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IMPROVING GOOD RECITAL OF AL-QUR'AN IN MAJLIS TAKLIM AISYIYAH FOR WOMEN IN BANDUNG

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ABSTRACT

Since both Islamic holy book and its commentaries are written in Arabic, the mastery of Arabic language for Muslims is required. This paper is about to observe the form of activity run by members of majlis taklim (studying circle) of Aisyiyah in the form of teaching service. The service is carried out en masse in the mosque. The method used in this paper is descriptive analysis; it will firstly do observation, interviews, and then do active participation in pre-test, teaching activities and post-test. It is apparent that a basic command of Arabic language is needed so that upon this program a good reading ability of al-Qur'an may improve. That way, participants who are mostly mothers with their children brought during the sessions, receive sufficient training in basic Arabic language teaching methods, and especially understand al-waqf wa al-ibtida' since meanings may alter due to wrong choices in reading when to stop (waqf) and when to start (ibtida'). As many as 20 members of the majlis taklim Aisyiyah are trained to know basic Arabic language so that they can read al-Qur'an better. The skill acquired is considered useful for everyday practice and may transmit to other Muslim women for the good of ummah as a whole in understanding the messages of al-Qur'an.

INTRODUCTION

Learning as part of the teaching process, Kusen and Hidayat (2019:55-70) defines, is a change in a person as manifests tangibly in terms of behavior. The

change is gained through experience and practices. This learning, while still within the frame of education, more profound than a process of student interaction with a teacher (Wekke & Mokodenseho, 2017). It is an instructor's assistance given to students to acquire knowledge, skills and behavior upgrading (Castillo, 2020: 95-103; Clark, Konrad, & Test, 2019: 41-56). Learning is the formation of student attitude and self-esteem out of the process of interaction between them (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Therefore, learning is also the conscious effort to help the students grow learn interest so that changes in the student's behavior may occur (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2020: 97-140). The change definitely requires a long time and sustained efforts for learning plans to realize. This process as a whole, with all participants taking parts, is also called "education". Defined according to the Indonesian Law Number 20 of 2003 on national education (article 1, paragraph 1), education is a conscious and planned effort to realize a learning environment and process so that learners actively develop their potential to have the religious spirituality, self-control, intellect personality, noble character, as well as necessary skills beneficial for oneself, the community and the state (Jandra, Huda, & Maseleno, 2020; Zainuri, Huda, & Maseleno, 2020). One of this activity is the basic Arabic language teaching that integrates with reading ability of al-Qur'an properly and correctly (Suminto & Arinatussadiyah, 2020: 62-80; Hidayat, Hasballah, & Siregar, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

For Muslims not born and living in the Arab world, reading al-Qur'an as a way to understand its meaning and messages is oftentimes very hard. Al-Qur'an is revealed in pure classical Arabic (Arif, 2019: 225-248; Alashari, Hamzah, & Marni, 2019: 33-45), thus learning this language is a necessity. Meanwhile, with the mastery of Arabic, Muslims can hope to carry out good worship and to have the ability of reading al-Qur'an properly and correctly. Efforts to achieve Arabic language skills are done through learning, meaning through an attempt to gain knowledge. The learning process consists of components of learning participants, instructors, learning materials, teaching processes, and evaluations (Pal, Mukhopadhyay, Pramanik, & Choudhury, 2020: 275-286; Ventura, Scheuer, & Pozo, 2020; Hidayati, Komariah, & Mirfani, 2020: 65-67).

The mastery of the rules of Arabic in order to understand the verses of al-Qur'an is important. Islamic scholars from all generations in history have agreed upon that notion. They say that if the rules of Arabic are not put in priority in a Muslim's search of knowledge, his understanding of al-Qur'an could not be considered reliable (Hafid, 2016: 193). Based on correlative quantitative analysis, a study shows a significant correlation between mastery of Arabic language with the ability to read al-Qur'an. This study interprets the data taken from a school in Java and makes a conclusion that "between variables X and Y (i.e., mastery of the language and ability of reading al-Qur'an), there is a moderate or sufficient correlation.

Meanwhile, it is also necessary to teach Arabic in a non-formal educational institutions such as majlis taklim. Not a peripheral earlier in nature and position, Yusra claims, majlis taklim was the very first place in Islamic history that the

socialization of Islam, its development and empowerment, began flowering from. She says that the house of Arqam ibn Abi Arqam at the waist of the Shafa hill was a majlis taklim. It is where first quietly and secretly, the Prophet began his teaching. It was at this first majlis taklim that the Messenger explained and taught Islam (Yusra, 2011: 174-192). Pulungan, quite suggesting the same way, saying that “majlis taklim is the oldest educational institution in Islam, since it has been implemented since the time of Prophet Muhammad, though at that time it was certainly not mentioned by the term majlis taklim” (Pulungan, 2014: 121-139).

