

Supplementary English Reading Materials Based on Interreligious Values in Maluku for the X Grade Students

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Abstract

This study explores the development of supplementary English reading materials grounded in interreligious values for Grade X students in Maluku, Indonesia. Recognizing the need for educational content that promotes tolerance and interreligious harmony, this research develops and evaluates reading materials that integrate local Maluku cultural values. The materials, designed as procedure, report, and recount texts, incorporate themes that celebrate cooperation and mutual respect among diverse religious communities. Findings indicate that these materials not only improve reading comprehension but also foster students' appreciation of interreligious harmony, a critical social value in Maluku's multicultural society.

Keywords: *Interreligious values, Supplementary reading materials, Reading comprehension*

Introduction

Maluku's history is rich with interreligious harmony, where religious tolerance has become a defining cultural feature. This region, characterized by both Christian and Muslim populations, has faced historical interreligious conflicts, notably the Ambon conflict of 1999, which left lasting social divisions (Braithwaite et al., 2010). In response, Maluku has emphasized the importance of rebuilding interreligious harmony, especially among the youth. With educational institutions playing a vital role in shaping societal values, it becomes essential to integrate lessons on tolerance within the academic curriculum (Mulia, 2012). Students who learn about local values in education are better prepared to promote peaceful coexistence in the future.

One critical area for imparting these values is through English reading materials that not only build language skills but also encourage students to engage with cultural content. Reading comprehension, a vital language skill, enables students to interpret and understand complex ideas while fostering critical thinking (Leipzig, 2011). This comprehension skill is foundational in English language education, particularly at the secondary level, where students are expected to analyze and interpret information. English reading materials that incorporate culturally relevant themes, such as

interreligious harmony, provide both academic and social benefits, helping students to connect language learning with values of tolerance and respect.

Existing English curricula, however, often lack content that resonates with students' local experiences and cultural identities. The gap between standardized learning materials and the students' cultural context can lead to disengagement (Tomlinson, 1998). Research has shown that students learn best when they can relate to the material, as it enhances motivation and comprehension (McGrath, 2013). In regions like Maluku, culturally relevant materials that reflect local traditions of interreligious cooperation can bridge this gap, making reading exercises not only an academic pursuit but a moral learning experience. By integrating interreligious themes, these materials provide students with a meaningful context that helps them internalize both language skills and cultural values.

Interreligious harmony is an essential societal value in Indonesia, where diversity in religion, ethnicity, and language is celebrated. Tolerance, as defined by Marzuki (2012), is a cornerstone of Indonesian society, promoting mutual respect among different cultural groups. In educational settings, teaching tolerance can prevent prejudice and conflict by fostering understanding and appreciation for diversity (UNESCO, 2016). For Maluku students, learning about interreligious harmony through English texts not only meets curricular requirements but also prepares them to participate in a multicultural society with empathy and awareness. Integrating these values into educational materials is a proactive approach to building a more cohesive and inclusive society.

This study aims to develop and evaluate supplementary English reading materials based on interreligious values for Grade X students in Maluku. By focusing on three types of texts—procedure, report, and recount—the study examines how culturally relevant materials can improve reading comprehension while promoting local values of tolerance and harmony. The research assesses the effectiveness of these materials in a high school setting and evaluates their impact on students' understanding of interreligious values, providing a model for integrating cultural content into language education.

Literature Review

Reading Skills in Language Education

Reading is a critical skill in language education, involving complex processes of decoding, comprehension, and critical thinking. Leipzig (2011) defines reading as a multifaceted skill encompassing word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Comprehension, the

central component, requires students to not only decode language but also to interpret meaning, make inferences, and connect ideas. In the educational context, developing strong reading skills is essential, as it lays the foundation for other academic abilities, including writing and critical thinking (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). For English learners, reading comprehension is particularly important, as it facilitates language acquisition and helps students build vocabulary, syntax, and grammar.

To maximize the effectiveness of reading instruction, educators are increasingly adopting culturally relevant materials. Research indicates that students learn better when the content reflects their own lives and experiences, as this creates a personal connection to the text (Tomlinson, 1998). For instance, incorporating local cultural values into reading materials can increase engagement and motivation, encouraging students to actively participate in their learning (McGrath, 2013). This approach is especially beneficial in multicultural regions like Maluku, where integrating interreligious themes can help students understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.

The Role of Supplementary Materials in Language Learning

Supplementary materials play a crucial role in language education by filling curricular gaps and providing contextually relevant content. Tomlinson (1998) describes supplementary materials as resources that complement existing textbooks by introducing new themes or perspectives, which may be underrepresented in standard curricula. These materials can include authentic texts, such as articles, local stories, and community-based narratives, that enrich students' learning experiences by connecting academic content with real-life situations. In Maluku, supplementary materials that reflect interreligious harmony not only provide language practice but also foster a sense of unity and respect among students from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to enhancing engagement, culturally relevant supplementary materials can foster positive social values. As McGrath (2013) notes, materials that address students' cultural and social realities encourage critical thinking and empathy, enabling students to see their role within a larger social framework. By introducing interreligious values into reading materials, educators in Maluku can promote tolerance and respect, providing students with both linguistic skills and the moral framework needed to navigate their multicultural society. Such materials can serve as a powerful tool for socialization, teaching students the importance of coexistence while also enhancing their language proficiency.

