Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues, 8 (1), page 99 - 110, 2025
ISSN: 2615-3920 EISSN: 2685-4473
DOI: 10.21043/jetli.v8i1.32453

The Perspective of Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Students Regarding the Needs of English Language Teaching Materials to Develop Islamic-Based Language Literacy

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How to cite:

Amalia, T. Z., Fitriati, S. W., Mujianto, J., & Widiati, U. (2025). The perspective of integrated Islamic elementary school (SDIT) students regarding the needs of English language teaching material to develop Islamic-based language literacy. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, *8*(1), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.21043/jetli.v8i1.32453

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in response to issues that arose in an Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT), stemming from the lack of consistent English language teaching resources aligned with the educational approach of Islamic schools. This study innovates by developing English language teaching material models for SDITs. It examines the need for these models from the perspective of SDIT students. Qualitative descriptive methods were employed in this research. Data was collected through a questionnaire containing ten closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The results indicate that integrated Islamic elementary schools (SDITs) require more English language teaching models, despite students' preference for the current materials. They enjoy singing in English but find reading English stories difficult. Additionally, they mentioned wanting content about Muslim children's daily lives and fun games added to their English language teaching materials. In conclusion, the perspectives of Integrated Islamic elementary schools (SDIT) indicate that the development of English language teaching material models with Islamic-based language literacy is needed.

KEYWORDS:
Integrated Islamic elementary schools (SDIT);
Development;
English language Teaching material model;
Student's perspective

ARTICLE HISTORY:
Received:
March 3, 2025
Accepted:
June 6, 2025

Introduction

English is studied globally at every educational level, from elementary school to college. This is due to English's status as a global lingua franca. Many believe that learning English enables students to interact with people around the world. Since students spend more years studying the language overall, it is important to start teaching them early (Mourao, 2003). The more

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years they spend studying English, the more accustomed they will be to it. This will improve their English skills and make it easier for them to learn English at a higher level of education without feeling left behind. Furthermore, early English instruction is thought to attract greater attention from stakeholders, including parents and teachers (Rahmadany et al., 2022). For these reasons, early English instruction is strongly advised.

However, learning English as a foreign language can be a challenging task. It is not our native language that we use on a daily basis. It requires a significant amount of effort and adjustment to learn it well. Since language is meant to facilitate communication, learning English involves more than acquiring knowledge. It also involves developing the ability to interact directly with native speakers. Conversing with native English speakers can significantly increase EFL learners' confidence in their ability to communicate in English (Alberth, 2023). Due to differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, we must study English from scratch and become accustomed to using it in daily life. According to Wallin and Cheevakumjorn (2020), it is best to start learning a second language as early as possible because younger students tend to have more varied vocabularies and better accents. Therefore, most schools in Indonesia have incorporated English into their curriculum at the elementary school level, including the Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT). Although the name of this school suggests that it prioritizes religion, the Integrated Islamic Elementary School also recognizes the importance of learning English for its students' future.

The Integrated Islamic Elementary School combines Islamic religious education with a general education curriculum. The SDIT curriculum encompasses general subjects, including mathematics, science, and language, as well as integrated Islamic religious education. According to previous studies, there are two main reasons why spirituality is relevant to teaching English: First, it can inspire students. Second, it can help them understand their religion (Amalia et al., 2022). The SDIT curriculum is designed to teach Islamic values, including morals, manners, and Islamic behavior, in everyday life. This type of school is very popular with parents because their children will receive two types of knowledge at once: religious and general. However, running a school that provides these two types of education requires more effort than running a regular school. SDITs usually follow two curricula: the JSIT curriculum and the national education curriculum. SDIT Islamic elementary schools promote competitiveness through an excellence-based curriculum that integrates science and religion, reinforces religious principles, and promotes life skills and personal growth (Ilyasin, 2019). In the SDIT curriculum, teachers include religious values from the Qur'an and Hadith in all their lessons, including English. Relevant verses from the Qur'an and Hadith are incorporated into English lessons. For instance, when studying English with natural scenery, teachers may incorporate verses from the Qur'an discussing *Asmaul Husna Al Kabir* (The All-Great).

In order to promote the acquisition of general and religious knowledge, SDIT must develop teaching materials that cater to the needs of its students. These materials often include various interesting learning models to engage students. These models play a crucial role in the learning process by enhancing students' effectiveness, understanding, and learning outcomes. Developing an appropriate, valid, and practical teaching material model has been shown to positively impact various aspects of learning at different educational levels. According to this research, students at various educational levels benefit significantly from relevant, reliable, and useful instructional material models in terms of learning outcomes, 21st-century skills, problem-solving abilities, motivation, engagement, and cognitive development (Asrizal et al., 2023). Using teaching materials based on learning models has a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Prayatni, 2019). Using a learning model helps students have

clear objectives about what they aim to learn. Learning models also enrich teaching and learning experiences by offering diverse and meaningful activities that cater to students' individual needs and support their ongoing growth.