Majlis taklim is a general term that covers all Muslim community activities related to the issues of Islamic education and teaching without limited by the sex and social status of the congregation, nor by place and time (Aghsari, Wekke, & Abbas, 2018). Thus, various Islamic religious education and teaching activities done by a Muslim community, male, female, children, teenagers or adults alike, also elderly people, are still in the scope of majlis taklim. Majlis taklim is also a place where an organization can build Islamic religious activities. What is missing in those opinions is the status of majlis taklim as non-formal education. To fill the gap there is definition by Mustofa. In his opinion, majlis taklim is a non-formal education institution and a place to carry out Islamic religious activities such as teaching the values of Islamic doctrines through study (Mustofa, 2016: 1-18).

Being an education institution, majlis taklim differentiates itself in that it is, unlike madrasah for example, non-formal (Mulyono, & Wekke, 2018). Exactly as it is non-formal whence lies its crucial meaning. Majlis taklim is part of the national education system called “community education (pendidikan masyarakat).” Majlis taklim, according to Anwar, is a community education institution that has a role as the social control within the community besides another role as active agent in fostering the quality of ummah through non-grade education (Anwar, 2012: 39-52).

Two works by Jadidah and Marzuki are specifically most relevant to our study. According to Marzuki (2016:185-198), as an educational institution which is oriented at developing attitudes and personality, majlis taklim works towards internalization of Islamic social ethics which leads to two things. First, to educate their students to behave with Islamic moral values. Second, to educate students to understand Islamic teachings and doctrines. According to Jadidah (2016:27-42), there had been majlis taklim specifically for women since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The main basis for the formation of this kind of majlis taklim is the need of female friends (*shahâbiyyât*) for religious knowledge as well as male friends (*shahâbiyyûn*). Recorded was the name of Asmâ binti Yazid, a smart *shahâbiyyâh* who was appointed as their spokesperson. Questions by Asmâ to the Prophet Muhammad on every occasion were compiled from meetings with other women; *Shahâbiyyât* asked questions and told their problems to her in the mosque or in an open forum. This is one of the ways *shahâbiyyât* expressed their aspirations. Some others directly asked the Prophet personally, or else through his wives. Direct questions to the Messenger of God were generally carried out by *shahâbiyyât* if the problem was very specific, such as the problem of *istihâdhah* or others concerning relations

between husband and wife (Jadidah, 2016). Once in the presence of shahâbiyyûn, the Prophet praised Asmâ's intelligence which was due to her training in majlis taklim. It is clear evidence that the Prophet was concerned about the equal rights of women and men in seeking religious knowledge. As in hadîts, it is stated his saying that "studying is an obligation of every Muslim and Muslimât".

Majlis Taklim Aisyiyah is a nonformal educational activity that is arranged by Aisyiyah, part of Muhammadiyah organization of women division. Aisyiyah was born and was inaugurated together with the commemoration of Isrâ' Mi'râj (the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad) on the 27th of Rajab 1335 H, coinciding with May 19, 1917 AD. Aisyiyah is working actively in the field of education and da'wah (Islamic propagation) for Muslim women, such as pesantren (Islamic boarding school), and majlis taklim (studying circle). Aisyiyah was originally a division for women within Muhammadiyah organization. Already now an independent Islamic organization, it preaches amar ma'rûf nahi munkar and tajdîd in all fields of life based on Islam and its sources in al-Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. Its headquarters is in Yogyakarta with branches and sub-branches all over the country (AD/ART Aisyiyah, 2012: 5-7). Aisyiyah is also engaged in education and da'wah activities in various aspects, including this majlis taklim of 'Aisyiyah. Materials presented in majlis taklim are around reading and studying al-Qur'an, tafsîr and the likes. The activities are carried out in all branches and sub-branches of the organization. Likewise in 'Aisyiyah of Ujung Berung, Bandung West Java.

