

Integrating *Hiem* Aceh Ice Breakers in Islamic Religious Education: Impact on Student Engagement and Challenges

Sulhan Yus¹, Jarjani Usman², Zulfatmi³, Muji Mulia⁴, Zubaidah⁵

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia; 241003004@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia; jarjani@ar-raniry.ac.id

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia; zulfatmi.budiman@ar-raniry.ac.id

⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia; muji.mulia@ar-raniry.ac.id

⁵ Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia; zubaidah@ar-raniry.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Hiem, a form of Acehnese oral tradition rich in riddles and local wisdom, is gradually being forgotten by the younger generation. Revitalizing this tradition through education offers opportunities to enhance students' cognitive abilities, linguistic skills, and cultural identity. This study explores the impact and challenges of integrating Acehnese *hiem*-based ice breakers into Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning. This qualitative field study was conducted at SDN Trans Despot Leungah, Aceh Besar. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, documentation, and post-test assessments. The sample consisted of 30 respondents, including teachers and students selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed through thematic categorization following verification and triangulation. Findings indicate that the use of *hiem*-based ice breakers significantly increased student engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm during IRE lessons. Students demonstrated improved Acehnese language proficiency and better learning outcomes. Teachers and students positively perceived the integration of local cultural content into classroom activities. However, a notable challenge was language diversity; not all students were fluent in Acehnese, necessitating differentiated instructional strategies. The implementation of *hiem*-based ice breakers not only enhanced classroom interaction and student focus but also served as an effective tool to preserve and transmit Acehnese cultural heritage within formal education. While the impact is promising, broader application requires pedagogical adjustments to accommodate linguistic diversity and curriculum integration.

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Corresponding Author:

Sulhan Yus

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh; 241003004@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

In the implementation of optimal learning, the use of ice breaker techniques is very useful and efficient in increasing enthusiasm and preventing boredom from students during the implementation of learning activities. According to M. Said, ice breakers are games or activities that serve to change the atmosphere of ice in a forum. With the aim that the learning process becomes more directed, vibrant, and effective (Said, 2010). Not much different, Syam Mahfud said that ice breakers are short exercises used during activities to help students get to know each other and feel comfortable in their new environment. Usually humorous in nature, the hobby is sometimes in the form of easy game activities (Siswanto & Wahida, 2022). Ice breakers are very useful in increasing learners' sense of exploration in new things for them, in accordance with Vygotsky's social learning theory which says that, early childhood education can develop innovative thinking that will continue to explore new ideas in art, science, and culture in general (Smolucha & Smolucha, 2021). So the application of icebreakers is needed to support the successful implementation of learning.

In the local culture of people in Indonesia, there are several forms of oral literature, including *pantun*, *gurindam*, poetry, proverb (*pribahasa*), proverb (*pepatah*), and riddle (traditional question). Riddles are one of the unique oral literature because in addition to being used as a medium for "sharpening the brain", it is also used as an effective means of da'wah in spreading the teachings of Islam (Fernando et al., 2023) and entertainment in leisure time. This form of oral literature (traditional riddles) is found in several regions in Indonesia, one of which is in Aceh Province. In the daily life of the people in Aceh Province, there is oral literature in the form of traditional riddles, namely *Hiem* (Harun, 2012). The response to *Hiem* is the result of one's intelligence and *Hiem* is a component of the thinking process for the purpose of teaching and learning, *Hiem* is developed by intelligent individuals with abundant resources. As such, creating a *Hiem* is more than just identifying flaws in other individuals. Religious knowledge, psychology, Sufism, logic (manthek), cultural information, and other knowledge, if needed, should all be incorporated into the production of a high-quality *Hiem* (Hamzah, 2004). Acehnese *Hiem* has many variations and characteristics. In general, Acehnese *Hiem* is classified into 4 (four) classifications, namely: based on the number of lines, short length, content and distinctiveness or poetic license (Harun, 2015).

