

# Relationship between Memorization Technique, Mastery of the Arabic Language and Understanding of the Qur'an

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**Abstract:** Although Huffaz (those who memorize the entire Qur'an) in Indonesia are certified to have memorized the whole Quran upon graduation, the majority are not able to fully interpret (Tafsir) its meaning. This could be related to the methods applied for memorizing the Text. This study aimed to identify the most common method used by respondents in memorizing the Qur'an, to analyze the differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization based on gender, to examine the relationships between respondents' score for Tafsir and Qur'an memorization. Respondents were students at Ma'had Tahfiz Al-Qur'an at Prenduan Indonesia. A questionnaire survey was employed for data collection. Besides that, the examination scores for Qur'an memorization (Tahfiz) and for Tafsir were also collected and analyzed to address the second and third research questions. Descriptive analyses, independent sample t-test and Pearson correlation were conducted to support evidences. Findings showed that four memorization techniques: *Wahdah*, *Kitabah*, *Sima'i*, and *Jama'* were applied by respondents, the most common method being the *Wahdah* method. The study found a significant difference in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization between male and female respondents. It also found that the relationship between respondents' scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an memorization is statistically significant. The study concludes that by studying Tafsir, Huffaz could improve the understanding of the Qur'an which should be the ultimate aim in memorizing the text. Huffaz should not only expect to gain rewards while reciting the Qur'an but to be able to apply the teachings from the revelation in daily life.

**Keywords:** Tahfiz, Tafsir, Wahdah, Kitabah, Sima'i, Jama'

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## Introduction

Historically, memorizing the Qur'an in Indonesia takes place in Pondok Pesantren Tahfiz. Indonesia established the first educational institution to conduct the *tahfiz* program in 1909. After the National Competition for Reciting the Holy Qur'an (*Musabaqah Tilawah al-Qur'an* or MTQ) in 1981, the number of Pondok Pesantren Tahfiz Al-Qur'an has increased in many regions across Indonesia (Fathoni, 2012). Unfortunately, most of the Pondok Pesantren Tahfiz from the beginning of their establishment until now, their curricula are only focusing on the memorization of the text. Sternberg (2003) stated on educational institutions that emphasize rote learning only promote recital and repetition rather than thinking skills which require skillful analysis, evaluation, and interpretation. Furthermore, Westwood (2004) states that rote learning encourages students to commit to memory information which is not understood and has no functional value, where information stored is not easily retrieved and is also easily forgotten. To solve that problem, understanding should be prioritized because it is more significant to help respondents to apply the Qur'anic teachings in real life context. To achieve this, it is necessary that Tafsir be added to the curriculum, in order that the meaning be easily understood.

The teaching and learning involved in the memorization of the Qur'an should not deny the integration of other subjects related with the Qur'anic sciences. The teaching system too will give more benefit if there is no dichotomy in these subjects. Therefore, curriculum integration of the two or more disciplines of knowledge is necessary. In this study, the researcher conducted the study in Islamic Boarding School of Al-Amien Prenduan, Madura, Indonesia, which has already integrated three disciplines of knowledge, namely *Tahfiz* Al-Qur'an, Arabic Language, and interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsir*). In this study, the above three components are considered as one of the memorization techniques to understand the Qur'an.

According to Al-Hafidz (2005), the techniques practiced in the most of Pondok Pesantren Tahfiz in Indonesia include:

- i. *Wahdah* method, is memorizing the Qur'an one verse at a time. The term *wahdah* is derived from the Arabic word, "wahid", which means one. This method teaches respondents to memorize every single

verse, one by one. The step is the verse is read ten times or more. So, this procedure will proceed in shaping the shadow. After the verse has been fluently memorized, it could be continued to memorize the next verse until to the end of a page. This method requires memorizing well on one page in one day until the tongue could naturally produce the Qur'an from pure memory.

ii. *Kitabah* method is memorizing the verse through writing. This alternative method is also used to memorize the Qur'an. Using this method, the student takes the first step of memorizing that is conducted by writing and secondly memorizes the verse which he had written. Then, those verses must be fluently memorized without any mistake upon its recitation.

iii. *Sama'i* method is memorizing through listening. It is to memorize the verse by listening to the teacher's reading. This method is very effective especially for someone who has strong memory. This method is very appropriate especially for those who have weak visualization, the illiterate and young children who are not familiar with the recitation of the Qur'an.

iv. *Jama'* method. It is a method of memorizing the Qur'an which is performed by students and teachers collectively. They together recite and memorize the Qur'an at the same time and place.

