Ventriloquism As A Medium For Strengthening Islamic Values And Character Education

Abdul Aziz[1*], Sri Maryati[2], Fifi Nur Azizah[3], Jimmy Malintang[4], Fahmi[5]

[1] *International Open University, Gambia*
[2] *Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surakarta, Indonesia*
[3] *Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia*
[4] *Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, Indonesia*
[5] *Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia*
Email: abuthaha11@gmail.com, [2] astikqueen@gmail.com, [3] fifinaj12@gmail.com,
[4]jimmymalintang81@gmail.com, [5]fahmi_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

ABSTRACT. Ventriloquism-based instructional innovation introduces a performative dialogic medium that merges cognitive, affective, moral, and social dimensions of learning into a unified interactive experience. By positioning the puppet as a "dialogue partner," the approach creates psychologically safe communication spaces, reduces speaking anxiety, and transforms abstract concepts into personified narratives. This qualitative field study examines the pedagogical role of ventriloquism-based instruction in strengthening classroom engagement and value internalization in secondary-level Islamic Education (PAI). Using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, the study explores how puppetry mediates teacher–student interaction and shapes students' learning experiences. The findings reveal that ventriloquism enhances behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement by reducing affective barriers, fostering dialogic participation, and creating an emotionally safe learning environment. The puppet functions not merely as an entertaining medium but also as an instructional mediator that builds students' confidence to speak, models polite and ethical questioning, and supports empathetic communication aligned with prophetic pedagogical values (adab al-hiwār). The results align with multidimensional engagement theory, social learning and self-efficacy development, sociocultural mediation within the Zone of Proximal Development, multimedia learning principles, and embodied cognition perspectives. This theoretical convergence positions ventriloquism as an integrated pedagogical strategy rather than a peripheral creative technique. The study contributes to the field by framing ventriloquism as a low-cost, teacher-driven instructional innovation that harmonizes creative performative media with Islamic educational values. Although limited to a single case study, the findings offer a foundation for future comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-method research on creative pedagogies in value-based education.

Keywords: *Ventriloquism, Interactive Learning Design, Instructional Innovation, Student Engagement, Classroom Creativity.*

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education systems worldwide are increasingly confronted with persistent challenges such as declining student engagement, learning burnout, emotional disengagement, and limited knowledge retention, despite continuous curriculum reforms and the widespread integration of digital technologies (Dearman et al., 2018; Etemi et al., 2024; H. S. Siregar et al., 2025; Triyono et al., 2025). Empirical studies demonstrate that these problems are both quantitative, reflected in low academic achievement and participation rates, and qualitative, manifested in students' anxiety, reluctance to speak, and passive classroom behavior (Emiru &

Gedifew, 2024; Fredricks et al., 2004). Although global educational discourses emphasize student-centered learning, creativity, and higher-order thinking, classroom practices in many contexts remain predominantly teacher-centered, monologic, and cognitively overloaded (Andriyani & Leksono, 2024; Blegur et al., 2024). This condition underscores the urgent need for pedagogical innovations that address not only cognitive outcomes but also emotional safety and dialogic interaction.

Previous research has explored various creative and performative pedagogies such as storytelling, drama-based learning, role-play, and gamification as strategies to enhance engagement and motivation (J.Mills et al., n.d.). However, existing studies largely conceptualize these approaches as supplementary techniques or expressive activities rather than as structured dialogic systems within formal instruction (Ataeifar et al., 2019; Nellitawati et al., 2024; Sartini et al., 2025). Research on puppetry and related performative media remains limited, primarily situated in early childhood education or arts-based interventions, with minimal attention to their function as symbolic communicative agents that mediate learning interactions in secondary education (Asrori et al., 2025). Consequently, the pedagogical potential of ventriloquism where teachers embody an alternative instructional persona through a puppet has been largely overlooked in empirical educational research (Akmansyah et al., 2025; Hussain, 2025; Qasserras, 2024).