Ice Breaker is an activity that can be done by a teacher in the implementation of learning, with the aim of breaking the ice or boredom in the classroom in order to restore a conducive, cheerful, not boring and vibrant classroom situation (Deswanti et al., 2020; Harianja & Sapri, 2022). Ice Breakers can also be interpreted as games or actions that serve to change the atmosphere of the classroom. Ice Breakers must contain familiarity, correspondence, cooperation, creativity, not tiring and can help students get motivated or refocus on learning (Fajarudin et al., 2021; Zakiyyah et al., 2022). The application of ice breakers is needed as an effort to restore good interactions between teachers and students, because learning is a collaborative process that occurs through social interactions (Kent & Rechavi, 2020). This is in line with Vygotsky's social learning theory, which says that interaction with more knowledgeable people (teachers) can increase students' cognitive development to a higher level (Ivanov, 2018; Smolucha & Smolucha, 2021). In using ice breakers, which have a very wide variety and types, teachers must ensure that the ice breakers given to students are in accordance with the age group or subject matter being given. Here are some collections of ice breakers that are often used in learning, namely; Ice Breaker fun story (Partovi & Wyness, 2022), Ice Breaker song (Pearce et al., 2015), clapping ice breaker, charades ice breaker, folk game ice breaker, brain gym ice breaker (Siswanto & Wahida, 2022), humorous ice breaker (Erdoğan & Çakiroğlu, 2021; Miller et al., 2017), numbers ice breaker (Cohen, 2014), stand-up comedy ice breaker (Kurniasih et al., 2018).

However, currently, the icebreaker techniques used by teachers tend to be techniques that have been used very often. Thus, it becomes mediocre for students. The purpose of using ice breaker techniques which initially aims to break the deadlock in the implementation of learning does not occur, because students are not distracted from the ice breaker techniques used by the teacher because they have heard or seen the ice breaker technique too often, so that students experience boredom and fatigue in learning (Jandrić et al., 2020), which results in poor quality of the learning process. The use of local culture-based

ice breaker techniques is still very rarely used, even though the use of local culture-based ice breakers, in addition to making it easier for students to understand the purpose of implementing ice breakers, can also help students recognize the local cultures around them, which along with the times, have begun to be forgotten by the nation's successors. The use of local culture-based ice breaker techniques can help activities to preserve local cultures that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Previous studies have explored the effectiveness of ice breaker techniques in various aspects of education, such as enhancing student motivation (Angelina & Rocmah, 2024; Dewi & Fadlillah, 2023; Eltahir et al., 2021; Fatihani et al., 2024; Haryati & Puspitaningrum, 2023; Nuryana & Sunardin, 2020; Wana et al., 2024), improving concentration and enthusiasm for learning (Remma et al., 2022; Sa'diyah & Suhaimy, 2023; Yusniarti et al., 2022), and increasing student achievement and learning outcomes (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Paradita et al., 2021; Pujiarti, 2022; Wurjani et al., 2019; Yanti & Putri, 2020). Other researchers have examined the use of local wisdom-based ice breakers to build students' self-confidence (Zain et al., 2021), as well as their impact on linguistic development and creative thinking skills (Partovi & Wyness, 2022; Ramadhanta et al., 2024; Yeganehpour, 2017). Collectively, these studies affirm the positive and effective role of ice breaker techniques in fostering student engagement, participation, and emotional involvement in the learning process (Xu et al., 2020).

This study differentiates itself from prior research by implementing ice breaker techniques grounded specifically in Acehnese local culture. While previous investigations have employed techniques derived from Sasak traditions or generalized strategies commonly found in educational resources, this research emphasizes the integration of *Hiem Aceh*—a culturally specific form of expression—within the context of Islamic Religious Education. The significance of this research lies not only in its pedagogical innovation but also in its cultural relevance. In an era when traditional local wisdom is increasingly marginalized (Lestari & Bahri, 2024), integrating culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) has been shown to enhance learning outcomes and foster deeper connections between students and their communities (Anlimachie et al., 2025; Kulkarni et al., 2020). Moreover, this approach contributes to the preservation and revitalization of Acehnese cultural heritage for future generations (Kartika & Mulyadi, 2024).

Based on the aforementioned context, this study aims to investigate the impact of integrating *hiem aceh* ice breakers in Islamic religious education on student engagement and challenges. The main objective is to examine both the effects and challenges of using *Hiem Aceh*-based ice breaker techniques in the teaching and learning Islamic Religious Education.

