

Ritual Communication in Learning Islam in Multi-Religious School

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ABSTRACT

Ritual practice is a basic feature in the religious life of a Muslim. Therefore, students in elementary schools are invited to practice religious rituals in learning the religion of Islam. Islamic Religious Education teachers try to teach students how to express their religion through rituals because ritual practice is a form of ritual communication. This study aims to describe and interpret the forms of religious rituals carried out in elementary schools, as well as communication models of religious rituals in building multicultural awareness. This study uses a qualitative-phenomenological approach. Data was collected by interviewing 18 informants in depth. Informants consisted of principals, religious teachers, parents and students. In addition, data were also obtained from several school documents. The research location is Setia Budhi Elementary School, East Java. Data analysis was carried out in three stages; data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the communication of religious rituals that were expressed through Islamic Religious Education learning contained social messages from childhood. It can function as multicultural learning because the ritual communication is not only intended as a religious expression but as an expression of harmony and togetherness because they can cooperate with each other in celebrating their respective religious rituals. Although there is an exclusive side of a religion, such as prayer, fasting and others, in other rituals, they are able to communicate well, so that it contains learning content to respect each other.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the important components in learning Islamic Religious Education in Elementary Schools (SD) is Islamic religious materials. The material contains a message that will be conveyed by the teacher to his students. The material contains Islamic content. In Islamic content, Islamic religious rituals are an integral part of the religious learning process (Mohammed, 2017). In fact, ritual practice is a basic feature of Muslim religious life (Bowen & Bowen, 2012). Therefore, students are also asked to practice these rituals in Islamic religious learning.

In relation to the material on religious rituals and their practice in Islam, Islamic Religious Education teachers try to teach students how to express their religion through rituals because ritual practice is a form of ritual communication (Cheal, 1992; Senft & Basso, 2009), and it is a religious expression in the form of symbols and behavior (Mulyana, 2007), such as prayer, ritual shalat, religious celebrations, and other forms related to Islamic teachings.

This research examines the practice of religious rituals that occur in the Islamic Religious Education learning process at the Setia Budhi Elementary School. In this school, there are many religious rituals because this school is occupied by students from various religious backgrounds, ranging from Muslim students, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, and Confucians. Communication of Islamic religious rituals, such as prayer, breaking the fast together, halal bi halal, Isra Miraj, Maulid Nabi, and so on, are not only internally oriented to Muslim students but also outwardly oriented by collaborating with non-Muslim students. In the above activity, all Islamic Religious Education teachers and students were involved. Usually, Muslim students are required to bring food parcels or called *berkat* in the local language, and they are distributed to all who participate regardless of religious background (interview with Principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers, April 30, 2019). Vice versa, when the ritual commemorates the Confucian, Buddhist, Christian and Catholic holidays, Muslim students also help the success of the ritual celebration event.

The ritual practice of learning Islam is a tool for learning (GÜRdenfors, 2018), and what is learned is a belief system shared in the school context. Such shared beliefs strengthen cohesion among students. Although ritual and language are tools for sharing the world, they serve different functions. One of the functions of the ritual is to promote long-term cooperation.

This study focuses on what forms of religious rituals are practiced in elementary schools and how to model ritual communication in the context of multi-

religious schools. The next focus is how to model ritual communication in building togetherness values among different students.

METHOD

In researching the two Kiai, the researcher used a qualitative-phenomenological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Saldana, 2011). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 18 informants: 1 informant was the principal, 5 religious teachers, 5 parents of students, and 7 students. Informants were interviewed as much as needed for information, and some were interviewed 1 (one) time and 3 times. Researchers dug up data for 1.5 years, between 2019-2020. The research location is Setia Budhi Elementary School, Setya Budhi Foundation in East Java Province.

In addition to interviews, the researchers also collected documents in the form of curriculum document profiles, teacher and student handbook documents, syllabus documents, Islamic Religious Education lesson plan documents, and several documents for activities outside the classroom, such as documents on the implementation of the commemoration of the Islamic Great Day, flash boarding schools, halal bi halal, and other relevant religious activities.