Al-Amien Prenduan has also practiced the above methods as methods that commonly used for memorizing the Qur'an. In practice, students at MA. Tahfidh Al-Qur'an Al-Amien Prenduan choose a method on the basis of its suitability which is used to ease them in memorizing the Qur'an. Other reasons for choosing a specific method include: it helped to strengthen and it is more enjoyable in the process of memorization.

It is a common practice at Islamic boarding school (pondok) in Indonesia to have male and female students. Therefore, this study also wanted to see whether there is difference in gender to implement those techniques. As a result, finding of differences in gender were hoped to be useful in designing and improving the curriculum which should integrate subjects such as Tahfiz al-Qur'an and Tafsir.

Meanwhile, to succeed in the goal of memorizing 30 chapters and understanding the Qur'an, curriculum at this pondok made responsibilities for respondents and teachers to practice Arabic language as a medium of instruction and to use it as the first language in daily communication inside of pondok. Hariyadi (2012) stated that the success of teaching Arabic in Al-Amien Preduan Islamic Boarding School, Madura, started by teaching vocabulary. According to him, the way how to teach vocabulary is that students are introduced to some vocabularies, and then they are taught how to make a sentence. After the respondents understood how to make a sentence, the teacher commands respondents to practice in the daily activities among inside of Pondok. Samah (2009) stated that good language relies on the use of vocabulary. Through vocabulary, it will highlight the meaning of uttered words so that it could be understood. Therefore, to master foreign language proficiency is how we use vocabulary. Thus, speaking in a foreign language will not be achieved unless there is a sufficient vocabulary when interacting. The vocabulary must be memorized, and marked. It is also how to using it for the purpose of enriching the vocabulary.

In addition, Omar (1996) stated that the type of words commonly used in daily speech will help students to master the vocabulary. He opined that, in the next time, it will increase the mastery of Arabic according to the level and interests of the respondents. Moreover, Haskanbancha (1995) stated that in his analysis of the teaching Arabic conversation among Thailand's respondents, he stated that to study Arabic, it should be emphasized on teaching vocabulary; and vocabulary itself should be prioritized on expressing in more complex sentences. This is because the vocabulary is an important factor that affects the ability of the respondents in their conversation.

Similarly, al-Naqah (1985) described that the need for proficiency in a foreign language is by mastering the vocabulary. He argued that the mastery of vocabulary is the first step in mastering a foreign language; it is because the vocabulary is a tool that brings meaning and rules for thinking. With vocabulary, someone is able to think, and then translate his thoughts into sentences in order to deliver meaning of what he speaks. Typically, the vocabulary can be achieved by listening and reading, speaking and writing. This indicates that vocabulary should be learned through sentences and expressions

## **The Present Study**

The primary purposes of this study are to identify the most common method used by respondents in memorizing the Qur'an. It is also aimed to analyse the differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization, based on gender, and to examine the relationships between respondents' score for Tafsir and Qur'an memorization. It explored how students at MA. Tahfiz al-Qur'an implemented the curriculum of Tahfiz and Tafsir Program in order to gain better insight into the implementation and practice of memorization techniques and understanding the Qur'an. Therefore, in this study, the researcher will try to see whether there are relationships between memorization techniques, in this case is the teaching Qur'anic memorization which is integrated with Arabic language and interpretation (Tafsir). Specifically, it aims to find answers to the following research questions: 1) What is the most common method used by respondents in memorizing the Qur'an? 2) Are there any differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization between male and female respondents? 3) Is there any relationship between respondents' scores for Tafsir and Qur'an memorization?

## **Methodology**

The four methods of memorizing the Qur'an would be investigated as they might be applied by the sampled respondents. The populations of this study are about 110 respondents, 37 students from class three of MA. Tahfidh Al-Qur'an Al-Amien Prenduan, Madura are selected as study sample. The class comprised of eighteen (18) male and nineteen (19) female respondents. A total of these thirty seven (37) respondents gave a sample size of about one third of the total population. This sample size is statistically acceptable to draw conclusion from. But, further generalization must be carefully addressed. The research instrument of questionnaire survey is used to collect primary data from respondents. To analyze the data, researcher used SPSS version 18. Descriptive statistics is used to identify the most common method used by respondents in memorizing the Qur'an, independent-samples t-test would be employed to analyze the differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization between male and female respondents. Meanwhile, Pearson correlations used to examine the relationships

between respondents' scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an memorization.

