

The Use of Islamic Story for EFL Students' Essay

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the use of Islamic stories as a pedagogical tool for enhancing the quality of essays among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The primary objectives of this research are to assess the impact of utilizing Islamic stories techniques on EFL students' writing skills and to determine if such an approach leads to improve essay composition.

To achieve these objectives, a pre experimental research design was employed. A group of EFL students of the third semester was selected purposively as sample and exposed to Islamic stories intervention grounded in Adab education principles, where pre- and post-intervention writing assessments on opinion essays were given to get data.

The results of this study show that using Islamic stories to integrate Adab education concepts greatly improves EFL students' ability to write essays especially in opinion essay that are well-organized and convey complex ideas. The disparity in the pre- and post-test findings serves as evidence for it. Students received 46.4 for content and 40.1 for organization on the pre-test. In the meantime, the students' post-test results showed improvement; they received a 68 on the content element and a 74 on the organization element.

In conclusion, this research provides insights into the potential use of Islamic stories principles in the context of English as a Foreign Language instruction, specifically in enhancing the teaching of essay writing in terms of opinion essay. These findings have implications for pedagogical practices in writing. Moreover, the findings indicate that implementing this strategy can serve as a beneficial instructional resource for teachers aiming to cultivate enhanced writing abilities.

KEYWORDS:

Islamic story, students' essay

1. INTRODUCTION

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." This quote from a hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning, a concept that aligns with the idea of using Islamic stories to enhance the education of students in Indonesia as English foreign language ones.

English is the third most widely spoken native language in the world, with over 375 million people who speak it as their first language. It is also the most commonly studied foreign language, with over 1.5 billion learners worldwide. This statistic highlights the global reach and significance of the English language in today's interconnected

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world, making a strong case for the relevance of the importance of exploring EFL students' skill in writing.

EFL students often encounter a myriad of challenges when learning English (Hermagustiana & Rusmawaty, 2018). These challenges include, but are not limited to, difficulties in grammar, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and, notably, writing skills. Writing, in particular, demands a deep understanding of the language's structure, usage, and cultural nuances. Moreover, students may struggle with expressing themselves effectively in writing and producing coherent, well-structured essays or compositions.

In this context, the integration of Islamic story materials becomes significant. Islamic stories provide an authentic and culturally relevant context for language learners. They offer compelling narratives, ethical dilemmas, and moral lessons that not only engage students but also serve as a bridge to language development (Atabik, 2020). By utilizing these stories as writing prompts or teaching tools, educators can

address writing challenges while simultaneously promoting cultural understanding. This approach encourages students to craft narratives, analyze characters' motivations, and express their own thoughts and reflections (Syah & Saputra, 2020). It not only enhances writing skills but also fosters an appreciation for the cultural and moral dimensions of the language.

By considering the challenges EFL students face and the advantages of using Islamic story materials in addressing these challenges, educators can harness the power of storytelling to make English language learning a more engaging and effective process, particularly in the realm of writing skills.

Writing serves as a means of articulating and conveying one's thoughts and ideas. According to Pamuji (2022), the act of writing involves the generation of thoughts and ideas as well as the expression of meaning. Meanwhile, Setyowati (2016) argued that possessing the skill of writing is of utmost significance in contemporary society. Through the medium of writing, students are able to effectively convey their thoughts and ideas, hence expressing their emotions on paper (Oshima et al., 2007). However, mastering writing skills can be quite challenging. Brown (2008) said that writing serves as a means of documenting ideas, facilitating relationships between writers and readers, and facilitating the development and exploration of the author's experiences. The process of expressing one's thoughts through writing, particularly among students, can provide challenges within the classroom setting. Consequently, teachers are tasked with facilitating opportunities for students to effectively explore and articulate their ideas in written form. Therefore, the provision or instruction of learning media is necessary for the enhancement of students' writing skills (Assylzhanova et al., 2022).

According to Arsyad (2007), the teaching and learning process consists of two essential components: teaching methods and learning media. The scope of educational media has expanded beyond conventional tools such as blackboards and notebooks within the classroom, indicating a departure from traditional learning methods (Awada & Ghaith, 2014). Currently, there is a prevalent utilization of contemporary educational tools such as internet-based platforms, applications, information and communication technology (ICT), and video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Google Meet, among others (Nappu, 2014 and Lampong Klomkul, 2021).

This study delves into the invaluable role of Islamic stories as teaching materials and media for EFL students, demonstrating how they enhance writing essay skill, and contribute to moral development. By examining the benefits, potential challenges, and overall impact of using Islamic stories in EFL classrooms, we will unravel the potential of this approach in shaping not only language skills especially in writing but also the moral or character of learners.

