

## **ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI, MUSTANSIR MIR, AND JOSEPH STORY: MAKING USE OF THE QUR'AN IN LEARNING LITERARY APPRECIATION IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM**

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### **Abstract**

The important role of religion in human life is undoubted reality. Many religions that were born hundreds or even thousands of years ago are still recognized for their existence today. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are the three major religions whose followers have had a major influence on the development of human civilization. In the holy books of these three religions there is a story about the Prophet Joseph. In the Islamic holy book, the story of the Prophet Joseph is said to be the best story. The aim of this research is to find out what is special about the Holy Qur'an, the English Al-Qur'an translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, so that it is suitable for bridging English Language Education study program students with the Story of Prophet Joseph, and what Mustansir Mir's findings which are useful for the subject of Literary Appreciation. This research is qualitative research using the records keeping method by utilizing information technology or internet networks. The results of this research are that the Holy Qur'an can be used in Literary Appreciation learning because of the ease of obtaining it and the quality of the translation. It was also found that the world-class scholar who researched the story of the Prophet Joseph was Mustansir Mir, an academician from Pakistan who taught at several well-known universities in the United States. In studying the story of the Prophet Joseph, this scholar found three main literary devices in Surah Joseph, i.e. plot, themes, and characters. Thus, the story of the Prophet Joseph can be included as an additional material in Literary Appreciation lectures in the English education study program by utilizing the works of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Mustansir Mir. This additional material is one of the special characteristics of Muhammadiyah Higher Education.

Kata kunci: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Mustansir Mir, Joseph Story, literary appreciation

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Researchers as academicians at Purworejo Muhammadiyah University need to look more deeply at the story of the Prophet Joseph. There are at least three reasons why this research needs to be carried out. Firstly, the story of the Prophet Joseph has an important position in the major religions in the world, i.e. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Secondly, this story, in the Islamic holy book, has been translated into English. Finally, this story has been researched by world-class academician who teach at some universities in the United States.

In English Education study program there are three subjects that are closely related to literature, i.e. Literary Appreciation, Research in Literature, and Seminar on Literature. Thus, it is expected that the findings of this research can enrich or become an additional material for those three courses. In this research, the researcher will discuss what is special about the Holy Qur'an, the English Al-Qur'an translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, so that it enables to bridge English Education study program students to understand the story of Joseph in the Al-Qur'an and Mustansir Mir's findings for Literary Appreciation learning.

The story of the Prophet Joseph has a special position in the holy books of the world's major religions, i.e. the Torah, Gospel, and Al-Qur'an. Regarding the specialty of this story, Ramey [14] said that the literary genius of The Joseph Narrative in its depth and beauty has still not been completely recognized by biblical scholars. In the Qur'an, this story is mentioned as the best story. Mustansir Mir [10] states that for its sheer readability, the Qur'anic story of Joseph, told in S. 12, is perhaps overlooked in the whole of the Qur'an. He further states that the less than one hundred verses of the narrative telescope many years, present an amazing variety of scenes and characters in a tightly-knit plot, and offer a dramatic illustration of some of the fundamental themes of the Qur'an.

It was further explained that the story of Joseph is the best story in terms of style, content, and purpose. [7]. Indeed, the story of Joseph is not the only story in the Qur'an that is explained in detail, but it is the only story of Joseph that is told in a dedicated context. In this case, [4] states that moreover, even though some of the stories could be seen as reported in detail (e.g. Moses and Mary and Jesus), all of them are not present in dedicated contexts, except for Joseph's story in Q. 12.

In terms of literary knowledge regarding the Joseph Story in the Bible, it is explained that this story is the best story that has been found so far. [14] states that the story of Joseph has been praised as a treasure of world literature. He further stated that neither Egypt nor Babylon can offer anything even remotely comparable. Not only in the Bible, in the Qur'an it is stated that this story is the best. The story of Joseph can thus be proposed as a reference for appreciation of world prose literary works.

World literary works written in the form of prose are presented in the English Education study program. As a study program in a university, the characteristics that differentiate it from the same study program in different universities need to be realized. In such a study program at Purworejo Muhammadiyah University, Joseph Story is expected to be an additional material in the Literary Appreciation subject. As a consequence, it is necessary to utilize the work of two world-class Muslim scholars, i.e. Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Mustansir Mir. Abdullah Yusuf Ali has translated the Qur'an into English and his work can be accessed via the internet by downloading it free of charge. Meanwhile, Mustansir Mir has written an article on the topic of the story of Joseph in the Qur'an and its relationship with literature.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This research belongs to qualitative research. The method used is called keeping records. This method will use coding as an analytical tool. Data is obtained from articles or writings that can be accessed using the internet network. With the keywords Prophet Joseph and Joseph Story, texts about the story of the Prophet Joseph were collected. From the collected texts, answers of the research questions are found.

