

From everyday objects to Islamic *adab*: Teacher-guided semiotic mapping in a young-learner EFL classroom

Yuli Astutik^{1*}, Rahmania Sri Untari², Fitria Wulandari³, Abdurrosyid Abdurrosyid⁴

¹English Language Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

²Information Technology Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

³Teacher Professional Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia

⁴School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University, Australia

*) Corresponding author, email: yuliastutik@umsida.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Ordinary classroom objects are often used to make English words concrete, but less is known about how teachers connect those objects with locally meaningful moral practices. This qualitative single case study investigated teacher-guided semiotic mapping in a third-grade EFL classroom at an Islamic elementary school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. The case involved one teacher and twenty-five students observed across six lessons; five focal students and the teacher also participated in short interviews. Thematic analysis traced how objects, English labels, familiar actions, and Islamic *adab* were linked and classified students' responses according to who introduced or extended the meaning. The findings show a recurring three-move process: establishing an object-word relation, grounding the word in an everyday action, and framing that action through *adab-related* teacher discourse. Students named objects and described familiar functions, but the moral interpretations were usually teacher-initiated or teacher-prompted. Some students produced short bilingual extensions within the teacher's frame, whereas no clear episode demonstrated a fully independent learner-generated object-*adab* connection. The study contributes a process-based explanation of how ordinary realia becomes culturally and religiously situated through classroom interaction. Pedagogically, it suggests that values integration should begin with plausible object functions and gradually move from teacher explanation toward open prompts that give young learners greater interpretive space. The findings concern meaning-making processes rather than measured vocabulary gain or independent moral development.

Keywords: everyday realia; Islamic *adab*; material meaning making; semiotic mapping; teacher scaffolding

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INTRODUCTION

Everyday objects have long been used in English language teaching to connect unfamiliar words with visible and touchable referents. For young learners, a pen, chair, mirror, or lunchbox can provide an immediate point of reference for naming, describing, and performing simple actions (Berwald, 1987;

Khaidir & Harahap, 2024; Rahmayani, 2022). Grounded cognition research helps explain this pedagogical value: conceptual understanding is partly shaped by perceptual and action-related experience rather than by detached verbal definitions alone (Barsalou, 2008; Moku, 2022). When a teacher holds up a pen and students name it, touch it, or demonstrate writing, the word is anchored in a shared material event. Such concreteness is especially useful in primary EFL settings, where students have limited linguistic resources and may rely on gestures, objects, and their first language to participate. However, describing realia only as vocabulary support leaves a further question unanswered. Objects also enter classrooms that already have routines, values, identities, and expectations (Ahmadova, 2025; Handayani & Subakti, 2021). The same word, for example “pen,” can therefore become more than a referent for a noun: through interaction, it may be associated with writing carefully, seeking knowledge, or beginning an activity with *Bismillah*.

This question is important in values-based schools, where English lessons may be expected to support language learning and character education at the same time. Previous studies have documented Islamic-value integration through curricula. Textbooks, selected texts, teacher examples, and school routines (Irawan, 2020; Milal et al., 2020). This work establishes that English instruction is not culturally neutral and that teachers often adapt content to the moral expectations of their institutions. Nevertheless, less attention has been given to the moment-by-moment role of material objects in this integration. The omission matters theoretically because a chair, mirror, clock, or pen does not carry one religious meaning by itself. It has practical functions and culturally available associations, but a particular moral interpretation becomes relevant only when classroom participants select, express, and respond to it. The analytical focus must therefore shift from asking what a real object inherently means to examining what teachers and students do with the object, the English word, and the associated classroom routine (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005).

Social semiotics provides a useful way to examine this process because it treats objects, words, gestures, spatial arrangements, and actions as resources whose meanings are shaped through social use (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005). A teacher’s question, the learner’s gaze, the act of holding an object, an English label, and an Indonesian or Arabic expression may work together in a single meaning-making sequence. Holliday’s (1999) small-cultures perspective further suggests that culture is produced in particular groups through recurring practices rather than imported as a fixed national package. An Islamic primary classroom can thus be examined as a local small culture in which familiar routines such as sitting politely, caring for belongings, seeking knowledge, or saying *Bismillah* provide shared interpretive resources. Combining these perspectives permits a close analysis of how ordinary objects become locally meaningful without claiming that an object is inherently Islamic or that a brief classroom answer proves a stable moral disposition.

