

## INCORPORATING ISLAMIC STUDIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG MUSLIM LEARNERS: PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' VOICES

**Anisah Setyaningrum**

*Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia.  
anisahsetya@iainkudus.ac.id*

**Abstract:** English teaching materials should meet the need of English learners. Unfortunately, most of teachers do not aware of the fact that actually young Muslim learners are able to learn Islamic studies in English in their age and it will be very useful for them in the future. This study aimed at investigating Pre-Service English Teachers (PSETs)' voices dealing with incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners. Open ended questions and brief interviews were administered to Pre-Service English Teachers as the future English teachers who learn teaching English for young learners (TEYL) in their undergraduate degree to know their voices. It is showed that the Pre-Service English Teachers have the same perception that incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners should be done by the teacher, because it is their golden age to learn many things, especially foreign language (English). The result of this study is able to be a good contribution for the practice of teaching English for young learners, especially young Muslim learners.

**Key words:** TEYL, Islamic studies, young Muslim learners, pre-service English teachers, voices.

### INTRODUCTION

As English developed into a global language, mastery of English became a must. To answer these global challenges, the Indonesian government has launched continuous English language learning starting from elementary school education to higher education. There is no specific policy governing the design of English teaching as a general course in each institution so that each institution can determine for itself the English learning design that suits their needs.

In Indonesia, Muslims represent a significant portion of the population (Maesaroh, D. T., Aridah, A., & Rusmawaty, D., 2022). In consistence, as mentioned by Elfi (2016) "most of students in Indonesia are Moslems and they study Islam in Islamic or public school. Besides, some of them also get additional knowledge of Islam from outside of the formal institution such as at home, at mosque, or Islamic community. They learn Islam and apply it in their daily life." However, based on the interviews with four Indonesian English teachers of Islamic elementary schools in 2022, it was found a fact that there is lack of awareness of Muslim children's teachers on the importance of incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners.

Most teachers still believe that students' backgrounds in Islamic knowledge are not essential enough to be exposed in the learning and teaching process when it comes to teaching English (Elfi, 2016). Even though, teaching English contextually is very useful for teacher in gaining students' engagement during the English learning process. It is in line with the John Dewey concept (1938 in Williams, 2017), it is progressivism, which mentioned that students

will come with their best learning if what they have learnt is related to what they have been familiar and known. Eventually, they will be interested in joining the learning process actively because the materials meet their needs.

Additionally, young Muslim learners are in a critical period. Siahaan (2022) explained that "in second language acquisition, The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) holds that there is time period for a person to learn a new language with native proficiency. This time usually begins around the age of two and ends just before puberty. According to the hypothesis, learning a new language after this critical period will be more difficult and unsuccessful." Based on that fact, so it is considered necessary to know the views of prospective English teachers towards incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners. With the hope that this result of study will be able to give contribution in considering the policy or teaching plans for the Pre-Service English Teachers, especially for those who will teach English in Islamic institution.

Young learners have special and different characteristics. In general, they enjoy playing, being active, collaborating with others, and directly experiencing/doing things. Teachers should indeed create lessons that incorporate play, allow students to move around and work or study in groups, and provide them opportunity to actively participate in the learning process. Especially in learning a foreign language, such as English, educators must be able to use the right strategies so that students are not saturated and bored, as well as so that students can easily pronounce English vocabulary. The teachers can get used to speaking English, of course, using simple vocabulary that has been introduced to students. The longer and more often students spend time studying English, the faster and better they learn the language. The more and more often educators introduce their students to English, they assume that the faster and better students will use English because they are more accustomed to it. Leont'ev (1981) stated that "Language learning in an early age of a child (6-12 years old) has a deceptive effect. His language development will be greatly affected by his experience in learning the language. When he has undergone the right track of learning his language acquisition will develop smoothly."

Everything must begin with the fundamentals, even teaching a toddler to speak English. The child will find it less difficult to acquire more complex sentence structures if he or she has a solid grasp of the fundamentals of English, beginning with learning the fundamentals of sentence structure, pronunciation, and writing. It will also be simpler for the child to comprehend the subsequent subject if he already comprehends these fundamentals. If the child's basic comprehension is poor, English can be rather complicated, but if the child has a strong understanding, English can seem lot simpler.

