LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

English teaching practice in the Covid-19 pandemic era has currently received increased attention in educational research. Many studies have highlighted the practical changes and cultural changes of TEFL due to the pandemic, yet such changes remain less explored in Islamic educational context. The aim of the paper is to document the changes that occur in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools with a particular focus on: (1) digital literacy, (2) multimodal materials, and (3) Islam moderation contextualization. The paper presents a case study on four Islamic boarding schools in Lampung Province, Indonesia. Data were drawn from audio-recorded teacher interviews, field notes, and documentation. A qualitative analysis of the data revealed the importance of digital literacy improvement for both students and teachers; the emergent needs of designing multimodal materials; and the urgency of incorporating four pillars of Islam moderation into English language teaching practices. It is argued that being conversant with such practical and cultural needs can be a remarkable springboard to improve English instruction in the Islamic boarding schools during and post pandemic era. With growing consciousness coming from this research, a multimodal teaching material that accommodates the spirit of Islam moderation can be studied and developed further.

Keywords: digital literacy, Islam moderation, Islamic boarding school, multimodal material

1. Introduction

Learning media migration is one of the adaptation efforts in the educational process during the pandemic. Digital literacy's usage is increasingly found everywhere, especially in language teaching and learning practices (Hafner et al., 2015). Digital literacy can help both teachers and students to provide and access materials easier during learning from home in pandemic era. Furthermore, technological advances bring changes in students' learning styles in receiving lessons (Kustini et al., 2018). This leads to the provision of multimodal material which is able to facilitate students in understanding meaning through various media and sensory modes (Anggrainy, 2016). In its utilization, the teacher can explain the subject materials in a variety of ways by using communication media such as images, colors, and audio (Ajayi, 2012).

Further, multimodal material is something commonly found in learning English (Lirola, 2020). The use of multimodal materials is widely used in learning English (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016; Nasution, 2019). Moreover, there is also supplementary material on the use of multimodal materials that can build students' awareness of the social conditions around them (Azizah & Sugirin, 2019). Several studies on supplementary materials in learning English have been conducted. The research on multimodal usually also included supplementary material using local cultural content (Amelia & Hikmawati, 2019; Nurliana, 2019) and the use of cartoons, anecdotes, and stories (Dodd et al., 2015; Mina, 2015; Thakur, 2015). In

addition, supplementary material regarding religious moderation can also be inserted in learning to provide knowledge, such as values of religious tolerance (Nirwana & Darmadali, 2021).

With this all in mind, in the education process, integration of religious moderation becomes important, especially in order to build harmony in plurality. In line with that, there is an integration of Islamic moderation in textbooks which include moral and ethical values as communication tools to students (Ashar, 2021). It is known that, Islamic moderation leads to kindness and benefit (Hafidz, 2021). Hence, the issue of religious moderation has become important to be supplemental materials in the learning process. However, the integration of religious moderation as supplementary materials in ELT has not much done.

Therefore, this research is aimed to find out the use of digital literacy, the importance Islamic Moderation materials and the use of multimodal materials in Islamic boarding high schools. In addition, this study attempted to answer three questions: (1) how is the students' competency in digital literacy? (2) Is there any platform as YouTube or podcast created by English teachers in ELT? and (3) is it needed for the Islamic moderation to be included in ELT?

2. Method

This research used descriptive qualitative, field research which tried to get a description of changes emerging in Islamic Boarding School regarding with digital literacy, multimodal materials and incorporation of the contextualization four pillars of Islam moderation in ELT. The data were generated through open-ended interviews and documentation. The interviews were chosen to be the main data generation tool as it provides teacher opportunities to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007:96). Understanding the educational phenomenon from teachers' voice is important since it could depict how teachers define their educational

philosophy and act accordingly towards realizing changes continuously emerge in the educational landscape (Kincheloe, 2003).

