Indonesian Islamic Children's Literature: the Lexical Choices in the Religious Teachings

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses Islamic religious teachings presented in the Indonesian Islamic children's literature through the uses of the lexical choices. The discussion covers the religious concepts and practices. For the purpose, the data were taken from five sample children story books of *Seri Kalimat thoyyibah* which is written by and translated by an Indonesians. The lexical choices presenting the Islamic religious teachings were analyzed by implementing the corpus method and using semantic theories of semantic field and relations. The analysis was also seen from the perspective of the characters' age by referring to the idea of children psycholinguistic development. The findings show that the lexical choices presenting the concepts of Islamic teachings are mostly unsuited the age of the children characters, as well as the children target readers. This raises concern on the stories comprehensibility. On the other hand, the verb choices describing Islamic practices are friendlier to children readers.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is regarded as a part of identity in a certain society, especially in Indonesia. It refers to the individual belief in relation to the divinity. In Islam, commitment to religion is implemented in the religious teachings, mainly believing and practicing the religious contents. In the study, the Islamic religious teachings are searched from lexical choices of children's literature.

Children's literature in Indonesia is developing significantly. Not only written in Indonesian, but the works are also published in English. Other than to answer the competition to the imported materials, the Indonesian publications perhaps also to react to the awareness of adults to introduce English earlier to children through the children's own media, story books. The effort to develop the genre is also used by Indonesian Muslims to write children's literature with the Islamic contents. Interestingly, the storybooks introduce children to mostly the abstract concepts of belief in Islam yet challenging in linguistic

choices, particularly the lexical choices (Malmkjær, 2018, p.137).

In other words, other than filling the stories with Islamic teachings, consideration is also taken to the suitability of the target readers; how to present the religious concepts and practices in the children language. With the various themes and a growing number of publications, these groups of children literary works need a special interest. People have started to see that the works benefiting in terms of facilitating language and literacy development, promoting intercultural understanding, and encouraging critical thinking skills. With the promising benefits, it is necessary to consider their linguistic appropriateness, particularly the lexical choices, that match the level of the target readers. A study of Djatmika, D A N, & A (2012) found related to the difficult words used in the sample Indonesian Islamic children literature which make the books inappropriate for children readers. With the limited previous studies found, the current study proposes the following questions:

1. How are Islamic teachings presented in the lexical choices in the story books?
2. How are the lexical choices related to the age of the stories' characters, as well as the readers?

Islamic Religious Teachings

The discussion of Islamic teachings can be derived from the concept of *iman* in Islam. It mainly covers two aspects, believing, performing, and valuing (Koenig & Al Shohaib, 2014). From the three, the initial two are adopted in this study.

In Islam, an individual who declares his devotion to Islam has to 'surrender' himself by believing on the six pillars of *iman* in Islam. However, believing has to be transformed further into certain practices as guided by the *sharia* in Islam. In other words, Islam obliges the believers to do more than just believing, but acting out the *iman*. The belief is usually implemented by accepting some concepts in Islamic teachings, like Allah the Only God, *malaikahs* (the angles). However, acting out requires the believers to practice some activities related to the belief and worshiping, like doing *shalah*, fasting, including saying the *thoyyib* expressions. All of the elements are in one unity in Islamic teachings.

Children's Literature

Children's literature refers to the literary works written for children viewers, from zero up to twelve years old (Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, & Lynch-Brown, 1993, p. 1). They are written either by an adult or a child. This type of literature is commonly used as a language teaching-learning source due to its support for children's personal and cognitive development. Stories teach concepts like ethics, values, and cultural norms and differences, as well as foster reflection and promote critical thinking (Crawley, Ditzel, & Walton, 2012, p. 47). The work may help children in interpreting, reflecting, and affirming their own feelings as well as introducing them to the interaction with others and world knowledge (Dowling, 2000, p. 139), making them explore personal roles and make sense of their lives (Crawley, Ditzel, & Walton, 2012, p. 47).

Literary work particularly provides exposure for language use; that different linguistic forms will affect different communicative goals (McKay, 2001, p. 319). These advantages make such literary works are commonly used in Indonesian EFL classes, as well as at homes. From the various choices, the hard job is to adjust between the appropriate works and learners needs because in order to make a literary work fruitful for the learning process, it has to be accessible for the learner. McKay (2001) has underlined the importance of text accessibility to the learner. She mentions further that in order a text to be accessible, the text has "to ensure that the theme of the text is engaging for the students and that the text itself is not too difficult on either a linguistic or conceptual level" (McKay, 2001). Relating to the use of literary works for children, McKay's statement locks that the works have to have a theme and linguistic choices which suite children's cognitive and language development. Therefore, identifying the readability of children's literature is necessary, either in choosing or improving the quality of a text.