Data analysis is carried out through data condensation flow, data display, and conclusion drawing (B. Miles et al., 2014). Data condensation was carried out by researchers by collecting data based on relevant themes. Irrelevant ones will be set aside without being discarded. Once collected, the research will present it as a whole to be analyzed and drawn conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning Communication

Communication learning is basically a merger of two studies, communication and learning. Communication is a social process in which individuals use symbols to construct and interpret meaning in their environment. Therefore, in communication, there are five key terms, which are social, process, symbol, meaning, and environment (Duncan, 2017; West et al., 2010). While learning is a process designed intentionally to create learning activities for individuals (Benny, 2009). Thus, learning communication can be interpreted as a social process mediated through symbols in the learning environment.

Learning communication is the study of human communication processes that occur in the learning environment. As such, the parameters are quite broad,

combining different levels, settings, and subject areas (Staton-Spicer & Marty-White, 1981). Although there is a lot of literature on communication and learning aspects, research focusing specifically on learning communication is still not widely developed. In defining learning communication, Richmond, Wrench, and Gorham said, Instructional communication is the process by which teachers select and organize what students learn, decide how best to help them learn, and determine how success in learning and how student progress will be communicated by and to them (Wrench et al., 2009).

The components of this model include teachers, content, learning strategies, students, and evaluation/feedback. All of these factors are enveloped by the learning environment/context. In this model, the relationship between teacher and student is interactive-communicative (McCroskey et al., 2004; Morreale et al., 2014; Preiss & Wheelless, 2014; Stewart & Roach, 1993).

Learning Communication in Multi-religious Elementary School

Setia Budhi Elementary School is a private school founded in 1951 by Chinese people who are members of the Setia Budhi Foundation. Previously, Setia Budhi Elementary School only accepted students from Christians and Catholics, but 2 years after the merger, Setia Budhi Elementary School began to accept students from various religions. In its development, Setia Budhi Elementary School not only accepts students from Chinese backgrounds but accepts students from various religious backgrounds, races, ethnicities, or regional origins.

Setia Budhi Elementary School students can be said to have a high level of religion. The students come from seven tribal backgrounds. There are Javanese, Batak, Madurese, Balinese, Arabic, Flores, to Chinese. They follow different religions. In total, there are 113 students with 18 teachers who are predominantly Muslim. If the percentage, 25 percent of students are Muslims. The rest, 72 percent, are adherents of other religions. Starting from Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. There are also Confucians who have merged with Buddha.

The Foundation agrees that multiculturalism is in accordance with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution that our country is a state of God. Yes, we have to recognize 5 religions if you add Konghucu. Konghucu is actually from the word Kong which means grandfather. Hucu is the name of the person. Grandpa Hucu. He's a man who managed to fight. His real name was Grandpa Hucu, who was considered successful in China in defending the truth. Because of his services, Grandpa Hucu, after he died, was respected. If so, we compare it with Islam, for example. He was a warrior of Islam. So he was respected for his struggle until now. Kong is grandpa. His name is Hucu. Instead of religion, in Indonesia, it is belief. Gus Dur also said so. Konghucu is belief. So that's their right. Yes, we have to admit it. Our country is

not a religious country. But the state of God. That's why they are recognized because they believe what they believe (interview with the principal, April 30, 2019).

The principal's statement was also strengthened by the firmness in determining the vision and mission. As in the school's mission, there are voices that clearly indicate an awareness of diversity, especially in the context of schools and generally for state life. The mission item is "Creating a meaningful education for all groups regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, or social/economic status so that it becomes a nursery ground for "Multiculturalism," and in the 2017/2018 academic year, the sound was changed to "Growing appreciation and practice towards Pancasila values, national culture, and also the spirit of diversity so that they become a source of wisdom in acting." This affirmation shows the school's commitment to building the concept of religious ethics, which is not only strong for internal religious communities but also strong in social relations with external religious communities.