2. METHODS

The research method used in this research is a field study with a qualitative approach, data collected through interviews, observation, documentation and giving post-test questions (Harper et al., 2020; Matta, 2022). The administration of post-test questions is given to measure the level of student learning outcomes after the application of Aceh *hiem*-based ice breakers in Islamic Religious Education learning, without giving pre-test questions, to find out whether or not there is an increase in student learning outcomes. Researchers compare the scores of students in Islamic Religious Education teachers with the scores obtained after giving post-test questions. Giving post-test questions in the form of multiple choice and an essay. The scoring system is done simply by looking at the increase in student learning outcomes before and after the *Hiem Aceh*-based ice breaker technique is applied.

Qualitative research is applied because it is exploratory (Wolf et al., 2020) and can collect diverse data (Clouder et al., 2022), so it is very relevant to the objectives of this study. The population in this study were all individuals at SDN Trans Despot Leungah Aceh Besar, totaling 46 people, sampling using a purposive sampling technique where the researcher determines for himself who the respondents are in accordance with the research objectives simply and purposefully (Kinde et al., 2021; Salifu, 2022). The sample in this study amounted to 30 people, consisting of the principal, Islamic religious education teacher and several students. There are no specific criteria that researchers do in selecting students for the application of ice breakers based on *Hiem Aceh*; researchers fully submit the

selection of students for the application of hiem aceh-based ice breakers to the teacher concerned. This research was conducted in early December 2024.

In analyzing the data, researchers first verified the data that had been obtained from various sources, both from interviews, observations, documentation and post-test results. The data that has been obtained is important to verify its accuracy in order to obtain accurate data (Themner, 2022). After the data obtained has been verified, the researcher then categorizes the data into two groups, namely, first, data that reveals the impact of the application of Aceh heim-based ice breakers and second, data that reveals the challenges of applying Aceh heim-based ice breakers. After the data is grouped according to the research focus, the researcher will present the final results of the research in descriptive form. In brief, the qualitative data analysis process goes through three stages: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing (Ojeh et al., 2023).

The research stage procedure starts from identifying problems, collecting theories, identifying variables, conducting research, processing data, analyzing, and reporting results. In detail can be seen in the figure below.



Figure 1. Data Analysis Stages

In conducting research related to the application of Aceh *Hiem* based ice breaker techniques. Researchers have collected several Aceh *Hiems* with various types, generally Aceh *Hiems* that are suitable and in accordance with the abilities of elementary level students, here are some of the Aceh *Hiems*:

- *Hiem-hiem hom, bue sikai punoh kanot, peu?*
(Hiem-hiem hom, rice a little full of pot, what?)
- *Boh amplam 5 boeh rhet lam krueng, 2 boeh thoe 4 boeh basah, peu?*
(Five mangoes fell in the river, 2 dry, 4 wet, what?)
- *Guda plang rhet dilanget, peu?*
(white horse falls from the sky, what?)
- *Dijak meuranjoe-ranjoe, dimee lham saboh sapoe, peu?*
(go together, bring their own hoes, what??)
- *Jidong meubanja-banja, tika duk saboh sapoe, peu?*
(stand in rows, bring each mat, what?)
- *Bak sibak, oen sioen, meribee thon han mala-mala, peu?*
(one stem, one leaf, it doesn't wilt for thousands of years, what?)
- *Bak disanan, oen disanan, boeh disanan, bak ujong boeh meubalek nan, peu?*
(The trunk has the same name, the leaves have the same name, the fruit has the same name, at the end of the fruit the name is different, what??)
- *Ek glee, tren glee, merumpok gajah meukudeu, peu?*
(climb tha mountain, down a mountain, meeting an elephant with a mange, what?)
- *Apui hue bak ujong ranteng, peu?*
(fire burning on the tip of a branch, what?)
- *Apui hue lam tanoh, peu?*

(fire burning in the ground, what?)

- *Ek glee, tren glee, merumpok rumoh meukee-ukee, peu?*
(climb the mountain, go down the mountain, meet the carved house, what?)

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

All data presented in this section is data obtained from interviews, observations, documentation and previous literature searches that are relevant to the objectives of this study.