In this study, Islamically situated everyday realia refers to ordinary classroom or household objects whose relevance to Islamic *adab* is constructed through teacher-guided talk, action, and locally familiar routines. The modifier Islamically describes a classroom process, not a permanent property of the object. A mirror remains a mirror, and a pen remains a pen; each becomes Islamically situated only when participants connect its label and use with a recognizable form of conduct. *Adab* is used here in a modest pedagogical sense: appropriate conduct, respectful habits, and morally guided everyday action. This definition deliberately limits the claim. The study does not assess religious knowledge, internal belief, moral development, or the long-term enactment of values outside the observed lessons. It investigates how such meanings were proposed and taken up in classroom discourse.

The empirical gap is therefore not whether realia can make vocabulary visible or whether Islamic values can be incorporated into English teaching. Rather, the gap concerns the interactional process connecting these two domains: how a teacher moves from an everyday object and its English label to an *adab*-related interpretation, and how students participate in constructing that meaning. Addressing this gap provides a process-oriented account of material meaning-making in young-learner EFL. It also enables a more careful interpretation of students’ participation by distinguishing repetition, prompted uptake, prompted extension, and independently initiated meaning. Accordingly, the present

study investigates how interpretive agencies are distributed during object-based classroom exchanges. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did teacher-guided semiotic mapping connect everyday objects, English words, and Islamic *adab* in a young learner EFL classroom?
2. How did students respond to teacher-initiated, teacher-prompted, and student-initiated meanings during these interactions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Everyday realia as material resources

Realia bring objects from everyday life into language instruction, allowing learners to connect linguistic forms with visible referents, familiar actions, and concrete situations (Astutik et al., 2026; Moku, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2017). This concreteness is particularly relevant to young EFL learners, whose limited linguistic resources may make lengthy verbal explanations difficult to follow. An object can establish joint attention and enable learners to respond by looking, pointing, touching, demonstrating an action, or producing a short expression (Bara & Kaminski, 2019; Alonso, 2019; Rahmayani, 2022). Research on teaching English to young learners similarly indicates that gestures, physical responses, and authentic materials can support children's participation before they are ready to produce extended oral language (Gobert, 2018; Riaz et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2017).

Grounded cognition provides a theoretical explanation for this pedagogical role. Conceptual processing draws partly on perceptual and motor experience; consequently, the meaning of "pen" can be supported through seeing, holding, and using a pen rather than through verbal definition alone (Barsalou, 2008). Studies of material meaning-making further show that physical objects work alongside speech and gesture as resources for constructing meaning (Tang, 2024; Tang et al., 2022). An object is therefore not merely an illustration added to verbal instruction. Its visibility, physical properties, and possibilities for action contribute to how learners understand the classroom activity.

Nevertheless, the presence of an object should not be treated as an instructional outcome in itself. Learners may attend to an object and repeat its English label without understanding the wider meaning proposed by the teacher. Similarly, they may reproduce a teacher-provided value without independently constructing the relationship between the object and that value. A vocabulary-oriented account can therefore explain whether learners recognize or name an object, but it may overlook how classroom discourse frames the object's use as appropriate, respectful, or morally meaningful.

This distinction is central to the present study. Material grounding and moral framing are related but analytically separate processes. Material grounding concerns how an English label becomes connected with a perceptible referent and a familiar action. Moral framing concerns how that action is subsequently interpreted through a locally valued norm. Separating these processes prevents religious meaning from being attributed to the object itself. It also permits a more cautious interpretation of learner participation: naming a mirror or demonstrating writing represents linguistic and functional participation, whereas connecting the action with *adab* requires an additional interpretive move.

Social semiotics and classroom small cultures

Social semiotics views meaning as socially constructed through the selection and combination of available semiotic resources rather than carried unchanged by individual words or objects (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005). From this perspective, speech, gesture, gaze, bodily action, and material objects can work together in a single meaning-making event. Recent research on physical objects as a material mode similarly demonstrates that objects provide particular affordances but acquire their situated meanings through their coordination with talk and embodied action (Tang, 2024; Tang et al., 2022). A pen, for example, affords holding and writing more plausibly than sitting or eating. However, the movement from writing to seeking knowledge or beginning an activity with *Bismillah* still requires discursive and cultural framing. The material properties of the pen constrain what actions are plausible, but they do not determine the moral interpretation selected in the lesson. Meaning is consequently

distributed across the object, its familiar function, the teacher's question, the demonstrated action, and participants' cultural knowledge.