However, several problems arise in the teaching and learning process. Based on observations at SDIT, there are still not many English books that combine the national education curriculum with the SDIT curriculum. They use English teaching materials that do not meet the learning needs of students in Islamic elementary schools. Currently, there are no teaching models that integrate Islamic nuances, such as verses from the Qur'an or Hadith. Teachers can only include Islamic principles within the content they deliver. As a result, educators at SDIT and other Islamic primary schools must not only teach accurately and effectively but also ensure that every subject they teach is presented within an Islamic framework. Furthermore, there is a lack of diverse learning activities. Teaching approaches remain limited, often being repetitive and unchanging. In reality, there is very little variation in the activities provided within each unit of study.

This phenomenon indicates that English language teaching materials remain limited and fail to meet the needs of students, particularly those in Islamic elementary schools. Amalia and Susanti (2024) noted that adjustments are being made to Islamic education in Indonesia due to the presence of Islamic-based institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, integrated Islamic schools, and madrasas. It is crucial to analyze student needs before developing teaching materials. In second language acquisition, a needs analysis helps identify learners' desires, needs, and areas of weakness and strength, enabling the design of a productive and successful teaching and learning atmosphere (Ibodullayevna & Abdimurotovich, 2023). With a needs analysis, the resulting teaching materials will be more effective. Once appropriate materials are available, Islamic elementary school teachers will no longer need to incorporate Islamic values because they will already be included in the materials. This research aims to identify the model of English language teaching materials that students at integrated Islamic elementary schools require, from the students' perspective.

Method

This study will analyze how students at integrated Islamic elementary schools perceive the need for English language teaching materials to develop Islamic-based language literacy. This study will use a descriptive qualitative approach. It is a valuable method for examining complex issues in second language teaching and learning (Nassaji, 2020).

Researchers conducted this study with fourth graders at integrated Islamic elementary schools. A total of 30 students were surveyed about their views on the necessity of an English language teaching model that develops Islamic-based language literacy in these schools. Using a qualitative research methodology, the researchers collected data via a questionnaire. The researchers distributed a questionnaire containing ten closed questions and one open-ended question. Fourth-grade students in integrated Islamic elementary schools were given four choices for each open question. Three of the questions will allow students to select more than one answer. The open-ended question will solicit their suggestions. The researchers will analyze the responses to calculate the percentage of respondents who answered each item. In research, Creswell typically recommends using closed-ended questions in questionnaires or structured interviews to obtain clear and measurable information, which facilitates comparison of answers from different individuals (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the data were analyzed using Miles et al. (2014)’s interactive approach to

qualitative data analysis. This method involves three main steps that occur simultaneously: reducing the data, organizing it into a clear format, and drawing conclusions or verifying them to ensure accuracy.

Results

This chapter discusses the use of questionnaires for collecting data. The findings and discussions are crucial processes that must be completed before the study's conclusions and recommendations are determined. The researcher created this questionnaire for students. Thirty students in total have already completed a ten-question questionnaire and provided one suggestion about the teaching materials they need to learn English.

Table 1 *Students' needs analysis of English teaching material*

No	Question	Options	N	F	%
1	How do you feel about learning English with the books currently used in school?	Very like	30	0	0%
		Like	30	15	50%
		Just so-so	30	12	40%
		Dislike	30	3	10%
2	In your opinion, how important is the content of English books for everyday life?	Very important	30	7	23%
		Important	30	20	67%
		Just so-so	30	0	0%
		Lack	30	3	10%
3	Which part of the English book do you like? (You can choose more than one)	Reading an interesting story	30	7	23%
		Writing own sentences	30	6	20%
		Having a chat	30	5	17%
		Singing an English song	30	12	40%
4	Which part of the English book content is the most difficult to understand?	Reading English Stories	30	11	37%
		Writing own sentences	30	5	17%
		Speaking new vocabulary	30	12	40%
		Listening to audio	30	2	10%
5	What makes the contents of English books more enjoyable? (You can choose more than one)	Interesting pictures	57	17	28%
		Fun games	57	21	37%
		Muslim children's story	57	7	12%
		Fun song	57	12	21%
		Others	57	0	0%
6	At school, you want to learn English with books that contain (you can choose more than one):	Islamic pictures	62	9	14%
		Muslim children's games	62	8	13%
		Stories about the daily lives of Muslim children	62	34	48%
		Islamic songs in English	62	11	26%
7	In addition to books, you usually learn English at school using:	LKS (Student worksheet)	30	1	3%
		Audio (Sound recording)	30	0	0%
		Learning video	30	29	97%
		Others	30	0	0%
8	In your opinion, how well do you understand the contents of English books?	Very good	30	5	17%
		Good	30	11	37%
		Enough	30	12	40%
		Lack	30	2	6%
9	In your opinion, how is the role of teachers in assisting in understanding the contents of English books?	Very good	30	8	26%
		Good	30	17	57%
		Enough	30	5	17%
		Lack	30	0	0%
10	How do you use books outside of class hours?	Very often	30	2	7%
		Often	30	14	47%
		Seldom	30	8	26%
		Very seldom	30	6	20%