English material for young learners should cover all aspects of English skills, ranging from reading, speaking, listening, and writing. This is so that elementary school students are able to improve their overall English skills. In general, the material may be very easy to make, but in its delivery, it is precisely the elementary school English material that is the most difficult to implement. Therefore, English teachers are not only required to be smart in compiling materials, but also must be genius in delivering material to children.

The current elementary school English material is indeed the focus of the emphasis on mastering vocabulary. This is certainly not at all wrong, but there are things that need to be underlined in teaching English in elementary schools, namely a communicative teaching approach. By getting used to the delivery of the material using English at every opportunity, although the words are difficult to convey verbally, but the teacher can use visual methods or gestures. Because communicative delivery of English material will encourage children to use English in real terms in the classroom. This will certainly provide experience and learning of

English, which is indeed the main purpose of which we can apply it for communication purposes.

Learn English word forms or tenses, listen to English conversation audio, read English books, write words in English, and speak English are some fundamentals that the youngster must comprehend. The most crucial and essential components of learning English are tenses and word forms. English verb tenses are helpful for indicating the circumstances surrounding the timing of an event. The designated time may be in the past, present, or both the present and the future.

It is not surprising that tenses be on the first page or chapter in an English learning book because comprehending tenses is the most fundamental skill in learning the language. It can be claimed that a child has mastered English to a 60% level if he or she is able to master and comprehend all of the present tenses. Therefore, if the child already understands what the different tenses are, it is likely that any interaction the child has in English—whether it be speaking or writing—can be assumed to be real. The next fundamentals of learning English for a youngster is listening. Through listening, the youngster will gradually get familiar with English vocabulary and be able to understand those who speak the language. Getting accustomed to hearing to English words is one technique to learn the language quickly. The vocabulary a youngster hears will be easier for him to learn the more comfortable he is with it. As a result, it is highly recommended that kids watch English conversation videos or listen to English songs on YouTube.

Reading is the next fundamental skill in learning English that is crucial to acquire after listening. Reading some English texts or sentences will help the youngster become more aware of how English words are put together. Automatically, he will discover the numerous new words in the English language. He will gradually learn references when composing or editing English phrases in this manner. This is unquestionably excellent for helping kids improve their English-language abilities. While they are listening to his favorite song, they can also read the lyrics. Unknowingly, the child has been practicing reading and listening in English.

Writing comes next once one has mastered listening and reading. Children can gauge their level of English competence by writing in the language. Writing in English will help kids grasp how to speak the language, whether it is through vocabulary or grammar. That is way, children will be more able to correct their weaknesses by practicing so that later the weaknesses are covered and there are none at all. Writing is, in essence, a form of the three previously mentioned skills. The next step is to practice using the tenses in writing after learning the tenses in English and hearing, reading, and interpreting English sentences.

Haas (2000) pointing out that “foreign language instruction for children can be enriched when teachers use thematic units that focus on content-area information, engage students in activities in which they must think critically, and provide opportunities for students to use the target language in meaningful contexts and in new and complex ways.” In this research context, the thematic units of the teaching materials is Islamic studies that can be incorporated by developing the teaching materials. Thus, the development of teaching materials can be done by adapting the available materials then adjusted to the needs (Suyanto, 2014).

In learning Islam, human being needs to learn and use English because most references of Islamic studies are written particularly in Arabic and globally in English (Amalia, 2013). Maesaroh, D. T., Aridah, A., & Rusmawaty, D. (2022) stated that “Islamic stories can be used as supplementary materials to integrate English teaching and Islamic values in the context of Islamic elementary schools. Islamic stories should be developed by considering several aspects

and steps such as the curriculum, the language used, illustration and appearance, guidance for teachers, and moral lessons/values.”

