

Visualizing Spirituality as Character Education in Indonesian Grade 4 ELT Textbook

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i3.2312>

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the presentation of spirituality as a character education value in the Grade 4 ELT students' book entitled "My Next Word." Employing a qualitative content analysis design, the research analyses and examines visual artifacts presented in the student's book based on five subdimensions of spirituality, based on the dimension of faith in God Almighty of Graduate Profile Values framework. These subdimensions include spirituality in religious practice, spirituality in personal morality, spirituality in social morality, spirituality in environmental morality, and spirituality in civic morality. The findings reveal that spirituality in personal morality is the most frequently represented value in the book, reflected in visuals that emphasize discipline, cleanliness, responsibility, and self-care. This is followed by spirituality in social morality, which is evident in depictions of cooperation, respect, and helping behaviour. However, spirituality in religious practices, environmental, and civic moralities appears minimally and is not consistently highlighted throughout the book. Overall, these results indicated that the book integrated spirituality-based character education mainly through daily-life activities rather than explicit religious symbols or direct doctrinal representations, suggesting an implicit and practiced-oriented approach.

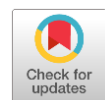
Keywords: *Character Education, Elementary School, ELT Textbook Analysis, Graduate Profile, Spirituality Value*

Article History:

Received 31st March 2026

Accepted 29th April 2026

Published 04th May 2026



INTRODUCTION

Recently, concerns about declining moral attitude among young learners have drawn increasing attention in educational discourse (Getie, 2020; Ratminingsih et al., 2020). Since character education formation is most effectively cultivated during early schooling, primary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral and social dispositions (Artini & Padmadewi, 2019; Aslan, 2024). Character education is understood as a deliberate effort to develop learners' ethical awareness, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and moral judgment in accordance with social norms and cultural values (Enizah et al., 2024; Piscayanti, 2012; Ramadhani et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, character education institutionally reinforced through the Pancasila Student Profile and, more recently, the Graduate Profile, which consist of eight dimensions, which emphasize the development of holistic learners with strong moral, social, and spiritual foundations including Faith in God Almighty as the foundation dimension that guiding students' ethical behavior and worldview (Kemendikbudristek, 2024; Permendikdasmen, 2025). The first dimension emphasizes the integration of religious awareness, moral conduct, social responsibility, and ethical behavior into students' daily lives (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018). Within this study, the value of Faith in God Almighty is operationalized through the broader concept of spirituality.

In educational contexts, spirituality extends beyond ritual religious practice. It does not merely refer to ritual worship practices but to the internalization of faith-based values manifested in personal discipline, social morality, environment responsibility, and civic awareness (Juharyanto et al., 2024). Spirituality serves as an analytical lens to examine how

faith-derived values are represented in instructional materials (Juniari et al., 2022). Thus, spirituality can be understood as a multidimensional construct that integrates belief, behavior, and social interaction. Within this study, spirituality is operationalized into five subdimensions: religious practice, personal morality, social morality, environmental morality, and civic morality.

Theoretically, character education is closely connected to moral development theory, which emphasizes habituation, modelling, and value internalization as main processes in shaping students' ethical behavior (Lickona et al., 2002; Naragatti, 2025). In language education, values are often embedded implicitly through narratives, illustrations, and classroom interaction rather than through explicit moral instruction (Artini et al., 2025; Indrayani et al., 2018). As a result, instructional materials often integrate character education, including faith-based values through visual artifacts in the form of images to construct meanings and influence learners' interpretation of moral actions.

One instructional material widely used in Indonesia is ELT textbook. ELT textbook plays a strategic role in the process learning English and faith-derived values. For young learners, textbook function not only as linguistic resources but also as cultural and moral mediators, shaping learners' perceptions of appropriate behavior and social norms (Artini, 2017; Widodo et al., 2024). Particularly in primary education, illustrated textbooks strongly influence students' interpretation of values, as visual representations often communicate implicit messages beyond textual content. Grade 4 was selected for this study because it represents an early transitional stage in elementary education, where students begin to develop more structured literacy skills while still relying heavily on visual cues (Mahayanti et al., 2020). At this level, character education can be meaningfully integrated into language learning through contextualized daily-life themes (Ratminingsih et al., 2020).

Previous studies have examined character education representation in junior and senior high school English textbooks (Mahrudin et al., 2023; Sukma et al., 2025). Another study also found character values in English textbook entitled *English on Target*, but not specifically involved Graduate profile value or spirituality value (Puteri et al., 2023). These studies indicate that faith-based values are frequently embedded in secondary-level materials. However, limited research has focused specifically on elementary-level ELT textbooks, particularly regarding how spirituality derived from Faith in God Almighty is visually represented. Considering that primary school is a foundational stage for moral formation, this gap warrants closer examination. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how spirituality as a character education values, derived from the Graduate Profile dimension of Faith in God Almighty, is presented through visual artifact in the Grade 4 ELT students' book entitled *My Next Word*.