> Your suggestions for making the contents of English books more enjoyable and easier to understand

As shown in the table above, the level of student preference for the books they are currently using is evident. 50% said they liked the books, 40% were neutral, and 10% disliked them. This indicates that the interest level of SDIT students is spread out evenly, with some students showing a strong interest in books, others having a moderate interest, and a few showing little or no interest.

Students were also asked about their awareness of the importance of English content for everyday life. The majority of SDIT students reported being aware of its importance, with 67% indicating that it was important and 23% stating that it was very important. These results suggest that students are highly aware of the importance of English content for everyday life.

Then, students were asked about the parts of English books that interest them. Students were allowed to choose more than one answer to this question. Most said that they liked the "Singing English Songs" section (40%). Twenty-three percent said that they liked the "Reading an Interesting Story" section. These results suggest that SDIT students will be more motivated to learn English through singing and reading interesting stories.

In addition to asking about the parts they liked, the researcher asked about the difficult parts of their English books. Based on the results, the two topics that students found most difficult were "Speaking New Vocabulary" and "Reading English Stories." The study didn't investigate the exact reasons why these were challenging, but research indicates that these problems occur due to a limited vocabulary, difficulties with pronunciation, and inadequate reading skills (Iswanto et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers should modify the English books by incorporating more practice with new words in context, providing help with pronunciation, and implementing activities that guide students through reading to assist them in overcoming these challenges.

The researcher also asked which content made students at SDIT enjoy learning English the most. "Fun Games" and "Interesting Pictures" were the most popular choices at 28% and 37%, respectively. As in the previous questions, students could choose more than one answer. Based on these results, it can be concluded that to help SDIT students overcome the difficulty of pronouncing new vocabulary and reading English stories, teachers should incorporate interesting pictures and fun games into their lessons.

To develop English books for SDIT that are appropriate and meet students' needs, students were asked about additional content they would like to include. Although the question mentioned examples such as Islamic stories and songs, it aimed to explore students' preferences in aligning English learning materials with their school's Islamic environment. The results showed that many students expressed interest in adding Islamic-related content, particularly stories about the daily lives of Muslim children and Islamic songs in English, suggesting their desire for materials that reflect both language learning and their values.

Furthermore, they were also asked about the media they use to learn besides books. Learning videos were the most popular choice, with 97% selecting this option. This indicates that SDIT students require audio-visual learning resources to optimize their English learning.

Next, the researcher asked about their understanding of the content in their English books. The results showed that they rated their level of understanding as good or sufficient.

Eleven out of thirty said "good" and twelve out of thirty said "sufficient." These results suggest that their understanding is good but not very good, so it still needs improvement.

The role of the teacher was also included in the question. SDIT students stated that their teachers played a crucial role in helping them understand the English content in their textbooks. Twenty-six percent said, "very good," and 57% said "good." These results show that teachers have fulfilled their role well, so improvements should be made to the books or teaching materials.

SDIT students were also asked how often they use books outside of class. Most said they often use books outside of class hours, at 47%. Meanwhile, 26% said they rarely use books outside of class. Books are not often used beyond the classroom for several reasons. Students may not be interested or motivated to read. Technology and social media, such as cellphones and TV, divert their attention. Additionally, it is challenging to find books that are both interesting and align with their interests. People often think books are boring or too costly, and they don't have enough time to read. These results suggest to teachers that developing English teaching materials is necessary, given the frequency with which students use books outside of class.

Finally, we incorporated their suggestions for making English books more enjoyable and easier to understand. This open-ended question allows students to answer according to their opinions. They wrote the most about increasing games, singing, and interesting pictures.