This material-semiotic perspective is important because much research on the integration of values into English teaching concentrates on curricula, textbooks, lesson plans, and selected instructional content (Alfian et al., 2022; Irawan, 2020; Milal et al., 2020). Those studies explain where values may be included, but they provide less detail about how a teacher constructs a value-related meaning through interaction with an ordinary classroom object. Examining physical objects as semiotic resources therefore extends values-integration research from planned content to the moment-by-moment production of classroom meaning.

Holliday's (1999) small cultures perspective complements this interactional view by understanding culture as something produced within particular social groupings and recurring activities. A faith-based classroom can thus be examined as a small culture shaped by institutional aims, shared routines, familiar expressions, and expectations about conduct. Terms such as *adab*, *wajib*, *ilmu*, and *Bismillah* may already be familiar to learners, but their relevance to a particular English word or object is organized within the classroom exchange.

This position avoids portraying Muslim learners or Islamic schools as culturally uniform. It also prevents an institutionally preferred response from being presented as a universal Islamic interpretation. The study therefore examines meanings made locally relevant by the teacher and students rather than assuming that the same object-*adab* connections would necessarily be produced in every Islamic classroom.

Islamic adab in English language teaching

Values-based English teaching seeks to make language education responsive to learners' moral, religious, and institutional contexts. Research in Indonesian Islamic educational settings shows that Islamic values may be incorporated through curriculum content, teaching materials, lesson plans, classroom routines, teacher explanations, and learning activities (Alfian et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2024; Irawan, 2020; Milal et al., 2020). However, these studies also indicate that teachers may find it difficult to translate a general commitment to Islamic values into coherent classroom practices. Alfian et al. (2022), for example, identified a gap between teachers' support for values integration and its representation in their instructional planning.

The present study observes a narrower mechanism than curriculum or materials-level integration: the mapping of an object's familiar use onto an *adab*-related interpretation. This mechanism is pedagogically attractive because ordinary objects are readily available and can support language and value-related discussion within the same activity. Nevertheless, availability does not guarantee coherence. If an intended value is too distant from an object's recognizable function, the association may appear imposed, and students may merely attempt to provide the answer expected by the teacher. A plausible mapping should consequently preserve a traceable relationship among the object, its ordinary use, the classroom situation, and the intended conduct.

Teacher guidance is particularly important when such activities involve young EFL learners. Children may understand a familiar practice without possessing sufficient English to explain it abstractly. Short bilingual responses, gestures, and physical demonstrations can therefore function as legitimate resources for classroom participation (Yusuf et al., 2017). Teacher prompts can also reduce the linguistic and conceptual demands of connecting an object, an English word, and an abstract value.

However, scaffolded participation should not be equated with independent interpretation. Repeating a teacher-provided expression, completing an unfinished statement, and proposing a new association represent different levels of learner contribution. A correct answer following a strongly leading question demonstrates uptake of the teacher's frame, but it does not necessarily demonstrate that the learner independently produced or internalized the moral interpretation. A careful analysis must therefore recognize children's brief and bilingual participation without converting it into evidence of autonomous moral reasoning.

Conceptual and analytical framework

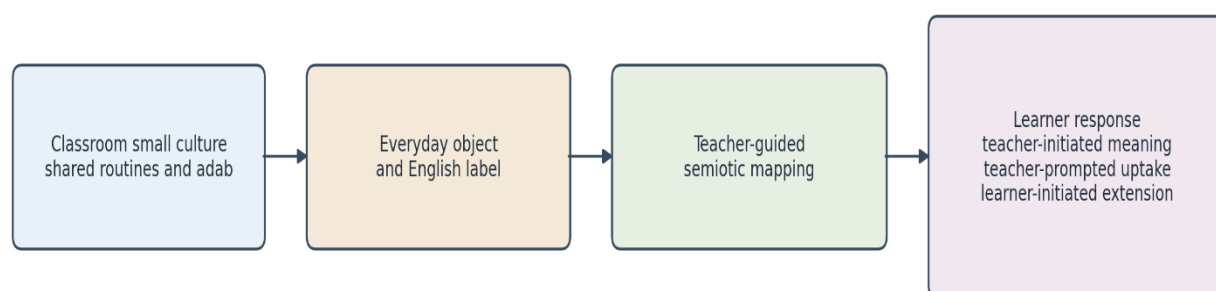
Drawing on grounded cognition, social semiotics, and the small cultures perspective, the analytical framework follows a linked but non-linear sequence. First, the classroom small culture provides familiar routines, expressions, and expectations. Second, an everyday object is made salient and connected with an English label. Third, participants relate the word to an ordinary action or function. Fourth, teacher-guided discourse frames that action through *adab*. Finally, student responses are classified according to the source of the interpretive contribution: teacher-initiated, teacher-prompted, or student-initiated.

