BEST PRACTICES ON ISLAMIC VALUES INTEGRATION AT *MADRASAH* ENGLISH CLASSES: TEACHERS' PRACTICES IN CONTEXTUALIZING THE VALUES

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Abstract: The idea of integrating Islamic values in non-religion subjects is still in the process of shaping its format. Many possibilities and flexibilities of the integration are existing and practiced by English teachers at Islamic Junior High School—knowingly as *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs). Also, in the middle of endless idea of integration, teachers have been trying to apply the integration based on their beliefs and situation. This study outlines the teachers' best practices on integrating Islamic values in English lesson at MTs in Jawa Timur. By using descriptive qualitative method, this study portraits 6 English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' best practices. Data were taken from classroom observation, interview, and documentation which then were analysed as best practices. Best practices refer to the practice of integration which is considered as working practice from each teacher's situation. The situation was mostly influenced by teachers' lack of confidence to contextualize and operationalize the values into the teaching materials and activities, and the lack of model for integration. Further study on how to operationalize the integration, and on developing the model of integration will be worth exploring.

Keywords: Best Practices, Integration, Islamic Values.

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the confusion on integrating Islamic values in non-religion subjects, EFL teachers have been trying to accommodate

the idea of integration in their classroom. This effort is one of the ways to achieve national education vision in shaping students to be *'insan kamil'*. *Insan kamil* refers to a human being who is intellectually, spiritually, socially, and emotionally mature (Brackett, Rivers, & Elbertson, 2011). This is a challenge faced by teacher at any level of education. Teachers are expected to be able to facilitate the students of being *insan kamil*. For EFL teachers, the challenge would raise a tension since the subject being taught was not easy to be situated with Islamic values. Rambe & Salminawati (2019) found that there has been a conflicting situation on English teaching in Islamic schools since there was a view that learning English as the target language which is totally different from students' cultural norms. There was common stereotyping that English is oriented to world life and does not give any benefits to their afterlife (Irfani, Meisuri, & Rohmatilah, 2018). The situation, then, influences the effort of integrating Islamic values at EFL teaching.

At the level of perception, Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) EFL teachers have similar perception on the idea on integration. They perceived that integration was essential element to carry out in English lesson (Rohmah, Hanifiyah, Fitriyah, & Andriya, 2019). However, the practice of integration has been still weak compared to the spirit of achieving the main target of curriculum. Teachers are aware of the clear commands stated in K-13 curriculum that the involvement of KI 1 and KI 2 should be intentionally given in the teaching and learning process. Again, the concept raised some question among teachers and stakeholders on how to do it. With the various subjects to be learnt by MTs students, and the expectation for UN, EFL teachers need strategy to integrate the Islamic values beyond the fixed instruction stated in the curriculum (Lie, 2017).

Some studies were conducted to advance the information about integration. Involving Islamic messages in the teaching materials and up grading teachers' qualification on integration facilitated the *santris* to be open to differences without losing their Islamic identity (Umam, 2014). To advance research on integrating

Islamic values, Rohmah (2009) conducted a study focusing on incorporating Islamic messages in ELT materials in Indonesian context as the medium to reduce the tension experienced by students. Meanwhile research on teachers' beliefs and practices on integration has shown that teachers perceived integrating Islamic values is essential part of teaching process. The last previous study has covered the description on teachers' practices in integrating Islamic values during their EFL teaching activities. It has been informed that teachers had different way to integrate Islamic values. Based on the practices, revealing their best practices is worth investigating.

This study is to explore teachers' best practices in integrating Islamic values. Best practices refer to the practices which are considered as teachers' own initiative to have integration and those which work for teachers' working situation. Based on this, the study is addressed to answer *'How do teachers' best practices accommodate the integration of Islamic values in EFL classroom at MTs?'* By conducting this study, it is expected to give intellectual supplement about the best practices of integration of Islamic values in English lesson at madrasah. Specifically, this study becomes a starting point of view that the idea of integration is dynamic and developing. It challenges us to continuously develop operational and contextual integration which so far it is still abstract for teachers themselves. Furthermore, the exploration gives empirical evidences on teachers' effort to catch the idea of integration at MTs.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Integrating Islamic Values

The idea of integration on Islamic values has been discussed at any level of education. At the higher level, it is still in the process of operationalizing of integration for teaching, researching, and doing community service. When it comes into lower level of education, it has been stated in the vision and mission of national education. To concrete the vision and mission, the 2013 school curriculum has accommodated into Core Competence (KI 1) and Core Competence

(KI 2). The integration of Islamic values has been closely related to KI 1. It refers to aspect of divinity. It has been explained that by studying all lessons, students are expected to appreciate the religion they believe in. In fact, the interpretation of KI 1 results a narrow point of view that KI 1 is the responsibility of religion teachers.