Pre-Service English Teachers are students of the English education program who are prepared to teach English in the future. They are equipped with a wide variety of courses that support their future careers, such as courses Methods in English Language Teaching, Teaching English for Foreign Learners, Curriculum and Material Development, Evaluation in Language Teaching, and so on. Therefore, they already have provisions to be good future English educators and it is valuable to know their voices toward some issues dealing with English language teaching especially related to incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this descriptive study was carried out using a qualitative methodology. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather the data. The participants of this research consists of 30 Pre-Service English Teachers (PSETs) of an Islamic university in Central Java, Indonesia. Two factors made up the inclusion criteria: a. pertaining to the Muslim community of Indonesia, b. either enrolled in English Education Department of an Islamic University at the time of data collection or a graduate of a such university. The findings were drawn out from depth analysis of data and a review of relevant pieces of literature on the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the researcher reported all the findings of the Pre-Service English Teachers' voices towards incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners. The researcher used questionnaire in collecting the data. As for the questionnaire sheets, the researcher created them by using Google Form. The researcher involved 30 participants by considering their willingness to participate in this activity. Afterward, the researcher reported the results of this research to reflect the Pre-Service English Teachers' voices towards incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners. There are ten points identified as findings of this research, they are mainly about the benefits of incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners. Those ten points are described in following explanations.

The benefits of incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners which were found from the participant responses are: (1) as two in one chance for the teacher; (2) having broader insight; (3) balance between English and religion; (4) as a provision in gaining new knowledge & English; (5) as an added value; (6) increasing faith; (7) responding to the challenges of the times; (8) forming habits in practicing English language skills; (9) able to support children to be good Muslim with broadminded; and, (10) maximize the golden age phase.

By incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English to young learners, the teachers are able to give double materials in one-time, they are English skills and Islamic knowledge. As some participants explained:

It is very useful because we are just like providing English knowledge and also Islamic studies.

(PSET 1)

Once learning will get two advantages. Where children can absorb vocabulary in English, as well as absorb the Islamic values in Islamic studies.

(PSET 4)

There are many benefits that we can get such as children being able to understand English through religious learning media which in fact is important for life, and also increases children's interest in English.

(PSET 7)

So that children understand Islamic studies and also knowledge of English vocabulary.

(PSET 11)

In addition to deepening their religious knowledge, they also learn to understand English texts.

(PSET 12)

We will get many of benefits with teaching Islamic studies. Besides, we will give them 2 in 1 material for them. The materials are about general knowledge and Islamic knowledge. It will make our position as a Muslim teacher will be complete to give them a complete lesson. In addition, we can also remember how to give them a good figure as a Muslim teacher, starting from our attitude and our dress code at home and school.

(PSET 18)

Based on the data that the researcher gathered, the participant thinks that the children will have broader insight.

So that children are able to be more insightful.

(PSET 2)

Moreover, by incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners, the children will have a balance between English and religion. This is in line with one of the participant's statements.

They can give a balance contribution between English and their religion.

(PSET 2)

It is also can be a provision in gaining new knowledge both at present and in the future. There are five participants' statements which support this point.

As their provision when gaining new knowledge out there and becoming an advantage and being able to create the faith and piety of the child.

(PSET 3)

Adding insight. Because religious studies require a more detailed understanding, while in our country there are still many (people) who cannot speak English. (In consequence), they will find it difficult to understand religious teachings properly.

(PSET 5)

Muslim children really need to learn English so that they have good English language skills, which is very beneficial for them in the future, not only for education and work, but they can know many things widely both nationally and internationally with their mastery of English.

(PSET 5)

This will be a provision for children to gain knowledge and make it easier for them to understand material about other Islamic issues that are presented in English.

(PSET 16)

Teaching English to Muslim children is necessary so that Muslim children can learn many things, because being able to speak English can be a bridge to learn literacy in the world.

(PSET 19)

Besides, the children will also have an added value by learn Islamic studies in English class. Two participants proposed this view, and PSET 22 discussed in more detailed explanation. This added value is very important for the children especially as the future Islamic moderation agents.