The participants of this study were four English teachers from Islamic Boarding High Schools located in the province of Lampung. All participants participated in this study without coercion and were assured that they could withdraw their participation whenever they wanted. To keep their confidentiality, no participant was referred with their real names; instead, we used T1 for teacher 1, T2 for teacher 2, and so forth. The collected interview data were then transcribed, translated, and categorized into some themes. Then, the data were thoroughly analyzed with a descriptive analysis method, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Creswell, 2009).

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Digital Literacy

Drawing on teachers' responses in the interviews, like in other types of schools, the students in Islamic boarding schools had relatively good digital literacy skills but indicated the need for technical supports, particularly in term of internet access, from the institutions. This was shown from following are some interview excerpts:

T1: *So far so good and we used some platforms such as Google classroom, Kahoot, quizzes for CBT E-learning.*

T2: *Students' digital literacy skills are quite skilled and capable in using technology, but, the internet usage in school areas is limited because they are not necessarily mature enough to use it.*

The teachers' statement delineated how English teachers in Islamic boarding schools have integrated digital technology in their teaching practices. The various digital platforms used instructional practices showed students' digital literacy skills as are able "to search and think critically about retrievable information (with the widespread use of the Internet) and be able to communicate with others through a

variety of digital tools and applications" (Ferrari, 2012, p. 16).

Teachers found this integration of digital literacies in English language teaching beneficial for both teachers and students which in turn contribute to good learning outcome. This is in line with Liza & Andriyanti (2020) who maintained that by integrating digital technology, teachers might meet the digital literacy standards of professional English teachers and improve the quality of English teaching and learning output. The involvement of digital literacies in blended learning is considered effective in terms of accessibility, ease of use, design, and duration of the e-learning (Tang and Chow, 2016). Digital literacies help students' autonomy to navigate the treasure of information accessed using the digital border and inherently free to select to work with texts that are most appropriate for their current language proficiencies (Yuan, et al., 2019).

However, it is worth noting that digital literacies in Islamic boarding school context might face some constraints due to the contextual rule of Islamic boarding schools which limits students' access to internet. Other factors which influencing this barrier include the complexity of digital literacy technologies, varying levels of understanding among young learners, and EFL teachers' lack of digital literacy experience (Mudra, 2020).

3.2 Multimodal Material

The need for a readjustment of ESL teaching and learning in various contexts can be realized by, among others, including a focus on multimodal pedagogical approaches, which enhances effective student learning outcomes. Multimodal techniques integrated into EFL teaching and learning can increase students' autonomy in learning, increase motivation to learn, and accommodate a variety of learning styles (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016).In the same vein, specifically in the area of reading skill, Ikasari et al, (2020) showed how multimodal texts with diverse modes or semiotic resources such as color, sound, motion, written text, and gesture could

affluence the teacher to help the students perform better. Moreover, the use of multimodal texts allowed the students to participate more actively in the classroom activities

A variety of print and digital multimodal texts were used in ELT practices in Islamic boarding schools such as, Islamic story books and novels, a collection of quotes, Islamic speeches, websites, video games, and picture books. This multimodal materials are expected to stimulate students to learn more effectively since it is assumed better learning outcome, that according to (Moreno & Mayer, 2007), is produced from a mixture of pictures and words than from words alone.

As elaborated by teacher 2, the materials in term of videos made and uploaded on YouTube were found to be more likeable among students since young learners today are familiar with this worldwide platform. This is beneficial to reduced students' boredom in learning English materials which are mostly presented in textbooks. This in congruence with what argued by Liu (2013) that multimodal learning classrooms which employ several modes, verbal and non-verbal, to represent content knowledge aims to activate both learners' visual and auditory sensory modalities.

3.3 Islamic Moderation

To this end, despite the large number of Islamic schools in Indonesia, studies and practices to include Islamic moderation norms into English language instruction remain less explored (Rizal, 2020). In fact, whereas including Islamic moderation comprising of *tawassuth, tawazun, tasamuh,* and *i'tidal* values could support the character development in Islamic junior high schools. This can be executed through simple routine activities such as wearing school uniform, perceiving ancestral culture, familiarizing greetings, sympathetic care routine for orphan and poor people and so on (Saefudin, 2020).