Regarding this method, [15] states that ... qualitative researchers find much meaning coming from their own experience, as well as experience with people they interview, and as learned about from documents. Related to coding, he said that coding is sorting all data sets according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study. Regarding the role of a researcher, he stated that the most valuable instrument for qualitative research is the researcher—experiencing an event or listening to a person with special experience or browsing through records. Furthermore, he said that most of the time, the research question is the compass point more than a standardized procedure. Meanwhile, in line with validity, [9] states that there is also the issue of what I will call secondary descriptive validity: the validity of accounts of things that could in principle be observed, but that were inferred from other data.

## **3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

After reading intensively both Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work on Surah Joseph and Mustansir Mir's work of the Joseph Story, the Joseph Story can be applied in Literary Appreciation subject. The researcher went through several stages. Firstly, read Sura Joseph in English. Secondly, read Mustansir Mir's research on Surah Joseph. Thirdly, read literature on the topic of Surah Joseph. Finally, code the parts that can answer the first and second research questions. The answer to the research question is explained in several sub-chapters, i.e. the Holy Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, an early scholar who studied Joseph Story, Mustansir Mir's investigation of Joseph Story, and Literary Appreciation learning in the English Education study program.

### **3.1 Al-Qur'an Translated in English by Abdullah Yusuf Ali**

The Al-Qur'an in Arabic can quickly spread throughout the world and its contents can be understood because it is translated into English. [12] said that English is the dominant language of the world today and so many people learn the message of the Qur'an, Muslims and non-Muslims, are learning the message of the Qur'an through its English translations. He also stated that the English translations of the Noble Quran have exposed the message of the Noble Quran to many people among the English speaking population of the world in the few centuries. Among the English-language Al-Qur'an, the Holy Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is the most widely distributed English-language Al-Qur'an. Furthermore, said that it has become among the most widely known English translations of the Qur'an, due in part to

its prodigious use of foot notes and its distribution and subsidization by Saudi Arabian beneficiaries during the late 20th century.

Concerning Abdullah Yusuf Ali, [12] wrote that he began studying the Qur'an and the Arabic language at the age of five, and was later sent to the Bombay Anjuman Islam School, one of the most prominent educational establishments in India, which was distinguished by the fact that it was open to students from different Islamic sects. Ali studied there for a short time before moving, in 1882, to the Welson English School, founded by John Welson, a minister of the free Scottish church. Ali spent five years at the school before moving to Welson College, part of the University of Bombay, where he graduated in classical literature in 1891. He obtained a scholarship to pursue legal studies at St John's College, Cambridge, and graduated with a higher degree in 1895.

Research on the translation of the Al-Qur'an into English has been carried out. [1] wrote ... certain techniques can be researched and explored for achieving the most accurate translation of this sacred text, the Holy Quran, which is considered by Muslims as the most fundamental source of God's revelation. Their research compared the translations of Abdullah Yusuf Ali with Muhammad Asad. Their research found that unlike Ali's translation which is based on dynamic equivalence, Asad's translation has the tendency to demonstrate fidelity to the lexical and grammatical form of emphasis. Next they wrote Ali's translation shows little tendency to convey the emphatic meaning, especially when emphasis is constructed via particles. This can be attributed to the fact that the priority of this translation is the reader. Concerning the characteristic of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's work, [12] writes that the English language translation of the meaning of the Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali is generally found to be Classical English, adult, religious-class, educated language. This translator is British Indian, in this case writing ... English native translators have produced more stylistically acceptable sentences than the non-English translators.

### 3.2 Joseph Story and Scholars Researching It

The first scholar to provide an in-depth study of Joseph Story from a literary perspective was Amin Al Khuli. This scholar influenced Mustansir Mir's work. Starting from this method of understanding the Al-Qur'an, Mustansir Mir's writing about Joseph Story started. This method departs from Amin Al-Khûli's anxiety regarding various previous works of interpretation which seemed to prioritize the interests of ideologies, schools of thought, sects, and groups.

