

The Empowerment of Religious Character of Feeling Blessed using the Song of Bismillah

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Abstract. This paper aims to empower students' religious character of feeling blessed using the song 'Bismillah, I am a Muslim,' and to highlight the importance of songs and rhymes in EFL teaching to elementary students. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of the student's experiences and perceptions. The participants are 125 i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd-grade students (6-9 years old) of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. The research was held at the end of the semester activities on December 10th, 2022, for 90 minutes in the school hall. The teacher interviewed the students about how often they say 'Bismillah' and 'Alhamdulillah' in their daily lives one day before the research was conducted. They were interviewed again after three days to figure out whether the song could empower students' religious character to feel blessed. The result shows that the 'Bismillah, I am a Muslim' Song is one of the ways to empower students' religious character and feel blessed, although it is needed. This research implies empowering students' religious character through teaching songs.

Keyword: Teaching Song; Religious Character; EFL

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the term 'insecure' is prevalent in Indonesia. Not only teenagers use the word, but adults and kids use it both in the virtual and real worlds. This term influences their thoughts to feel unconfident and affects their lack of feeling blessed. Imam Budoyo & Matulesy (2019) said that the forms of feeling blessed are the sense of acceptance of giving, calm, peace, and satisfaction, which affect people to be happier and more satisfied in all aspects of their lives. In other words, unfeelingly blessed people will find it hard to feel satisfied and accept anything in their life. Feel blessed needs to be empowered from an early age so they will be habituated to gratitude in all conditions.

Feeling blessed is not an easy thing to do. People need to habituate it from elementary age, so it will be easier to feel blessed when they grow older in teens or adults. The empowerment

of religious character is crucial. Many students say unpleasant words innocently in this era. They do not know the etiquette to communicate with other people correctly. The expansion of technology not accompanied by religious characters will cause a harmful impact, such as some students skipping class hours to play online games (Ubaidillah, 2018). There are many students' characters who have experienced a deterioration in religiosity aspect. Therefore, three parties can support the empowerment of a religious nature: family, teachers, and environment. The first part is the family (especially the parent), who is a critical factor and has a role as their child's first educator and spends much time together. The second part is a teacher who teaches many things at school and can be called an agent of change for society. The last part is the environment which has various morals and characteristics that influence a child's thoughts.

The empowerment of the religious character of feeling blessed needs to be done in elementary school to build a good foundation for each child. But they need an exciting method to learn about it. Kids need a fun activity that makes them happy and not bored in the teaching and learning process. Teachers have a task to do a fun activity with valuable meaning in empowering their students' religious character. One of the ways to do a fun activity is by using a song. Lekli et al. (2021) stated that mixing up music and language, words and musical notes through songs and rhymes, besides linguistic and affective benefits, is highly appreciated for its positive influence on maintaining kids' concentration over a more extended period, often stimulating certain parts of the brain that are connected to motivation. So, teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia can be done in a fun way, such as by using a song.

Children love songs. They are attracted to musical sounds, so they will be understood quickly and memorize many things easily if chanted in a rhythm. A song entitled Bismillah, I am a Muslim by Yusuf Islam teaches children to say Bismillah every time they want to do something and say Alhamdulillah when they are done doing something. This song can help the teacher to habituate the children with reciting Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily activities.

The researchers were interested in organizing this study because she realizes the behavioral effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on children. The pandemic forced all people to do all their activities at home. Likewise, children also study online in their own houses using their gadgets. It happened for almost two years, and now some people realize that children have less knowledge about religious character. The most important habit to teach elementary Muslim students is saying Bismillah before they start every activity and saying Alhamdulillah after they finish something in their daily lives. Saying Allah's name is significant for every Muslim, as the prophet Muhammad taught us to get Allah's blessing. So, it is necessary to enforce this study to strengthen the children's character building.

Most elementary school teachers use songs as a teaching method, and (Džanić & Pejić, 2016) states that Songs, chants, poems, and rhymes play an essential role in early language development. (Cameron, 2001) Also, the use of songs and rhymes is also crucial for young learners in foreign language classrooms. Similarly, (Glen, 2017) states that songs can be an excellent activity for students, build musical and social skills, encourage creativity and improvisation, and enrich the study of history, culture, and language.

