



DIGITALIZATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: GLOBALIZING INDONESIAN MADRASSAS

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ABSTRACT

Madrassas are educational institutions that have deep roots in Indonesia and emphasize the teachings of Islam. However, as a part of the integral education system, madrassas also incorporate other subjects mentioned in the national curriculum, including the global language, English. This study aims to provide a view of the digitalization of English language learning in madrassas in Indonesia as the advancement of technology can provide more learning experiences to prepare for the dynamic global world. This study employs systematic literature review methods using scientific journal articles and books. The results show that while it is not limited to a certain subject, digitalization is inevitable and therefore transforming madrassas to be ready for the digital era. The undergoing changes have both positive and negative impacts on the teaching and learning process in madrassas. Concerning English language learning, it is implied that digitalization has positive impacts in improving students' skills. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that integrating technology and digitalizing the teaching and learning process while also considering the core values of madrassas provide ways to improve English language learning, leading madrassas to participate more in the global world.

Keywords: Digitalization, Madrassas, English, Global

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the advancement of technology nowadays, being able to use the English language has become an indispensable skill because as a global language, it is used by people with different occupations in almost all fields (Rao, 2019). Therefore, whether it is to gain more knowledge from books and other sources or as a means of communication, mastering this language is undeniably important. There are many ways to achieve this goal, such as including English in the national education system. It is shown by many nations' policy to employ English as one of the compulsory subjects in their curriculum. This approach is also done in Indonesia, where it has become a subject that must be taught to the students since 1967 and survived the changing era (Isadaud et al., 2022).

As a mandatory subject, English is also taught in madrassas acknowledged by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Madrasa is an educational establishment centered on the teaching of Islam and it usually combines the Islamic boarding school with public school using the national curriculum (Syar'i et al., 2020). Some of the madrassas also focus on guiding the students to memorize and understand Al-Quran. Furthermore, it has several levels from *madrasah ibtidaiyah* which is equal to elementary schools, *madrasah tsanawiyah* which is equal to junior high schools, and *madrasah aliyah* which is equal to senior high schools. As a country where the majority of the people is Islam, madrasa has a long history in Indonesia as it made a major contribution to educating the people back when the Dutch colonized this country (Syarif, 2020). Since that, the continuous efforts to make madrassas as recognized institutions did not cease until 1950, when a law was published stating that students in madrassas or religious schools were considered fulfilling their studies (Muhajir, 2019; Syarif, 2020).

Therefore, as one of the educational institutions in Indonesia, madrassas need to keep up with the teaching and learning environment constructed in the curriculum while also considering the development of technology to be implemented in their curricula. Digitalization or digital, as the name suggests, is an advanced way to make and get the worth of things utilizing digital technology and digitized data (Gobble, 2018). Digitalization in education is swift because it provides more chances to learn and connect with a teacher online up to the preparation and actual tests (Obidina et al., 2020).

Sheppard and Young (2006) in Sutrisno (2023) also stated that agility in things including using technology can assist madrasa to adjust to the ever-changing world and solve problems faced in education. Furthermore,



technology also allows students to get materials in other sources aside from the classroom, communicate with friends and teachers, and get various opportunities to assess their knowledge and skills (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). While there are many studies about digitalization and the impact of technology in madrassa, there is little for digitalization in English language learning in madrassa. Taken from the aforementioned reason, this paper aims to provide a view on employing digital technology in English language learning conducted in madrassas to provide more learning experiences for the students so they can participate more in the global world while not forgetting the values unique to madrassas.

2. METHODS

This article employs the systematic literature review (SLR) proposed by Snyder (2019, p. 336) that follows four steps, including: preparing; carrying out; examining; and reporting the review. For further analysis, this article uses a method proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) by collecting, displaying, reducing, and drawing conclusions from the data. The data used was taken from references including scientific journal articles and books related to madrassas and digitalization in education.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

English Language Learning in Indonesian Madrassas

English as the *lingua franca* or the language of the world means that if one wants to participate in international communication and transaction, they have to be able to understand and use the language. Richards (2015) states that for countries that do not use English as their first language, they use it as their second or foreign language. There are four macro-skills in English; reading, listening, writing, and speaking. These skills are needed to be learned to communicate using English. As this language is used widely in many fields, non-English-speaking countries have to facilitate the people to learn it. To reach this goal, one of the ways is through education.

Indonesia, a country where English is a foreign language, has a long history of English education. It started in the sixteenth century when the Dutch colonized this country and thus its language and several other European languages were compulsory subjects. However, after Indonesian independence, they were erased, leaving only English as it was deemed as having the potential to be an international language (Zein et al., 2020). Then, in the New Order period, English was made a compulsory subject for schools under the Ministry of Education and Cultures and Ministry of Religions Affairs (Isadaud et al., 2022; Zein et al., 2020).