3.1. Aceh Hiem And Islamic Education

When we talk about Acehese culture and literature, it will not be separated from the values of Islam (Birchok, 2020). Given that Islam is the majority religion in Aceh, it is not surprising that Acehese literature contains teachings, knowledge, or messages related to Islamic teachings, these messages can be contained in hadih maja (Syahputera et al., 2024), hikayat prang sabi (Sari et al., 2022), and hiem (Harun, 2015). Hiem Aceh is one of the Acehese literatures that still exists today. Hiem Aceh has long been used to educate, entertain (Amat, 2024) and as a means of interaction for the people of Aceh when they are gathered or at certain traditional ceremonies such as weddings (Kana et al., 2022). Currently, the use of Hiem Aceh is very rare and almost forgotten by the people of Aceh, its use may only be used in certain situations, so it is only ceremonial.

Islamic Religious Education itself is an education that is strongly guided by the Qur'an and Sunnah (Nurhadi, 2020). The main purpose of Islamic education is to teach students to have aqidah and morals in order to become a person who is faithful and pious and useful in the social environment (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024; Kosim et al., 2023; Nasir et al., 2024). Islamic education is a lifelong education (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021) for every Muslim, because studying knowledge basically has no limit as long as Allah SWT gives time. According to Al-Ghazali, Islamic education is very important in fostering the changing morals of mankind, sometimes they get the urge to do evil and at other times get the urge to do good, Islamic education is needed by humans to fortify them when there is an urge to do evil (Mobarak, 2022).

3.2. Teachers' and Students' Knowledge of Hiem Aceh

Based on the results of interviews with 27 students, the researcher found that 20 students already knew what was called *Hiem* and the rest said they did not know anything about *Hiem* Aceh. All students said that the teacher never utilized *Hiem* Aceh in the implementation of Islamic religious education learning or in other subjects.

"We were never introduced to what Hiem Aceh was by our teachers. Not only by the Islamic education teacher, but all teachers at SDN Trans Despot Leungah".

This finding was confirmed based on interviews with two Islamic religious education teachers. Teachers admitted that they never thought of utilizing the ice breaker technique based on *Hiem* Aceh.

"True, we as teachers have never introduced Hiem Aceh to our students, nor utilized it in the learning process, because usually we only use common ice breaker techniques, such as; singing or yelling, guessing sounds, playing claps, guessing words, guessing numbers, and others".

For this reason, the principal and Islamic religious education teachers strongly support the objectives of this research and hope that this research will be the first step in the utilization of *Hiem* Aceh based ice breakers in Islamic religious education learning.

3.3. The Impact of Implementing Hiem Aceh Based Ice Breaker Technique in Islamic Religious Education Learning

After the researchers applied the Aceh hiem-based ice breaker technique in learning Islamic Religious Education at SDN Trans Despot Leungah. Researchers found that there were several impacts that could be seen when and after the Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breaker was applied.

As for the positive impact in the application of Aceh *Hiem* based ice breakers, namely; students are more excited and motivated in learning after being given Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breaker techniques, this finding is in line with what was conveyed by (Eltahir et al., 2021; Remma et al., 2022; Wana et al., 2024) that the application of ice breakers can increase enthusiasm and motivate students in participating in the teaching and learning process. Then the application of Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breakers can maximize student learning outcomes, this can be proven by giving pre-test and post-test to students, the results show the development of student learning outcomes before and after the application of Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breakers, this finding is supported by previous research (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Pujiarti, 2022). Which explained that the application of ice breakers can maximize student learning outcomes. The application of ice breakers based on *Hiem* Aceh can also foster student confidence in the learning process, this is supported by the findings of (Zain et al., 2021) which prove that the application of ice breakers based on local wisdom *rensing rajak* can arouse student confidence.

Furthermore, the application of Aceh *Hiem* based ice breakers is also able to foster students' creative thinking, because students are required to be able to make and answer *Hiems* given by teachers and peers, this is supported by (Ramadhanta et al., 2024) who utilize ice breakers in fostering students' creative thinking. The application of Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breakers also affects the involvement of positive emotions between students and teachers, positive emotions and good mental health in students can optimize good academic results for students, as described by (Stifter et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2020) who argue that positive emotions and mental health in students can support optimal academic results. The application of Acehnese *Hiem* based ice breakers can also prevent student boredom in the classroom, this can occur because students interested in the Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breaker, this finding is in line with what was said by (Desmidar et al., 2021; Nasution et al., 2024) who said that the application of ice breakers can eliminate student boredom in the learning process.