The sequence is not proposed as a developmental scale and need not be completed in every classroom episode. Instead, it is used to identify the point at which meaning moves from material reference to familiar function and from function to moral interpretation. It also helps distinguish between the material contribution of the object and the discursive contribution of the teacher. The observable outcomes are therefore the form of the semiotic mapping and the level of learner participation, not vocabulary gain, internalized character, or the transfer of conduct beyond the classroom.

In practical terms, the framework guided the identification and comparison of object-centered classroom episodes. It helped trace how each interaction moved from an object and English label to a familiar action and an *adab*-related interpretation, while also identifying who introduced or extended the meaning.

Figure 1

Conceptual and Analytical Framework for Teacher-Guided Semiotic Mapping



As illustrated in [Figure 1](#), the framework does not assume that learners automatically progress toward independent moral interpretation. The teacher may provide both the English label and the value, learners may complete an expected expression, or a learner may add a short association within an interpretive frame already introduced by the teacher. Although all these responses constitute classroom participation, they represent different levels of interpretive agency. This distinction allows children's short and bilingual responses to be recognized as meaningful situated uptake without presenting them as evidence of internalized character or stable moral reasoning.

METHOD

Research design

The study used a qualitative single case design to examine a bounded classroom process in its natural setting ([Tisdell et al., 2025](#)). The main objective was to explain how material, linguistic, and *adab*-related meanings were connected and how interpretive work was distributed between teacher and students. The case was bound by one class, one teacher, six lessons, and the classroom use of familiar objects. The unit of analysis was the interactional episode in which an object, English label, everyday function, and value-related meaning were connected. Individual vocabulary achievement was not the unit of analysis, and no causal comparison between instructional conditions was attempted in this article.

Research setting and participants

The study was conducted in a third-grade EFL classroom at one of the Islamic elementary schools in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. The case involved one English teacher and twenty-five students aged 8–9 years. English was a foreign language for the students, and classroom interaction commonly included short English expressions alongside Indonesian and familiar Arabic religious terms. This multilingual interaction was treated as a natural feature of the classroom and enabled the students to express meaning that exceeded their available English vocabulary.

All students participated in the observed classroom activities. Five focal students, identified as FS1-FS5, were purposively selected for short follow-up interviews because the observation notes showed different forms of verbal participation and responses to the objects. The interviews were not intended to represent the opinions of the whole class. Instead, they helped clarify how the focal students remembered selected object *adab* connections and whether those meanings had been introduced by the teacher, developed through a classroom prompt, or added by the students. The teacher was interviewed because she selected the objects, planned the classroom activities, and guided the object word *adab* connections.

Data collection

Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations, short interviews with five focal students, and one teacher interview. During the observations, field notes documented the objects used, their English labels, related actions, teacher prompts, *adab*-related explanations, and learners' verbal or embodied responses. When the exact spoken wording was not available, the interaction was recorded as an observation note reconstruction rather than presented as a verbatim transcript.

The focal student interviews used short and concrete questions about selected objects and classroom activities. The students were asked what an object was used for, what they remembered from the activity, and how its connection with *adab* had been explained. They could respond in Indonesian, English, or a combination of languages. The teacher interview explored the selection of objects, the planning of object *adab* connections, and the challenges encountered when guiding the activities. The interviews were used to clarify the observed classroom interactions, not to assess vocabulary retention or moral development.

Procedure

During preparation, the research team and teacher selected familiar classroom or household objects and considered possible links among each English label, the object's ordinary use, and an aspect of Islamic *adab*. Selection prioritized objects that learners could recognize and actions that could be demonstrated. During implementation, the teacher first used the objects within vocabulary activities and then employed questions, comments, or modeled phrases to extend selected exchanges toward conduct or values. The researchers observed rather than directing the interaction. After the observations, focal interviews were conducted individually in a child-friendly format, followed by the teacher interview.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed thematically through familiarization, initial coding, category development, review, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Observation notes and interview records were first read repeatedly to identify complete object-centered episodes. First-cycle codes remained close to observable interaction, including object displayed, object named, function stated, action demonstrated, teacher supplied value, student completed expected value, student repeated association, and student added association. The codes were then organized along two analytical dimensions derived from the research questions. The first traced the mapping move: object-word, word-action, or action-*adab*. The second identified the source and level of the response: teacher-initiated, teacher-prompted uptake, teacher-prompted extension, or student-initiated meaning. A response was coded as student-initiated only when the learner introduced an object-*adab* connection without an immediately

preceding teacher explanation or leading question. Borderline instances were coded conservatively as prompted when the teacher had already supplied the interpretive frame.