Discussion

The discussion presented the views of fourth-grade students at Integrated Islamic Elementary School regarding the need for English language teaching materials that promote Islamic-based literacy. These views were based on a questionnaire that the students filled out.

Developing learning models in teaching materials according to students' needs is crucial, including for English lessons. Elementary school students benefit from an efficient English learning model based on a learning community, as it improves their English proficiency and helps identify their areas of need (Z. Zhang, 2018). However, some schools with independent curricula, such as Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SDIT), do not rely solely on general teaching materials because they are oriented toward Islamic values in all lessons. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine what kind of English teaching material model SDIT students need from their perspective.

Success in learning English will be easier to achieve if it starts with interest. The results of the study showed that fourth-grade students of SDIT still like the English books currently used. Half of the students stated that they liked the books, while 40% reported being indifferent. Students' interest in the books used in class can improve reading habits, academic achievement, and positive attitudes toward reading. This is especially true when students are allowed to choose books based on their interests. Compared to their peers who do not read, students who read literature for pleasure tend to get higher grades in English, arithmetic, science, and history (Whitten et al., 2019).

Learning English is not only about gaining knowledge, but also about applying it in everyday life. When asked how important the content of English books is to their daily lives, 67% of students agreed that it is important. This shows that they are very aware of the importance of the content of their English books. They will apply the content in their daily lives later, so it must be appropriate. If the content is not related to their lives, applying it will also

be difficult or even impossible. Several researchers argue that the content in English textbooks is important. According to Susiati and Mufidati (2020), textbooks play a crucial role in teaching and learning, as they broaden students' knowledge. Ayu and Indrawati (2018) stated that using English textbooks has significant benefits for educators and students. Through explanations and exercises, textbooks serve as guides for teachers, providing valuable information. Furthermore, English textbooks must meet the requirements of the teaching and learning process (Susiati & Mufidati, 2020).

Students' understanding of English also depends on the content of the books they use. Previous research suggests that teachers perceive English textbooks as helpful for teaching English because they improve students' ability to understand the language, despite some drawbacks (Olivia, 2020). However, if the content is confusing, does not suit their needs, or uses vocabulary beyond their level, then learning English will be difficult. To learn about the content of the English books' students are currently using, researchers asked how well students understand the content. The results showed that 40% understood it quite well, and 37% understood it well. "Quite" understanding indicates that the books have some shortcomings. These shortcomings stem from a lack of engaging pictures or an ineffective learning model, resulting in low motivation. Students' enthusiasm for learning English, interest in reading, and language and reading skills increase greatly when interactive teaching techniques are combined with language picture books (Chen et al., 2023). Based on these results, it can be concluded that the content of the books is sufficient to help fourth-grade students at SDIT understand it; however, it has not yet motivated them to read and utilize it.

Students' frequent use of textbooks outside of class indicates a lack of interest. Based on the students' surveys, 47% reported "often," 26% reported "rarely," and 20% reported "very rarely." Students who do not use their textbooks much outside of class will struggle to grasp and retain the material. Textbooks enhance comprehension and memory by giving the learning process structure and coherence. Students will not receive the reinforcement they need to strengthen their knowledge if they do not regularly use textbooks outside of class. While learning can be done anywhere, books remain the best choice for elementary school students who require supervision when using smartphones. Moreover, mastering the material by reading books beforehand will better prepare students for what they will learn. Considering the importance of books for elementary school students, the development of Islamic-based English teaching materials is necessary.

Then, students from the fourth grade at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School were asked about the teaching materials they use besides books. Although books are important and appropriate for elementary school students, they may become bored if they rely solely on books. Of the choices of worksheets, audio recordings, and learning videos, 97% chose learning videos. According to Hita et al (2024), video-based learning media significantly increase elementary school students' learning motivation compared to conventional learning without video media. Based on this study, it is essential to stay current with technological advancements in teaching and learning. However, teachers must know how to use technology effectively, because although it can make things easier, negative impacts can arise if it is not used wisely. Elementary school children ideally play and interact with their peers outside; therefore, parents should limit their smartphone use. A lack of offline social networks and lower social engagement are associated with children's smartphone addiction. Stronger networks, on the other hand, reduce addiction and boost engagement (Jennifer, 2018). Additionally, elementary school children generally lack the ability to distinguish between positive and negative things. Some of them imitate what they see without understanding it.

