



Enhancing Al-Quran Reading Proficiency in Higher Education: The implementation of the Focused Mad & Idgham Technique

Muhd Syahazizamir bin Sahmat & Fatin Ardani binti Zamri*

Faculty of Education, Language and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak,
Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The issue of students' weakness in Quranic reading has long been a concern in Islamic education, and it continues to persist. This study aims to innovate Quranic teaching techniques by focusing on Mad (elongation) and Idgham (merging) rules. The study examines students' motivation and involvement in Quranic reading activities and investigates their learning experiences. Twenty-nine Year 1 students and 22 students from the Islamic Education Programme, performing at medium and low levels, were selected to participate in the intervention. Data were collected and analysed by observing the students' Quranic recitations and reactions. The researcher introduced the Focused Mad (elongation) and Idgham (merging) technique (FMI) as a solution for improving Quranic reading. The findings revealed that some students in the Islamic education program still read the Quran at a less than satisfactory level. However, it was observed that students could read the Quran more effectively using the FMI technique as an intervention. The findings also indicated that the FMI technique can increase the motivation and involvement of learners in reading the Quran. Additionally, the positive perception of the FMI technique among students suggests its potential to enhance their learning experience in Quranic education, fostering engagement, comprehension, and confidence in Quranic recitation. Overall, the Focused Mad (elongation) and Idgham (merging) Technique (FMI) not only improves the ability to read the Quran but also boosts students' confidence and involvement in learning the Quran.

Keywords: Quranic reading, mad and idgham rules, Islamic education, teaching techniques, student engagement

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Email address: zfardani@unimas.my (Fatin Ardani binti Zamri)

*Corresponding author

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1 INTRODUCTION

Al-Quran literacy among Muslim youths in Malaysia reveals a moderate level of Quran reading and mastery (Ismail, 2022). Emphasis on learning Tajwid is significant in improving the quality of students' recitation of the Quran, especially in terms of sound, rhythm, and meaning (Zahroh, 2022). However, challenges persist among Muslim students, spanning oral skills, fluency, Fasahah proficiency, Tajwid recitation, and deep Tartil reading across primary, secondary, and higher education levels. Baharun (2020) emphasises the significance of Arabic knowledge in understanding the Qur'an, suggesting that a lack of proficiency in this language could contribute to the "Al-Quran blind" phenomenon. This issue continues in Islamic education; it is crucial for higher education students, even those in Islamic education programs, to master the principles of Tajwid, including correct pronunciation, rhythm, and melody, as Alagrami (2020) emphasised. Ensuring accurate interpretation of sentences and letter characteristics is essential, as emphasised by Khowarizmi (2020). Moreover, Ruhaya (2023) and Abrar (2023) advocate for improved Arabic language education, with Ruhaya focusing on listening and writing skills and Abrar emphasising the importance of teaching pronunciation and meaning.

Ismail (2020) found that Al-Quran literacy among Muslim youths in Malaysia indicates a moderate level of Quran reading and mastery. However, there are challenges in the learning process, including the lack of individual learning opportunities and post-program support (Ismail, 2022). The effectiveness of the Tahfiz Akhyar method in improving Quran memorisation among deaf youths has been demonstrated (Khamaruddin, 2021). Regarding teaching and learning methods, Quranic Reading teaching and learning methods are effective in private universities (Bakar, 2020). These studies collectively highlight the need for continued efforts to improve al-Quran literacy among Muslim youths in Malaysia.

To effectively learn to read the Qur'an, the traditional method of Talaqqi musyafahah, characterised by direct teacher-pupil interaction, plays a crucial role in enhancing correct pronunciation and understanding, as noted by Abidin (2019) and Kaltsum (2020). Additionally, the mnemonic method, particularly the al-Baghdadiyah and al-Nuraniyyah methods, has been traditionally used in Malaysia and Oman to teach the Quran (Hamzah, 2022). However, there is a need for more effective methods to improve students' Quranic literacy, as indicated by the success of the "One Child One Book" method in increasing Islamic literacy among children in Al-Ikhlis Masjid (Oktarina, 2020). Imitating Quranic verses has also been effective in helping students construct Arabic sentence patterns (Zakaria, 2020). Despite these efforts, the practice of reading the Quran among Muslim youths in Malaysia is decreasing, highlighting the need for further research and intervention (Ismail, 2022).

Teachers at higher education institutions often encounter challenges with students' Quranic recitation fluency, particularly in applying Mad (elongation) and Idgham (merging) rules, as highlighted by Surul Shahbudin bin Hassan & Muhammad Azhar Bin Zailaini (2017). Their analysis revealed that nasal and non-nasal (ghunnah) pronunciation errors constitute a sizeable portion of overall Quranic reading errors. Specifically, long, and short pronunciation errors (mad) rank among the most common errors, underscoring areas often overlooked by students during recitation. Observations during assessments suggest that students struggle with fluency due to difficulties recalling words associated with the Mad (elongation) and Idgham (merging) rules. According to Mahadi Dahlan Al-Hafiz (2003), Mad Asli is elongating the sound of letters mad and lin with a rate of 2 to 6 harakat where the letters mad are three, namely alif, waw, and