Table 1

Example of the Revised Analytical Coding Process

Data extract or event	Initial code	Mapping move	Response level
Teacher holds a pen and asks, 'What is this?'	Object named	Object–word	Teacher-initiated
Student answers, 'Pen for writing.'	Function stated	Word–action	Teacher-prompted uptake
Teacher links the pen with seeking knowledge	Teacher supplies <i>adab</i>	Action– <i>adab</i>	Teacher-initiated
Student adds, 'I write Bismillah with pen.'	Prompted extension	Action– <i>adab</i>	Teacher-prompted extension
Student recalls that the teacher connected chair with sitting politely	Reproduced teacher meaning	Object– <i>adab</i>	Teacher-taught meaning recalled

Trustworthiness and ethics

Credibility was supported by comparing classroom observations with the five focal-student accounts and the teacher interview. The purpose of this comparison was not to make all sources agree, but to check whether an interpretation attributed too much initiative to students. Claims were reviewed across sessions and qualified whenever a response followed a strong prompt. Dated field notes, interview records, coding tables, and successive category definitions formed an audit trail. The analysis also attended to limiting and negative evidence, particularly associations that remained teacher-controlled and the absence of clearly student-initiated moral interpretation. Reflexively, the researchers recognized that familiarity with values-based ELT could encourage a favorable reading of integration. Coding who introduced each meaning and reporting teacher-led episodes explicitly were used to counter that tendency. Institutional permission and informed consent were obtained under the approved study procedures. Pseudonyms were used, identifying school details were minimized, and participation in interviews was voluntary and unrelated to grades.

FINDINGS

RQ1: Building object -word-adab connections

Across the six sessions, the observed mappings generally developed through three linked moves: establishing an object-word relation, grounding the word in a familiar action, and connecting the action with *adab*. These moves were analytical patterns rather than a fixed teaching script. An exchange could pause after naming, return to the object after an explanation, or reach the *adab* connection only through a teacher prompt. The distinction matters because visible participation at the first two moves did not necessarily mean that students independently produced the final interpretation.

Naming the object and grounding the word

The first move established a visible relation between an English word and its referent. In a session using mirrors, the field note recorded students looking at and touching the mirror while repeating its English label. Their gaze and touch converged on the displayed item, so the spoken word, physical object, and embodied attention occurred within the same event. At this stage, the object organized joint attention and reduced the need for an extended verbal definition. Observation notes excerpt, Session 2:

Field note: *"The teacher placed a mirror on each group's table. Several learners touched the frame or looked at their reflections while repeating 'mirror'".*

This initial move is analytically important because it separates material reference from later moral framing. Looking at or touching the mirror supported identification of the referent, but those

actions did not themselves supply an Islamic interpretation. The mirror became Islamically situated only when subsequent classroom discourse connected its familiar use with a locally recognized routine or form of *adab*. Thus, material salience created an entry point for meaning, while teacher-student interaction selected the moral relevance.

Relating the word to a familiar action

The second move connected the English label with what students could do with the object. In the “pen” episode, the teacher’s identification question elicited both the noun and its everyday function. The response was short and linguistically simple, but it performed more meaning-making work than repetition because the learner related the label to an action schema already familiar from daily classroom life. Observation-note reconstruction, Session 4:

Teacher : *“What is this?” (The teacher was holding a pen.)*

Student 1 : *“Pen, Ust (means ustadzah/ teacher). Pen for writing.” (Short bilingual classroom response.)*

The student’s answer extended the label with a familiar action. The mixed form ‘Pen for writing’ was treated as meaningful classroom participation rather than corrected into a longer sentence, because its analytical relevance lay in the relation it established. At this point, however, the meaning remained functional: a pen was something used for writing. No *adab*-related interpretation had yet been voiced.