Children Psycholinguistic Development

McDevitt & Ormrod (2002, pp. 262–263) describes certain stages of language development;

1. Early Childhood. The stage usually takes place between the ages of two to six-year-old. At this stage, the rapid memory increases for vocabulary and syntax development that enable children to acquire and memorize vocabulary and syntactic knowledge.

In other words, the children are saving the formal system of vocabulary and syntax. Therefore, it is quite common to find children are playing with the trial and error of mixing and matching language forms

2. Middle Childhood. This second stage lives between the age of six to ten-year-old. At this stage, children start to analyze the concrete concepts of vocabulary. With such limitation, children of this age could only understand information presented in the simple and concrete words composed in the simple sentence construction, like simple past, simple present, or simple compound sentences with the clear and explicit logical representation.

3. Early Adolescence. The final stage of childhood language development is the early adolescence, the early stage of puberty, between the ages of 10 to 14-year-old. At this stage, they start to acquire abstract concepts. Therefore, they start to be able to comprehend words with abstract and complicated concepts which are composed in the more complicated sentence structures, like perfective, complicated compound, or complex sentences. In addition, they may also be able to analyze a complete discourse in order to identify text coherence.

Semantic Field and Semantic Relation

Semantic field discusses the working domains/areas of the meaning of words, like family, education, religion, and others (Saeed, 2003), while semantic/sense relation refers to the relation of meaning, or the networking, between the lexemes of a language (or

between lexemes and larger expressions) (Cann, 1993, p. 6). In simple, it means the way the meaning of words is related to each other (Trask, 1999, p. 272). There are two kinds of sense relations, Substitutional (Paradigmatic), and Combinational (Syntagmatic) (Lyons, 1995, 124). It is said that, substitutional, or paradigmatic (Saussure), relations ae the relation between expressions (or, in this case, words) from the same grammatical category which can be interchanged each other. For example, the relation between *vegetable: spinach, prototype: stereotype, support: encourage*. On the other hand, combinational, or syntagmatic (Saussure), is the relation of words which are commonly coming from the different grammatical category, and can be combined together in grammatically well-formed combination. Like *water, spinach, (adjective, noun), fully support (adverb, verb),* etc*.* In this discussion, the sense relation discussed is the first one, paradigmatic relations.

Substitutional (paradigmatic) sense relation is grouped into two basic principles: inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion means one sense allows or requires the other (or one sense is within the other), that they are in a certain identity. On the other hand, exclusion means one sense excludes of does not allow the other's sense, that one will be the opposite of the other. The categories of sense relations of inclusion and identity are: Hyponymy, the sense of one word includes another (Cann, 1993, p. 6) as in *tiger: carnivore;* Synonymy, two or more words have the same sense (Cann, 1993; Kearns, 2000; Lyons, 1995) like in *mist*: *fog*; Taxonomy, the hierarchical classificatory systems such as *animal*: *carnivore, herbivore, omnivore; M*etonymy, 'the part-to-whole relation' between lexical items (Cruse, 2004; Saeed, 2003) as cell phone: *touchpad, screen, speaker, hands-free-stuffs*.

The categories within the sense relations of exclusion and opposition are Complementary, a special case of incompatibility like in dead: alive; Antonym, opposing senses (Cann, 1993, p. 6) as in *big: small*; Reversive, a specific case of opposites in relation to straightforward (Cruse, 2004, p. 162) direction of the same type movement like in *up*: *down*; Converse, opposites in terms of the different point of view (Saeed, 2003, p. 68) or angle in seeing something (Cruse, 2004, p. 167) such as in *sell: buy.* Taxonomic Sisters, oppositeness occurs between words of the same level in taxonomy (as a result of this relation) as in *color*: *red, orange, white, blue*.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a stylistic analysis applying the corpus method (Adolps, 2006) using lexical choices to describe how the Islam's religious teachings are introduced to children in a series of Islamic children's literature *Seri kalimat thoyyibah*. The discussion further sees the relation between the lexical choices and the relevance to the age of the characters producing the words in the storylines. The sources of the data are five storybooks introducing several *thoyyib* (noble) expressions to children which were written by Ahmad Zakky, translated by Wicha SB, and published by Zikrul. Both the writer and translator are Indonesians. The sample storybooks are:

Table 1. Data Sources

No	Title	Publication	Code
1.	I can say *Alhamdulillah*	Mei 2015	ISAl
2.	I can say *Insya Allah*	Mei 2015	ISI
3.	I can say *Subhanallah*	Mei 2015	ISS
4.	I can say *Astaghfirullah*	Mei 2015	ISAs
5.	I can say *LaaIlaahaIllAllah*	September 2015	ISL

In selecting the data, the lexical items used to introduce Islam's religious teachings were collected from the storybooks. The selection was based on the semantic relation (Cann, 1993; Cruse, 2004; Saeed, 2003) between the lexical choices; which word describes which. The selection further was also based on the lexical choices spoken by the characters in the stories in order to focus on the interaction among the characters. Therefore, the speaker of each lexical choice was also noted for describing the appropriateness of the words in relation to the age of the characters.

In the analysis, there are two main parts. The first past is the description of the lexical choices introducing Islam's religious teachings by relating them to the words associated with. This is done with the help of the semantic theories, particularly semantic field (Saeed, 2003) and semantic relation; semantic field is used to categorize the lexical choices into the area of Islam's religious teachings, and semantic relation is referred to describe the lexical choice relation in order to support the aims of the writer. The second part of the analysis is describing the relation between the lexical choices and the characters who produce them. This is done in order to see the appropriateness of the lexical choices to the age of the characters (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2002).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The main focus of the storybooks is to introduce children to several *thoyyib* (noble) expressions in Islamic practices. The five storybooks are centralized to the story about four characters in a small core family: Alif, Ulfa, Bunda, and Ayah. Alif is the youngest son, a preschool child. Ulfa is the older daughter, Alif's sister, an elementary school child. *Bunda* is the mother, and *Ayah* is the father. The stories are usually around the interaction of these characters, although other characters may be added in some parts of the storybooks, like *Nenek* (Grandma), and the children's friends. Hence, the settings are usually simple and the stories are commonly about teaching/guiding the youngest family member, Alif, to practice the *thoyyib* expressions.

The lexical choices used in the stories presenting the Islamic religious teachings are mainly in the forms of the concepts and activities. The Islamic related concepts are performed mostly in nouns and the activities are in verbs.

1. Concepts

Since conceptual lexical choices are used in relevance to the description of the *thoyyib* expressions, the elaboration is done within the expressions. The expressions are in Arabic which is commonly unfamiliar to Indonesian speakers, especially children. Therefore, the Arabic *thoyyib* expressions are practiced with certain lexical choices describing them. The lexical choices referred to the Islamic religious

teachings identified from the storybooks are:

Table 2. The concepts used in introducing Islamic teachings

No	Concept	Associated Words	Character	Source
1.	*bounty*	*Alhamdulillah*	Ulfa, Daddy, Mommy, Alif	ISAl
		present	Ulfa	
		gift	Daddy, Alif	
		food	Mommy	
		health	Mommy	
2.	*grateful*	*Alhamdulillah*	Ulfa	ISAl
3.	*tomorrow*	*Insya Allah*	Ulfa	ISI
4.	*fresh*	*Alhamdulillah*	Alif	ISI
5.	*obstacle*	*Insya Allah*	Alif	ISI
6.	*beautiful*	*Subhanallah*	Mommy, Alif	ISS
7.	*amazing*	*Subhanallah*	Mommy, Alif	ISS
8.	*God*	*Creature*	Daddy	ISS
9.	*forgiveness*	*Allah*	Mommy	ISAs
10.	*tahlil*	*LaaIlaahaIllAllah*	Ulfa	ISL
11.	*thoyyibah*	*LaaIlaahaIllAllah*	Alif	ISL
12.	*dhikr*	*LaaIlaahaIllAllah*	Ulfa	ISL

The concepts used in presenting the *thoyyib* (noble) expressions:

a. *Alhamdulillah*

Expression *Alhamdulillah* is a concept itself referring to the expression of thanking *Allah* for a certain blessing. It is common to hear Muslims uttering the expressions after receiving things or being in conditions considered as a bless from *God*.