Interreligious Tolerance in Indonesian Society

Interreligious tolerance is a foundational value in Indonesian society, where diverse cultural and religious groups coexist. Tolerance, according to Marzuki (2012), is defined as a principle of mutual respect and cooperation among people of different beliefs. Indonesia's history of multiculturalism, exemplified by regions like Maluku, highlights the importance of tolerance as a means to maintain social harmony. Educational systems, therefore, play a vital role in promoting interreligious tolerance, as early exposure to these values can prevent conflicts and foster peaceful relations among future generations (Mulia, 2012). By including lessons on tolerance in the curriculum, schools can contribute to building a cohesive and resilient society.

Maluku's local wisdom, such as *katong samua basudara* ("we are all brothers") and *pela gandong* (inter-village alliances), serves as cultural expressions of interreligious tolerance. These traditions emphasize unity and solidarity across religious lines, reinforcing the idea that differences should be celebrated rather than feared (UNESCO, 2016). Incorporating these values into educational materials not only enhances students' cultural awareness but also instills a deep-seated respect for religious diversity. By teaching tolerance through culturally embedded reading materials, educators can help students internalize these values and apply them in their daily lives, contributing to a more harmonious society.

Method

This study uses a design-based research approach to develop, test, and refine supplementary reading materials that integrate interreligious values for Grade X students. Design-based research allows for a cyclic process in which materials are initially created based on theoretical insights and then iteratively improved based on classroom feedback and practical observations. This approach ensures that the final materials align with both academic standards and cultural relevance.

The research took place in a high school in Ambon, involving 40 Grade X students. The participants were selected to represent diverse religious backgrounds, ensuring that the materials' cultural content was both relatable and impactful. Teachers and administrators provided additional input to ensure the materials adhered to both educational standards and local sensitivities regarding religious content.

Three instruments were employed to assess the impact of the developed materials: pre-and post-tests, interviews, and observational checklists. Pre-and post-tests measured improvements in reading

comprehension, specifically evaluating students' abilities to understand text structures, identify main ideas, and infer meaning from context. These tests offered a quantitative measure of the materials' effectiveness in improving reading comprehension skills.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers. The interviews explored students' perceptions of the materials' cultural relevance and their experiences with the interreligious themes. This qualitative approach provided insights into how well the students connected with the content and its influence on their attitudes toward interreligious harmony. Observational checklists were used during classroom activities to document students' engagement, cooperation, and participation levels. This instrument helped identify specific behaviors that indicated active learning and cultural awareness, offering a detailed perspective on the materials' social impact.

Data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The pre-and post-test scores were analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine the statistical significance of improvements in reading comprehension. For the qualitative data, thematic coding was applied to interview responses and observational data, focusing on themes such as cultural relevance, engagement, and the appreciation of interreligious harmony. This mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive evaluation of the materials' impact on both language learning and cultural understanding.

Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the interreligious-themed supplementary reading materials led to notable improvements in both reading comprehension and cultural appreciation among the students. The quantitative results from the pre-and post-tests demonstrate an average increase in reading comprehension scores by 18%, with a t-test analysis confirming the statistical significance of this improvement ($p < 0.05$). These tests focused on students' ability to identify main ideas, recognize text structures, and make inferences, skills that are foundational in reading comprehension.

The first unit, a procedure text centered on the Eid Mubarak celebration, proved particularly effective in helping students understand step-by-step structures in texts. In this unit, students engaged in activities that required them to sequence events and recognize specific vocabulary associated with the celebration. Observational data showed a high level of engagement as students discussed the cultural significance of Eid Mubarak in Maluku. Many students expressed that the activity helped them

better appreciate how this celebration fosters a sense of unity across different religious groups. This connection was further validated in interviews, where students reported that learning about the cultural and procedural aspects of Eid helped them feel more connected to their community's values.

The second unit, featuring a report text on Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran (MTQ), required students to engage with a more factual text type, focusing on summarizing information and identifying specific details. Quantitative analysis showed that students' performance in distinguishing main ideas and supporting details increased by an average of 20% from the pre-test to the post-test. Observational checklists revealed that students maintained high focus during this unit, with many showing pride as they learned about MTQ as a cooperative event involving both Muslim and Christian communities. The interviews revealed that students saw MTQ as a symbol of mutual respect and support, with several students stating that this unit helped them understand how interreligious cooperation is practiced in real-life contexts in Maluku.

The third unit, a recount text on Christmas celebrations in Maluku, allowed students to explore narrative structures while learning about interreligious support. This unit showed a 16% improvement in students' abilities to follow narrative sequences and summarize events in chronological order. Observational data highlighted the students' active engagement in class discussions, particularly when they shared personal experiences of celebrating Christmas with friends of different faiths. In interviews, students expressed that they were proud of the mutual respect exhibited in Maluku during holiday celebrations. They noted that learning about these practices made them more appreciative of the diverse ways interreligious harmony is expressed within their community.