Materials presented in the Majlis are reading, studying al-Qur'an and other related subjects, such as tafsîr (Qur'anic interpretation) and Arabic language. Concerning the basic Arabic language teaching, all its components, and also the extent to which the progress has occurred – for example scales of upgrade from elementary to more advanced position, from unknowing to knowing, from incorrect to be correct, and so on, are observed in this study. Moreover, the study will also pay attention to indicators of the success of teaching Arabic which follows: apparent elevation in Arabic language knowledge; useful learning outcome in that it can then be applied in daily life; sustainable learning outcome in that it settles in mind and sufficiently influences behavior that gradually shapes the personality. Related to basic Arabic, such as reading al-Qur'an correctly, both the makhârij al-hurûf (spelling or pronunciation) and correct application of al-waqf wa al-ibtida', since meanings may alter due to wrong choices of how to pronounce a particular letter or when to stop (waqf) and when to start (ibtida') the reading, will be paid their attention as well.

It is therefore important to disseminate knowledge about Arabic language in this majlis taklim Aisyiyah. The locus of study is Aisyiyah's majlis as it assumes its duties to help people to be good Muslims. Aisyiyah's majlis taklim expects to make changes by transmitting knowledge in the community. This basic Arabic language teaching of how to read al-Qur'an well and correctly is among duties it believes it can contribute. The purpose of this study is to socialize better reading al-Quran and implement more effective teaching techniques. The objective of the study to share with others the implementation of basic Arabic

language teaching whose activities are: a). To provide proper materials al-Qur'an reading and study to the participants of majlis taklim Aisyiyah; b). To train majlis taklim Aisyiyah effective methods of teaching basic Arabic and reading al-Qur'an correctly.

METHODS

This study discusses the basic Arabic language teaching in majlis taklim Aisyiyah for women in Ujung Berung Bandung, West Java Indonesia concerning to the ability to read al-Qur'an better. The method used to obtain the data is through observation and interviews, as well as active participation in the whole process of teaching from initial ability test (pretest), delivery of materials, and final ability test (post-test) (Burns, Gallant, Fenton, White, & Hamilton-Hinch, 2020: 51-68; Pryce, Deane, Barry, & Keller, 2020). The study itself can be seen as an activity in the form of teaching service. While in general teaching activities are carried out in classroom, possibly under certain circumstances they can be arranged outside the classroom in the form of informal learning. In the case of majlis taklim Aisyiyah, teaching activities are especially held in the mosque. As many as 20 members of the majlis taklim Aisyiyah are trained to know basic Arabic language so that they can read al-Qur'an better.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language is a system of symbols that people use to spawn thoughts, ideas and feelings (Brown, McIlwraith, & de González, 2020; Ma, 2019: 78-84). Like other languages in general, Arabic is a language system which is arbitrary in nature. Indeed, according to Chaer, language is an arbitrary sound symbol system used by members of social groups to get together, communicate and identify themselves (Ahmed, Nidhoimi, Badrasawi, & Mamat, 2020: 1659-1670; Ismail, Halias, Saad, & Mohamed, 2020: 700-708; Sabani, Jimmie, & Hasnor, 2020: 178-204). Exactly as one dictionary states, language is an arbitrary sound symbol system, which is used by community members to cooperate, interact, and identify themselves (Nugraha, 2020: 35-39).

From these two definitions, interesting points need to be revealed: language is a system since it is orderly patterned to bring both meaning and function. Language is then also systematic, since it consists of elements that are regularly arranged according to certain patterns, and eventually form a unit. Moreover, besides being systematic, language is also systemic, meaning that language is only a single system but may consist of several subsystems, such as phonological, morphological, lexeme, syntax and lexicon subsystems (Dóczy, 2019; Montrul, & Yoon, 2019; Fischer, & Gabriel, 2016).

Language is symbol (Brown, McIlwraith, & de González, 2020; Ma, 2019: 78-84), since it bears conventional marker of something. Between symbol and its object there exists no representation of a direct relationship. Example: The word "school" does not show special feature possessed by a building called "school," other people may call it as they like. Arabs will call it madrasah, not school. Variety of sound produced by human beings in phonetics is called phone while in phonemics called phoneme (Morais, & Kolinsky, 2019: 41-61; Imam, & Alaraif, 2017). Speech instruments in phonetics, are a, b, c, d and the like. While in the phonemic level, the phonemes are words like teach, build and others. It is

arbitrary, meaning “as you like it.” In this arbitrary term there is no mandatory relationship between the symbol of language and the concept of the intended object; a building that people use to study and store books could be called a “library” or as in Arabic, *maktabah* and so on (Fischer, & Price, 2017: 22-31; Adamson, Bakeman, & Deckner, 2017: 171-196).