In the storybook, expression *Alhamdulillah* is presented in relation to the word *bounty*, *present*, *gift*, *food*,

health, *grateful* (ISAl), and *fresh* (ISI). Since the expression is conceptual, the writer uses other words to explain how it may 'work' in Islamic practice. *Alhamdulillah* is associated with *bounty*, *present*, *gift*, *food*, and health (ISAl) which have been provided by *Allah* to human beings. It is also an expression of *grateful* (ISAl). Other than the relation to a certain object, expression *Alhamdulillah* is also related to a certain positive condition achieved after having a bad state, as used in ISI. Here, the expression is associated with the condition of *fresh* after the character has taken a bath and felt better.

b. *Insya Allah*

Insya Allah is another conceptual Arabic expression which is uttered in relation to future uncertainty, for instance in promising. In the storybook, the expression is linked to the words of *tomorrow* and the *obstacle* (ISI); *tomorrow* shows the relation to the future time marker, and *obstacle* is the possible negative possibility for the speaker to fulfill the future action.

c. *Subhanallah*

Subhanallah identifies in the story as the expression to complement the creation of *Allah*. It is usually used when a speaker is mesmerized and fond of certain phenomenon or view that s/he is seeing. Perhaps, that is the reason why *Subhanallah* is linked to the lexical choices of *beautiful* and *amazing* (ISS), as the speaker is pleased by the rainbow.

d. *Astaghfirullah*

Astaghfirullah is usually expressed when a speaker feels guilty and hope for the mercy of *Allah*. Therefore, in the story, it is directly related to the word *forgiveness* (ISAs), as the character realized that he has made mistake and asked for *God*'s *forgiveness*.

e. *LaaIlaahaIllAllah*

LaaIlaahaIllAllah is an expression in Islam declaring the fundamental belief of the religion. It is used to declare that a person believes only in *Allah* and no other accepted as the only *God*. In the story, the expression is linked to its synonym of *tahlil*, to its bigger part of *thoyyib*ah, and its purpose *dhikr* (ISL). *Tahlil* is another name for expression *LaaIlaahaIllAllah*, *thoyyibah* (sentence) is the main root of the expression, and *dhikr* indicates the purpose of the speaker to always remember *Allah*. Adding to the list, there are also some conceptual words used by speakers in the storybooks, like:

f. *bounty*

Since *bounty* is also a concept, older characters in the story (ISAl) described it further by using the lexical choices synonymous with the concept yet considered more familiar to children: *gift* or *present*, and the lexical choices of parts of the *bounty* itself: *food* and *health*. Perhaps *bounty* is considered sounding elegant and high, with the association of the sacred and holy position of *Allah*.

g. *God* (ISS)

The concept of *God*, which refers to *Allah*, is used in opposite to *creature*, the *God*'s creation, which is more observable for children rather than the concept of the divinity.

h. *Forgiveness* (ISAs)

Forgiveness is considered an attribute of *Allah* in Islamic teachings. *Forgiveness* is uttered by the character (Alif) as he realized his mistakes and asked for the mercy of *God*, for *Allah*'s *forgiveness*, to forgive his wrongdoings.

Related to the psycholinguistic background of the speakers, most of the lexical choices are unsuitable with to the age of the characters;

a. Children characters, Alif and Ulfa

The actual ages of the children characters are not stated explicitly in stories. Information only indicates that Alif is a preschool child whom always be guided by the older family members, and Ulfa seems to be an elementary school girl since she mentions about her teacher and lessons several times in the stories.

The lexical choices initiated by the children characters for the concepts of Islamic teachings are:

1) Alif, the youngest character in the series produced the words *bounty, fresh, obstacle, beautiful, amazing,* and *thoyyib.* Most of the words Alif uttered are actually the repetition of the previous speakers, his older sister or parents, except *fresh, obstacle*, and *thoyyib*. It means that Alif acquired the words by imitating, then validated the meaning to his parents. For instance, *bounty*, he heard it firstly from his sister and validated then to his mother. However, Alif's words for *fresh, obstacle*, and *thoyyib* are the lexical choices initiative produced from himself.

As the lexical choices compared to Alif's age, only a few words are quite common to his age; *fresh* and *beautiful*. These words are familiar since they are used in daily interaction. Unfortunately, other lexical choices may create a gap in Alif's age. It is questionable to see a child at Alif's age is able to produce *obstacle* and *thoyyib*, for example, apart from the imitation habit. However, in the stories, Alif is pictured

to have a comprehension on the words' meanings and even uses, like in

> "Alif, do you still want to go with me tomorrow?" asked Daddy.
> "*Insya Allah*, Dad. If I have no **obstacle**," Alif said significantly. (ISI)
> or in,
> "The *tahlil* sentence is *Laailaahaillallaah*. The meaning is there is no God but Allah," Ulfa explained.
> "Now, I know. Daddy ever said that *Laailaahaillallaah* is one of **thoyyibah** sentences," said Alif. (ISL)

Meanwhile, in McDevitt and Ormrod (2002, pp. 262-263), the proper age for children to be able to use the abstract concepts is actually at the early adolescence (start from 11 years old). As the result, as the stories read by children, the conceptual lexical choices may arise a gap in their comprehension toward the stories.