Connecting the action with adab

The third move was usually introduced by the teacher. In the same episode, the teacher shifted the frame from the physical function of writing to the culturally valued practice of seeking knowledge. The question invited students to complete a familiar proposition rather than construct an unrestricted interpretation. Observation notes reconstruction, Session 4:

Teacher : *“In Islam, we use the pen to write ilmu. Seeking knowledge is ...?” (Teacher introduced value connection.)*

Student 2 : *“Wajib ... must ... wajib.” (Obligatory ... must ... obligatory.)*

Student 1 : *“I write Bismillah with pen.” (A short extension after the teacher’s prompt.)*

The *adab*-related meaning did not arise from the pen itself. It was produced through the teacher’s framing of writing as part of seeking knowledge. Student 2 supplied the expected term after the teacher’s unfinished question, which was coded as prompted uptake. Student 1’s statement about writing *Bismillah* was added as related classroom practice and was coded as a prompted extension. The extension showed that the student could contribute an association beyond the requested word, but the interpretive field had already been established by the teacher. The episode therefore demonstrates active yet scaffolded participation rather than independent discovery of the object-*adab* relation.

Selecting plausible connections

The teacher interview confirmed that constructing the final move required deliberate pedagogical judgment. The challenge was not finding a religious term for every object, but deciding whether the object’s ordinary use offered a credible bridge to a locally meaningful practice.

Teacher : *“I had to think carefully: which Islamic value can I connect to this object so it makes sense?”*

This reflection supports the social semiotic interpretation that object *adab* relations were selected and designed pedagogically. The teacher recognized the risk of forcing an association, which implies that the resource constrained but did not determine the available interpretation. Plausibility depended

on whether students could follow the movement from object to function and from function to conduct.

RQ2: Level of student response

Student responses differed mainly in how much of the interpretive relation had already been supplied by the teacher. The data contained teacher-initiated meanings, teacher-prompted uptake, and short prompted extensions. These categories describe the source of the connection rather than the quality of a child's character or motivation. No episode met the study's stricter criterion for student-initiated object *adab* meaning.

Teacher-initiated meanings

In teacher-initiated episodes, the teacher named the value or supplied the connection before students responded. Students commonly repeated a term, agreed, or gave the brief expected completion. Such responses showed attention to and participation in the classroom activity. They also indicated that students could follow the teacher's proposed association at the level required by the exchange. Nevertheless, because the central relation was already available, these turns cannot establish that students independently constructed or endorsed it beyond the immediate lesson.

Teacher prompted uptake and extension

The "pen" episode illustrates the difference between prompted uptake and prompted extension. The teacher supplied the relation between writing and seeking knowledge, and Student 2 completed the expected statement with *wajib*. Student 1 then added *Bismillah*, which was not the exact completion requested and therefore contributed to a small new association. Even so, the contribution followed a value-oriented prompt and remained within the teacher's frame. Coding it as a prompted extension recognizes the student's contribution without treating the exchange as fully student-initiated. A focal-student interview provided a similar pattern for chairs. The student remembered that the teacher had connected the object with sitting politely.

FS3 : "The teacher said that a chair is not only for sitting; there should also be *adab*. Sit nicely".

The response showed that the student remembered and could reproduce the teacher-taught association between chair and polite conduct. Its bilingual form was natural for a short interview with a young EFL learner and should not be rewritten as an adult-like abstract explanation. More importantly, the student explicitly attributed the association to the teacher. The excerpt therefore corroborated classroom uptake while also locating the origin of the moral framing outside the student.

Limited evidence of student-initiated meaning

A student-initiated response was defined as an object-*adab* connection introduced without a preceding teacher explanation or leading question. No classroom or interview excerpt clearly met this criterion. Students occasionally added short phrases, but the additions occurred within an interpretive frame already established by the teacher. This absence is not treated as failure. Given the students' age and limited English, independent verbal explanation may require more time, familiar examples, and less directive questioning. Analytically, however, reporting the absence prevents prompted agreement from being presented as autonomous meaning-making.

Overall, teacher-guided semiotic mapping operated as a layered classroom process rather than as a property of the teaching objects. Everyday objects first supported joint reference and familiar action. *Adab* became relevant when discourse selected a moral interpretation of that action. Students participated most visibly by naming, describing familiar functions, completing expected associations, and occasionally adding a short association within the teacher's frame. The evidence supports situated uptake and prompts extension, but not a claim of independently generated moral interpretation.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated how teacher-guided semiotic mapping connected everyday objects, English words, and Islamic *adab*, as well as how students participated in constructing those connections. The findings indicate that the integration did not occur through a direct movement from an isolated English noun to an abstract moral statement. Instead, an object's familiar function served as an interpretive bridge. Object-word identification established a shared referent, word-action grounding activated familiar practical knowledge, and action-*adab* framing connected that knowledge with a locally valued form of conduct. This three-move process is consistent with research showing that physical objects contribute to classroom meaning-making when they are coordinated with speech, gesture, action, and participants' prior knowledge (Tang, 2024; Tang et al., 2022). The process also explains why some mappings were more plausible than others: a value-related interpretation was easier to follow when it remained closely connected with an action that the students already recognized.