Islamic Religious Education learning at Setia Budhi Elementary School cannot be separated from the communication process that runs between teachers and students, students and students, teachers and teachers, students and school members, teachers and parents, and students and parents of other students. Judging from its scope, this learning communication does not only occur in the classroom during religious learning but also occurs outside the classroom. In the context of a multicultural school environment, communication of Islamic religious learning basically occurs outside the classroom because teachers and students directly come into direct contact with students with diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. As for communication in the classroom, the students communicate more with internal Muslims, and the difference is a little from the ethnic aspect.

The intensive communication of Islamic Religious Education learning at Setia Budhi Elementary School took place during the implementation of learning. In its implementation, Islamic Religious Education learning is only followed by Muslim teachers and students in separate classrooms so that those involved are Muslim teachers and Muslim students. Muslim teachers act as communicators (people who convey messages to Muslim students. This also applies to all classes, from grade 1 to grade 6.

In addition to learning in class, there is also learning outside the classroom. In activities outside the classroom, those involved in learning communication are not only Muslim teachers but also teachers of other subjects who are Muslim. This is especially so when the implementation of religious rituals is routinely carried out in schools.

Teaching Islamic Religious Education subjects in the context of a multi-religious school is a challenge for religious teachers. On the one hand, they must strengthen their beliefs and teach the teachings of Islam, but on the other hand, they should not allow their learning to offend the teachings of other religions, which they meet at school every day.

At first, sir. If you're there later, don't worry. Moreover, there are few Muslims here. Sometimes there are also worries, for example, later offending. Turns out, after doing it, just enjoy it. Precisely here, the guys get along peacefully. Not as imagined at the beginning (Interview with Islamic Religious Education Teacher, September 12, 2019).

This shows a psychological condition when in direct contact with the school situation of interfaith students. At first, there are worries, but when you experience them firsthand, you will get used to life. In general, the Islamic Religious Education learning communication process occurs in the scope of learning, learning in the classroom and learning outside the classroom. Each of these spheres turned out to display a different communication process. In the classroom, Islamic Religious Education learning is specifically carried out by Muslim students, while outside the classroom, it can be witnessed and sometimes involves non-Muslim students.

Communication of Religious Rituals in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Islamic Religious Education learning communication at Setia Budhi Elementary School related to religious rituals not only displays an interactive process by forming certain patterns but also displays forms of communication that are indirectly related to the communication function. This is mainly related to learning communication in the context of a multicultural school.

Ritual communication in Islamic Religious Education learning is necessary. There are many Islamic religious rituals taught in schools, both mandatory and sunnah rituals. In this study, the researcher saw an interesting communication. In addition to the religious rituals in elementary schools as a consequence of religious people, these rituals are also deliberately carried out as part of the practical Islamic Religious Education learning process to carry out the process of habituation to practice religious teachings.

Table 1. Muslim Religious Rituals at Setia Budhi Elementary School

No	Religious Rituals	Ritual Category	Ritual Activities	Form of Implementation
1	Muslim	Mandatory Ritual	Prayer before study	➤ According to their respective beliefs
			Interfaith Prayer	➤ Toward the Exam, each religious teacher takes turns.
			Congregational Dzuhur Prayer	➤ Dzuhur prayer only for 5th and 6th grades.
			Fasting	➤ When Muslim students are fasting, non-Muslims respect them by buying snacks without showing off.
			Distribution of Zakat	➤ Zakat from Muslim students and teachers. Distributed pedicab drivers and the poor. Non-Muslim students help share.
		Sunnah Rituals	Dhuha Prayer	➤ Dhuha prayer is carried out in classes 1-6.
			Prophet's Birthday	➤ School administrators, and all teachers are involved with the committee decree. Non-Muslim teachers help as committee members. Muslim students take part in activities.
			Islamic Boarding School	➤ Two days ➤ Tadarus ➤ Fiqh of Fasting Ramadan ➤ Fiqh of Tarawih Witir Prayer ➤ Fiqih Thaharoh ➤ Moral Development ➤ Prophet's Struggle Film (only for Muslim students, some are non-Muslim) ➤ Distribution of ta'jil (non-Muslim students participate).