As a group of people who live together, society use the same communication tools and agree upon certain rules commanding their life. In need of others to work together, they create cooperation, so they can supply their basic necessities and more. Good cooperation requires good communication so that collaborative activities may run smoothly and its meaning may be understood by others. With language, this communication between fellow humans makes interaction and cooperation established (Bukhari, Wekke, Thaheransyah, & Sabri, 2019: 1102-1116). That way, it is a process of exchanging information between individuals by using language as a system of symbols later recognized and agreed upon. It certainly uses not only spoken languages, but also many others so long as they understand each other. Getting clearer over time, smooth communication depends on various conditions of speakers and listeners, from their physical and mental abilities to the topic or the message of the conversation (Das, & Choudhury, 2020).

The nature of language is that it is human, meaning that language is only possessed by humans. Language is also dynamic, there will always come new words or phrases on top of the older ones, its styles and forms are also not stationary. It is also conventional, meaning that every speaker of a language must adhere to rules that have been agreed upon about the relationship between the symbol and its object (Baker, & Souza, (2020: 1-62).

A newspaper will never be called a magazine, otherwise we violate the existing language convention. It is also productive, meaning one type of word can produce variety of sentences (Henderson, 2020: 91-106). Moreover, with an infinite number of words, more sequences of sentences will be produced. Arabic is one of the United Nations' leading languages. Very rich in vocabulary, it has distinctive characteristics; it is known in its language styles such as poetry, prose, *matsal*, *majâz*, *ithnâb* and *i'jâz*, which cannot be compared to other languages of the earth. Very often an Arab felt proud and arrogant, even said that the rich legacy of language is more powerful than al-Qur'an (Bafjaish, Azmi, Al-Mhiqani, & Sheikh, 2020: 516-523). Therefore, a surah was revealed to challenge whether the Arabs are able to make verses similar to al-Qur'an: “And if you remain in doubt about Qur'an that we reveal to our servants, make a single such Qur'an and call on your helpers other than Allah, if you are truthful (Al-Baqarah [2]: 23).” Upon the time when al-Qur'an put this challenge, no one was able to respond it in like a manner. Arabic language was actually at its peak, it continued to present its best in accomplishment, and al-Qur'an gave impetus for the language to thrive even further.

The characteristics of Arabic language of possessing rich vocabulary is quite startling. Starting from root words to its derivation, from the side of its pronouns to the basics of verbal derivations, it shows dynamic vitality. The words in Arabic are several kinds, including verbs, nouns, and letters, with each has its

own meaning (Muspawi, Arifin, & Nadila, 2017: 58-68). In the case of letters, they sometimes have no meaning, functioning as a word former, called *mabâny*, for example *hijâiyyah* letters. But in others, these same letters can have meaning, called *ma'âny* letters. Furthermore, words in Arabic can have the textual and contextual meaning either in spoken and unspoken words. That also as contained in Qur'anic verses. In the Qur'anic recitation generally there is a stop sign named *waqf*, the state of stopping in one word or letter which has effect on the meaning. Though this state of stopping has been enacted in recommended readings, the rule may be ignored for the benefit or convenience of a beginner (Frishkopf, 2016: 93-132). It means its stop and start of the readings can be done not based on rules only in the condition of studying; the trainers would take care of it and teach for better improvement so there is no error in interpreting the meaning.

Related to that, then, to understand Arabic words with their intended meaning in al-Qur'an requires basic Arabic knowledge. The basic Arabic in question is related to that Arabic language that is most prevalent in the verses of the Qur'an. Because, strictly speaking, there are two kinds of Arabic; *fushhâ* and *'âmmiyyah* (Ikhwanuddin, 2017: 1-14). Two levels of *fushhâ* and three levels of *'âmmiyyah*. The two levels *fushhâ* are *fushhâ al-tûrâts* and *fushhâ al-'ashr*. *Fushhâ al-tûrâts* a linguistic vehicle of the legacy of Islam in history, is now in effect a liturgical language, while *fushhâ al-'ashr* is contemporary *fushhâ*, the vehicle of more recent civilization. Three levels of *'âmmiyyah*; *'âmmiyyah* of *al-mutanawwirîn*, of *al-ummiyyîn* and of *al-mutsaqqafîn*. *'Âmmiyyah al-mutanawwirîn* is for the "enlightened" (*al-mutanawwirîn*), while *'âmmiyya al-ummiyyîn* is for the illiterate (*al-ummiyyîn*), being the predominant. As for *'âmmiyya al-mutsaqqafîn*, it is intended for the highly educated (*al-mutsaqqafîn*), a definitely small portion of the people.