The qualitative data from interviews provided further insight into how students connected with the material. Several students stated that the texts made them feel prouder of Maluku's traditions of tolerance, with one student noting that "it's good to know how different religions support each other." Teachers also noted that students seemed more motivated and invested in the lessons, possibly because the texts were both educational and culturally significant. One teacher mentioned that the materials "added meaning to the curriculum by linking language learning with social values," which encouraged students to view reading as more than just an academic exercise.

Observational data consistently showed high engagement across all three units. Students often collaborated in group discussions, exchanging insights on how the cultural practices described in the texts related to their personal experiences. This collaborative atmosphere indicated that the materials facilitated a deeper understanding of cultural content, fostering a classroom environment that

celebrated diversity and promoted empathy. Students' body language and expressions indicated a positive response to the interreligious themes, suggesting that the materials resonated with them on a personal level.

The pre-and post-tests also revealed specific areas of improvement within each text type. In the procedure text, students displayed increased accuracy in identifying sequential steps and transitional phrases. In the report text, improvements were noted in the students' ability to summarize factual information. The recount text led to stronger narrative comprehension, with students effectively identifying the beginning, middle, and end of the stories. These findings suggest that the materials successfully targeted specific reading comprehension skills, further validating their academic value.

Teachers observed that students showed increased openness and sensitivity toward discussing religious topics, which they attributed to the culturally relevant materials. During feedback sessions, students noted that learning about interreligious events through reading exercises “made the lessons feel real” and helped them understand “how religion can bring people together.” This response suggests that the materials fostered not only language skills but also a more inclusive mindset, encouraging students to view diversity as a source of strength.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the effectiveness of using culturally relevant, interreligious-themed materials in enhancing both reading comprehension and cultural appreciation among students. The statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension scores, as shown by the pre-and post-test results, aligns with Tomlinson's (1998) assertion that supplementary materials tailored to students' backgrounds increase engagement and academic achievement.

The procedure text on Eid Mubarak demonstrated that culturally embedded materials can make complex concepts, such as text sequencing, more accessible and meaningful to students. The high engagement levels observed during this unit suggest that integrating familiar cultural events into the curriculum enhances students' motivation and interest, which in turn positively affects their academic performance (McGrath, 2013). The alignment between cultural familiarity and academic learning outcomes seen here echoes findings from previous studies on the role of culturally relevant materials in language education (Leipzig, 2011).

The report text on MTQ illustrated the potential of factual content to strengthen students' analytical skills while promoting an understanding of interreligious cooperation. By engaging with real-

world examples of mutual support, students were able to connect factual learning with social values. This supports Marzuki's (2012) findings on the importance of using educational content that mirrors students' social realities to reinforce both knowledge and values. The improvement in students' ability to distinguish main ideas and supporting details shows that culturally enriched materials can also serve traditional academic functions.

The recount text on Christmas highlighted how narrative-based content can foster empathy and understanding among students. The positive response observed during the Christmas unit aligns with research by UNESCO (2016), which suggests that narrative texts that reflect students' own communities can build cultural awareness and respect. The recount text allowed students to reflect on shared values of support and respect, reinforcing the idea that reading materials can serve as a bridge between academic and moral education.

Furthermore, qualitative data from the interviews suggested that students found the materials personally meaningful. The expressions of pride and appreciation for local traditions of tolerance indicate that culturally relevant reading materials contribute to identity formation, aligning with McGrath's (2013) findings that students learn better when materials affirm their cultural identities. This response highlights the importance of educational content that validates students' backgrounds, fostering both academic and personal growth.

The engagement observed during group discussions suggests that interreligious-themed materials also support social learning objectives. Group activities that encouraged students to discuss personal experiences and cultural practices likely promoted social cohesion and empathy. This finding supports Vygotsky's social learning theory, which posits that collaborative learning environments enhance cognitive development and interpersonal skills.

Teachers' observations that students appeared more open to discussing religious topics demonstrate the role of culturally relevant materials in creating an inclusive and respectful classroom atmosphere. By introducing interreligious values in a structured, educational setting, the materials helped students navigate sensitive topics with confidence. This outcome supports the assertion by UNESCO (2016) that culturally relevant education promotes social harmony by encouraging positive attitudes toward diversity.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

The integration of interreligious values into supplementary reading materials provides a valuable approach to English language education in multicultural regions like Maluku. This study demonstrates that culturally relevant content enhances both reading comprehension and social awareness, helping students appreciate the significance of interreligious harmony. The findings suggest that incorporating local values into educational materials can foster both academic and cultural competencies, preparing students for a more inclusive society.

Suggestions

Future research could explore similar approaches in other culturally diverse regions, adapting themes to reflect local traditions and values. Curriculum developers should consider expanding the range of culturally relevant materials, encouraging students to relate language learning to social and cultural understanding. By prioritizing cultural relevance, educational systems can cultivate students who are not only linguistically skilled but also socially responsible and culturally aware.

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