



THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN COMPREHENDING ENGLISH TEXTS RELATED TO ISLAMIC SUBJECT

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Article History:

Received: 20 Juli 2024

Revised: 27 Juli, 2024

Accepted: 1 Agustus, 2024

Published: 6 Agustus, 2024

Keywords:

Difficulties, comprehending English texts

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Kata Kunci:

Kesulitan memahami teks bahasa Inggris

Abstract:

This study examines the challenges encountered by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau in understanding English literature pertaining to Islamic topics. Using a quantitative study design, information was gathered from 142 students using a structured questionnaire. The findings underscore notable difficulties, such as language hurdles, cultural and environmental hindrances, and interpretive subtleties. More precisely, 68% of students encountered difficulties with specialist vocabulary, while 62% faced challenges with complicated sentence constructions. In addition, a majority of students, namely 57%, encountered issues comprehending historical events and cultural customs. Similarly, 54% of students struggled with the varying interpretations found within different Islamic schools of thought. The students' academic performance was significantly affected by these challenges in understanding, with 71% reporting that it had a detrimental influence on their grades and their level of engagement with the course material. In order to tackle these difficulties, the study proposes focused vocabulary training, contextualized teaching of historical and cultural allusions, and the cultivation of critical thinking abilities. Utilizing scaffolded reading strategies and collaborative learning activities can assist students in developing their comprehension skills and boosting their confidence.

Abstrak:

Studi ini mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa di STAI Al-Kifayah Riau dalam memahami sastra Inggris yang berkaitan dengan topik Islam. Menggunakan desain studi kuantitatif, informasi dikumpulkan dari 142 siswa menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur. Temuan ini menyoroti kesulitan yang luar biasa, seperti hambatan bahasa, hambatan budaya dan lingkungan, dan kesederhanaan interpretatif. Lebih tepatnya, 68% siswa mengalami kesulitan dengan kata sandi spesialis, sementara 62% menghadapi tantangan dengan konstruksi kalimat yang rumit. Selain itu, mayoritas siswa, yaitu 57%, menghadapi masalah yang mencakup peristiwa sejarah dan kebiasaan budaya. Demikian pula, 54% siswa berjuang dengan interpretasi yang berbeda yang ditemukan dalam berbagai sekolah pemikiran Islam. Prestasi akademik siswa secara signifikan dipengaruhi oleh tantangan ini dalam memahami, dengan 71% melaporkan bahwa itu memiliki pengaruh yang merugikan pada nilai mereka dan tingkat keterlibatan mereka dengan materi kursus. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan-kesulitan ini, studi ini mengusulkan pelatihan kata sandi terfokus, pengajaran kontekstual dari alusi sejarah dan budaya, dan kultivasi kemampuan berpikir kritis. Menggunakan strategi membaca dan kegiatan belajar kolaboratif dapat membantu siswa mengembangkan keterampilan pemahaman mereka dan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri mereka.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential means of accessing a diverse range of academic resources, especially those relevant to Islamic studies, in the context of global education (Ningsih, 2022). Understanding English literature pertaining to Islamic issues is of utmost importance for various reasons. First and foremost, it facilitates precise comprehension, so decreasing the risk of misconstruing Islamic principles and practices and elucidating intricate concepts. Precise understanding is crucial for respectful discourse and engagement in a diverse, globalized environment (Farra Amartya Ika, 2022).

Moreover, it promotes interfaith discourse by improving communication and identifying shared beliefs among Muslims and individuals of different religious backgrounds (Kasim & Raisha, 2017). Comprehending these writings is crucial for students and academics as it aids in academic research and the construction of curricula in disciplines like religious studies and Middle Eastern studies (Ali, 2022). Individually, it has the potential to enhance one's religious beliefs and enhance their understanding of different cultures. Having a precise understanding also helps to combat stereotypes and false information about Islam in the media, promoting well-informed reporting and ethical journalism (B et al., 2023). Furthermore, it facilitates the process of legal and social integration by assisting policymakers and professionals in developing inclusive policies and services that uphold Islamic practices. Comprehending these writings is crucial for effectively and intelligently engaging with the extensive and varied tradition of Islam.