## **Findings and discussion**

The first research question was "What is the most common method used by respondents in memorizing the Qur'an?" To answer this research question, respondents were asked to reply to the four (4) methods they were taught and normally used in memorizing the Qur'an, namely Wahdah, Kitabah, Sima'i, and Jama' methods. The respondents were asked to categorize their response according to functions (to ease memorization; to strengthen memorization) and to reveal the method they (most preferred and most pleased).

### ***Techniques for Easing Memorization of the Qur'an***

With respect to the first objective of this study, it is concluded that there are two methods widely used by respondents, at Al-Amien Prenduan in memorizing the Qur'an, namely: the Wahdah and the Sima'i methods. Based on function of each method used in memorization of the Qur'an, it could be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that two previously identified methods (the Wahdah and the Sima'i) again had been agreed by respondents (Wahdah:  $M = 4.5135$ ,  $S.D = .60652$  and Sima'i method:  $M = 4.4054$ ,  $S.D = .79790$ ), to have made much easier for them to memorize the Qur'an. Due to the higher mean score for the Wahdah method and agreed by majority (94.6%) of the respondents, the study concluded that this method is the most common method used to ease their memorization process; leaving the Sima'i method as the second most common method, which had been agreed by 91% of the respondents. The Kitabah method was seldom used ( $M = 3.7838$ ,  $S.D = 1.20497$ ); while the Jama' method was rarely used ( $M = 3.3784$ ,  $S.D = 1.08912$ ).

### ***Techniques for Strengthening Memorization of the Qur'an***

To strengthen memorization of the Verse, the study found that two methods (the Sima'i and the Wahdah) had been widely used. However based on the high mean score shown by the Sima'i method ( $M = 4.5135$ ,  $S.D = .69208$ ) compared to the Wahdah ( $M = 4.2973$ ,  $S.D = .66101$ ) method, has led this study to conclude that the Sima'i or 'listening'

method was the most common method used to strengthen memorization of the Qur'an, and agreed by the majority (95%) of the respondents. The mean score for the Kitabah method ( $M = 3.9730$ ,  $S.D = 1.01342$ ) had indicated that it was seldom used, while for the Jama' method ( $M = 3.5676$ ,  $S.D = 1.14359$ ) was, as usual, rarely used to strengthen memorization of the Qur'an.

### ***Preferred Techniques for Memorization of the Qur'an***

When asked to reveal which is the 'most preferred method used in memorizing the Qur'an, only the Wahdah method mean score had reached above 4.0 ( $M = 4.4324$ ,  $S.D = .72803$ ), indicating that 86.5% of the respondents who had agreed to this choice had preferred this method in memorizing exercise. All the other three methods gave mean score below 4.0, and the Jama' method was not at all preferred ( $M = 2.9459$ ,  $S.D = 1.07873$ ) by the respondents at Al-Amien Prenduan.

### ***Most Pleasant Techniques for Memorization of the Qur'an***

With regard to the method which is "most pleasant in memorizing the Qur'an", the study found that 86% of the respondents had agreed to choose the Sima'i (listening) method. Its mean score was higher ( $M = 4.2973$ ,  $S.D = .81189$ ) compared to lower mean score given to the Wahdah method and agreed by 81% of the respondent. The other two methods (Kitabah  $M = 3.1081$ ,  $S.D = 1.07455$  and Jama'  $M = 3.2432$ ,  $S.D = 1.06472$ ) received mean score below 4.0.

Conceptually in using the Wahdah method, one needs to memorize one (Qur'anic) verse completely and fluently. Only after having memorized one verse fluently and without mistake, one could be allowed to continue memorizing the next verse, using the same technique, which was used in the previous exercise. Then one should repeat the first and the second verse together to be fluently memorized without any mistake.

In line with the view expressed by Imam and Khatib of al-Nabawi Mosque in Madinah, al-Qasim (2007), he stated that in order to gain strength, reliability and speed in memorizing the Qur'an, al-Hafiz should finish memorizing 30 chapters of the Qur'an in a short time and that al-Hafiz should complete memorizing one verse before he could continue memorizing another verse (in this study this is similar to

Wahdah method. A complete memorization for eight verses is a limit for each session, and the session was suggested to be divided into two parts:

1. The first part is to memorize the first ayah until the fourth and to be repeated 20 times. In this way complete memorization for the first verse should be 20 times, without making any mistakes. After the first verse is well memorized. The second verse should be attempted in a similar way until the four verses had been completed and memorized fluently. Subsequently, the third verse and finally the fourth verse to be memorized using the same technique. The four verses should be reviewed together and repeated until al-Hafiz had completely memorized them fluently.
2. For the second part of each session, the similar way should be applied to memorize the fifth, the sixth, the seventh and finally the eighth verse. The fifth until the eighth verses should be read together, reviewed until one could completely memorized them fluently.