The first finding supports the social-semiotic view that material resources provide meaning potentials rather than fixed messages (Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005). In the 'mirror' episode, the object aligned the learners' gaze, touch, and repetition of the English label. In the 'pen' episode, the familiar affordance of writing supported a functional explanation. However, neither the mirror nor the pen automatically communicated *adab*. The teacher's questions and the classroom's shared cultural knowledge made particular interpretations such as seeking knowledge or beginning with *Bismillah* relevant to the interaction. This finding corresponds with Tang et al.'s (2022) argument that physical objects operate as a material mode whose meanings emerge through coordination with speech and gesture. Materiality and discourse therefore performed complementary functions: the object grounded attention and made certain actions plausible, whereas classroom talk selected and valued their moral significance.

This interpretation extends vocabulary-oriented accounts of realia. Previous research has primarily emphasized the value of realia and other authentic materials for establishing concrete reference, contextualizing vocabulary, and supporting young learners' physical and verbal participation (Barsalou, 2008; Moku, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2017). The present findings show that an object can support an additional layer of socially situated meaning. However, this extension requires an important qualification. The additional meaning did not originate from the physical object alone; it was constructed through the interaction among the object, its familiar use, teacher discourse, and locally available cultural resources. This distinction prevents the material object from being treated as though it inherently possessed an Islamic identity.

The second finding concerns the distribution of interpretive agencies. Most action-*adab* connections were teacher-initiated or teacher-prompted, whereas students' contributions mainly involved brief uptake and occasional extensions. This pattern can be understood in relation to the students' age and the combined linguistic and conceptual demands of the activity. The students were expected to identify an object, describe its function, and connect that function with an abstract norm while using a language they were still learning. Research with young EFL learners has similarly shown that children often demonstrate understanding through short verbal responses, gestures, imitation, and physical actions rather than through extended explanations (Yusuf et al., 2017). Teacher guidance therefore reduced the task's linguistic and conceptual demands and enabled participation that might not have occurred through English alone.

The students' use of English, Indonesian, and familiar Arabic religious expressions should consequently be understood as a meaning-making resource rather than as deficient English. A response such as *wajib ... must ... wajib* allowed a student to connect a familiar religious concept with the English expression available in the lesson. Nevertheless, accepting bilingual participation does not mean overstating what the response demonstrates. Completing an expected word after a leading prompt indicates recognition and uptake of the teacher's interpretive frame. It does not, by itself, demonstrate that the student independently generated or internalized the moral meaning. The distinction among repetition, prompted uptake, prompted extension, and learner initiation is therefore necessary for interpreting children's brief classroom responses proportionately.

The predominance of teacher-guided meanings reveals a pedagogical tension rather than simply a limitation. Scaffolding enables young learners to participate in tasks that would be difficult to complete independently, but effective scaffolding should respond to student contributions and gradually create opportunities for greater responsibility (Bakker et al., 2015; Li & Zou, 2021). In the present case, teacher modeling and partial prompts made the object-*adab* connection accessible. At the same time, strongly leading questions reduced the range of meanings that students could propose. This finding is consistent with Li and Zou's (2021) observation that more open-ended primary EFL activities provide greater opportunities for interactional scaffolding and student participation.

From Holliday's (1999) small-cultures perspective, teacher-led responses also illustrate how an established classroom norm is reproduced through recurring expressions and expectations. Terms such as *adab*, *ilmu*, *wajib*, and *Bismillah* were already recognizable within the classroom's local culture. The teacher drew on these resources to frame preferred interpretations, and students displayed their recognition through short responses. However, recognition of a shared classroom norm is not identical to independent reasoning about that norm. The absence of clearly student-initiated mappings may therefore reflect not only the student's developmental and linguistic readiness but also the type of interactional opportunity made available by the teacher. Scaffolding should not simply be removed; rather, it can be gradually shifted from explicit modeling to partial prompts, open questions, and student-proposed examples.

The findings also extend previous research on Islamic-value integration in English teaching. Existing studies have shown that Islamic values may be incorporated through curricula, teaching materials, lesson plans, selected texts, classroom routines, and teacher explanations (Alfian et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2024; Irawan, 2020; Milal et al., 2020). However, these studies have generally examined whether and where Islamic values are included. The present study adds a micro-level explanation of how such integration is accomplished during classroom interaction. An *adab*-related meaning entered the lesson when the teacher connected an object's familiar function with an appropriate form of conduct and invited students to respond to that connection.