Students encounter numerous difficulties in understanding English writings pertaining to Islamic topics, which can be ascribed to both internal and external factors. Internally, pupils frequently encounter difficulties due to their restricted vocabulary and weak grammatical proficiency, both of which are essential for comprehending intricate literature. The research conducted. revealed that obstacles to reading comprehension include challenges in understanding the primary concept, terminology, references, inferences, and specific details (Ganie et al., 2019). Furthermore, The research emphasized that students struggled the most with comprehending the significance of specific words, indicating a requirement for additional exercises and educational techniques such as schema, skimming, and scanning (Prayitno et al., 2021). Achmad Fawaid's research on Arabic texts highlights the significance of linguistic familiarity. It points out that students often see the distinct shapes of Arabic letters as alien, which is similar to the difficulties encountered with English texts when students lack knowledge of the language structure (Balqis, 2022). Externally, the surroundings are of utmost importance. Sofyan et al. observed that pupils' acquisition of English language skills in boarding Islamic schools is severely impeded by restricted exposure to English outside the school environment and curriculum limits (Thao & Tham, 2018). Research have provided evidence that external influences, such as the family and school surroundings, have a major influence on kids' learning difficulties in courses like mathematics. This finding can also be applied to English understanding (Nuralimah et al., 2023). In addition, the study conducted at Raden Fatah Islamic State University highlights that the absence of media education or support from family members intensifies these challenges. The research focuses on translation operations inside Arabic education programs. The study also emphasizes the combined influence of linguistic and non-linguistic factors, which can be extended to English writings concerning Islamic topics (Septia et al., 2022). In Nur Fadilah Amin's research on reading Arabic texts, it was discovered that linguistic challenges, such as comprehending harakat (diacritical marks) and vocabulary, as well as non-linguistic elements like instructional techniques and infrastructure, provide substantial obstacles (Jyoti, 2020). According the research in Banda Aceh, students frequently encounter challenges in reading comprehension, specifically in dealing with intricate vocabulary, sentence structure, and identifying main ideas without relying on a dictionary. These skills are crucial for understanding English texts related to Islamic topics (Ali, 2022).

These results indicate that a comprehensive approach, which considers both internal linguistic abilities and external environmental elements, is crucial for enhancing students' understanding of English texts in Islamic education settings.

Nevertheless, numerous students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau face substantial challenges when it comes to understanding English writings that pertain to Islamic topics. These challenges can impede their academic advancement and reduce their involvement with crucial religious studies. This matter is especially urgent considering the significance of Islamic studies in the curriculum and the need for students to have access to a wide range of resources in order to enhance their comprehension.

Prior research has extensively recorded the difficulties encountered by individuals who are not native English speakers in diverse academic fields, emphasizing problems such as a restricted lexicon, intricate sentence constructions, and unfamiliar cultural allusions. Within the field of Islamic studies, the level of intricacy is intensified by the specialized vocabulary, historical backdrop, and nuanced interpretations included in the literature. Scientists have investigated different approaches to help understanding, including activities before reading, guided learning, and the utilization of multimedia resources. Nevertheless, there is still a notable emphasis on academic writings in general, with a restricted amount of study explicitly addressing the understanding of English literature in the field of Islamic studies.

Although there is already a significant amount of literature on language comprehension obstacles, there is a clear lack of study that especially focuses on the distinct difficulties experienced by students in Islamic higher education institutions, such as STAI Al-Kifayah Riau. The majority of research have focused on either broad academic texts or have not sufficiently taken into account the overlapping linguistic, cultural, and theological intricacies in the field of Islamic studies. This discrepancy highlights the necessity for focused study that investigates the particular challenges these students encounter and assesses the efficacy of customized teaching methods.

This study seeks to address the research vacuum by specifically examining the difficulties encountered by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau when understanding English literature connected to Islamic issues. The uniqueness of this research resides in its all-encompassing methodology, which integrates language analysis with cultural and environmental factors specific to Islamic studies.

METHOD

This study utilizes a quantitative research methodology to examine the challenges that students encounter when trying to understand English literature pertaining to Islamic subjects at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau. The study employs quantitative approaches to systematically gather and analyze data in order to uncover patterns and correlations between variables.

The sample for this research comprises 522 students who are currently enrolled in the Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) program at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Al-Kifayah in Riau. A sample size of 142 pupils was picked from the population using Slovin's formula. Stratified random sampling was utilized to guarantee that every subgroup of the population had an equitable opportunity of getting included in the sample. This methodology involves the segmentation of the population into distinct subcategories or strata, according to certain attributes such as academic year or gender. Random samples are then chosen from each section.

The data was gathered through the use of a well-organized test specifically created to evaluate the different challenges that students face when trying to understand English literature linked to Islamic topics. The test was segmented into sections that focused on linguistic obstacles, cultural and contextual hurdles, and students' perspectives on their difficulty in understanding. The questions were test to ensure clarity and relevancy, using existing literature as a basis for their formulation.

The gathered data were evaluated utilizing statistical tools to do descriptive statistics. The results of the data analysis were utilized to pinpoint significant areas of difficulty for students and provide specific treatments aimed at enhancing their understanding of English texts pertaining to Islamic topics.

The investigation was conducted with strict adherence to ethical considerations. All participants provided informed permission, indicating their understanding of the study's objective and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point. The confidentiality of the participants' responses was upheld, and the data was anonymised to safeguard their identities. The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical principles of STAI Al-Kifayah Riau.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the collected data reveals several key findings regarding the difficulties faced by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau in comprehending English texts related to Islamic subjects.

category	Description	Percentage (%)
Linguistic Barriers	Difficulty understanding specialized vocabulary such as "Tawhid," "Sharia," and "Hadith."	68%
Cultural and Contextual Challenges	Difficulty with complex sentence structures, hindering comprehension of main ideas.	62%
	Difficulty understanding historical events and cultural practices, such as the Battle of Badr and contributions of scholars like Al-Ghazali.	57%
	Lack of background knowledge significantly impeding comprehension.	83%
Interpretative Nuances	Struggles with interpretative nuances and diversity of interpretations among different Islamic schools of thought.	54%
Impact on Academic Performance	Difficulties with English texts negatively affecting grades and overall engagement with the course material.	71%

The table displays examination of the gathered data uncovers various significant discoveries concerning the challenges encountered by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau in understanding English literature pertaining to Islamic topics.