While this study found that the Wahdah method was most common method used to memorize new verses; Huffaz in general used the Kitabah (writing) method for this exercise. The Jama' method had also been said to be more suitable for beginners including children at the age of 5 or so, who could not recite the Qur'an properly. In this study the Jama' method was rarely used to ease and to strengthen in memorizing the Qur'an, neither that the method was most preferred nor selected as the most pleasant method.

Listening to recitation of the Quran is a method which was suggested in al-Kaheel (2008) and said to ease in strengthening memorization of previous verse as According to him, in the subconscious condition, Muslims who listened to the recitation of Qur'anic verses repeatedly helped them to memorize permanently. Meaning that, the subconscious mind while listening to the recitation of the Qur'an repeatedly would enable the verses be preserved in the conscious mind. As such it is much easier to remember it back at later times. In order to reach this level of conscious mind, the following stages should have been observed:

1. Listen to the Qur'anic recitation with tartil
2. Understand and think deep of the verses being recited



### 3. Strengthen the memorization by seeing the mushaf.

However, results from this study had shown that the above stages including the listening (Sima'i), writing (Kitabah), and reciting together (Jama') methods are not widely used by surveyed respondents at Al-Amien, Prenduan, since the mean score for these methods sometime were below 4.0.

#### ***Gender Influence on Memorizing the Quran***

The second research question was: "Are there any differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization between male and female respondents?" In comparing the differences in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization based on gender, mean scores from both genders were analyzed using SPSS version 18 programme. Results of mean score for male respondents was  $M = 8.1667$ ; whereas for female respondents was  $M = 6.7105$ . Further independent-samples t-test for equality of means was computed. Results had shown that the calculated value for  $t(35) = 3.755$ ,  $p = .001$  (two-tailed) indicating, there was significant difference in the examination scores for Qur'an memorization between male and female respondents.

With regard to gender influence in memorizing, Herlitz, Nilsson, and Backman (1997) stated that there is no difference on gender memory. In addition, the obtained gender differences might reflect males and females interests and differential familiarity with different kinds of materials.

#### ***Relationship between Tafsir and Qur'an memorization***

The third research question was: "Is there any relationship between respondents' scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an memorization?" Based on the scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an Memorization, Pearson correlations ( $r$ ) was computed. Results had shown that ( $r$ ) between respondents' scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an memorization was positive: ( $r = .583$ ,  $n = 37$ ,  $p < .005$ ). The results indicated that respondents who obtained higher scores for Tafsir tend to have high scores for Qur'an memorization. The study thus concludes that the relationship between respondents' scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'an memorization was positive and statistically significant at .000 levels (two tails).

Good understanding of Tafsir strongly helped in memorizing the Qur'an. Hidayah (2010) stated that understanding of the Qur'an verses is also one of the ways to strengthen the memorization of the Qur'an. Moreover, by understanding the Qur'an, al-Hafiz could easily relate one verse to another verse, because in the Qur'an there are some repeated verses (al-ayat al-mutashabihat). Al-Hafiz could also categorize those similar verses in order to find out the exact meaning of each verse which would make them easier to memorize the verse. Therefore, it is necessary for a hafiz to understand the Tafsir especially the verses which had been memorized in order to collect information on unfamiliar words. By understanding the Tafsir, al-Hafiz could recognize asbab al-nuzul (occasions or circumstances of revelation), understand the meaning of difficult verses, and understanding the special rule of the Qur'an.

In line with the above statement, al-Hafiz (2010) added that those who memorized the Qur'an need to understand the general meaning of the verse, collect information therein, and recognize the meaning between one verse and another verse. Moreover he said, al-Hafiz could easily memorize the Qur'an as, the Qur'an says in surah Muhammad, verse 24: "Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up by them?".

One of the general requirements to understand Tafsir is by learning Arabic language. Al-Sabuni (2012) put forward some basic requirements for Muslims male and female to understand verses of the Qur'an such as being a Mufassir for the purpose of studying and understanding the Arabic language. Furthermore, Murad (1985) stated that Arabic language becomes the most essential prerequisite to understand the Qur'an. He argued that Muslims are prohibited to postpone the endeavors to study the Qur'an; the first thing that Muslims should do by using a good translations of the Qur'an and start the pursuit from there. Reading the translation of the Qur'an is better than reading the Qur'an without any comprehension.