I think teaching English for young Muslim Learners is something that should be done. Because no matter how smart children (know) about the religion of Islam, they must also be able to speak English. So, if one day they find an article about Islamic studies in English that diverges with their teachings they will not be easily influenced.

(PSET 22)

I wonder why teaching Muslim children about the study of Islam in English is a necessity, because if children have been taught about Islamic studies in English if there is a news or article about Islamic studies in English that is deviant or inconsistent with the teachings of the Islamic religion, they are not easy to believe and get carried away about it.

(PSET 22)

The benefits of teaching Islamic studies in English to Muslim children in my opinion are: if there is a reading on Islamic studies that is distorted in English, they can understand that it is not enviable, when they are asked in English about the basis of the Islamic religion they can answer, and there is an added value for the child. Besides, they will be smart in knowing terms of religion and they are also smart in English.

(PSET 22)

Because when they grow up and go abroad, the language they use is English. And a person who can master English is an added value for that person.

(PSET 26)

Incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners is also able to increase the children's faith. It was explained by PSET 3.

I think it is very helpful in gaining knowledge and faith of the child.

(PSET 3)

In addition, incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners is one of ways in responding to the challenges of the times.

Very interesting. Like myself, Muslim learners. Because besides the importance of religious science, general knowledge such as English language learning is also very much needed, especially at this time.

(PSET 8)

The development of language and technology is now very advanced, and English is an international language that is commonly used anywhere. In my opinion learning English for Muslims is also important.

(PSET 8)

Undoubtedly teaching English to Muslim children is an important thing to do early on. The reason is, English is used to interpret books or sentences in order to advance the development of Islam. Muslim children as a young generation certainly do not want to be out of date by refusing to learn English which plays a role as an international language. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with introducing English early to children.

(PSET 14)

I think that's a really good idea. Nowadays, English is necessary in many ways, and young Muslim learners also need to learn it.

(PSET 25)

In today's age of globalization, English is a universal language. Muslim children are the forerunners of the future of Muslims, Islam needs to develop according to the times, so the future leaders of Islam need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge to preach to the international community.

(PSET 25)

Muslims children will remember that Islam is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islam exists for the whole world, teaching children about Islam in English makes them understand there are many international people who need to understand about Islam.

(PSET 25)

In my opinion, by seeing the development of globalization today, using foreign languages is very much needed for every student, especially English, therefore teaching of English is very important in addition to Islamic science.

(PSET 28)

As an international language, English can be learned by anyone, including Muslim children. As we know science is broad and infinite, now many aspects of life in practice use English ranging from business, technology, government, and even education. Therefore, learning English needs to be applied at a young age/children.

(PSET 29)

Forming habits in practicing English language skills also mentioned by the participants. There were four explanations as follow.

So that children also practice knowing English from an early age.

(PSET 17)

Because as Muslims we have to teach children about Islamic studies in English so that children are accustomed to learning Islamic studies and English skills.

(PSET 10)

The benefits include for Muslim children, they will be familiar with vocabulary about Islam. For example, they will know the vocabulary like prophet, angel, God (Allah)

and many more. They will know that English and Indonesian are different, the delivery of Islamic studies in English sounds more unique to them, then some of these Muslim children are interested in learning English.

(PSET 23)

They will be familiar with English.

(PSET 24)

This effort of incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners is also able to support children to be good Muslim with broadminded.

Because teach Islamic studies in English to young Muslim learners can make learners don't lose their real life because Islam teaches them how to act good. Can get the reward from Allah, learners can be good Muslim with broadminded.

(PSET 13)

The last but not least, all of benefits of incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners that has been mentioned above is also able to be conclude as an effort to maximize the golden age phase.

The teaching of English to children is very important, both for Muslim or non-Muslim. Because at the age known as the golden age, they are very easy to teach.

(PSET 17)

Because it is their golden age to learn many things, especially foreign language (English). It was also in agreement that incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English needed to be done for young Muslim learners since there are numerous advantages to learn it at an early age.