Amin Al-Khûli positions the Al-Qur'an as the greatest literary book. Then he grouped the verses based on certain themes with the aim of producing true meaning. Amin Al-Khûli confirms the ideal method of studying literary texts through two methodological principles. His methodological principles are, first, the study of everything surrounding the Al-Qur'an, and second, the study of the Al-Qur'an itself. The former or extrinsic analysis is expected to be able to discover the relationship between the work, the background to which it emerged, and the intellectual spirit it contains, while the latter or intrinsic analysis is expected to be able to discover how the Al-Quran views itself - the Al-Qur'an challenges humans to create something that matches it [13]. The method developed by Amin Al-Khûli provides a new discourse in the development of the science of interpretation. Apart from various opinions regarding his method, there are those who reject it and accept it, the most important thing is Amin Al-Khûli's enthusiasm to distance interpretation from the subjectivity of the interpreter [2].

According to Amin Al Khuli, it is a fact that the Al-Qur'an is linguistic and literary facts. The Qur'an is seen as what it is in relation to the society that first received it. The holy book appeared within the framework of a dialectic between revelation and the reality of society at that time. Therefore, the Qur'an should be enjoyed first for the psychological enjoyment of its readers, before then for other purposes [13]. The Qur'an is beautiful so many people - when the Qur'an was first revealed - were fascinated. What makes the Qur'an enchantingly beautiful is what literary interpretation must reveal. This charm should be enjoyed by readers of the Qur'an without considering the reader's own religion and race [13].

### 3.3 Mustansir Mir's Writing about Joseph Story in the Qur'an

Mustansir Mir's intelligence can be seen from the books he wrote. He has written at least eight books. Of the eight books that are closely related to understanding the Qur'an are: *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Islahi's Concept of Naz in Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Terms and Concepts*, *Verbal Idioms of the Qur'an*, and *Understanding the Islamic Scripture: A Study of Selected Passages from the Qur'an*. Mustansir Mir's biography also confirms his intelligence. Mustansir Mir is a Professor of Islamic Studies at Youngstown State University, Ohio, the US. He completed his undergraduate and

master's programs at Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan. He finished his second master and obtained a Ph.D. from University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI in Islamic Studies. He taught colleges in Lahore, at the University of Michigan, University of Virginia, Oxford Center for Islamic Studies/University of Oxford, Youngstown State University and at the International Islamic University in Malaysia. His main research interests are Qur'anic studies, Islamic intellectual history, and South Asian studies [8].

Concerning Surah Joseph, [10] wrote that the study is mainly literary in character. I have thus limited the scope of this inquiry in order to bring into relief, with reference to S. 12, a sorely neglected aspect of the Qur'an, namely, the literary aspect. It is not necessary to reproduce the story in detail or in outline; any of the well-known translations of the Qur'an can be used for purposes of reference. ... the Qur'anic story of Joseph effectively presents a set of interrelated themes using a tightly-knit plot and employing a variety of characters in a state of dynamic interaction. [8] stated that this study shows that Mir reflects on the nature and power of God and reveals the moral messages in the scene and structured dialogue on the passages in Sūra Joseph. It also reveals that Mir's approach to the story is structural where he elaborates the structure, plot, and scene of the story and connects them with the moral message of the story. Furthermore, she stated that in analyzing these stories, Mir focused on three aspects: a reading of the plot, themes, and characters in the story of Joseph. This study shows that in reviewing the Qur'anic story of Joseph, Mir focuses on analysis of the plot, themes and characters. Methodologically, Mir determines the theme of the story of Joseph and divides it into some compositions of the plot.

Concerning the approach used by Mustansir Mir, Matswah [8] wrote ... his method can be categorized as a structuralist approach. This is evident from its efforts to further explore the intrinsic elements of the story of the Qur'an rather than the extrinsic elements. It is also related to an analysis of how the Qur'an presents its message through the structure of the stories that have a high literary value. What he does is something that makes him different from other scholars in studying the sūra of Joseph.

Regarding Mustansir Mir's interpretation, [8] wrote that while from the aspect of his interpretation, he finds that there are parallels or similarities that may escape from a course reading. First, when in Kana'an Joseph was put into a hole/well, while in Egypt he was put into prison. Second, when Joseph was a child, his brothers took him away and went home without him. When he went to Egypt, they took Benjamin and went home without him. Third, there are two attempts to win the love. Joseph's brothers were trying to gain the affections of his father and wife of al-Aziz who tried to get the love of the Prophet Joseph. Next he said that he said, the story of Joseph basically wanted to show that God is the Almighty, the Most gentle, All-Knowing and Wise. Therefore, he not only reveals the detailed and meticulous characters of scenes and dialogue in the series of Joseph, but is also able to deduce its moral message.

