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# THE USE OF THE ISLAMIC – BASED READING MATERIALS AMONG STUDENTS IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

The objectives of the study were to evaluate upper secondary Islamic – based reading materials, to study the improvement of the students' vocabulary skills through the Islamic – based reading materials, and to examine the students' opinions toward Islamic – based reading materials. The mixed – mode approaches between quantitative and qualitative models with quasi – experimental design were used as the main research methodology. The research was conducted through three stages, namely; the reading material development, reading material implementation, and reading material evaluation. The research tools were the achievement tests, questionnaires, and the semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed by using means and standard deviations. The data was also tested by using t-test for paired - sample statistics. The results of the Islamic- based reading implementation indicated that the students' achievement mean scores and the total mean scores after using the revised reading materials were statistically higher than the students' achievement mean scores in the same group before using the revised reading materials at 0.01 level of significance. The students' vocabulary mean scores after using the revised reading materials were also statistically higher than the students' achievement mean scores in the same group before using the revised reading materials at 0.04 levels of significance. Moreover, the students' opinions toward the revised reading materials were positive, they were satisfied with the teaching-learning process of the revised reading materials at higher at 0.05 levels of significance. As a conclusion, Islamic – based materials could improve students' reading skills and most of students were satisfied with the Islamic – based materials. The study implied that the Islamic – based reading materials were effective and could be promoted to be used in classrooms to improve reading skills among students in southern Thailand.





## PENGUNAAN BAHAN BERINTEGRASI ISLAM UNTUK BACAAN DI KALANGAN PELAJAR DI SELATAN THAILAND

### ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi satu bahan bacaan di peringkat sekolah menengah atas, untuk meningkatkan kemampuan pelajar dalam pemahaman, untuk mengkaji peningkatan kemahiran pemahaman melalui bahan bacaan yang berintegrasi Islam, dan pendapat pelajar terhadap bahan bacaan yang berintegrasi Islam. Metode kajian berkombinasi, pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan reka bentuk kuasi eksperimen telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini memiliki 3 tahap, perbaikan bahan bacaan, kombinasi bahan bacaan dalam kelas, dan evaluasi bahan bacaan. Instrumen kajian antara lain: ujian pencapaian, soal selidik, dan wawancara. Data yang diperolehi dianalisis dengan menggunakan min dan sisihan piawai. Data kajian telah diuji oleh ujian-t untuk statistik - sampel berpasangan. Hasil kajian terhadap bahan bacaan yang berintegrasi Islam menunjukkan bahawa skor min pencapaian pelajar dan jumlah skor min selepas menggunakan bahan bacaan yang disemak semula secara statistik lebih tinggi daripada skor min pencapaian pelajar dalam kumpulan yang sama sebelum menggunakan bahan bacaan yang disemak semula pada tahap skor statistik 0.01. Skor min pemahaman pelajar selepas menggunakan bahan bacaan yang disemak semula secara statistik lebih tinggi daripada skor min pencapaian pelajar dalam kumpulan yang sama sebelum menggunakan bahan bacaan yang disemak semula pada tahap kepentingan 0.04. Selain itu, pendapat pelajar terhadap bahan bacaan yang disemak semula berpuas hati dengan proses pengajaran-pembelajaran bagi bahan-bahan bacaan yang disemak semula pada tahap yang lebih tinggi di tahap skor statistik 0.05. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa bahan bacaan yang berintegrasi Islam di peringkat menengah atas adalah berkesan dan boleh digunakan di dalam kelas. Kesimpulannya, bahan berintegrasi Islam akan dapat meningkatkan kemahiran membaca para pelajar dan kebanyakan para pelajar berpuas hati setelah menggunakan bahan bacaan yang berintegrasi Islam. Kajian ini telah membuktikan bahawa bahan bacaan berintegrasi Islam sangat efektif dan dapat digunapakai di dalam bilik kelas untuk meningkatkan lagi kemahiran membaca dalam kalangan pelajar di Selatan Thailand.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CU-TEP	Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency
EFEPI	Education First English Proficiency Index
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as the Second Language
ETS	The Educational Testing Services
GPA	Grade Point Average
IBTEP	Islamic - Based Teacher Education Program
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
LIVE	Living in Islamic Values Everyday
MUIS	Islamic Religious Council of Singapore
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NIET	The National Institute of Educational Testing Service
N.T	National Test
O.NET	Ordinary National Education Test
SBPAC	The Southern Border Province Administration Center
TNEA	Thai National Education Act
U.M	University of Mumbai





## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction



### 1.1 Background of the study

English is a common language and is spoken in many countries. It is considered as a universal language. To add on to this fact, English is the native language of more than 350 million people worldwide (Subash, 2013). Furthermore, the popularity of the language terms English as the international language of diplomacy, business, science and technology. Undoubtedly, English is used as the primary source of communication and education. While people have their own native languages, English serves as the most common and user-friendly language to interpret, translate and communicate with English-speaking customers and professionals. Hence, to make the best out of the available opportunities, students must be highly fluent in English (Subash, 2013).