The findings suggest that a considerable proportion of students encounter difficulties with specialized terminology and intricate sentence constructions. Around 68% of the participants indicated that they faced challenges in comprehending concepts like "Tawhid," "Sharia," and "Hadith." Moreover, a significant majority of 62% of students encountered difficulty with intricate sentence constructions, impeding their comprehension of the primary concepts conveyed in the readings.

The inclusion of cultural references and historical backgrounds in the texts presented significant difficulties. Approximately 57% of students expressed challenges in comprehending historical events and cultural customs referenced in the readings, such as the Battle of Badr and the scholarly contributions of figures like Al-Ghazali. The limited familiarity with these subjects greatly hindered their understanding.

According to the research, 54% of the students faced difficulties in understanding the subtle and complex aspects of Islamic teachings. The multiplicity of interpretations throughout various Islamic schools of thought resulted in perplexity, as students encountered difficulty in navigating these divergent viewpoints.

The students' academic performance was significantly affected by their difficulty in comprehension. A majority of 71% of the participants reported that their struggles with English texts had a detrimental impact on their academic performance and general involvement with the course content.

The findings emphasize the complex nature of the difficulties encountered by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau in understanding English writings that are relevant to Islamic issues. According to Firman et al., (2021) the linguistic obstacles, such as technical terminology and intricate sentence constructions, align with the current body of work on the difficulties in understanding language faced by individuals who are not native English speakers. Nevertheless, the distinctive obstacles related to cultural and contextual aspects in the field of Islamic studies provide a distinct level of complexity that has not been well investigated in previous studies.

The difficulty in understanding technical terminology and intricate sentence constructions indicates a requirement for focused vocabulary training and reduced versions of texts to enhance comprehension. Implementing pre-reading exercises that explain important terminology and concepts has the potential to greatly improve pupils' comprehension. In addition, the incorporation of multimedia resources, such as films and interactive information, can enhance the accessibility of the texts by providing visual and contextual support (Sachran et al., 2022).

Teaching Islamic texts necessitates a methodology that takes into account the cultural and historical elements present in the writings. Teachers should include lessons on important historical events and cultural practices into the curriculum to give pupils the essential context needed to comprehend the literature. Moreover, producing additional resources that elucidate these allusions in uncomplicated language might help connect the disparity between students' prior understanding and the substance of the texts (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

The presence of various interpretations within distinct Islamic schools of thought introduces an additional level of intricacy. Fostering critical thinking and fostering comparative analysis abilities can assist pupils in navigating these diverse ideas. Engaging in classroom conversations that examine various interpretations and their historical and religious underpinnings helps cultivate a more profound comprehension and admiration for the literature (Hezam et al., 2022).

The profound influence of difficulties in understanding on academic achievement emphasizes the importance of promptly resolving these obstacles (Samad et al., 2017). By employing scaffolded reading approaches, which involve dividing books into smaller, more digestible chunks and then facilitating guided discussions and comprehension tests, students can systematically develop their understanding. Collaborative learning activities involve students working together in groups to debate and interpret texts. These activities can also offer peer support and improve comprehension (Saraswati et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the study identifies key areas in which students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau encounter difficulties in understanding English literature pertaining to Islamic topics. By implementing focused teaching methods and providing helpful materials, educators can enhance students' understanding, academic achievement, and overall involvement in Islamic studies. The findings offer useful insights to the wider world of educational research, specifically in the context of Islamic higher education, and offer practical strategies to improve the learning experience for students.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the substantial challenges encountered by students at STAI Al-Kifayah Riau in understanding English texts pertaining to Islamic topics. The main obstacles mentioned encompass linguistic hurdles, cultural and contextual constraints, and interpretative subtleties. Many students face difficulties with specialized terminology and sophisticated sentence constructions, which hinder their comprehension of important ideas. Moreover, the presence of new historical events and cultural connections in the texts presents substantial challenges to comprehension. The multitude of interpretations within many Islamic schools of thought adds complexity to pupils' capacity to comprehend the topic proficiently.

The consequences of these understanding issues are significant, resulting in a detrimental influence on students' academic performance and their level of engagement with the course material. Tackling these difficulties necessitates a comprehensive and diverse strategy. Explicit training in specific vocabulary, incorporating historical and cultural allusions into teaching, and promoting critical thinking abilities can greatly improve students' understanding. By incorporating scaffolded reading strategies and collaborative learning activities, students can progressively develop their comprehension and self-assurance in reading English books pertaining to Islamic topics.

The results of this study provide useful knowledge to the field of educational research, specifically in the context of Islamic higher education. By implementing the recommended tactics, educators can enhance students' academic achievements and their entire involvement in Islamic studies, cultivating a more comprehensive and efficient learning atmosphere.

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