2) Ulfa. The lexical choices related to religious concepts produced by Ulfa characters are *bounty, grateful, tomorrow, tahlil,* and *dhikr.* An elementary school girl, as Ulfa, may be familiar with the words *tomorrow*, yet it is still questionable to find her quite knowledgeable with the rest of words, *bounty, grateful, tahlil,* and *dhikr.* Perhaps in some part, she mentioned that she got certain word from her teacher,

> "Alif got a present from Daddy. The teacher said that we have to say **Alhamdulillah** if we get any **bounty...".** (ISAl)

However, it is surprising to find the child character guide her younger brother to other complicated and conceptual words, such as

> "Have you said alhamdulillah, Alif?" asked Ulfa.
> "What for?" asked Alif.
> "If God gives us bounty, we should be **grateful** by saying **Alhamdulillah**," Ulfa explained. (ISAl)

> "Sst, Grandma is saying **tahlil**," Ulfa whispered.
> "Hah, what is tahlil, Sister?" asked Alif, whispering.
> "The **tahlil** sentence is **Laailaahaillallaah**. The meaning is there is no God but Allah," Ulfa explained. (ISL)

which are far beyond her linguistic development (McDevitt and Ormrod, 2002). Again, the lexical choices may create a gap between the character age and her language, affecting further also the children readers of the stories.

b. Adult characters; Mommy and Daddy

In the stories, the roles of the parents seem to validate Ulfa's guidance to her younger brother in terms of practicing saying the *thoyyib* expressions. In the stories, both parents are hand in hand in providing further explanation to their children, especially the youngest. Here are the lexical choices produced by the parents:

> Mommy: *bounty, food, health, beautiful, amazing, Allah*
> Daddy: *bounty, gift, Allah, God*
> "Daddy, Mommy, what is **bounty**?"
> "Alif, **bounty** is a gift from Allah," said Daddy.
> "**Bounty** comes in various forms, dear. Food that you ate and health are some examples of the **bounty** from Allah," Mommy explained. (ISAl)
> "If we see a rainbow, we must say *Subhanallah.* Is that right, Mom? When we saw a rainbow, Sister Ulfa said *Subhanallah*," asked Alif.
> Mommy was smiling.
> "Alif, if we see something **beautiful** or **amazing**, we must say *Subhanallah*," Mommy explained calmly.
> "Since rainbow is a **beautiful** and **amazing** phenomenon in this universe, we must say *Subhanallah* every time we see it," said Mommy. (ISS)

Here, the parents' roles and lexical choices in the stories seem to help explaining an application of the *thoyyib* expressions in daily life. The characters are used to detail the actual meaning of the words, although in some of the

choices are not suitable to the children's ages.

2. Activities

Perhaps activities are more effective ways to show children religious teachings. Activities also give more concrete examples for children in practicing religion. Thus, in storybooks, activities related to Islam are described through the lexical choices uttered by the characters. Here are the verbs indicating the religious activities:

Table 3. The activities described in introducing the Islamic teachings

No	Activity	Associated Words	Character	Source
1.	*Say*	*Alhamdulillah*, *Insya Allah*,	Ulfa, they Ulfa, Mommy, Alif, Daddy	ISAl, ISI,
		Subhanallah	Ulfa, together/ the family	ISS
		Astaghfirullah	Mommy	ISAs ISL
		tahlil	Ulfa	ISL
		dzikr	Alif	ISL
		Laailaahaillallaah	Alif	
2.	*Thank*	*bounty*	Mommy	ISAl
		Allah	Daddy	ISAl
3.	*promise*	*Insya Allah*	Ulfa, Mommy	ISI
4.	*enchanted*	*beauty*	Daddy	ISS
5.	*fell*	*Astaghfirullah*	Ulfa	ISAs
6.	*lie*	*Astaghfirullah*	Ulfa	ISAs
7.	*forgive*	*Daddy, Mommy* *Allah*	Alif	ISAs ISAs

Activities related to Islamic teachings are presented in certain verbs, like

1. *say*

say becomes the most common lexical choice used by the characters in association with various Islamic *thoyyib* (noble) words. Perhaps it is related to the aims of the storybooks, to introduce the *thoyyib* (noble) words to children as well as to ask them practicing the expressions. Therefore, the writer chose to show readers by describing that certain characters are actually saying the expressions.

