islamic values. Therefore, this research is expected to make a new contribution in filling the gap in the study, especially in the Islamic higher education environment.

Latifah and Rahmat (2019) found that students showed higher levels of learning engagement when the teaching materials used reflected their Islamic values. This finding provides a conceptual basis for the current study to review in more depth students' perceptions of reading materials that are not only linguistic, but also have a value dimension. Furthermore, Hidayatullah (2021) reported that the use of reading texts that raise narratives of Islamic figures or stories in English classes encourages critical discussion while forming value awareness in students. The contribution of this research lies in proving that Basic Reading teaching materials can function as an integrative tool that combines language learning with character education. Meanwhile, Suryani (2022) stated that texts containing religious values actually facilitate students' understanding of language structures because they are relevant and contextual. This finding strengthens the assumption that teaching materials containing religious values do not reduce linguistic quality, but rather increase students' cognitive connection with the material.

Amaliah's research (2020) conducted in the Islamic Education Study Program also shows that students prefer religiously oriented teaching materials because they are considered to reflect their academic and spiritual identity. The implications of the study

clarify the urgency of exploring student perceptions of teaching materials integrated with Islamic values, especially in Basic Reading courses which have tended to be technical-linguistic in nature.

Thus, all of these previous studies have strong relevance to this research. However, most of them focus on the impact and implementation of Islamic teaching materials in general, not specifically on student perceptions in the context of Basic Reading courses. This study aims to fill the void by examining how students perceive the meaningfulness, convenience, and suitability of basic reading teaching materials integrated with Islamic values in English language learning in Islamic higher education.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing in depth the students' perceptions of Basic Reading teaching materials integrated with Islamic values. This approach was chosen because researchers wanted to understand students' subjective views, understandings, and experiences of teaching materials used in the learning process. The subjects in this study were students of the English Language Study Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal who had taken the Basic Reading course using teaching materials that integrated Islamic values. The selection of subjects was carried out by purposive sampling, namely by considering students who have interacted directly with these teaching materials for at least one semester.

Data in this study were collected through three main techniques, namely: In-depth interviews: conducted with a number of selected students to explore their perceptions, responses, and assessments of the content, presentation, and relevance of Islamic values in teaching materials. Observation: conducted during the learning process to see how students respond to and use the teaching materials in the classroom context. Documentation: Basic Reading teaching materials were analyzed to find out the extent to which the elements of Islamic values were integrated in the reading materials.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as described by Miles and Huberman in Heryudita (2016). Data reduction was done by selecting relevant data, then presented in the form of narration and thematic matrix. Furthermore, researchers drew conclusions by interpreting the meaning behind student responses related to the teaching materials used.



To ensure data validity, researchers used source and technique triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was done by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Meanwhile, triangulation techniques were used to compare the results of interviews with the results of observations and the results of document analysis. In addition, member checking was also used to ask participants to review the interview results to ensure that the data obtained was in accordance with their intentions and views.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of data analysis obtained through interviews, observations and documentation, it was found that students' perceptions of Basic Reading teaching materials that integrate Islamic values are divided into several main themes, namely: (1) the relevance of Islamic values to the learning context, (2) ease of understanding reading texts, (3) increasing learning motivation, and (4) formation of Islamic character.

### **1. Relevance of Islamic Values in Reading Materials**

Most students stated that the presence of Islamic values in reading texts made the material more relevant to their identity and needs as students at Islamic Religious Colleges. Values such as honesty, responsibility, mutual assistance, and the spirit of seeking knowledge are considered to be in line with the principles of learning in Islam. Reading texts that contain stories of inspiring Muslim figures, verses of the Qur'an, and quotes from hadiths strengthen students' connection with the material being studied. Such as when reading texts that contain Islamic values, I feel closer to the material because it is in accordance with the values, we learn every day (Informant).

### **2. Ease of Understanding Material**

Students also expressed that the use of reading texts that are familiar in terms of values and culture helps them understand the contents of the material more easily. The context that is close to their daily lives makes vocabulary mastery, sentence comprehension, and drawing conclusions from the text more efficient. They feel they can grasp the message of the reading more quickly because the narrative is familiar and full of meaning.