This article seeks to address this gap by examining ventriloquism as an innovative instructional method grounded in established learning theories. The study positions ventriloquism as a pedagogical practice aligned with constructivist theory, which emphasizes knowledge construction through social interaction(Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), and Social Learning Theory, which highlights modeling and symbolic interaction as key mechanisms of learning (Bandura, 1977). Additionally, ventriloquism reflects the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, as it integrates auditory, visual, and affective cues that support deeper processing and reduce cognitive overload (Mayer, 2009). Unlike prior studies focusing on narrative or artistic outcomes, this research specifically examines the dialogic structure created when the teacher operates as both instructor and symbolic character.

Furthermore, the approach resonates strongly with Affective Learning Theory and Embodied Cognition, which assert that emotional states, bodily engagement, and performative interaction significantly influence cognition and meaning-making (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Through ventriloquism, abstract concepts are embodied through voice modulation, gesture, movement, and character-based interaction, fostering a psychologically safe learning environment. Students often perceive the puppet as non-threatening, enabling increased participation, question-asking, and risk-taking behaviors that are typically constrained in conventional classrooms. This performative dynamic also aligns with Performance Pedagogy, which views improvisation and character embodiment as transformative tools for inclusive and participatory learning environments (Dixon & Senior, 2011).

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how ventriloquism as a low-cost, teacher-driven instructional innovation enhances student engagement, reduces emotional barriers, and improves learning retention within the context of Indonesian secondary education (Hadiyan et al., 2024; Sabarudin et al., 2024; D. O. Siregar et al., 2022). The central argument tested in this article is that ventriloquism functions not merely as entertainment but as a legitimate pedagogical strategy capable of reshaping classroom interaction, strengthening student agency, and supporting the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum (Adiyani et al., 2025; Al-Ulya et al., 2025; Amalia et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2025; Hakim & Abidin, 2024; Msamba et al., 2023; Ulfadhilah, 2024). By presenting empirical insights from SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru, this study contributes to the broader discourse on creative pedagogy by demonstrating how performative instruction can integrate cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of learning in a cohesive and contextually relevant manner.

Abdul Aziz1*, Sri Maryati2, Fifi Nur Azizah3, Jimmy Malintang4, Fahmi5

METHOD

This This study employed a qualitative case study approach, drawing on the framework proposed examine how ventriloquism-based instruction functions within an authentic classroom setting. A qualitative design was chosen because the phenomenon under investigation student engagement, emotional comfort, and dialogic interaction is experiential, contextual, and process-oriented (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Case study research is particularly suitable for investigating educational innovations, as it allows researchers to capture instructional practices, social interactions, and meaning-making processes as they naturally unfold in real-life contexts. The study was conducted over a three-month period during the second semester of the academic year, enabling sustained observation of instructional routines and student responses.

The research site was SMP Negeri 2 Kotabaru, Indonesia, with one eighth-grade class purposively selected as the case. The participants consisted of 32 students aged 13-14 years and one classroom teacher who implemented the ventriloquism-based instruction and served as a key informant. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, following qualitative data collection principles outlined (Creswell et al., 2020)). Observations focused on student participation, communicative behaviors, emotional expressions, and interaction patterns during ventriloquism sessions. Interviews were conducted with the teacher and selected students to explore perceptions of engagement, learning comfort, and value internalization. Documentation included lesson plans, reflective teaching notes, student worksheets, and visual records of classroom activities. The combination of these techniques enabled data triangulation to enhance credibility and depth of understanding (Miles et al., 2014).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following the procedures described by (Miles et al., 2014). Observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents were read repeatedly to achieve data familiarization, after which inductive coding was applied to identify meaningful patterns. Codes were clustered into broader themes representing engagement dynamics, dialogic interaction, emotional safety, and character-related expressions emerging from ventriloquism-based learning. To ensure trustworthiness, member checking was conducted with the classroom teacher, and analytic decisions were documented through reflective notes to reduce researcher bias. This analytic process enabled a contextual and practice-oriented interpretation of ventriloquism as a low-cost, teacher-driven instructional innovation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