Situated in the school context with main emphasis on religious education, English teachers in Islamic boarding schools

have positive attitude toward the instilling of religious moderation values into English language teaching practices. The accommodation of religious moderation values into ELT in is in relevance with the importance of addressing inter-culturality in online learning environment (Sadykova & Meskill, 2019).

In attempt to identify how Islamic moderation understandings are promoted in ELT practices in this schooling context, some particular values are highlighted. The first is nationalism. The nationalism values, according to T1, were presented through the section of cultural awareness in the textbooks used in English classes. She emphasized that through cultural awareness section, students are provided the local and foreign cultures contained in each unit of the textbook. The representation of the balanced culture in the textbooks has motivational effect on learning English language. (Shah et al., 2019)

The other value was tolerance. Regarding this, T3 ascertained that

"It is very crucial to teach students tolerance values because I sometimes see my students from different ethnics bully each other. Therefore, to reduce this issue, we teachers should take a part of spreading the importance tolerant behaviors by instilling it in our instruction".

Tolerance is a valuable trait to have, and it will help students greatly if it is instilled early in their education, particularly in English learner. Therefore, multicultural language learning can be used as an alternate strategy in the classrooms. They can think critically and be tolerant from an early age as a result of this influence, but it must be tailored to their age and mental capacity (Miftakh & Wachyudi, 2019). Furthermore, according to a study, learning culture "allows the student to gain a fondness for the individuals of that culture," "helps the students avoid stereotypical views," and is part of the general education (Kitao, 2000).

The next pillar of Islamic moderation is anti-violence. In this regard, English teachers assumed that

"Students should know about the value of anti-violence considering many criminality and violence out there. We as educators need to provide Islamic moderation value so that they don't do something bad to others" (T4).

The integration of Islamic moderation made by teachers in Islamic boarding schools was implemented in several ways. For example, teacher 2 and 3 used quote of the day and Islamic stories containing moral values related to the pillars of Islamic moderation. The same way was stated by teacher 1 that used an advice as a media to prevent violence among the students. This media consisted of proverb in ELT which put up moral values that can represent pillar of Islam in the theme of anti-violence.

The integrations above are pursuant to a study by Siswanto (2019) which found that the mainstream way of implementing Islamic moderation value is not explicitly explained in the textbook. The Islamic value substances such as the values of tolerances, democracy, simplicity, and justice and harmony –which is the part of anti-violence- indeed is essentially have to be reflected in the education process.

The last pillar of Islam moderation found in ELT process of Islamic boarding school is democracyall the particiants agreed that the value which represent cultural awarness and nationality comitment in their teaching-learning process. Specifically, the teacher 1 used to compare the cross-culture found in indonesia and western as a result of ELT. Then they added the importance of building a nationalism in students' heart and realized in daily behavior.

This is in congruence with (Zuhdi, 2018) which stated that schools in Indonesia have to provide a chance as wide as possible for children to understand and practice religion with promoting a sense of nationalism. The result is that Indonesian students have been considered as moderat Islam. As the teacher 2 and 3 added further that if the teacher do not teach the student about nationalism and such, the big stream of foreign culture will dominate or even swept away Indonesian culture.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to shed light on the integration of digital literacy in ELT during instructional process from home in pandemic era. In general, it could be stated that students had good responses to digital literacy in their class. Both teacher and student could adapt new learning environment during pandemic by implementing multimodal materials. Based on the finding of this study, the teachers could use multimodal text and integrate the values of Islamic moderation as the supplementary materials for students. It helps the teacher to provide good values with some particular values highlighted as nationalism, tolerance, anti-violence, and democracy. Further, the teacher could promote local content as teaching materials in order to introduce and show the students' national identity.

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