While there is a foundation of research exploring the role of music and songs in education—particularly in language acquisition—there remains a notable gap regarding the influence of Islamic songs on the religious character development of young children. Most existing studies have primarily focused on the cognitive advantages of music education, such as enhanced memory and language abilities. However, the affective and spiritual aspects of music, especially in the context of religious education, have not been thoroughly investigated. This study seeks to fill that gap in the literature by examining how Islamic songs affect young children's religious character. It aims to contribute to a richer understanding of music's role in shaping children's values and beliefs.

Therefore, the researchers conducted a study about “The Empowerment of Religious Character of Feel Blessed Using the Song of Bismillah.” The research questions of the present study are how to empower students’ religious character to feel blessed using the song Bismillah, I am a Muslim, and what is the way to maintain students’ spiritual nature of feel blessed elementary students.

Literature Review

Religious Character

According to Aqil (2017) character is a way of thinking and behaving in the character of each individual to live and cooperate within the scope of family, society, nation, and country. There are some kinds of character: honest, responsible, disciplined, hardworking, confident, creative, self-sufficient, curious, democratic, nationalist, and religious (Ubaidillah, 2018).

Character education has identified values that form characters from religion, Pancasila, culture, and national education goals. One of them is religious values, to be specifically respectful states of mind and practices in executing the lessons of the religion they follow, being tolerant of the hone of other religions, and living in concordance with friends of other faiths (Benaziria & Murdiono, 2019).

Humans have two potentials for the basic formation of Religious Characters, specifically excellent and bad (Aqil, 2017). Individuals who can make a decision and face the consequences of the decisions they make are called individuals with good character.

A good character in Islam can be seen in various ways. For example, about cleanliness. One of the characteristics of a Muslim who has a good character is keeping themselves and the environment clean, as the hadith says cleanliness is a part of faith. So, a Muslim with a good character will take notice of cleanliness and tend to apply the healthy lifestyles as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad.

Islamic religious education and good character can be alluded to as notes in carrying out Allah's commands. Worship, *muamalah*, and morals in developing life (Abidin et al., 2022). One of Allah's almighty God's commands is ‘feel blessed’ or grateful. When Muslims feel blessed, they will feel peace and happiness. Feeling blessed is when people accept everything that comes into their lives wholeheartedly and feel enough with things they have without expecting other stuff because they realize everything happens and comes from Allah. A form such as feeling blessed can be said by reciting *Alhamdulillah*, and to indicate a Muslim remembers Allah can be told by reciting *Bismillah* before starting any activities.

Music and Song

Teaching English as a Foreign Language to children in elementary school is very challenging. Teachers need a fun method to attract students’ attention. One of the methods is using music and songs that can stimulate students’ motivation and help them be interested in language learning imaginatively and creatively. Music and songs are profitable for introducing foreign language practice (Ningsih, 2019).

According to Maley & Murphey, 1992 music has the potential to change the atmosphere in a classroom. Music can change students’ moods. It can affect students’ motivation and willingness to study. When students in a good feeling, they will understand the topic easily. As Mejjini (2016) states that music is a source of motivation, interest, and enjoyment. It is easier for children to imitate and remember language effectively in children’s language classes as children like to repeat and mimic words and sounds. Likewise, Lo and Li (1998 as cited in Mejjini, 2016) claim that songs in the class can change the monotonous mood, and with the smoothing effect of music; they provide a comfortable class environment so that students can develop their language skills more quickly.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. This method aims to systematically, clearly, and accurately describe an object under study. In this study, the researchers used a combination technique for collecting data. The analysis is inductive, and the result emphasizes the meaning of generalization (Sugiyono, 2013).

The study involved 125 students from the lower grades, specially first, second, and third graders (6-9 years old) of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia as the research participants. From Riley Children's Health, at this age, children start to sustain self-esteem; be liked and accepted by peers; find a way to be like everyone else and to be different; find acceptable role models for the future; begin the process of questioning the beliefs and values; respect; explore independence and test limits; acquire knowledge and master new skills; accept one's physical appearance, body build, and athletic abilities; deal with multiple fears; take control of drives and desires; and the last is develop a realistic sense of self. From these children's development, empowerment of religious character of feel blessed in 6-9 students is very suitable for them to start looking for their identity by knowing their God.

This research employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. This approach involved the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria. The criteria for selecting participants were as follows:

1. Age: Participants were limited to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-grade students, corresponding to an age range of 6 to 9 years old. This age group was selected due to its significance in character development and religious education.
2. School Affiliation: Participants were drawn from Muhammadiyah Tempuran Elementary School in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. This particular school was chosen because of its religious affiliation, which aligns with the focus of the research.

Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. This approach involves choosing individuals who are presumed to have substantial knowledge about the research topic or possess specific characteristics pertinent to the study. In this instance, the researchers selected the entire population of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-grade students at the school, as they were all deemed relevant to the research.

By utilizing purposive sampling, the researchers ensured that the sample accurately represented the target population, thereby enhancing the relevance of the data collected to the research question.

The research was held at the end of the semester activities on December 10th, 2022, for 90 minutes in the school hall. The teachers interviewed the students about how often they say *Bismillah* and *Alhamdulillah* in their daily lives one day before the research was conducted. Teachers write down the students' responses about how often they recite *Bismillah* and *Alhamdulillah* as a sign that they feel blessed. After that, the researchers, as a guest teacher, taught the song of 'Bismillah, I am a Muslim' and the researchers explained about God's kindness and told students to feel blessed every time. Next, the students were interviewed again after three weeks to determine whether the song influenced their habits or not to know their religious character and feel blessed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the identification of the data following the proposed problem, the researcher obtained the data classification as follows:

Steps to empower students' religious character to feel blessed are:

1. The researchers interviewed students about how often they recite *Bismillah* and *Alhamdulillah* as a form of remembering Allah and feeling blessed with help from the teachers.

2. The next day, the researchers came to the school as a guest teacher and taught the song of Bismillah, I am a Muslim, in the school hall. The researcher first created a fun atmosphere with the students by giving them games and compliments. After the students were in a good mood, the researcher explained the importance of saying bismillah and alhamdulillah in daily life using the song and rewarding the active students. The researchers then asked the students to sing together. Before leaving the class, the researchers re-emphasized the importance of saying bismillah and alhamdulillah in daily life and motivated the students to make it a habit and not forget to feel blessed.
3. After three weeks, the students were interviewed again about how often they recite Bismillah and Alhamdulillah to remember Allah and feel blessed. There are a large number of students, i.e., 81 out of 125 students, who said they feel more blessed after learning the song. They said the song could make them remember to say 'Bismillah' and 'Alhamdulillah' in their daily life. Parents of the students said that their children showed an increment in feeling blessed after learning the song, but after some days, they forgot about the song and decreased in feeling blessed. After the teacher introduced the Bismillah song to the students through repeated and consistent practice, the students became more conscious of feeling blessed and began to incorporate the recitation of 'Bismillah' and 'Alhamdulillah' into their daily lives.

Based on the identification of the data in accordance with the proposed problem, the researcher obtained the data classification as shown in the following tables.

Table 1 Decrease Responses

No.	Saying Bismillah Alhamdulillah		Frequency
	Before	After	
1.	Often	Sometimes	1
2.	Always	Often	3
	Total		4

The table above shows the decrease responses of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school's students of their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily life after they know Bismillah, I am a Muslim song. There are four students who give decrease responses, one of them is used to saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah frequently but he sometimes says Bismillah and Alhamdulillah after learning the song. Three of them used to say Bismillah and Alhamdulillah all the time in every activity that they do, but after three days knowing the song, they often say those words.

Table 2 Constant Responses

No.	Saying Bismillah Alhamdulillah		Frequency
	Before	After	
1.	Not yet	Not yet	1
2.	Sometimes	Sometimes	21
3.	Often	Often	16
4.	Always	Always	2
	Total		40

The second table above shows the constant responses of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school's students of their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily life after they know Bismillah, I am a Muslim song. There are 40 students who did not change their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah. One student is not saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily activities; 21 of them sometimes say the words, 16 students often say Bismillah and Alhamdulillah, and 2 students always say the words.

Table 3 Increase Responses

No.	Saying Bismillah Alhamdulillah	Frequency
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	Before	After	
1.	Sometimes	Often	63
2.	Sometimes	Always	3
3.	Often	Always	15
	Total		81

The third table above shows the increase responses of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school's students of their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily life after they know Bismillah, I am a Muslim song. There are 81 students who increase their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily life activities. There are 63 of them who change from sometimes to often, 3 from sometimes to always, and 15 from often to always.