The findings of this qualitative field study are grounded in sustained classroom engagement and rich empirical evidence collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and instructional documentation. Rather than reducing outcomes to abstract claims, the results illuminate *how* ventriloquism-based instruction unfolded in practice and *why* it influenced classroom interaction, emotional dynamics, and learning behavior. The data reveal that ventriloquism functioned not merely as an entertaining technique, but as a dialogic and affective mechanism that reshaped the relational structure of teaching and learning.

Classroom observations consistently demonstrate a transformation in the teacher's instructional practice once ventriloquism was introduced. The teacher no longer operated solely as an authoritative knowledge transmitter but alternated fluidly between instructor, narrator, and symbolic character embodied through the puppet. This shift altered the communicative ecology of the classroom. Field notes repeatedly describe immediate changes in student posture and attentional focus at the moment the puppet appeared. One observation excerpt recorded:

> "When the puppet was introduced, students who had been leaning back immediately sat upright. Several students stopped whispering to their peers and redirected their gaze toward the puppet, showing curiosity and anticipation rather than distraction." (Observation, Session 1)

The puppet was deliberately used to introduce lesson content and moral dilemmas through short narrative dialogues, allowing abstract concepts to be framed as lived situations. During a lesson on honesty (*amanah*), the teacher avoided direct moral instruction and instead allowed the puppet to initiate reflection: *"Teacher (as puppet): 'Is it sometimes hard to tell the truth when we are afraid of being blamed?'*
Several students nodded, while others responded softly, 'Yes, sometimes.' (Observation, Session 2)

Documentary evidence supports this practice. Lesson plans explicitly identified the puppet as a "dialogue partner" rather than a teaching aid, and reflective teaching notes stated that the puppet was intentionally designed to "soften authority, invite honesty, and reduce fear of moral judgment" (Teacher Reflection Document, Week 2). These materials indicate that ventriloquism was not used spontaneously but implemented as a conscious pedagogical strategy.

Student engagement emerged as a prominent and sustained pattern across observational and interview data. During ventriloquism sessions, students demonstrated higher levels of behavioral and emotional engagement compared to conventional teacher-led instruction. Observation records show increased eye contact, spontaneous verbal responses, and immediate reactions to narrative humor embedded in puppet dialogues. One field note documented: *"More than half of the students raised their hands to respond to the puppet's question. This level of voluntary participation did not occur during previous lessons delivered through direct explanation."* (Observation, Session 3)

Interview data further illuminate the subjective experience behind these behaviors. Students frequently described feeling more relaxed and attentive when interacting with the puppet. One student explained: *"I feel braver talking to the puppet because it feels like talking to a friend, not a teacher. If I say something wrong, it doesn't feel embarrassing."* (Student Interview)

Another student emphasized the impact on attention and motivation: *"Usually I get sleepy when the teacher explains for a long time. But when the puppet talks, I want to listen because it's funny and different."* (Student Interview)

These accounts suggest that ventriloquism reduced affective barriers while sustaining interest, enabling students to remain emotionally present rather than disengaged.

Evidence of communicative bravery was particularly visible among students who had previously avoided speaking in class. Observation notes documented several instances in which typically silent students initiated dialogue through the puppet, often addressing it directly rather than the teacher. In one session, a student known for low verbal confidence raised her hand twice and spoke clearly to the puppet while maintaining eye contact. The observation record states: *"The student addressed the puppet directly. Her voice was steady, and classmates listened attentively without teasing. She appeared more confident than in previous sessions."* (Observation, Session 2)

Such moments illustrate how the puppet functioned as an emotional buffer, allowing students to take communicative risks without fear of social exposure. The teacher confirmed this interpretation during interviews, noting that students who were usually withdrawn became more willing to express opinions and ask questions when mediated by the puppet persona.