Religion-based school like MTs has its own capacity to intensively integrate Islamic values. It has wider space to integrate Islamic values in every subject. The values should be the baseline for teachers' teaching practices. The school is expected to be centre of integration among other schools. However, the school separates religion subjects and general subjects. It means that there is no strong interconnection among subjects. The spirit of integration requires school members to have sense of connection starting from the classroom. Islamic values should be the main teaching spirit and characteristic in Islamic schools. The spirit has actually raised in 2013 curriculum, however, in terms of the application, it was still far from the idea of integration. School policy has instructed to have Islamic values in every subject. For teachers, Islamic values are closely related to universal values such as being discipline, respectful, empathy, and responsibility. It sometimes raises another confusion on what is considered as Islamic values. This is a big challenge for us to formulate the values which are then widely understood and applied at schools.

The integration in general subjects, in this case, English, could be done in two different ways, specific and holistic integration (Rohmah, 2009). Specific integration allows integrating Islamic values through specific courses such as religions and other Islamic-related courses are taught separately. This way has weakness as not all teachers of Islamic-based courses have intercultural competence which then, they only teach purely about religion without trying to give interconnection between the values and students' cultural background. Another challenge is specific integration potentially produce overlapping situation in which the teachers will repeat what have been taught by other teachers. Different from separated/specific

pattern, holistic integration offers a model that allows teachers to directly internalize Islamic values in ELT. It opens a wide space to enable students being '*Insan Kamil*' as it balances students' all needs as human being (Chang & Cheong, 2008). Many possibilities are open to have holistic integration. Topic selection could be phase to begin. Potential topic for English can be directed to Islamic values. The next phase is in material development. With careful process of development, teachers could select and develop Islamic-related English materials to facilitate the integration.

Integrating Islamic values is a complex process. Liddicoat (2004) break down the complexities into five stages leading to holistic integration. Beginning with *active construction* that directs teachers to facilitate students understanding explicit cultural aspects stated in both written and spoken texts. Then, the teachers facilitate students to experience *making connection* stage by connecting local culture and other cultures, and Islamic culture. When the integration successfully builds students' sense of connection, teachers move to bring the students into meaningful *social interaction* stage by giving space to them expressing, discussing, and negotiating ideas to others mediated by group work or in pairs to discuss a particular topic. This stage develops students' collaborative skill which will give great effect when they are in real situation facing diversity (Bremner, Peirson-Smith, Jones, & Bhatia, 2014). After mediating the class with social interaction, the teachers give time to the students doing reflection stage reflecting on what is happening or commenting on others' opinion. The last stage is directed *responsibility* stage to direct into a point of view that the teaching and learning process is a medium for students to be responsible and obey the Islamic norms while is still respectful to other cultures (Wahyudi, 2012).

There is an urgent call to help teachers accommodating the stages in the class. Their full understanding will lead to better pattern of pattern of integration for ELT. At the initial point, this study tried to portray the teachers' best practice which then in the following step, it would be shaped into more deep integration. This study also

becomes an intellectual resource that fruitfully leads to EFL teachers' effort to in integrating Islamic values in the classroom.

METHOD

This descriptive qualitative study describes the best practices of EFL teachers. The aim of the research is to reveal how Islamic values and culture of Islamic educational institutions influence or shape their English teacher's perception and give much impact on classroom English teaching and learning.

Six MTs EFL teachers were involved in this study. They were teachers from different areas in East Java. MTs from Malang, Surabaya, Pasuruan were chosen under the consideration that those three regions have specific characteristics. Malang represents education city, Surabaya represents metropolitan city, and Pasuruan represents *santri* city. It helped to get a clear picture how socio-cultural condition influences teachers' best practices on the integration. Two schools from each region were chosen with the criterion, one school was from regular MTs, and one school from *pesantren*-based school. The data source was EFL teachers with at least five-year teaching experience. The reason for the selection was the teachers have already known the situation and culture of the schools.

At the beginning, the process of data collection was doing classroom observation followed by semi-structured interview. The interview was for collecting data about teachers' knowledge on the integration of Islamic values and their idea on how to integrate in the English lesson. Teachers were firstly given explanation about the study and were asked for the availability for the observation and the interview. The observation was to collect data about the practice of integration. Observation checklist and recorder were used to ease the process of classroom observation. The existence of the researchers might destroy teacher's and students' concentration; therefore, the researchers took a role as passive observers. The interview spent around 30-40 minutes and it was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to

accommodate teachers' ideas, attitude, and explanation compare to in English. Classroom observation was to get the data on the teachers' best practices of the integration.