Globalization changed the national and international social and economic fabric of the nation. Thai schools were being instructed to provide effective education in order for Thailand to keep pace with an increasingly changing world. It therefore was necessary to reform teaching and learning procedures, operating in Thai schools. The 2001 report from the Ministry of Education showed that the students' achievement in some classes did not yet reach the standard, such as English, Sciences, and Mathematics at upper secondary level (Becker and Maunsaiyat, 2004). Tippawan (2008) explained that the Ministry of Education adopted policies called empowering educational reforms. These reforms were based on social – constructivist teaching practices and a focus on learning new technologies (Tippawan, 2008).

In addition, the latest Thai National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999: 42)

section 22 states that:



Education shall be based on the principle that all students are capable of learning and self- development, and are regarded as being most important. The learning – teaching process shall aim at enabling the students to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potential. ( P. 12)

Thai National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999: 42)

This statement explained why the role of English had gained significantly important that the Ministry of Education had made English as one of the compulsory subjects in the primary and secondary levels in 1996. Not surprisingly, English became one of the main subjects tested in the annual Nationwide Entrance Examination of grade 12 students. However, It turned out that the English average





score was rather low. Although Thai students spend twelve years studying English in primary and secondary schools, the students' English proficiency has been relatively low. The 2010 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) showed that Thailand ranked 116<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries (Sripatham, 2013). The international average score was 80 but the Thai average score was 75, which was a little higher than the average scores of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar, but was trailing far behind other ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore (Sripatham, 2013). Prapphal (2011) studied the comparison of students' English efficiency in ASEAN by testing the CU-TEP, Chulalongkorn University and discovered that Thailand was ranked the 8<sup>th</sup> with the average score of 498 which was above only Laotians (Prapphal, 2011). In addition, in the most recent Education First English Proficiency Index (EFEPI) released in 2014, Thailand was ranked the 48<sup>th</sup> with an average score of 47.79 and labeled very low proficiency (EF, 2014).

When the English-proficiency test results within Thailand were examined, the O-NET revealed that the English average scores of Thai primary school students in 2010 and 2011 were, out of 100, 31.75, and 20.99 respectively. The average scores between 2009 and 2011 of 900,000 lower secondary-school students were 32.42, 26.05, and 16.19 respectively. Among 350,000 upper secondary-school students, the English-language average scores from 2009 to 2011 were 30.68, 23.98, and 19.22 (Sripatham, 2013). The Educational Testing Services (ETS) released the 2014 report and showed that the Thai average score was 75 from 120 which was still poor (ETS, 2015).

For the past 7 years, education development in Thailand was implemented in accordance with the National Education Act. In view of the current situation and





recognizing that each province was unique in terms of available resources, capacity and educational institutions, the formulation of provincial education development plans would ensure that national policy was better integrated and adjusted to local conditions.

The southern provinces of Thailand, especially the three border provinces, namely Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, these provinces had a total population of 1.8 million, 80 % of which were Muslim. The provinces, thus became unique in culture and values. It was found that a significant percentage of students from the three southern border provinces of Thailand had very limited proficiency in English, especially in reading skills (Amornwich, 2009). As they did not understand the content in English textbooks, these students performed badly in national tests, ranking the lowest in O-Net for the national university entrance examination. According to teachers and students from these provinces, the problem stemmed from the contents of reading materials which were not related to students' background (Thantawan et al., 2009).

Jimenez (2007) pointed out that the purpose of selecting reading materials wisely for the English class implied the teacher awareness as well as student's involvement in the material selection process. English teachers were expected to provide students with appropriate reading materials. For this reason, the reading selection process should be a thoughtful process of carefully consideration to those factors involved in this process. In this important process of selecting the material for a reading class, the teacher could not neglect the students' level, interests, needs and background knowledge in order to consider text difficulty, content and authenticity.







This text selection process required some effort on the instructor. Some forms of assessment were crucial in order to compile an appropriate set of reading materials for the class: a survey, an informal discussion, individual interviews, or any other form of inquiry could give the instructors some insight of what type of materials to select for each particular class. Selecting appropriate reading materials for the English class was certainly time consuming, but it was really beneficial for the students as well as the teacher. He also pointed out that for beginners and experienced readers alike, there were always the possibility of fluent reading and the possibility of difficult reading. Consequently, the teacher could enhance the reading process by providing the students with appropriate texts (Jimenez, 2007).