Beyond engagement and participation, changes were also evident in learning behavior and value internalization. Analysis of student learning journals revealed clearer and more contextualized explanations of moral concepts discussed during ventriloquism sessions. Rather than repeating textbook definitions, students frequently connected values to everyday situations. One journal entry stated: *"Amanah means being trusted. Like the puppet said, if we borrow something, we must return it even if no one is watching."* (Student Learning Journal)

Classroom observations further indicate that communicative norms modeled by the puppet were gradually adopted by students during peer interactions. During group discussions, students were observed using supportive and empathetic phrases such as *"Let's try again together"* and *"It's okay to make mistakes."* These expressions appeared verbatim in the teacher's scripted puppet dialogues, as confirmed by lesson script documents, suggesting a transfer of modeled communication ethics into student behavior.

The overall classroom atmosphere underwent a noticeable shift throughout the implementation. Observations consistently recorded laughter, relaxed facial expressions, and sustained attention across lesson segments. Students remained engaged for longer periods and showed fewer signs of emotional absenteeism. The teacher described this change reflectively: *"The puppet helps me create a warm atmosphere. Students look forward to the lesson, and even quiet students want to participate."* (Teacher Interview)

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that ventriloquism-based instruction generated observable and meaningful changes in instructional interaction, emotional safety, and value-oriented learning behavior. The convergence of observational evidence, participant voices, and instructional documents underscores the credibility of the findings and affirms ventriloquism as a pedagogically substantive practice within real classroom settings.

Table 1. Explicit Field Evidence Supporting Key Findings

Theme	Observation Evidence	Interview Evidence	Documentation Evidence
Dialogic instructional practice	Students sat upright and focused when puppet appeared	Teacher: "Students answer more honestly when the puppet asks."	Lesson plans label puppet as "dialogue partner"
Student engagement	Increased hand-raising and eye contact	Student: "I want to listen when the puppet talks."	Activity logs show sustained participation
Emotional safety	Shy students spoke through the puppet	Student: "It doesn't feel embarrassing."	Teacher reflections on reduced anxiety
Communicative bravery	Previously silent students initiated dialogue	Teacher noted increased student confidence	Observation sheets note new speakers
Value internalization	Respectful dialogue and ethical language observed	Students referenced puppet's moral messages	Learning journals include value-based reflections
Classroom atmosphere	Laughter, relaxed expressions, sustained attention	Teacher: "The class feels warmer."	Photographs and reflection notes

Discussion
Ventriloquism-Based Instruction and Multidimensional Student Engagement

The findings of this qualitative field study demonstrate that ventriloquism-based instruction functions as a pedagogical practice capable of simultaneously activating behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of student engagement. Classroom observations and interview data indicate increased voluntary participation, sustained attention, expressive affect, and reflective verbal responses during learning activities mediated by puppetry. These patterns correspond directly with the multidimensional engagement framework proposed, which conceptualizes engagement as an interrelated configuration of behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment (Fredricks et al., 2004). Unlike conventional teacher-centered instruction, ventriloquism reorganized classroom interaction by introducing an alternative communicative agent that lowered psychological barriers and redefined participation as playful, dialogic, and non-evaluative. This finding reinforces the argument that student engagement is not a fixed learner trait but a condition that emerges through pedagogical design and social interaction.

Symbolic Modeling, Self-Efficacy, and Social Learning

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, the study's findings strongly align with Bandura (1977) emphasis on observational learning, symbolic modeling, and self-efficacy development. The puppet served as a symbolic model demonstrating respectful communication, moral reasoning, and empathetic dialogue. Interview data reveal that students perceived the puppet as non-threatening and emotionally safe, which increased their willingness to speak and

ask questions. According to Bandura, learners are more likely to adopt modeled behaviors when the model is perceived as approachable and when the learning context supports mastery experiences. The emergence of communicative confidence among previously withdrawn students can thus be interpreted as increased verbal self-efficacy facilitated by indirect modeling. In this sense, ventriloquism operates as a social learning mechanism that enables behavioral change without direct evaluative pressure from the teacher.