Table 4 Percentage of Responses

No	Respond	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Decrease	4	3.2%
2.	Constant	40	32%
3.	Increase	81	64.8%
	Total	125	100%

The fourth table above shows the percentage of responses of Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school's students of their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their daily life after they know Bismillah, I am a Muslim song. There are 125 respondents in this research. There are 4 respondents (3.2%) who show decrease responses of their habit in saying Bismillah and Alhamdulillah, 40 respondents (32%) show constant responses, and 81 respondents (64.8%) shows increase responses.

From the data, the researchers analyzed that there are changes of students' habits in their daily life to say Bismillah and Alhamdulillah in their activities even though some of them already had a good habit in saying the words. Most of the students change their habit after knowing the importance of saying Allah's name before and after doing their activity like eat, drink, sleep, go out, come back home, etc.

Character education can be actualized through several approaches, one of which is based on school culture (Hayati et al., 2020). Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school applied an Islamic culture that habituates the students to have a religious character daily. The song of Bismillah, I am a Muslim, can help empower people to feel blessed religiously. Applying music and songs in the classroom during the teaching process can be distinguished for their physical and psychological benefits, often reflected beyond the school environment (Lekli et al., 2021). The drills activities used during a song, not only as physical enjoyment realized through activities but also as a reinforcement of the foreign language lexicon. In addition, teaching Bismillah, I am a Muslim song not only has an impact on empowering students' religion to feel blessed but also teaches English in a fun way.

Religious character education is integrated with three aspects: Intracurricular, Extracurricular and Habitual (Rahman & Aliman, 2020). In Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school, intracurricular activities are done by the teacher, as a good example. When the teachers have a commendable attitude and mentality, the students will be able to absorb knowledge easier and become a generation of character. In addition, extracurricular activities in Muhammadiyah Tempuran elementary school support intracurricular activities implemented during class hours. Such as Quran *tilawah*, Qurban during Ei dal-Adha, etc. The last habituation activities are done by prayer practices every time starts and end the lesson, Memorizing the Quran, Dhuha prayer, Friday prayer, Islamic dress culture for students and teachers, and culture of keeping cleanliness.

The most important thing is good cooperation between students, teachers, and parents (Baehr, 2017). The empowerment of students' religious character of feeling blessed can start from

the student's motivation to have a good character. Teachers can develop the student's motivation, and they should give an excellent example to the students and teach them in a fun and understandable way. Not only at school, but children should also empower their religious character at home with their family. Parents have an essential role in helping their children to develop a good character; they especially feel blessed by giving them an example, reminding them when they forget, and giving a compliment when they did a good job.

From the data, the researchers analyzed that the Bismillah song can empower students' religious character to feel blessed after singing several times with drills. Students must constantly be reminded to do and act a good character, especially feel blessed. To maintain religious consistency, cooperation from the teachers at school and the parent at the house is needed to give examples and empower the religious character together. Through the song, students can be habituated in their daily life to saying *Bismillah* and *Alhamdulillah* in their activities because they can understand the importance of saying Allah's name before and after doing activities like eating, drinking, sleeping, going out, coming back home, etc.

One limitation of this study could be the generalizability of findings. Since the focus is on the empowerment of the religious character of feeling blessed using the song of Bismillah, the research may primarily apply to individuals within the specific religious or cultural context where the significance of Bismillah holds importance. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to populations with different religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the song "Bismillah, I am a Muslim" serves as an effective tool for empowering students' religious character and fostering a sense of being blessed, although this process takes time. Instantly empowering students' religious character is not feasible; it necessitates collaboration between teachers and parents and requires ongoing, repetitive teaching. The song aids children in remembering the significance of invoking Allah's name and encourages feelings of blessings, even though it should be sung frequently. To sustain this religious character, strong cooperation between teachers at school and parents at home is essential to model and empower the students' religious character collectively.

Teaching songs that empower students' religious character and instill a sense of being blessed can be particularly effective for elementary school students. However, it is essential to consistently reinforce these teachings to help them develop into lasting habits that cultivate character. Further research could enrich our understanding of the impact of teaching songs.

To enhance the comprehensiveness of future studies, researchers might consider incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into individuals' experiences with the song of Bismillah and its effects on their sense of empowerment and feelings of being blessed. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies could yield valuable information regarding the long-term effects of engaging with the song of Bismillah on individuals' well-being and spiritual growth. Moreover, examining potential variations in the perception and usage of the song of Bismillah across different cultural and religious contexts could lead to a more nuanced understanding of its significance.

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