2. *thank* (ISAl)

Thank is the activity described with the relation to *Bounty* and *Allah*, since its meaning is related to expressing *gratitude* to *Allah* for the *bounty* which has received by the speaker. Thus *thank* is a specific action of say.

3. *promise* (ISI)

Promise is also a specific action of say in which the speaker engages her/himself to a commitment of a future action. In the story, *promise* is another way of describing the function to expression *Insya Allah*; it is required to end a *promise* with such expression.

4. *enchant(ed)* (ISS)

enchanted was chosen by the speaker, the father, in association to beauty; he was *enchanted* by the beauty of an object causing him forgot to express the religious expression of *Subhanallah*.

5. *fell* (ISAs)

The word *fell*-fall is used to describe the accidental activity experienced by a character, Alif, as he ignores his sister's command to stop chasing a butterfly. In her surprise, the sister, Ulfa exclaimed *Astaghfirullah* showing the common expression in Islam for surprise, as

well as for annoyance, as the younger sibling did not pay attention to her warning which cause a more serious problem of getting hurt.

6. *lie* (ISAs)

Other than expressing surprise and annoyance (no. 5), *Astaghfirullah* is also associated with the story to *lie*, in which character Ulfa expresses her regret of hiding the accident experienced by her younger brother. Thus, after the mother forbids her of committing lying, she felt sorry and asked for *God*'s forgiveness by expressing *Astaghfirullah.*

7. *forgive* (ISAs)

Verb *forgive* is showing the activity of character Alif as he expressed his sorry for doing a wrong thing, chasing a butterfly, to his parents. The parents, *Daddy* and *Mommy,* redirected his request to the more essential source of *forgiveness*, *Allah,* since Alif might have hurt *God*'s *creature* in his previous action. In addition, *forgive* also seems to be shown in relation to the action addressed to the more superior participants, like parents and God. It occurs in the story, perhaps, with the plotting of training the youngest family member, Alif, expressing the *thoyyib* expressions.

Here is the description of the verbs produced by each character in the stories:

> Alif: *say, forgive (-Daddy, Mommy), forgive (-Allah)*
> Ulfa: *say, promise (-Insya Allah), fell (Astaghfirullah), lie (-Astaghfirullah)*
> Mommy: *say, thank (-bounty), promise (-Insya Allah)*
> Daddy: *say, thank (-Allah)*
> They: say

From the verbs indicating the activities practicing Islamic teachings, *say* seems the most common verb used by all characters. Perhaps, verb *say* is a common word uttered by characters of any age, children, and adults. Verb *say* also shows directly how the characters do the action in the stories as if inviting readers to practice uttering the *thoyyib* expressions. Other verbs are also in relation to the *thoyyib* expressions; *forgive* and *lie* for *Astagfirullah*, promise for *Insya Allah*, and *thank* for *Alhamdulillah*. All of them are in relation to the worship of mankind to Allah.

In relation to the age of the characters, most of the verbs are quite common, even for children users, except *forgive*, since it seems to be a more formal choice for children instead of *sorry*, which sounds more common to children age. In addition, forgive is also not commonly used within family members' interaction since it may create psychological distance among participants.

CONCLUSION

*S*eri Kalimat Thoyyibah is an effort of Muslim writers to introduce early Islamic practice to the Muslim children. The particular genre has added a new nuance in Indonesian children's literature, which means the term for Islamic children's literature is appropriately added into the collection of the kind. In the spirit of arising the Islamic content into the literature, several concerns still remain in the wording of the stories. At one hand, Islam, with the huge content of conceptual teachings, is the challenging task for writers, also parents, to

introduce them to the children. On the other hand, children's literature itself also requires certain standards for children readings, particularly the friendliness in terms of the comprehensibility of the lexical choices. In the sample stories, the lexical choices used to present some Islamic religious contents are most problematic, since they are expressed in the lexical choices unsuitable the characters' age, especially the children characters. In other words, the children characters in the stories produced several adult-like lexical choices. This may create a gap in the stories comprehension. On the other hand, religious practices expressed in verb choices are friendlier to children age comparing the concepts. Perhaps, because the verbs are the lexical choices that can be seen and implemented directly by children, as shown by the characters whom explicitly practice the religious activities in the stories of *Seri Kalimat Thoyyibah.*

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