Mediated Interaction and Sociocultural Meaning-Making

The findings are further consolidated through Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory, particularly the concepts of mediation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this study, the puppet functioned as a mediating cultural artifact that bridged abstract moral concepts and students' lived experiences. Dialogues mediated by the puppet allowed students to articulate values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness) and responsibility more clearly and contextually. This supports Vygotsky's assertion that higher-order cognitive functions develop through socially mediated interaction before being internalized individually. The gradual shift from puppet-guided dialogue to more autonomous student discussions observed across sessions indicates successful scaffolding within the ZPD, where students moved from supported participation toward independent meaning-making.

The puppet functioned as a mediating cultural artifact that bridged abstract moral principles and students' lived experiences. Rather than encountering values such as amanah (trustworthiness) and responsibility in purely textual or didactic forms, students interacted with these concepts through dialogic narratives embodied by the puppet. This mediation enabled learners to contextualize moral values within familiar social situations, making ethical reasoning more accessible and meaningful.

Dialogues mediated by the puppet created a socially supportive space in which students could articulate moral ideas with greater clarity and confidence. The puppet's role as an intermediary reduced communicative pressure and encouraged participation, allowing students to experiment with moral language and reasoning. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's assertion that higher-order cognitive functions initially emerge on the social plane before being internalized at the individual level.

The gradual shift observed across instructional sessions—from puppet-guided dialogue toward more autonomous student-led discussions—provides clear evidence of effective scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development. As students became increasingly familiar with moral concepts and dialogic patterns, the teacher's reliance on the puppet decreased, signaling a transfer of responsibility from the mediating tool to the learners themselves. This transition reflects successful pedagogical support that was progressively withdrawn as students' competence increased.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of mediated interaction in sociocultural meaning-making processes. Ventriloquism-based instruction illustrates how culturally meaningful artifacts can function as scaffolding tools that support moral reasoning, social dialogue, and internalization of values. Consequently, this approach reinforces the relevance of sociocultural theory in understanding how moral knowledge in religious education is constructed through interaction, mediation, and guided participation.

Multimodal Processing and Cognitive Load Reduction

Although ventriloquism is not a digital medium, the findings are consistent with Mayer (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. The puppet integrated verbal explanation, visual representation, narrative sequencing, and emotional cues into a cohesive instructional experience. Students' improved retention and clearer articulation of moral concepts suggest that learning occurred through dual-channel processing, in which verbal information was reinforced

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by visual and embodied representation. Mayer argues that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively integrate verbal and visual information while managing cognitive load. The puppet served as a visual anchor and narrative agent that reduced abstraction and supported the organization of moral concepts into coherent mental schemas.

The ventriloquism-based instruction integrated verbal explanation, visual representation, narrative sequencing, and emotional cues into a cohesive learning experience. Rather than presenting abstract moral concepts in isolation, the puppet contextualized values within concrete narratives and expressive gestures. This multimodal integration enabled students to process information in a more structured and accessible manner, reducing the cognitive demands associated with abstract moral reasoning and enhancing conceptual clarity.

Evidence of improved retention and clearer articulation of moral concepts among students suggests that learning occurred through effective dual-channel processing. Verbal messages conveyed through dialogue were reinforced by visual and embodied representations provided by the puppet's movements, expressions, and narrative role. This alignment between verbal and visual cues minimized extraneous cognitive load and allowed students to allocate cognitive resources toward constructing meaning rather than deciphering abstract explanations.

From a cognitive load perspective, the puppet served as a visual anchor and narrative agent that supported the organization of moral concepts into coherent mental schemas. By externalizing moral reasoning through a recognizable character, students were able to segment information, follow moral cause–effect relationships, and integrate new knowledge with prior experiences. This process aligns with Mayer's assertion that instructional design should support essential processing while avoiding unnecessary cognitive overload.