Madrassas emerged as a result of the education system at that time of colonization where schools could not reach every person in Indonesia so traditional schools that have more accessibility were established, including *pesantren*, the base for madrassas (Syarif, 2020). Initially, madrassas were educational institutions that focused on teaching Al-Quran, Islamic teachings, and other supporting subjects but now, the lessons are adjusted so that general knowledge is also conveyed to prepare the students to face challenges (Wijaya, 2021). Therefore, madrassas as a part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs also must insert English in their curricula that combines general subjects and Islamic teachings. This obligation is based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion which stated that madrassas must have the right and autonomy to manage their education and adapt to technology and science development (2022). It can also mean that madrassas can keep their unique values of Islam and its teachings while still being able to project the national curriculum. These values need to be kept to preserve the identity of the madrassa.

Several studies have been done about English language learning and its relation with Indonesian madrassas. Umar (2022) in his article states that English has become an important subject in *pesantren* and madrassa because it can be used as a medium for *da'wah* or spreading Islamic teachings and for the students in madrassa to be able to follow the latest knowledge. The latter is related to how students in madrassas also need to understand and utilize technology for good causes. To achieve those, instilling praiseworthy characteristics in the lessons is one of the best ways. Similarly, Hidayati (2017) argues that there are opportunities for English language teaching in Indonesian madrassas by integrating religious values into it. This way, the students get both knowledge. Sholeh et al. also found that many Islamic moderation values can be fused with English lessons to



teach students about good values that can be implemented in daily life (2022). This way, it is ensured that students are used to applying them in their interaction and communication, locally and globally.

Digitalization of English Language Learning

Taking into account the fact that English language learning is necessary in many countries, the implementation of it should be done effectively, following the development of the technology. Various applications, websites, and other means have been constructed to be used in the teaching and learning process. In this way, digitalization, which means the use of digital technology, is a vital part of learning. It has many advantages that make it easier for the educational process. In terms of foreign language learning, technology can help learners interact with the target language they want to learn without the need to go abroad (Blake, 2008). Various applications also let one meet with people from different countries easily and thus provide authentic experiences. Learning languages can be taxing for the learners and digitalization can act as a tool to ease the process.

A study by Mahrani et al. (2022) found that the use of digital technology can improve independent learning. Being an independent learner has many advantages as there are no limits in studying because of the easy access to materials needed from the Internet. Nowadays, face-to-face meetings are unnecessary because one can use social media to conduct them virtually, without losing anything. Instead, it saves time and money, and it allows people in different parts of the world to meet easily. Moreover, digitalization in English language learning also provides more engagement for the learners to be exposed to the English language, leading to be independent learners (Nugroho & Atmojo, 2020). Similarly, Fansury et al. (2020) also argue that because digital media can be integrated into various applications, including social media, it can make learning easier and improve learners' engagement.

Digitalization of English Language Learning in Indonesian Madrassas

Digitalization has undeniable impacts on education in madrassas. Husna et al. (2023) support this by stating that madrassa's educational system has to be dynamic to transform madrassas to be more digital. Technology is inseparable from Islamic education and the term 'digital madrassa' refers to the integration of technology in madrassas (Santosa & Jazuli, 2022). This becomes a subject worth to be studied because digitalization makes the teaching and learning process more diverse and various, improving students' engagement. Moreover, technology can also improve students' achievements which results in an improvement in its quality (Siskandar, 2020).

Hence, considering the effect of digitalization in education and English language learning in madrassas, it is important to implement it in the practice of teaching and learning process in madrassas. The Islamic values they need to convey to the students can also be presented through digital technology. In this way, madrassas can preserve the unique values related to their identity, while using modern technology in their teaching and learning process. Moreover, it can assist English learning by providing more opportunities to study and interact with other people and giving more authentic materials.

4. CONCLUSION

Madrassas are educational institutions that combine Islamic teachings with general knowledge. They have great values that can be implemented in life. In Indonesia, madrassas are intertwined with its history, being an inseparable part of the struggle to be free from colonization. At first, they are the accessible and affordable choices for people but over time, madrassas are recognized formally under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Therefore, they must employ the national curriculum and keep up with the development of technology. Using the national curriculum means integrating other subjects, including English. The international language is a must for a country that does not use it as its first language to ensure that it can participate in the global world. However, learning a foreign language is not easy so the need to employ different ways to learn it emerges. One of the ways to assist English language learning is through digitalization. Nowadays, technology cannot be separated from



daily life. Digitalization is the use of technology and it is very impactful to the world of education. Madrassas must not shut the digitalization and embrace it instead, considering that digitalization has many advantages in the teaching and learning process, while it can also be used as a media for *da'wah*, thus spreading the values of Islam.

There are limited numbers of studies about the digitalization of English language learning in madrassas even when it has many aspects to be examined, including the teacher's and students' perspectives, implementation, and others. This paper provides a view of the relationship between technology and madrassas and how the former affects the latter. More research must be done to find out in-depth about this issue.

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