No	Religious Rituals	Ritual Category	Ritual Activities	Form of Implementation
2	Non-Muslim	Catholic	Easter Day (Christmas Together)	SK Easter Commemoration Committee
		Buddha	No ritual activities	-
		Hindu	No ritual activities	-
		Confucius	Cap Go Meh Celebration (15 days after Chinese New Year or the end of Chinese New Year). Chinese New Year	Distribution of basket cakes, dumplings and fans

In the ritual activities above, there are many interesting phenomena. The involvement of each party, not only from the school but also the parents or guardians of students and also the community. In fact, parents who in fact have different religions have also participated in the success of other religious events. The school program was well received by parents, as indicated by their willingness to contribute to the success of the event. This is a distinct advantage because the involvement and support of parents are stronger in this school.

Religious ritual activities are also not only from the Muslim community but also from other religions. Although the majority of teachers are Muslim, teachers also provide opportunities for other religions to carry out rituals in schools. In fact, the teachers and students also rejoiced and helped the success of the event.

In the context of multi-religious schools, this ritual communication takes different forms. Apart from the fact that Islamic religious rituals are part of fundamental teachings, there is also an expansion of meaning from being merely an expression of personal worship to being a social celebration. In the implementation, Muslim students were also involved in the implementation process. However, they do not follow the ritual that is being carried out but only help prepare for the event. Ritual communication in the midst of this multi-religious environment is an important lesson that the implementation of religious rituals should be understood

not only as an affirmation of one's religious identity but also as a medium for communicating socially by knowing and understanding others' rituals.

Ritual Communication Model

Learning communication can simply be understood as communication that takes place during the learning process, both communication between teachers and students, students and students, as well as between individuals and all school members. When learning is not only understood in class, communication can take place more widely. It can happen in the prayer room, in the library, in the school yard, and even in the school environment.

In fact, Islamic Religious Education learning does not only occur in the classroom. Islamic Religious Education learning also requires practices that must be carried out, such as habituation of obligatory prayers, fasting, zakat, and several other religious rituals. At a certain moment, the teachers also felt the need to carry out direct practice on the subject of love for the Prophet with the need to celebrate the anniversary of the Prophet's Birthday. Therefore, learning communication has a broader meaning.

Ritual communication is an endeavor that involves the creation of cultural knowledge in various speech-centered human interaction practices. Ritual communication is artful, not only involving speech, which is formulaic and repetitive and therefore anticipated in the context of certain social interactions. Ritual communication has anticipated (but not always achieved) consequences. As a performance, it is subject to evaluation by participants according to standards defined in part by language ideology, local aesthetics, the context of use, and, especially, power relations among participants (Senft & Basso, 2009). Therefore, ritual communication presupposes the use of ritual terms in the communication process.

In the context of learning Islamic religious education, ritual communication is an inseparable part because ritual is the most important and main aspect of religious teaching and tradition, including in Islam. Rituals and traditions give meaning and structure to daily routines that make them special and create lasting memories (Scully & Howell, 2008). In Islamic learning, these rituals are spread from mandatory and sunnah rituals. Like it or not, students (Muslims) must know and practice obligatory rituals, and this requires learning.

This ritual communication regularly runs because of the relationship between Islam as a learning material and Islam as a daily practice. Therefore, Islamic religious learning is also related to learning religious rituals that must be carried out

daily. In this case, religious teachers also oversee and teach ritual practices through daily habituation processes, such as obligatory prayers, fasting, prayer, and others.

Communication Level of Islamic Religious Learning Rituals

The study of ritual communication in Islamic Religious Education learning takes the form of a gradual expansion of meaning. In this case, the researcher is interested in Luger's analysis of the level of ritual communication. According to him, there are four levels of ritual communication: Rituals in a Restricted Sense, Rituals in an Extended Sense, Ritualizations, and Routinization (Lüger, 1983). A restricted ritual is a form of ritual communication whose target is limited. This usually happens in certain religious institutions. In learning Islam in elementary schools, there are several rituals whose targets are limited, including the congregational midday prayer, dhuha prayer, fasting, and zakat. This ritual is actually part of the learning process of Islamic religious education, which is practiced and guided specifically by Islamic religious teachers. This communication occurs because there is a match between religious ethics and practices that must be carried out. To instill religious ethics in the form of religious ethics, the practice of religious rituals is an important part of Islamic Religious Education learning. Due to its limited nature, only Muslim students are allowed to take part in these activities.