Stories are included in literary matters, and each story contains valuable lessons. The story of the Prophet Joseph consists of 10 episodes, namely the dream of the Prophet Joseph, the Prophet Joseph being removed from his brother, the Prophet Joseph being sold to the Egyptians, the seduction of someone's wife to the Prophet Joseph, the banquet, being in prison, the dream of the king and Prophet Joseph's freedom, the Prophet Joseph becoming a government official, meetings with family, and i'tibar from the story of the Prophet Joseph [7]. In the Qur'an we find various kinds of stories. If researched, of the 6342 verses, there are around 1600 verses that contain stories or tales. Ahmad Hanafi stated that there are around 1600 verses that discuss prophetic stories, not to mention stories other than the Prophet and parables (tamsiliyah). This is an indicator that the stories of the Qur'an are very urgent [5].

Concerning his research, [10] said that this study has focused on a few selected aspects of the story, although there are other dimensions (for example, that of irony) that call for an in-depth look. In analyzing the story I have confined myself largely to the data furnished by the Qur'an, and have not made any explicit comparisons between the Qur'anic and Biblical accounts of the story.<sup>32</sup> Such a comparative study, if undertaken along the lines here followed, could well throw new light on some of the hitherto insufficiently explored aspects of the relationship between the two scriptures.

#### *Mustansir Mir's Literary Elements*

Plot	Themes	Characters
○ Tensions and Their Resolution	○ Principal Theme	○ General

- |                    |                                |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| ○ Parallels        | ○ Inexorable                   | ○ Major Characters |
| ○ Dramatic Element | Fulfillment of Divine Purposes | ○ Minor Characters |
|                    | ○ Subsidiary Themes            |                    |
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Literature is the art of language. In English Education, the dominant language used is English. If the special story of Joseph is to be used as a material in this study program, of course it requires the Story of Joseph in English. This is why the Holy Qur'an is used. In studying literature in this program, literary works are not only read to be enjoyed but also to be analyzed. Thus we need a good analytical instrument. This good analytical tool can be obtained by a muslim who has international involvement and of course he is fluent in English. For this reason, the choice fell on the work of Mustansir Mir.

The Literary Appreciation subject can be a bridge for educated muslims and prospective teachers who are currently pursuing higher education degree and who want to study literature. Indonesia, as the country with the largest muslim population in the world, needs to highlight the story of Joseph.

At Purworejo Muhammadiyah University, such a study program offers three courses that focus on literary science, namely Introduction to Literature, Literary Appreciation, and Seminar on Literature. These three courses have the potential to highlight Islamic literature contained in the holy book. Thus, the students can understand that Islam has its own unique characteristics in literature.

### 3.4 Literary Appreciation Learning in the English Education

The English Education study program educates would-be English teachers in lower and upper secondary educations. However, students are also educated to become edupreneurs who are able to create jobs at least for themselves. In several lectures, students are introduced to literary works, both prose and poetry, written by writers whose mother tongue is English. There is no doubt that prose and poetry with Islamic nuances also need to be added as a differentiator from similar study programs that are not under the Muhammadiyah organization.

The reasons for highlighting Joseph Story have at least two considerations. Firstly, the Al-Qur'an version of Joseph Story has been well-translated into English by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Secondly, it is because of Mustansir Mir's work which examines this story systematically. What Mustansir Mir has done is not much different from what literary experts have done with the new criticism movement. In this case, [3] wrote that ... new criticism involved a way of reading that emphasizes form – the importance of considering 'the words on the page' – rather than factors such as the life of the author and his or her intentions, or the historical and ideological context in which the text was produced.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In the holy books of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam there is a story about the Prophet Joseph. In the Islamic holy book, the story of the prophet Joseph is stated to be the best story. Connecting Joseph Story with Literary Appreciation lecture is the main problem answered by researchers. To make specify it, the researcher broke down the problem into two questions, i.e. what is special about the Holy Qur'an so that it is suitable for connecting students to the story of the Prophet Joseph, and what are Mustansir Mir's findings that are useful for learning Literary Appreciation. This research is qualitative research carried out using the records keeping method by utilizing information technology or internet networks. The results of this research are that the Holy Qur'an can be utilized because of the ease of obtaining it and the quality of the translation. The world-class academician who researched the story of the Prophet Joseph is Mustansir Mir. In analyzing it, the scholar found three main literary devices in Surah Joseph, i.e. plot, themes, and characters. Thus, the Story of the Prophet Joseph can be used in Literary Appreciation subject.

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