Overall, these findings suggest that multimodal, embodied instructional strategies can enhance learning effectiveness even in non-digital contexts. Ventriloquism demonstrates that multimedia learning principles are not limited to technological tools, but can be realized through pedagogical creativity that leverages narrative, embodiment, and visual symbolism. Consequently, this approach offers valuable implications for instructional design in moral and religious education, where abstract concepts often require concrete and cognitively manageable forms of representation.

Embodied Cognition and Emotional Presence

The study also strongly supports principles from Embodied Cognition theory, which posits that cognition is grounded in bodily action, sensory experience, and affective engagement (Barsalou, 2008; Shapiro, 2019). Observation data documenting students leaning forward, smiling, laughing, and maintaining prolonged attention indicate that learning was not merely symbolic but bodily experienced. These embodied responses contributed to heightened emotional presence and reduced emotional absenteeism. Moral values, therefore, were learned not only as propositional knowledge but as lived and emotionally charged experiences. This finding highlights the importance of bodily engagement in value-oriented learning contexts, particularly within moral and religious education.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

The findings suggest that ventriloquism-based instruction offers a theoretically grounded and culturally adaptable strategy for enhancing engagement and moral internalization in PAI classrooms. By modeling respectful dialogue, empathy, and reflective reasoning through an embodied and mediated format, the approach aligns with Islamic educational principles emphasizing *adab*, dialogical ethics, and moral habituation. Rather than trivializing religious content, ventriloquism provided a structured pathway for students to engage deeply with Islamic values in a psychologically safe environment.

From a pedagogical perspective, ventriloquism enables teachers to model respectful dialogue, empathy, and reflective reasoning in ways that resonate with learners' developmental stages. The mediated character functions as a moral interlocutor, allowing sensitive ethical issues to be discussed without direct personal confrontation. This aligns with constructivist learning principles, where students actively negotiate meaning, while also reducing psychological barriers such as fear of judgment or reluctance to participate in moral discussions.

Importantly, this instructional approach is highly compatible with Islamic educational principles that emphasize adab, dialogical ethics, and moral habituation (ta'dīb). The embodiment of moral messages through narrative and character interaction reflects classical Islamic pedagogical traditions that employ storytelling (qiṣṣah), exemplification (uswah), and gradual moral cultivation. In this sense, ventriloquism does not introduce foreign pedagogical elements, but rather recontextualizes established Islamic methods within contemporary classroom practices.

Contrary to concerns that such methods may trivialize religious content, the findings indicate that ventriloquism provides a structured and meaningful pathway for students to engage deeply with Islamic moral values. By creating a psychologically safe environment, students are encouraged to reflect, question, and internalize ethical principles without coercion. Therefore, ventriloquism-based instruction holds significant potential as an innovative pedagogical tool in PAI, particularly in fostering moral understanding, emotional engagement, and sustained character development.

Implications for Academic Discourse and Knowledge Construction

Beyond classroom practice, the study contributes to understanding how pedagogical research is embedded within broader academic discourse. Following Foucault (1972)conception of discourse, academic knowledge is produced and legitimized through shared conventions governing how research is written, cited, and structured. The study illustrates that theoretical grounding, coherent argumentation, and transparent presentation are not peripheral formalities but epistemic practices that shape scholarly visibility and credibility. This observation supports Swales (2011) view of academic writing as a socially situated genre shaped by disciplinary expectations.

In this sense, the study demonstrates that the structure and presentation of research are integral to epistemic legitimacy. Theoretical grounding, coherent argumentation, and methodological transparency function as discursive practices that position a study within an established scholarly field. These elements are not peripheral formalities; rather, they actively shape how research is interpreted, evaluated, and integrated into ongoing academic conversations. Without such alignment, even empirically sound studies risk marginalization within dominant knowledge regimes.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce Swales' (2011) view of academic writing as a socially situated genre shaped by disciplinary norms and rhetorical expectations. The conventions of research articles—such as the articulation of a clear research gap, engagement with authoritative literature, and systematic presentation of findings—serve as gatekeeping mechanisms within academic communities. By conforming to these conventions, scholars signal their membership in a disciplinary discourse and enhance the circulation and impact of their work.