In line with the above statement, Barakatullah (2013) asserts that Arabic language has been chosen by Allah almighty as the language of the Qur'an; so that Allah told us in the Qur'an to give emphasis in understanding the message in it, as stated in the Qur'an "Indeed we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, in order that you may understand" (Qur'an, Yusuf: 2). According to him that Ubay ibn Ka'ab had said to

teach Arabic like to teach the memorization of the Qur'an; and it is also Imam al-Shafi'i said that it is imperative that every Muslim should strive to learn Arabic as hard as he could, so that he could testify the shahadah, and recite the Book of Allah, invoke some mandatory du'a/verses upon Him, such as the takbir, tasbih, tashahhud and other prayers. Thus the more one learns Arabic, the language that Allah Himself chose His for His final revelation through Gabriel and to the Prophets s.a.w., the better it is for him. The choice for the revelation in Arabic is a sunnatullah and should support evidence that understanding the language should contribute the understanding of the Qur'an (Barakatullah, 2013).

### **Recommendations**

Based on findings generated from this study, some recommendations are forwarded:

#### ***Recommendations for Further Research***

Since the findings from this study are derived from a limited number of respondents (i.e. from class three of MA. Tahfidh Al-Qur'an, Al-Amien Prenduan), a larger sample size from many more Tahfiz school should be included to enable various curriculum designs and different memorization methods be analyzed and several statistical analyses be employed before general conclusion could be derived in order to determine which method is the most common method in memorizing the Qur'an.

This research applied quantitative method; therefore, in order to gain further and in depth information with regard to methods taught at Tahfiz institutions, it is suggested that both qualitative and quantitative approaches be utilized. These two approaches, if applied would allow for a more robust statistical test be conducted, which would lead to a more accurate, reliable and valid finding, especially in testing the differences with respect to methods used in memorizing the Qur'an based on gender, and the relationship between respondents' score for Tafsir and scores for Qur'anic memorization.

This research involved only three aspects of estimation (the most common method used in memorizing the Qur'an; the differences in the methods used by male and female respondents and the relationships between scores for Tafsir and scores for Qur'anic memorization) and had investigated four methods of memorizing the Qur'an. Further

research should investigate many different methods such as muraja'ah which had gained wider use, in memorizing the Qur'an.

This research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren using curriculum which is equipped with a number of Islamic studies. The findings could be different if respondents from different educational systems (such as public schools) and secular curriculum be included. A comparative study between public and private schools on the most common method used by students in memorizing the Qur'an is also suggested.

### ***Recommendations for Tahfidh Schools.***

It is suggested that the schools should conduct several trainings and workshops in order to enhance the use of methods of memorizing the Qur'an. This strategy is crucial to impart teaching techniques as well as to improve the quality of teaching skills while performing duties of producing Huffaz who could memorize the whole Qur'an and understand the teachings from it.

Based on study findings, respondents were found to prefer Wahdah method and they had used this method more frequently, thus teachers are suggested not to force students at MA. Tahfidh Al-Qur'an to use other methods unless it could be supported with a valid statistical evidence that another memorization. Method would have made much easier for students to memorize the Qur'an.

### **Conclusion**

Al-Amien Prenduan, Madura has produced many graduates who have memorized the entire 30 chapters of the Qur'an. Although, four memorization methods were taught to students at the Pondok Pesantren, respondents did not use all methods because each student has a preferred to memorize the Qur'an. Therefore, the educational institutions involved in the exercise of Qur'an memorization should find out what is the preferred method by students in order to produce graduates who could preserve the Holy Qur'an through a complete and fluent memorization.

The institutions involved in producing Huffaz, should give emphasis in the understanding of the verse and in the application of its teaching. Therefore, a subject such as Science of Tafsir should be included in the school curriculum. The role of teaching Arabic language

should also be prioritized in order to affect good understanding of the Qur'an among the students. To reach those goals, Pondok Pesantren should improve the quality of teaching the Arabic Language and to apply the language in daily students' activities at Pondok Pesantren. In this manner, the Arabic language would not be alien to students and thus the understanding of the Qur'an would have been much easier for students.

We can conclude that by studying Tafsir, Huffaz could improve the understanding of the Qur'an which should be the ultimate aim of memorizing the Text. Huffaz should not only expect to gain rewards while reciting the Qur'an but to be able to apply the teachings from the revelation in daily life.

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