The use of Islamic story as a pedagogical tool is considered one of the methods employed by the divine being to impart knowledge and instruct humanity. This aligns with the psychological inclination of those who possess a strong affinity for narratives. The utilization of narrative or story as a means to successfully communicate educational lessons without resorting to didacticism is a desirable outcome. In the *Qur'an*, Allah presents numerous accounts of prophets, notable individuals, and past societies with the intention of establishing them as exemplars (*uswah hasanah*) and sources of moral instruction (*ibrah*) for humanity at large. The analysis of Islamic stories derived from various sources inside the *Qur'an* leads to the inference that the *Qur'an* serves as a comprehensive life manual, elucidating aspects of past, present, and future existence. Moreover, it imparts knowledge pertaining to the significance of monotheism, intellectual pursuits, moral development, sexual ethics, spirituality, and democratic principles (Maesaroh et al., 2022).

Some previous research have been conducted on the use of Islamic stories in teaching and learning. However, none of them focused on the skills of EFL students. They are Sofiatun et al. (2022) conducted a research on the use of Islamic stories to see the cognitive development of children, Anjarsari & Agustin (2022) and Putra (2022) did a research to find students' character building, Syaikhon (2020) study was to reveal students' moral religion, and Hidayat (2022) focused on social behavior. While essay writing is a crucial skill in education, there is limited research on the integration of Islamic stories approaches into this context. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the potential benefits of incorporating Islamic stories for EFL students' skill in writing essay. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the impact of Islamic stories on EFL students' writing skill on opinion essay.

II. METHOD

In this study, a pre-experimental research design was employed, utilizing purposive sampling to select participants. The pre-experimental method is characterized by its simplicity and its aim to provide a preliminary understanding of a particular phenomenon (Neuman, 2014). Purposive sampling was chosen to deliberately select participants who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research focus (Martínez et al., 2018). This method was employed to ensure that the sample represents the population or subgroup of interest. It allowed us to target participants who could provide valuable insights into the research questions or test a specific intervention (Sugiono, 2019). A total of 14 participants were selected as the sample size in this study, which was based on practical considerations, ensuring that the study could be conducted within available resources and time constraints. The instruments utilized in this study consisted of a pre-test and a post-test. A pre-test was employed to assess the prior knowledge of students in composing essays. A post-test was given to assess the proficiency of students in producing

essays subsequent to receiving instruction utilizing Islamic stories.

III. RESULTS

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the use of Islamic stories on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' proficiency in essay writing. In order to ascertain the outcomes, the students were administered writing assessments prior to the intervention as the pre-test, and subsequently after the intervention as the post-test. Table 1 displays the average scores attained by students in both tests.

Table 1. The Result of the Pre-Post Tests

Elements	Pre-test	Post-test
Content	46.4	68
Organization	40.1	74

The results shown in Table 1 demonstrate a significant increase in the content of students' writing, as seen by the rise from 46.4 in the pre-test to 68 in the post-test. Moreover, it can be observed from Table 1 that there is a notable improvement in the students' writing organization, as evidenced by the increase from 40.1 to 74. Moreover, Figure 1 displays the average scores of the students' writing in the pre-test and post-test.

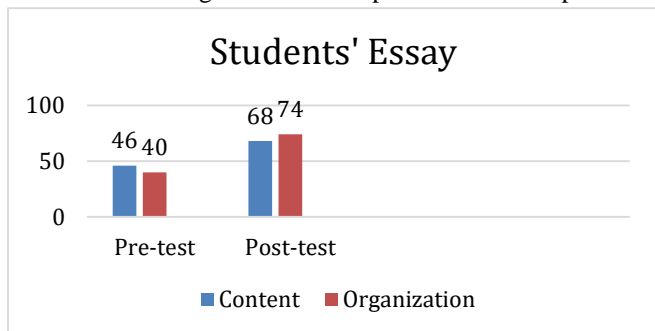


Figure. 1 EFL Students' Essay Result

Figure 1 indicates that the average score of students' writing shows an increase where in the pre-test students get an average score of content 46.04 while in the post-test becomes 68, meanwhile the organization is 40.1 in the pre-test and increases 74 in the post-test. The classification can be seen in the following Table:

Table 2. Category of Students' Essay

Classification	Score Range	Pre-Test		Post-test	
		C %	O %	C %	O %
Excellent	96-100	-	-	-	-
Very good	86-95	-	-	1	7.3
Good	76-85	-	-	4	28.6

Fairly Good	66	-	-	-	-	5	35	3	21
Fair	75	-	-	-	-		.7		.4
Poor	56	-	1	7.	1	7.	1	7.	2
	65		1		1		1		.3
Very poor	36	-	1	92	1	71	3	21	2
	55		3	.9	0	.5		.4	.3
	0	-	-		3	21	-	-	-
	35					.4			
Total		1	10	1	10	1	10	1	10
al		4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0