The study also highlights the reciprocal relationship between content and form in academic knowledge production. Pedagogical innovations, such as ventriloquism-based instruction, gain scholarly legitimacy not only through their practical effectiveness but through their conceptual framing within recognized theoretical traditions. This underscores that knowledge construction in education is both empirical and discursive, requiring researchers to negotiate meaning at the intersection of practice, theory, and academic language.

Ultimately, these implications suggest that pedagogical research contributes to academic knowledge when it is consciously positioned within broader discursive structures. By attending to

issues of discourse, genre, and epistemic authority, scholars can enhance the visibility, credibility, and transformative potential of their work. Thus, the study affirms that academic writing is not merely a vehicle for reporting findings, but a central mechanism through which educational knowledge is constructed, contested, and sustained over time.

Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

For teacher education programs, the findings emphasize the importance of preparing educators to design learning environments that integrate creativity, embodiment, and dialogic interaction. This aligns with (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2019) academic literacies model, which conceptualizes learning as a socially situated practice. Training teachers to use low-cost, performative pedagogies such as ventriloquism can expand pedagogical repertoires while remaining accessible to resource-limited schools.

The primary novelty of this study lies in its empirical and theoretical positioning of ventriloquism as a legitimate instructional strategy within formal secondary education, rather than as a supplementary artistic or early childhood technique. While previous studies have examined puppetry, drama, or storytelling primarily as expressive or motivational tools, this study uniquely demonstrates how ventriloquism operates as a dialogic, embodied, and theory-consistent pedagogical mediator that simultaneously activates engagement, self-efficacy, moral reasoning, and emotional safety.

The study also contributes conceptually by integrating five major learning theories multidimensional engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), social learning (Bandura, 1977) , sociocultural mediation (Vygotsky, 1978), multimedia learning (Mayer, 2009), and embodied cognition (Barsalou, 2008) into a single explanatory framework. This theoretical convergence strengthens the validity of ventriloquism-based instruction as a pedagogical innovation and extends existing scholarship by demonstrating how low-cost, teacher-driven creative media can produce deep cognitive and moral learning outcomes.

Within PAI scholarship, this research offers a novel contribution by showing that pedagogical innovation can reinforce, rather than undermine, Islamic communicative ethics. By integrating creative performance with moral discourse, the study advances a model of religious education that is both theoretically robust and culturally grounded.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that ventriloquism-based instruction constitutes a pedagogically valid and theoretically grounded approach for strengthening interactive learning and value internalization in Islamic Education (PAI) classrooms at the secondary level. Field evidence shows that the use of puppets mediates teacher–student interaction in ways that enhance behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, reduce affective barriers, and foster dialogic participation. Within PAI contexts, the puppet functions not merely as an entertaining medium but as an instructional mediator that encourages students' courage to speak, models polite questioning, and supports empathic communication consistent with prophetic teaching practices (adab al-hiwār).

The findings are theoretically reinforced by their convergence with multidimensional engagement theory, social learning and self-efficacy theory, sociocultural mediation within the Zone of Proximal Development, multimedia learning principles, and embodied cognition perspectives. This alignment confirms that ventriloquism functions as an integrated pedagogical strategy embedded in established learning theories rather than as a peripheral or entertainment-based technique.

The study contributes novelty by positioning ventriloquism as a low-cost, teacher-driven innovation that harmonizes creative performative media with Islamic educational values. It shows that character formation, emotional engagement, and academic rigor can coexist productively in

PAI learning. Although limited to a single case study, the findings provide a foundation for future comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-method research exploring creative pedagogies in value-based education.

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