The nature of qualitative research allows the back and forth processes in data analysis which was preceded by categorizing the integration of Islamic values existing in the classroom. This process was relied on the observation checklist and recording. After the integration practices were classified, the interview data analysis was done. The interview was to confirm what teachers have done in the classroom. The holistic integration was the underlying principle in analysing the data. Some commonalities and differences were analysed to find the pattern of integration.

FINDINGS

The observation and interview reveal that all participating teachers both from *pesantren* and non *pesantren*-based schools were familiar with the integration of Islamic values. They perceived that the integration was very essential for general subject including English. Not only a medium of character building, the integration to English course was also to motivate students to study harder in learning general courses like English. Commonly assumed by students from Islamic-based school that English was less important subject, as the way to minimize the assumption, the integration was carefully done. However, the perception was not strongly in line with the lesson plan or *Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP)* of English. The RPP has purely been broken down from the curriculum without featuring Islamic values. As a result, the practice was at the partial level of integration and was far from stages of integration. The data reveal that small portion of integration were given and it was done for the sake of formality to the school policy of doing routine religion activities.

Diverse practices of integration were done by EFL teachers. The main feature of integration was inserting religion routines at the beginning of the class session.

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> *"The class was begun by asking the students praying, reading Juz amma and Surah Yasin" (T6)*
> *"The class does praying before the lesson continued to Dhuha praying and Dhuhur praying. It indirectly accommodates the integration. The teachers do not necessarily do integrate the Islamic values" (T3)*

The data indicated that the integration was understood as the way to keep reminding the students about their compulsory of being a Moslem. It was not internalized in English lesson as supplementary messages in the teachers' explanation and materials. This type of integration was mostly practiced by the participating teachers. It tends to be the fifth stage of integration known as responsibility. The given activities and reminders were focused on students' responsibility as a Moslem not as EFL learner. Similar to T6 and T3, T2 tried to insert Islamic messages while and after the lesson. The messages refer to human etiquette and daily manners.

> *"Giving advices was given in and after the lesson which since years ago before curriculum 2013" (T2)*

Referring to the stage of holistic integration, what T2 was done also accommodating responsibility stage. The advice was given to remind students on their responsibilities as human being, as students, and as Moslems. T2 did the practice years ago before the launch of Curriculum 2013. It indicated that T2 perceived that giving messages beyond the materials was significant rather only focusing on the textbook. At this point, T2 has integrated even still was not strongly support the nature of integration. Meanwhile, T4 had different practices which were closely related to holistic integration.

> *"Having procedural text could be connected to the procedures of wudhu" (T4)*

The strong feature of integration in T4's class was making connection stage. When the handbook of English lesson came to discuss procedural text on how to do something, T4 strongly connect to wudhu. Being conditioned by the procedure of wudhu, students

could directly capture the idea of procedural text much easier as wudhu becomes their daily activity at least 5 times a day. Similar practice was done by T1.

> *"No fixed material for integration, but, it was frequently done in small portion of integration. It happened when teaching pronunciation, I related to Arabic makhrorijul huruf (place of articulation). I found it was easier to train students with making connection to their common knowledge"…"Relating to quranic verse was another way I inserted Islamic value, and reminding their five praying times was also my common practice" (T1).*

As confirmed in observation and interview, connecting the material with students' familiar situation helped them to build the sense of connection. They will critically think that among other things happened could have similarity.

> *"Feeling afraid of citing Quranic verse. My intention to do that was remind students that what is being taught not only from teacher, but it was commanded by God. This was also to make students aware of their religion teaching. The students spontaneously said 'why English used Bismillahirrahmanirrahim' when I wrote it on the board" (T5)*

The integration practiced by T5 was closely related to active construction and making connection. Firstly, students were given an exposure on a phenomenon existing in the surrounding which could be from students' local context. The phenomenon was manifested in the form of cultural aspects such as beliefs, behaviours, tradition, communication etc. T5 described those explicit cultural aspects stated in the written text. At the making connection stage, T5 connected cultural aspects existing in students' daily situation to God' commands by stressing that the rules of behaving, thinking, and communicating in social life are also being ruled by God. It raises students' awareness to have point of view on what they are doing involve both human and God norms.