This interactional account is important because the inclusion of a value in a curriculum or lesson plan does not guarantee that students will find its connection with the language activity meaningful. Alfian et al. (2022), for example, found that teachers' stated support for Islamic-value integration was not always reflected clearly in their lesson planning and classroom preparation. The teacher's concern in the present study about finding connections that "make sense" points to a similar issue at the interactional level. Effective integration requires pedagogical judgment: the selected value should remain plausibly related to the object's ordinary function and the students' familiar experience. Otherwise, students may simply search for the answer expected by the teacher.

The study therefore makes a deliberately bounded contribution to research on values based English teaching. It demonstrates how an Islamic value was made relevant and discussable within an object-based English activity, but it does not establish that the value became a lasting personal disposition. Classroom agreement, successful completion of a prompt, remembered wording, and moral development represent different levels of evidence. Maintaining this distinction is particularly important in research involving children, whose brief responses can easily be interpreted beyond what the data supports.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that teachers should begin with the object's recognizable function before introducing an *adab*-related interpretation. A sequence of increasingly open questions such as "what is this?", "what do we do with it?", "how should we use it?", and "why is that a good way?" can move from material identification toward functional and moral interpretation. Research on primary school EFL scaffolding suggests that combining explicit and implicit support and using more open-ended activities can increase opportunities for student participation and the gradual transfer of responsibility (Li & Zou, 2021). In the present context, teachers can also accept brief bilingual responses and subsequently recast the central idea in simple English.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the construct of Islamically situated everyday realia as a relational classroom accomplishment. The construct brings together material grounding, social

semiotic meaning making, classroom small culture, and the distribution of interpretative agency. Its central claim is that cultural and religious meaning is located neither wholly in the object nor solely in a curriculum statement. Instead, it emerges through an interactional relationship among objects' affordances, familiar action, teacher discourse, and shared classroom practices (Holliday, 1999; Kress, 2010; Tang, 2024; van Leeuwen, 2005). This process-oriented understanding may also inform research in other values-based educational settings, provided that researchers examine locally relevant meanings rather than treating cultural associations as inherent properties of objects.

Several limitations define the scope of these interpretations. The study involved one teacher, one class, six sessions, and five focal-student interviews. The patterns should therefore be understood as an analytical account of a bounded classroom case rather than as representative of all Islamic elementary schools. Classroom exchanges were documented mainly through field notes; when verbatim audio records were unavailable, the reported interactions were presented as observation note reconstructions. Consequently, the analysis could not examine features such as intonation, overlapping speech, pauses, or moment-by-moment changes in gaze and gesture. The study also did not assess vocabulary gain, the durability of students' remembered meanings, moral development, or the transfer of conduct beyond the observed lessons.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that everyday objects became Islamically situated when teacher-guided interaction connected an English label with a familiar action and then interpreted that action through Islamic *adab*. Students participated at the concrete and functional levels and could take up or briefly extend teacher-framed meanings, but the available evidence did not show an independently initiated object-*adab* interpretation. The main theoretical contribution is a process-based account of realia as relational meaning-making resources rather than objects that inherently contain linguistic or moral messages. The practical contribution is a teachable sequence that begins with plausible everyday functions and gradually opens space for children's own explanations. Teachers should therefore use fewer, coherent object-value connections, accept short bilingual responses, and move progressively from modeling to open prompts. Therefore, further research should document interaction audiovisually, observe students over a longer period, and compare prompting strategies and classroom contexts to determine when children begin to propose and justify such meanings more independently.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

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About the authors

Yuli Astutik is a senior lecturer in the English Language Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Her research interests include teaching English to young learners, technology-enhanced language learning, instructional design, realia, and the use of digital and immersive technologies in English language education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7993-0563>, email: yuliastutik@umsida.ac.id.

Rahmania Sri Untari is affiliated with the Information Technology Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Her academic and research interests include educational technology, digital learning media, instructional technology, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9452-8604>, email: rahmania.sriuntari@umsida.ac.id

Fitria Wulandari is affiliated with the Teacher Professional Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Her academic interests include teacher education, professional learning, instructional practice, and the development of effective learning activities. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2310-2874>, email: fitriawulandari1@umsida.ac.id

Abdurrosyid Abdurrosyid is affiliated with the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University, Australia. His academic interests include language education, linguistics, culture, and language-related classroom research. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1193-1105>, email: abdurrosyid13@monash.edu