*"If the text is about an Islamic story or religious values, I can understand the meaning more quickly even though it is in English." (Informant 7)*

### **3. Increased Motivation and Involvement**

The integration of Islamic values in teaching materials has also been proven to increase students' learning motivation. They feel more enthusiastic about reading because the material is considered not only a language lesson, but also a medium to strengthen religious understanding. In addition, discussions in class become more lively because students feel they have a moral responsibility to understand and explore the contents of the reading that carries an Islamic message.

*"I feel more enthusiastic about learning because I can simultaneously deepen Islamic values while learning to read." (Informant 1)*

### **4. Formation of Attitude and Character**

Several students stated that the content of readings containing Islamic values had an impact on their attitudes and views in everyday life. They felt that the teaching materials not only increased their linguistic insight, but also provided moral inspiration and spiritual motivation.

*"From the texts about Islamic figures, I became motivated to study harder and have a spirit of preaching." (Informant 5)*

The findings above show that students' perceptions of Basic Reading teaching materials integrated with Islamic values tend to be positive and constructive. Students not only see it as a medium to develop English language skills, but also as a means of internalizing values and strengthening Islamic identity. This is evidence that an integrative approach in teaching material design is relevant to be further developed, especially in the context of Islamic higher education.

The study indicated that the integration of Islamic values in Basic Reading teaching materials received a positive response from students. This finding strengthens the theory of social constructivism which emphasizes that students' understanding is formed through the interaction between learning experiences and the background of cultural and religious values that they adhere to (Vygotsky, 1978). In this context, the integration of Islamic values in reading texts not only helps students understand the content of the material but also facilitates the process of internalizing values cognitively and affectively.

Students feel that teaching materials that integrate Islamic values are more relevant to their identity and needs as part of the academic community in religious universities. This is in line with the findings (Asaad & Shabdin, 2021; Boda, 2019; Li, 2021) which state that the relationship between the learning context and the values



believed by students can increase motivation and active involvement in the learning process. The relevance of this context is not only thematic, but also encourages the creation of a critical dialogue space between the text and the students' personal values.

In addition, in terms of linguistics, the integration of Islamic values in reading texts helps students understand the contents of the text more easily. The familiar narrative context and values that are already known to students make it easier to understand the vocabulary, plot, and implied meaning in the text. This finding supports Kasman's (2024) statement that the use of religious value-based texts can increase the absorption of reading comprehension because of the strong personal connection between students and the material.

From an affective perspective, this study also confirms that teaching materials containing Islamic values can be an effective instrument in character formation. Students feel more motivated and inspired to apply the moral values contained in the reading materials. This shows that Basic Reading learning not only has an impact on language skills, but also on the development of attitudes and character, in accordance with the concept of character education in Islam which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, faith, and morals. In the classroom context, the integration of Islamic values also enriches the discussion process because students are more encouraged to express their views based on their religious values and experiences. This creates a more reflective, participatory, and meaningful learning space. Thus, this approach has the potential to support 21st-century learning objectives that focus not only on academic ability, but also on strengthening identity, morality, and spirituality.

Referring to the results of previous studies, it can be concluded that the main contribution of this study lies in the in-depth exploration of students' perceptions as direct users of teaching materials. If previous research has focused on the development and implementation of integrated Islamic teaching materials, this research provides a new dimension by looking at it from the perspective of the recipients (students as end users), which ultimately strengthens the empirical basis for the development of contextual and integrative curriculum designs in the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of Basic Reading teaching materials integrated with Islamic values are generally very positive. Students view that the existence of Islamic values in reading

texts provides contextual relevance, increases learning motivation, makes it easier to understand the material, and contributes to character building. This shows that the integration of Islamic values in English learning not only enriches the content dimension of the material, but also strengthens the personality and spiritual values of students. This study also shows that teaching materials that are in line with the religious background of students can be an effective medium in bridging the mastery of language skills and the development of Islamic values. Thus, this integrative approach is in line with the spirit of holistic Islamic education that does not separate the cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects in the learning process.

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