Rituals in an Extended Sense is a ritual that is used as a social function. Therefore, it is not only carried out by adherents of the ritual but is communicated socially (Coyne & Mathers, 2011; Lüger, 1983; Sohi et al., 2018). There are several Muslim rituals whose functions are expanded, such as breaking the fast together, distributing *ta'jil*, commemorating the Prophet's Birthday, Is'ra 'Miraj, and *Syawalan*. The targets are not only internal Muslim teachers and students but also non-Muslim teachers and students. They are generally involved in committees without going any further than the ritual aspect. The involvement is more to reflect the spirit of togetherness and mutual tolerance among others.

Ritualizations move in public or have become a persuasive discourse. Ritualization is an effort to make certain aspects into rituals (Lüger, 1983; Wulf, 2011). What was originally considered not to be a specific ritual of religious tradition shifted to a ritual almost understood as an obligation, although previously, there was no obligation. In this case, the consequence of this ritualization is no longer a measure of reward and punishment but rather the pattern of social interaction in elementary schools. For example, shaking hands while standing when new students arrive at school is a form of ritualization. Although he is not tied to the rituals of each religion, religious teachers and Muslim and non-Muslim students, such

behavior is a must and becomes a mandatory ritual for all students from various religious and cultural backgrounds.

Routinization is an action that has been standardized and has become a routine within a specified time (Chae & Choi, 2019; Lüger, 1983; Tavory & Winchester, 2012). Internally, Muslim students are used to performing the dhuhā prayer ritual and the midday prayer, and this has become a daily routine. Externally, rituals in other forms, such as the birthday of the prophet, *halal bi halal*, and the slaughter of *qurban*, were originally rituals for Muslims but have become an annual school routine. Because it has become a routine, the implementation runs naturally and without any element of coercion.

Ritual Communication and Children's Multicultural Awareness

The function of ritual communication is to integrate people of certain ethnic cultures and representatives of others, participating in the ritual as spectators. Experts underline the humanistic and communicative characteristics of these rituals (Chistyakov & Chistyakova, 2020). Moreover, these ritual practices are not only one form of a particular religious tradition, but students witness many rituals, and they learn about tolerance and multiculturalism through the most basic part of religion, which is ritual.

The meaning in the context of ritual communication in learning is interesting to observe. *First*, that communication between teachers and students or students and students in the context of a multicultural school is not only a matter of learning interactions between them but as the meaning of generation, where they build a form of communication that does not offend others. There is a relationship between the multi-religious context and the context of the meaning of religion in the Islamic religious learning process. *Second*, that communication in the school environment forms a certain culture. They are formed and disciplined according to the school's vision and mission. They recognize symbols, rules, and values which contain meaning for teachers and students. Thus, communication is not a process of conveying but generating meaning from the symbols, rules, and values constructed together with the school community.

If viewed from the perspective of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the elementary school level is in the concrete operational stage. Children develop the ability to think systematically, but only when they can refer to concrete objects and activities (Crain, 2007, p.171). At this stage, elementary school children show an increased understanding of religion and religious beliefs. However, in line with concrete operational thinking that characterizes elementary school-aged children, thoughts about religion are also based on observable behaviors and activities, not on

thoughts, feelings, and motivations. Children understand different religious activities, but they have far less understanding of the different religious beliefs that underlie different activities.

CONCLUSION

Learning communication does take not only the form of teacher and student social interaction but also in the form of ritual communication. Communication of religious rituals concludes that religious rituals expressed in the context of multi-religious schools become learning tools about the meaning of tolerance and multiculturalism because they are not only intended as religious expressions but also as expressions of harmony and togetherness.

In the context of multi-religious schools, awareness of tolerance can be easily instilled because students witness and experience firsthand the development of concrete operational cognition. Ritual communication in the context of multi-religious schools does not mean mixing various religious rituals at the same time but extends its scope to rituals as a social function. In addition, the rituals of various religions can be a learning tool (GÜRdenfors, 2018) about togetherness, encounters and strengthening social relations.

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