Therefore, supervision is necessary. Another study found that YouTube videos for education have received mixed reviews from parents and students regarding their effectiveness as a learning tool. Challenges they face include connectivity issues and a lack of time for parents to assist their children with studying at home (Paksi & Harmianto, 2022). To keep pace with technological developments and eliminate the need for parental supervision, it is necessary to develop English teaching materials that utilize technology-based books and engaging learning models from the student's perspective. YouTube videos for education elicit a range of opinions from parents and students about the usefulness of YouTube learning, as well as the challenges that parents and students face while using it, such as connectivity issues and a lack of time for parents to help kids study at home.

To explore their needs regarding teaching materials, researchers asked about the types of content they preferred in English teaching materials or books. 33% enjoyed reading interesting stories; 20%, writing; 17%, having conversations; and 40%, singing English songs. Most students found it easier to understand and remember English when they learned it through songs. Children who sang outperformed those who spoke in terms of translation, pronunciation, and word recall. Thus, learning a foreign language can be enhanced by singing. Singing makes learning English more enjoyable, especially when singing familiar songs. Singing recognized song melodies enhances the vocabulary and pronunciation of Chinese adolescent ESL learners more than reciting lyrics does (Y. Zhang et al., 2023). Many students choose to sing when memorizing, using melodies that are familiar to them. Familiar song melodies enhance students' understanding of irregular verbs and enliven the classroom atmosphere. In addition to improving comprehension and speeding up memorization, songs improve harmony among groups and individuals. Songs make students happy and provide a lot of repetition, which is why students only look for textual examples. Primary school students are more engaged and eager to participate in activities when songs are played (Şener & Erkan, 2018). Thus, singing helps students retain vocabulary. Therefore, it is not surprising that most students prefer to learn English by singing.

Students were also asked what content they would like to add to their English teaching materials. The majority chose "fun games" and "stories about the daily lives of Muslim children." This suggests that their English teaching materials, including the learning model, need to be developed. Various learning models and games need to be added to make English learning less monotonous. Learning English must be fun so that students no longer feel it is difficult. Students also chose "Stories about the daily lives of Muslim children.” Since all SDIT students are Muslim, they naturally want Islamic values to be incorporated. This aligns with the school's principle of connecting all lessons, including English, with Islamic values. In the context of Indonesian English language teaching (ELT), Islam, as the majority religion of students, can function as a cultural and religious identity with the potential to be integrated into English teaching. As the majority of students practice Islam, it can serve as a cultural and religious identity to be incorporated into English language instruction (Asmiyah & Safriyani, 2024).

In addition to asking about their preferences, we also inquire about the content that is difficult for them to comprehend. Forty percent of students reported difficulty understanding new vocabulary in speech. Then, 37% of students said that reading stories in English is also difficult. These results align with previous research indicating that elementary school students struggle to learn English vocabulary due to various internal and external factors, such as inadequate facilities, negative peer pressure, and linguistic barriers (Ryan et al., 2024). Previous research has also identified other factors contributing to the difficulties students

face. According to Mailasari (2018), students with poor motivation and limited prior knowledge find it challenging to memorize English vocabulary, whereas those with high intelligence and enthusiasm can do so with ease. Researchers are expected to find solutions to these difficulties so that the content is no longer challenging.

Finally, the students were asked about their teachers' performance in helping them understand their English learning materials. 57% of the children agreed that the teacher performed well in assisting them. Sadiku (2015) emphasized that teachers play a crucial role in facilitating students' understanding of the material by organizing communication activities, suggesting additional resources, and fostering cooperative relationships. Without teachers, even the most effective learning materials cannot be utilized properly. The core of learning in school is the interaction between two main elements: teachers and students. Students may misunderstand the content in the learning materials if they study it themselves. These results indicate that students in integrated Islamic elementary schools recognize the significant role their teachers play in helping them understand.

Conclusion

This study aims to determine the most effective teaching materials for SDIT students learning English. Learning English is challenging because it is a foreign language. Engaging and effective instructional materials are necessary. Previous studies have shown that although SDIT students claimed their resources were adequate, they felt the need to improve the English teaching material model. Most fourth-grade SDIT students reported liking the English learning books they were using, especially the sing-along sections. However, they said that some sections were difficult to understand, such as "Reading English Stories" and "Speaking New Vocabulary". The results of the questionnaire also revealed the need for improvement. Students wanted content such as "Daily Stories of Muslim Children" and "Fun Games" in their textbooks. These results demonstrate that SDIT students require content that aligns with their school's curriculum. In addition to content, students want learning models that make them feel like they are playing, not learning. This aligns with the suggestions that SDIT students made in the open-ended questions. They wrote most about incorporating more games, singing, and interesting pictures. These results demonstrate the need for new models of English teaching materials.

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