Many studies pointed to the fact that reading comprehension formed the basis for the learning process. Thus, learners who read without comprehending what they read had fewer chances of succeeding academically than learners who read with comprehension (Torgesen, *et al.*, 2010). Reading and comprehension presents a problem to many students due to several factors. Upper - secondary school students in three southern border provinces face more problems than the urban students. These are due to two main factors, namely environmental factors and problems of reading and comprehension.

Reading comprehension is not only the understanding and interpretation of what is read, but it also involves combining reading with thinking and reasoning. Students couldn't decode what they read; they couldn't make connections between





what they read and what they already know; and they couldn't think deeply about what they have read. As found by Suknantapong et al. (2002), the students performed poorly in reading ability and their poorest skills was inference and determining context clues. Moreover, it was found that students were not able to draw conclusions about what they read because they were weak in reading comprehension. (Suknantapong et al., 2002). Also, Kusuma (1994) found that student were very slow readers and their comprehension skill in finding main idea were very weak (Kusuma,1994). Likewise, the study of Thantawan et al. (2009) revealed that many of undergraduates students whom most of the students were from Islamic – Private school at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, had limited vocabulary knowledge, particularly those majoring in Communication Science, Islamic Studies, and Social Sciences. The results showed a failure rate of approximately 75%



On the basis of the regular observation, the textbooks used in the school nowadays could not motivate students in the area. Some students had a negative attitude toward them because they contained potentially offensive western - cultural images, words, idioms, and sentences. This study focuses on the achievement of the Islamic – based reading course which integrates Islamic cultures and perspectives at the upper secondary level of Islamic – Private schools in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. Its related instructional materials aims to help students in developing the understanding of English and to enhance their reading comprehension abilities.

Many researchers emphasized the limitations of textbooks. Ur (1991), for example, mentioned that textbooks were inadequate for supplying every learner's





needs. Moreover, topics in textbooks were irrelevant or uninteresting to actual classes which possibly caused students boredom and paucity of motivation. The textbooks might hinder a teacher's initiative and creativity because of its set structure and sequence (Ur, 1991). Besides, Richards (2012) stated that textbooks might not suit students' needs because they were often written for global markets (Richards, 2012). Similarly, Sheldon (1988) added that textbooks might not be worth their price since they were seen as poor compromises between what was educationally desirable on the one hand and financially viable on the other (Sheldon, 1988). In addition, Muhamad (2009) investigated how English teachers in Indonesia used and applied textbooks in their classrooms. The finding revealed that teachers concluded that textbooks could not serve teachers' and students' needs because they lacked content appropriateness (Muhamad, 2009).



Moreover, some teachers said that topics provided in the textbooks did not match students' interests. Some of the topics were irrelevant or uninteresting to their classes. Some topics were too far beyond students' proficiency. In addition, due to the different cultural settings, topics that dealt with cultural information about native countries made students uncomfortable to study. Some teachers finally concluded that they preferred using teacher-made materials to commercial textbooks (Ladaporn and Anchalee, 2013).

As cited by Tomlinson (2012), non-native speakers should be encouraged to read local materials in order to activate their background knowledge, improve vocabulary, use reading strategies explicitly as well as build English reading fluency. Thus, developing reading materials for EFL students should focus on the integration of acquiring language, promoting learning and students, as well as making use of their





social or local contexts (Tomlinson, 2012). In order to improve the reading comprehension of the secondary school students in the three southern border provinces, a specific framework should be designed for the materials. ELT materials for the students of these provinces should be relevant to their needs, background knowledge, social context and level of proficiency as people living in these provinces have a unique socio – demographic characteristic and culture which made them different from people residing in other regions of the country (Srisueb, 2009).

Moreover, Tomlinson (1998) mentioned that the English reading materials should be familiar to the students in the region and match the norms of the learner's school and social context. It was also found that students could perform better language output if they learned through materials that were flexible enough to meet their needs, familiarity and interests. Thus, it couldn't be denied that the education system in these three southern border provinces was quite unique as compared to other provinces in Thailand. Likewise, the materials to be used in these areas should be developed around the context in order to motivate the students to learn well (Tomlinson, 1998).

Therefore, as Sandra (2002) mentioned that students could be motivated by cultural integration in the language classroom, it was the responsibility of the teachers to motivate their students to read by selecting appropriate materials. It was suggested that a good provider of materials would be able to modify activities to suit the needs of students (Sandra, 2002: 81). Tomlinson (1998) drew similar conclusions that ELT materials in Asia should be less reliant on imported materials and ideals from the central English speaking countries. Instead, materials for the local multilingual and multicultural societies needed to be developed from within the region itself.