Table 2 displays variations in the grouping and proportion of marks attained by students in the pre- and post-tests for the elements content (C) and organization (O). In the pre-test, there were thirteen students (92.9%) in the poor content category and seven percent in the fair category. In the post-test, however, there were three students (21.4%) in the poor category, one student (7.1%) in the very good category, four students (28.6%) in the good category, and five students (35.7%) in the fairly good category. Additionally, for the organization element, two students, or 14.3%, changed from the pre-test's ten students, or 71.5%, who received the Poor category to the post-test's two students, or 14.3%. Furthermore, in the post-test, three students, or 21.4%, are in the very good category, four students, or 28.6%, are in the good category, and three students, or 21.4%, are in the pretty good category while in the pre-test, there were no students in the very good, good, or fairly good categories.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed a statistically significant disparity in the substance of essays produced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Specifically, the mean score for content was 46.4 in the pre-test, while it increased to 68 in the post-test. This distinction can be characterized as more audibly perceptible, more substantial, or more intricate content. In essence, the students have incorporated a greater amount of pertinent and all-encompassing data, bolstering the effectiveness of their written work. In relation to the aspect of organizational structure, a notable disparity was observed, with the pre-test yielding a score of 40.1, while the post-test recorded a score of 74. This distinction can be analogized to a sound that is perceived as clearer or possessing a more well-organized structure. The data indicates that students have demonstrated enhanced proficiency in structuring their thoughts in a logical and cohesive manner, resulting in writing that exhibits greater coherence and improved readability. The results or the findings of this study is similar with the findings found by Santillán & Rodas (2022) and Sangeetha (2020) in which the students' essays, as their samples, were better or higher in the post-test than the pre-test.

The assessment of the essay writing skills of the EFL students focused on the extent to which the concepts pertaining to the issue were consistently developed

throughout the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. After being treated to using Islamic stories in the essay writing class for several meetings, students were given writing tasks. The task assigned to the students required them to formulate two distinct reasons, each to be presented in a separate paragraph. Each paragraph was expected to commence with a main phrase, followed by a series of supporting sentences that provided further explanation and evidence for the stated reason. Their opinion essays were written based on the Islamic stories in which they have been treated.

After analyzing their essay, it is revealed that mostly students wrote the introduction of their essay by highlighting the significance of addressing the chosen issue. This then become a good starting point and a clear information for readers before reading the content. It is relevant with what Wale & Bogale (2021) proposed that a good introduction should proceed to provide a comprehensive overview of the background, incorporating pertinent information, factual details, and definitions. Moreover, students wrote their essay introduction by presenting their thoughts in a concise and focused thesis statement. The essay elucidates the rationales underlying the students' perspectives as articulated in the thesis statement.

Furthermore, the assessment of writing skills in terms of organization element was conducted by evaluating the coherence and logical connections between concepts presented inside sentences, as well as the integration of ideas within paragraphs in the introduction, body, and conclusion sections. The good writing ability of students in terms of organization is demonstrated by the coherence and logical presentation of ideas in the topic sentence and supporting sentences, which support the arguments stated in the thesis. It is related with the argument proposed by Sangeetha (2020) that a well-organized essay can be seen from the logical ideas in the topic and supporting sentences formulated in each paragraph.

The last paragraph that the students wrote is the conclusion paragraph. The paragraphs demonstrated the students' ability to organise their thoughts and present logical conclusions and personal viewpoints that are relevant to the topic discussed. The students' ability to write their paragraphs was assumed to be the result of the use of Islamic stories, which influenced their formulating sentences into paragraphs. Since the Islamic stories were derived from many stories of prophets, figures, and previous people as role models in the *Al-Qur'an*, they became lessons for people to understand, find wisdom, and receive guidance for life. The use of Islamic stories then conveys educational messages effectively which was reflected by the students on their essay. In short, this study offers valuable insights on the potential use of Islamic stories within the realm of English language training for non-native speakers. More specifically, it explores how the Islamic stories might be utilized to improve the teaching of

essay writing, particularly in relation to the genre of opinion essays.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the conclusion can be drawn that the use of Islamic stories improved students' writing on opinion essay in terms of content and organization. The implications of these findings have ramifications for teaching approaches within writing skills. Furthermore, the results suggest that the adoption of this approach can be function as a valuable pedagogical tool for educators seeking to foster improved writing skills.

However, the pre-experimental design used in this study, although valuable for its exploratory purposes, may have limitations in terms of generalizability and establishing causal relationships. Therefore, the results obtained from this design will serve as a foundation for future research that can build upon the initial findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. The sample size is relatively small, it was considered sufficient for the exploratory nature of the pre-experimental design, which aims to provide initial data and insights for further investigation.

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VII. DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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