The application of *Hiem* Aceh based ice breakers can also facilitate students in interacting with peers, *Hiem* Aceh which uses Aceh language is the mother tongue or first language of students in daily interactions, so it is very influential in strengthening relationships and kinship between students and teachers in the learning process. When students feel a sense of connection with their friends and teachers, this can support an optimal, active and effective learning process, this finding is supported by (Allen et al., 2021; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021) who explained that a sense of connection in a group can facilitate interaction and tend to have stable mental health.

Finally, the researcher found that the application of Aceh *Hiem* based ice breakers can increase students' linguistic abilities, especially the addition of Acehnese vocabulary, where there are vocabulary in Aceh *Hiem* pronunciation that are very rarely used in everyday life, so that with the application of Aceh *Hiem*-based ice breakers, students can use new Acehnese vocabulary in their interactions in everyday life. This finding is in line with what was conveyed by (Yeganehpour, 2017) which revealed the development of students' language after being given ice breaker activities. Students' verbal development will also be supported by an increase in students' cognitive abilities, in accordance with Vygotsky's theory which says that children's verbal behavior will influence their cognitive development (Ivanov, 2018).

Before implementing the Aceh hiem-based ice breaker, based on the results of observations and interviews, researchers found that in the process of learning Islamic Religious Education students were easily bored, tired, not confident, did not have creative thinking, were unable to control their emotions, did not have a sense of connection with the teacher, Aceh language skills were still less qualified and student learning outcomes were not good. For this reason, we can conclude that the application of ice breakers based on hiem Aceh in learning Islamic Religious Education at SDN Trans Despot Leungah

has an extraordinary impact and beyond the expectations of the researchers themselves. It is the hope of researchers that the application of *hiem Aceh* can be continued not only in Islamic education learning, but also other subjects, by creating more *hiem Aceh*, so that students do not feel bored if the *hiem Aceh* given is the same every day.

3.4. Challenges of Implementing Hiem Aceh-based Ice Breaker Technique in Islamic Religious Education Learning

The challenges in implementing ice breaker techniques can be divided into 2 (two), namely internal and external obstacles. Internal challenges in the implementation of ice breaker techniques can be in the form of, for example, lack of teacher mastery of ice breaker types, lack of teacher creativity, no variation in the use of ice breakers, students do not respond to the ice breakers given (Abbas et al., 2022), student concentration, increasing student interest, and student achievement (Anisaturrahma. et al., 2024). And the challenges of using ice breaker techniques from the outside can be such as, inadequate school facilities / infrastructure, no ice breaker-based soft skills training, a learning environment that is not interactive, and not fun (Marzatifa et al., 2021).

In the application of *Aceh Hiem* based ice breakers, researchers found several challenges, obstacles and problems during the application of *Aceh Hiem* based ice breakers at SDN Trans Despot Leungah, these obstacles include; students cannot provide answers related to the *Hiem* that the teacher gives, students cannot reply to the *Hiem* given by the teacher, students do not know the vocabulary in the *Hiem* given by the teacher, and time constraints, because basically ice breakers are only as a distraction in overcoming student silence. To overcome the above challenges, researchers tried to map the causes of the emergence of the above challenges, and the results of the researcher's investigation found that, students who were not fully able to respond to the *hiem* given by the researcher were students whose home Acehnese was the second language after Indonesian or other regional languages, so that some of these students had problems understanding the *hiem* given, because they were not accustomed to speaking Acehnese at home. Related to this problem, the researcher gave advice to the Islamic Religious Education teacher to provide ice breakers other than *Aceh hiem*-based. This is taken to not force students who do not speak *Aceh* to understand the *Aceh hiem*. This is also a form of tolerance and mutual respect between students and students, or between teachers and students.

Researchers only found a few previous studies that discussed challenges or problems in the application of ice breakers, including research conducted by (Marzatifa et al., 2021) which revealed that the challenge in applying ice breakers is a learning environment that is not interactive and not fun. Then research conducted by (Abbas et al., 2022) found challenges in the application of ice breakers in the form of not all students are suitable for the ice breakers the teacher provides.