METHOD

This current research employed qualitative content analysis as a research design to examine the representation of spirituality as a character education value, derived from the dimension of Faith in God Almighty in the Graduate Profile in ELT students' book. The research was conducted in Bali, Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). The object and the data source of this study was the English students' book for Grade 4 entitled "*My Next Word*," which was published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, Technology, Development, and Book Agency Curriculum and Book Centre in the first edition in 2021. The book consisted of 152 pages in total with 11 chapters for the first and the second semesters. The document that was used is an English student's book that contains English materials completed with visual material in each chapter.

The unit of analysis in this study was visual artifacts (VAs), including images and illustrations presented throughout the textbook. A total of 25 visual artifacts were identified as relevant data based on their representation of spirituality-related values. The analysis method in this research has five procedures for examining research objects to analyze the five sub-dimensions of spirituality, adapted from the faith in God Almighty dimension of the Graduate Profile in the student's book. These procedures were adopted by Ary et al. (2010),

which includes defining the phenomena to be analyzed, choosing the media to investigate, formulating coding categories, creating a sampling strategy, and data analysis. The first stage specified the phenomenon to be analyzed included aspects of spirituality as character education based on the value of faith in God Almighty, as outlined in the Graduate Profile value. The second stage involved selecting the media to investigate, where this research used a student's book for Grade 4 elementary school students as a medium for investigation. The third stage was formulating coding categories. This recent research has some coding categories in this step, which were formulated using each initial of the terms used to identify the visual artifact (see table 1). The fourth was selecting a sample strategy. In this step, the research data sample was taken based on the visual artifact in the selected student's book. The fifth stage was data analysis. This step aims to provide a description, interpretation, and explanation of the data that has been selected through the given criteria.

Table 1. The List of Coding Categories for Spirituality

No.	The Term	Coding Categorize
1.	SP-RP	Spirituality in Religious Practice
2.	SP-PM	Spirituality in Personal Morality
3.	SP-SM	Spirituality in Social Morality
4.	SP-EM	Spirituality in Environmental Morality
5.	SP-CM	Spirituality in Civic Morality

The coding procedure involved several steps. First, all visual artifacts in the textbook were carefully reviewed and selected based on their relevance to the concept of spirituality. Second, each visual artifact was categorized into one of the five subdimensions using predefined indicators. Third, the categorized data were tabulated and analyzed to identify patterns and frequency distribution. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied peer checking, in which the coding result were reviewed and discussed with a colleague familiar with character education and ELT materials. This process aimed to minimize subjectivity and enhance the consistency of data interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of visual artifacts in the Grade 4 ELT textbook entitled "My Next Word" indicates that spirituality as a character education value is represented across five subdimensions with varying intensity. The uneven distribution reflects the pedagogical orientation of the textbook in operationalizing the first dimension of the Indonesian Graduate Profile, namely Faith in God Almighty. This research focused only on the use of visual artifacts, henceforth VA, which are pictures or illustrations as data. The VAs analyzed is in the form of pictures. The data was selected from the fourth-grade ELT student's book for elementary school. There were twenty-five VAs found in the students' book using the framework of the Graduate Profile Value arranged by the Ministry of Education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). For more details, the data can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The Presentation of Spirituality Value in the ELT Student's Book for Grade 4 Elementary Students

No	Value of Spirituality (SP)	Unit												Quantity	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
1.	Spirituality in Religious Practice (SP-RP)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
2.	Spirituality in Personal Morality (SP-PM)	1	N/A	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	N/A	N/A	12	

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3.	Spirituality in Social Morality (SP-SM)	3	1	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	8
4.	Spirituality in Environmental Morality (SP-EM)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
5.	Spirituality in Civic Morality (SP-CM)	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
Total Unit	VA per	7	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	5	2	0	0	25

The table above presents the results of investigating the five sub-dimensions of spirituality based on the value of faith in God Almighty of the Graduate Profile from Chapter 1 to Chapter 12 in the ELT student's book. In this section, each subdimension is explained below.

Spirituality as Personal Morality

Spirituality in personal morality emerged as the most dominant subdimension. There are 12 visual artifacts found, included in Unit 1 on page 10, Unit 3 on pages 28 and 29, Unit 4 on page 36, Unit 5 on page 52, Unit 6 on page 62, Unit 7 on page 70, Unit 8 on pages 90 and 91, Unit 9 on page 98, and Unit 10 on pages 111 and 112. The visuals frequently depict students performing daily routines such as cleaning their bedrooms, maintaining personal hygiene, organizing belongings, and fulfilling responsibilities independently. These representations frame spirituality as self-discipline, responsibility, and moral-self-regulation manifested in everyday behavior (Kusuma, 2020). From character education theory perspective, this finding reflects ethical values are internalized through repeated action as moral habit formation (Lickona et al., 2002).

In educational context, spirituality is often internalized through habitual moral conduct rather than solely through ritual expression (Rahmatunnisa et al., 2024). This finding aligns with previous studies showing that elementary textbooks tend to emphasized individual moral responsibility as the foundation of character education formation (Mahrudin et al., 2023). However, the strong focus on personal discipline may also narrow spirituality to behavioral compliance rather than reflective faith awareness.