DISCUSSION

The demand of integrating Islamic values emerges tension for MTs EFL teachers. They have faced two different sides of situation.

They hold strong belief on the importance of integration; however, it is not in line with the availability of integration model. The practices are based on teachers own interpretation and on informal instruction from the school policy. The situation, then, raises some possibilities and flexibilities of integration. The data reveal that teachers have integrated Islamic values which could be confirmed to the stages of holistic integration. The participating teachers' practices were categorized as their best practices because of its intensity to use. Another important reason of categorizing into best practice was its capacity to represent teachers' view on Islamic values integration. The teachers viewed integration as essential part of classroom activity which should be continuously employed in any possible space of the English lesson. Learning English could not be separated from learning cultural aspects. Integration invites class members to learn the strong interconnection among their local culture, target culture and Islamic culture (Sada, Pbs, Inggris, Keguruan, & Pendidikan, 2013). East's conceptualization of implication of glocalization suggests that the three social influences of globalization, localization, and glocalization could be accommodated in integration (East, 2008; Syafi'i & Gestanti, 2017). It could be mapped that the teachers' best practices were still far from the idea of integration; however, those could be starting point of departure to reach real best practices (Azizah & Surya, 2017).

The practices were closely related to holistic integration proposed by Liddicoat (2004). From this perspective, the stages of holistic integration have a vital role in building sense of connection among the English lesson and Islamic values. From English as International Language (EIL) perspective it is widely acknowledged that English has become the central asset of globalising students' minds (Iwan & Ulwiyah, 2012). This phenomenon reflects the high demand on making EFL teaching becomes a place for building strong character as Moslem EFL students. This type of multi layers effects appear to carry with how the integration should applied. Such best practices have several models. The stages of holistic integration were

found in the participating teachers. There are still some holes in the practices since the stages were not all done.

Doing responsibility stage, the teachers emphasize to help students being responsible as social and spiritual beings who deeply aware of social and religion norms (Transinata, 2018). Spirituality does not purely refer to religion dimension. It could be refers to sense of empathy and interconnectedness with the community (Octavita & Saraswati, 2017). EFL also has potential space as a strong exposure to connect among social and spiritual values that would lead them to be wellbeing (Soviyah, 2007; Sakhiyya, 2011). The existence of making connection stage in teachers' practice acknowledges students' capacity to reach openness and unity, validated diversity, and made the course more meaningful for their daily life (Grauerholz, 2010; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2013).

With regard to active construction stage, it helps the students develop powerful literacies on what cultural aspects are explicitly stated in their surroundings. When the successful active construction occupied by students, they would be easy learn other materials which is beyond the English materials. When students found explicit English cultural aspects, at the same time integration facilitates them to realize them that another cultural could be placed to support the learning (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). By having active construction Mirra and Morrell (2011) argue that the teachers are bringing to mainstream views about teaching and learning as a source of literacy as well as source of cultural engagement. It would lead students (Patel, 2003) become producers of knowledge for their needs which is in the long term, they can create social change (Izham & Sharif, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of EFL teachers' practices reflects the notion of 'integration' at MTs level. The practices have been done by the teachers to answer the need of national education vision on building students as '*Insan Kamil*'. These practices appear to be confirming a 'holistic integration' which would seem to imply that

there is a strong connection between English and other cultural aspects. The practices accommodate the idea of integration in terms of the stages of holistic integration. The EFL teachers have done active construction, making connection, and responsibility stages in the classroom. In fact, the stages were still accommodated as supplementary point not as primary one. It is the result of teachers' hesitation to directly integrate English lesson and Islamic values. They are still not confident to explicitly insert the values in the teaching materials. Another contributing factor of the hesitation is the lack of guidelines on the integration. Teachers have tried to interpret the integration based on their belief that it is essential to bring the students to Islamic daily routines such as reading a pray, reminding their obligation as a Moslem, and giving surface connection to Islamic aspect. However, the practices found from the study could be intellectual point of departure to holistic integration.

The implication of study is essentially two-fold. The theoretical implication is integration of Islamic values in EFL teaching and learning is justified by the underlying principles of holistic integration. The pedagogical implication of the study could be mapped that integration fosters students' soft skill to emerge. When the teachers situate the students the English class with integration stages, students are experiencing meaningful learning and deep learning. The learning would be the asset for students to have strong sense of openness and interconnectedness among cultural aspects of locality, English, and Islam. It is suggested for further study to have exploration on the students' needs for learning with total integration. And, study on developing model of integration for EFL teaching at madrasah will be worth conducting.

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