Producing materials on a local rather than a global level might connect them meaningfully with the context and with the students' own life. Teachers should design or adapt their own teaching materials to take into account of their learning environment in order to overcome the lack of fit of the course book (Tomlinson, 1998). Hence, materials should be developed to suit the needs of the students and their background knowledge and culture at an adequate level of proficiency among the students in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The prime reason for the development of materials, which was not received enough attention yet should therefore be attended (Howard and Major, 2005).

The above-mentioned reading comprehension results were a cause for concern. Amongst the factors that improve learners' reading comprehension was Islamic integrating in the use of reading texts and strategies. Thus, the study seeks to examine the use of Islamic – based reading materials in order to improve students' ability in reading comprehension.

### 1.3 Purposes of the Study

In order to be able to respond to the creating of Islamic – based materials in reading skills and achieve the overall goal of this research, the purposes were as follows.

1. To evaluate upper secondary Islamic – based reading materials.
2. To study the improvement of the students' vocabulary skills through the Islamic – based reading materials.





3. To examine the students' opinions toward the Islamic-based reading materials.

#### 1.4 Research questions

To attain the main objectives of creating Islamic– based English reading materials and practice, the following research questions were proposed.

1. To what extent do Islamic –based reading materials develop reading comprehension skill of students in Islamic – private schools?
2. To what extent do Islamic –based reading materials improve vocabulary skills of students in Islamic – private schools?
3. To what extent do students satisfy after using the Islamic –based reading materials?

#### 1.5 Significance of the study

Reading is a critical skill for obtaining knowledge. It perhaps more than any other language skills, provides the foundation for success in language learning and academic learning. According to Day (2011), vocabulary played a vital role in students' comprehension and acquisition of foreign language. Without enough number of words, students would not be able to comprehend or use the second language (Day, 2011). According to Anderson (2008) mentioned that reading was the most often used skills for English as a foreign language (EFL) students and it became





one of the most essential skills for the students of English to achieve not only learning a language, but also to acquire knowledge from any content areas (Anderson, 2008). Janzen (2007) observed that reading was critical to the academic achievement of second language students. It was a tool for obtaining knowledge. People who have the ability to read English could gain more knowledge to keep up with the latest information around the world via internet. Without being able to read, EFL students struggle to take part in the world and failed to reach their full potential as community members, and employees. Reading also enabled students to learn vocabulary more effectively (Janzen, 2007). In addition, Day (2011) also agreed that one of the primary ways to learn vocabulary was through reading. Vocabulary played a vital role in students' comprehension and acquisition of foreign language. Without enough of words, language students would not be able to comprehend or use the second language (Day, 2011).



Although reading is an essential skills, students in Thailand, especially in the three southern border provinces gain a low score on their reading test. According to the result of the Ordinary National Educational Testing (O-NET), the National Institute of Educational Testing Service indicated that, students in Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala had the lowest scores in English on their O-Net test in Thailand since 2008. They were ranked of 75 – 77 out of the 77 provinces in Thailand. In the year of 2009, they achieved only 23.31, 19.53, and 18.98 respectively, with a total score of 100 (Amornwich, 2009).

In addition, Ladaporn and Anchalee (2013) studied the teachers' perceptions toward using English textbooks of 10th grade English teachers in MahaSarakham Province. The results of this study further revealed that one of the problems was about





using English textbooks. Some teachers believed that the use of English textbooks was a waste of time, they preferred teacher-made materials to commercial textbooks (Ladaporn and Anchalee, 2013).

Sripathum (2013) mentioned that upon examining the English language classes, there were several factors contributing to the failure of English language teaching and learning, for example, unqualified and poorly-trained teachers, poorly-motivated students, students of mixed abilities in overly large classes, and rare opportunities for student exposure to English outside of class time (Sripathum, 2013). Wiriyachitra (2002) compiled the causes of difficulties in English language teaching and learning in Thailand especially in the secondary schools. Two of the main problems she posted were unchallenging English lessons and the inappropriateness of the curricula for local conditions. These two factors made students become passive and being poorly-motivated and lack of responsibility for their own learning. These problems have been attributable to the unsatisfactory results of English language teaching as mentioned earlier. As recommended by Wiriyachitra (2002) that teachers would have to write their own course materials with content related to real-life situations in the community (Wiriyachitra, 2002).

Eison (2010) pointed out that students could study well if lecturers produced a course that exactly matched the needs of a group of students (Eison, 2010). In addition, IsarjiSarudin et al. (2008) confirmed that the social – psychological perspectives on L2 learning propagated the notion that cultural beliefs influenced the development of students' attitude and the degree to which attitudes and achievement were related. Negative attitudes towards the target language community could reduce students' motivation and impeded language learning, whereas positive attitudes could