Spirituality as Social Morality

Spirituality in social morality appeared as the second frequent category. There are eight visual artifacts found included in Unit 1 on pages 3, 4, and 5; Unit 2 on page 14; Unit 4 on page 37; Unit 8 on page 88; and Unit 9 on pages 100 and 102. Visual artifacts illustrate cooperation, helping behavior, tolerance, and respectful interaction among peers. This representation reflects the relational dimension of spirituality, where faith is expressed through harmonious social engagement (Triastuti & Muchtarom, 2023). Spirituality is thus constructed as relational ethic, emphasizing empathy and mutual support, especially between students.

Such findings are also consistent with the prior research indicating that Indonesian English textbooks frequently embed moral education through socially appropriate behavior and collective values (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the representation remains largely situational and descriptive, with limited opportunities for critical reflection of moral reasoning, like moral dilemmas, conflict resolution processes, or critical ethical reflection.

Spirituality as Religious Practice

In contrast, spirituality in religious practice is minimally represented. It is only found in Unit 9 on page 101, that showed a picture of a boy doing a prayer. The limited number of

explicit worship illustrations suggests that the textbook adopts an inclusive and moderated strategy, avoiding overt theological emphasis in a linguistically oriented subject.

While this approach may support diversity and prevent exclusivity, it also reduces the visibility of direct faith practices as articulated in Graduate Profile framework (Kemendikbudristek, 2024). The minimal visual representation of religious practice indicates a shift from doctrinal spirituality to behavioral spirituality. Spirituality becomes embedded in daily routines rather than explicitly connected to devotional acts (Hasbi et al., 2023). This reflects a pedagogical translation of faith into universal moral values, yet it also raises concerns about whether the theological essence of the dimension is sufficiently represented.

Spirituality as Environmental Morality

Similarly, spirituality in environmental morality appeared in only a few visuals, such as a student watering plants in Unit 9 on page 98. Although this illustration symbolically reflects appreciation of God's creations, the representation remains concrete and action-based without broader environmental discourse.

Environmental care as a manifestation of spiritual awareness has been emphasized in character education literature (Farida et al., 2022). Yet its limited presence in the textbook suggests that ecological spirituality is not strongly integrated within English learning materials at this level. Limited frequency also suggests that ecological actions is not yet a central focus within English learning materials. Moreover, the absence of contextual explanation means that students may interpret the act merely as routine school behavior rather than as spiritually grounded environmental stewardship.

Spirituality as Civic Morality

Spirituality in civic morality also minimally represented, there are three visual artifacts found Unit 1 on pages 1, 4, and 5. Its showed mainly through visuals related to cultural appreciation like traditional clothing, and national identity (Saylendra et al., 2023). These images symbolically connect spirituality with citizenship and cultural respect. However, the representation remains symbolic rather than dialogic, lacking deeper contextualization that explicitly link civic responsibility with spiritual foundations. The absence of contextualized narratives linking faith with civic responsibility limits the depth of interpretation.

From the lens of textbook ideology, such symbolic representation may function to align spiritual values with national identity without critically engaging student in understanding the relationship between faith and civic engagement (Naragatti, 2025). Thus, spirituality is presented as harmonious connection with cultural identity rather than as active moral participation in society.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that *"My Next Word"* predominantly constructs spirituality through implicit moral behaviors embedded in daily-life contexts rather than explicit religious or theological representation. This strategy may be developmentally appropriate for Grade 4 learners, who benefit from concrete visual examples (Artini, 2017). However, the imbalance across subdimensions indicates that spirituality is framed primary as personal and social discipline, while religious, environmental, and civic dimensions receive limited attention. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in mediating and expanding these values during classroom instruction to ensure a more holistic integration aligned with the Graduate Profile framework.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that spirituality in *"My Next Word"* is predominantly constructed through visual representation of daily moral behavior rather than explicit religious practices. Spirituality in personal morality and social morality are strongly emphasized, while spirituality in religious practices, environmental morality, and civic morality dimensions receive limited visualization in the textbook. This pattern shows that spirituality in the textbook is embedded implicitly within routine activities, which reflect a pedagogical strategy that prioritized behavioral modelling over overt religious symbolism. Such an approach may

support young learners' developmental needs, but it risks limiting students' understanding of spirituality as a holistic concept that integrates faith, reflection, and broader social responsibility. Therefore, a more balanced representation across all subdimensions is needed to fully align with the intended goals of the Graduate Profile framework. For educational practice, teachers are encouraged to play an active role in mediating and expanding the representation of spirituality found in textbooks, particularly by providing additional explanations, discussions, and contextualization. Future textbook design should incorporate a more comprehensive integration of spirituality, including religious practice, environmental, and civic dimensions for material developers. Future research is also recommended to extend this study by analyzing multiple ELT textbooks, incorporating both visual and textual elements, and exploring how spirituality is implemented in actual classroom practices.

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