(PSET 17)

One of today's basic human necessities is the ability to speak English. English is already widely spoken on a global scale and is utilized in practically every industry (Siming, et.al., 2021). As a nation develops, there is an urgent need for English language education. As a result, the introduction of English as a second language to students when they are 12 years old began as soon as possible. Early childhood, defined as a child between the ages of 2 and 7, is a prime time for language development (Triyanto & Astuti, 2021).

Early childhood language education is crucial to the growth and development of young children. They can converse, tell stories, and even sing using language. Because teaching young children to speak a language is far simpler than teaching them to utilize logic. This includes English education in the language instruction that should be given in early childhood (Nasution, 2016).

In the golden age, when kids can learn anything with ease, the teaching and learning of English in elementary school gives students the English language proficiency they need (Sukarno, 2008). In this context, they are able to maximize the golden age phase by forming habits in practicing English language skills.

Teaching English to young Muslim learners should be different from others learners. Specifically, the teaching material that will be taught to the students. Because in this situation, English teachers must provide their pupils with instructional tools that help them develop Islamic values and character in addition to their language skills (Maesaroh, Aridah, & Rusmawaty, 2022).



## CONCLUSION

Pre-Service English Teachers have the same view that incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners should be done by the teacher, because it is their golden age to learn many things, especially foreign language (English). It was also in agreement that incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English needed to be done for young Muslim learners since there are numerous advantages to learn it at an early age.

The result of the study which showed the Pre-Service English Teachers voices can be classified into ten points, they are: as two in one chance for the teacher, having broader insight, balance between English and religion, as a provision in gaining new knowledge & English, as an added value, increasing faith, responding to the challenges of the times, forming habits in practicing English language skills, able to support children to be good Muslim with broadminded and maximize the golden age phase. It can be concluded that incorporating Islamic studies in teaching English for young Muslim learners should be done by the teacher. However, additional research was still required. Findings could vary depending on the individual places, distinctive traits and demands.

## REFERENCES

- Amalia, T. Z. (2013). Multicultural Education, The Frame of Learning Islamic Studies Towards Islamic Religion Teachers Bilingually. *QIJIS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies Volume 1 | Number 1 | January-June 2013*.
- Elfi. (2016). Integrating Islamic Messages In The English Teaching For Moeslem Students in Indonesia. *Batusangkar International Conference I, 15-16 October 2016*.
- Haas, M. (2000). Thematic, communicative language teaching in the K–8 classroom. *ERIC Digest EDO-FL-00-04*. <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0004thematic.html>
- Leont'ev, A. (1981). *Psychology and the Language Learning Process*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Maesaroh, D. T., Aridah, A., & Rusmawaty, D. (2022). Can Islamic Stories be Used as Supplementary English Materials at Islamic Elementary Schools?. *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education*, 4 (2), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.21093/sajie.v4i2.4166>
- Nasution, S. (2016). Pentingnya Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Pada Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Warta Edisi 50 Oktober 2016*.
- Siahaan, F. (2022). The Critical Period Hypothesis of Second Language Acquisition Theory of Eric Lenneberg's. *The Explora Volume. 8 No. 2 July 2022*.
- Siming, M. S. M., Liwang, N. A. S., Kusumawardhani, R., Dikastuti, A. D., Zulkifli., & Saymsiyah. (2010). Pentingnya Bahasa Inggris Untuk Anak Usia Dini di Kelurahan

- Mangasa. *Jurnal Lepa-lepa Open* <https://ojs.unm.ac.id/JLLO/index> Volume 1 Nomor 1, 2021.
- Sukarno. (2008). Teaching English to Young Learners and Factors to Consider in Designing the Materials. *Jurnal Ekonomi & Pendidikan*, Volume 5 Nomor 1, April 2008.
- Suyanto, K. K. E. 2014. *English for Young Learners*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Triyanto, D. & Astuti, R.Y. (2021). Pentingnya Bahasa Inggris Untuk Anak Usia Dini di Desa Purwoasri, 28 Metro Utara. *JSGA* Vol. 03 No. 02 Tahun 2021.
- Williams, M. K. (2017). John Dewey in the 21st Century. *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education*, 9 (1), 2017.