3.5. Perceptions of Teachers and Students After the Application of Hiem Aceh-Based Ice Breakers in Islamic Religious Education Learning

After learning and providing ice breakers based on *Hiem Aceh* in Islamic education learning was carried out, the researcher again interviewed the Islamic education teacher and several students who were sampled in this study, in order to find out their opinions regarding the use of *Hiem Aceh*-based ice breakers. The students said:

"Hiem Aceh based ice breakers are fun, interesting, and easy to understand. Although there were some Acehnese hiems that we couldn't answer. This is something new for us, and hopefully this will be maintained and also applied to other subjects."

Islamic religious education teachers who researchers interviewed also gave a positive response regarding the utilization of *Hiem Aceh*-based ice breakers in Islamic religious education learning. An Islamic Religious Education teacher, said:

“This is an extraordinary thing and should be appreciated. The utilization of local wisdom in addition to local content subjects is a very useful breakthrough. As we all know, the current curriculum no longer includes local content subjects. So this is also a concern for us so far, considering the changing times that are increasingly unstoppable at this time, there are already quite a lot of Acehese vocabulary that is starting to disappear and be forgotten by the Acehese people themselves, this is certainly very worrying and efforts are needed to find solutions related to this problem. For this reason, efforts to maintain the values of local wisdom in the realm of educational institutions are an effort that must be made, not only in Hiem Aceh, but also in other Acehese local wisdom”.

From the perception of Islamic education teachers and students of SDN Trans Despot Leungah regarding the application of ice breakers based on Hiem Aceh in Islamic education learning is an indicator that shows how Acehese local culture is starting to be forgotten in the environment of everyday life. This is certainly a warning to every individual Acehese community to be able to revive Acehese local wisdom in everyday life. This research is expected to spark enthusiasm to preserve Acehese culture, not only in Hiem Aceh, but also in other local cultures.

Given the strong Islamic values in Aceh since the royal era. So, it is not surprising that Aceh's local wisdom has a close relationship with Islamic values, one of which is Hiem Aceh. Hiem Aceh is very useful in developing and sharpening children's critical thinking intelligence, in addition to instilling Islamic values in the younger generation. The utilization of Hiem Aceh in the application of ice breakers is one step in reintroducing Acehese cultures that have begun to be forgotten and abandoned. For this reason, although the application of ice breakers based on hiem Aceh in learning Islamic education still has obstacles or challenges, the impact caused by the application of ice breakers based on hiem Aceh in learning Islamic education shows extraordinary results. This application must be continued with a little evaluation and adjustment, because not all students know or understand what hiem Aceh is. Therefore, it is our duty to continue to preserve the local wisdom of our respective regions in order to keep it from extinction.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering the declining use of local languages in Indonesia, including Acehese, researchers are moved to get involved in various efforts to preserve local wisdom, especially the traditional oral sphere. One of the causes of the decline in the use of Acehese language is educational policies that do not support the preservation of local wisdom or the application of teaching modules that do not contain local wisdom values. For this reason, educational institutions should contribute to the preservation of local wisdom values, one of which is by utilizing ice breakers based on hiem Aceh in Islamic religious education learning. This research focuses on the impact and challenges of implementing Hiem Aceh-based ice breakers in learning Islamic religious education. The results showed that the impact of the application of Hiem Aceh-based ice breakers on Islamic religious education learning showed quite positive results and helped in the implementation of learning and as a forum for preserving local culture to the next generation. Then, the challenge in the application of ice breakers based on Hiem Aceh is where there are some students who find it difficult to answer related to Hiem that has been given by the teacher, so that the purpose of ice breakers which was originally as an ice breaker instead became an ice breaker. The utilization of the local wisdom of the hiem tradition has considerable implications for the progress of educational institutions as the last bastion in instilling local wisdom to students. This research is limited only to the utilization of Hiem Aceh in ice breakers, currently, researchers are developing P5 teaching modules on the theme of local wisdom based on *Hiem Aceh*. Other researchers can further examine educational institutions' contribution to preserving the local wisdom of each region in Indonesia.

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