Among these two kinds of Arabic language and their levels, the kind of *fushhâ* of *al-tûrâts* is definitely the one we learn and use as a standard language in reading al-Qur'an, in prayers, as well as in classical books 'ulamâ' always refer to solve their religious law problems (Zohdi, 2017: 26-35). Arabic and al-Qur'an are inseparable; Arabic is the vehicle on which al-Qur'an delivers its messages. Both need to be continually enhanced and socialized so that many people can understand and see the benefits. As does learning Arabic, both basic and advanced. Among the efforts is through informal education in *majlis taklim*. So, arranged in relation to the socialization of how to read al-Qur'an is teaching this Arabic material in *majlis taklim Aisiyyah*. The members of the *majlis taklim* apparently have never received Arabic teaching before.

The benefit of this activity is to provide information to the members of *majlis taklim Aisiyyah* about the importance of understanding and let them master the correct way of reading al-Qur'an through various methods (Latif, Jimaain, & Jasmi, 2020: 249-253) which to the extend can be spread to the wider community. Its initial efforts include teaching basic Arabic. This activity is aimed at a state that they understand the importance of Arabic as the language of Islam and then may integrate a good way of reading al-Qur'an with correct Arabic spelling and pronunciation (Saty, Bouzoubaa, & Lhoussain, 2020: 34-41; Alshargi, Dibas, Alkhereyf, Faraj, Abdulkareem, Yagi, & Rambow, 2019:

137-147). More importantly, members of the majlis taklim can disseminate the knowledge to the wider community through simple and enjoyable teaching. To the better reading al-Qur'an, the knowledge of waqf (stop) and ibtidâ' (commencing reading after quitting) must be put an important emphasis. Because, to maintain the accuracy of the meaning of the verse, it helps keep aside the ambiguity and hinder mistakes (Koyuncu, 2015: 163-188).

Furthermore, according to Koyuncu (2015:163-188), to read good and correct waqf wa ibtidâ', it requires the knowledge of certain level of linguistic grammar, qiraât (varieties in Arabic dialects) and tafsîr. According to some ulamâ', a mistake in waqf wa ibtidâ' while doing the recitation of the Qur'an is makrûh (dislikeable). "It is appropriate for the person who is speaking or reading to choose and sort the reading or conversation to determine where to pause, so that the reading and the words can be understood by the other person who hears it. If he misplays a break or fragment of the conversation or reading it sounds bad and less favored, this provision applies in terms of expressing words or readings relating to human relations, moreover if it is related to the verses of al-Qur'an it will be very inappropriate and much disliked" (Kara, 55-79; Rosyad, 2015: 69-90). However, there are a number of verses that are long that it does not allow some readers to hold their breath (Nayef, & Wahab, 2018: 50-70). When reading it, they need to pay attention to marks properly put. They must know some sets in al-Qur'an which tell how and when to stop before the waqf. Usually, the novice reader will get accustomed to always stop at the mark that is set and start reading again after being informed by their trainer of the recitation of al-Qur'an.

Considering al-Qur'an as an Arabic text, the knowledge of basic Arabic is a necessity; it is in order that the reader can stop and start on reading the words in the verse of al-Qur'an based on their rightful guided knowledge of their meanings and rules (Hummadi, Mat Said, Hussein, Sabti, & Hattab, 2020). In addition, the miracle of al-Qur'an lies not only in its ideas and doctrines, but also in its style and linguistic expression (Ibrahim, 2020: 1287-1292; Tukwain, Fatimah, & Wekke, 2018). Thus, mastering Arabic knowledge is very important to strengthen understanding the messages of al-Qur'an and to grasp its intense beauty (Khan, & Al-Hilali, 2020: 135). That way we may be able to appreciate the expressions of al-Qur'an more profoundly. As part of community service activity, this teaching of basic Arabic includes spreading the knowledge of waqf wa ibtidâ' (Akmaliyah, 2016) in reading the verses of al-Qur'an in order to avoid mistakes in understanding its messages.

Based on the pretest, which is aimed to know the basic abilities of the participants related to their reading of al-Qur'an, pronunciation of the letters of hijâiyah in particular, it shows that 100% or as many as 20 participants have the ability to begin study well, and as many as 75% or as many as 15 participants have enough ability to know about waqf wa ibtidâ'.

Satisfied with their initial abilities, the facilitators continue with lectures explaining basic knowledge of Arabic, such as isim, fi'il, and dhamîr, along with examples taken from the verses of al-Qur'an. After that, they are asked to read verse by verse of al-Qur'an guided with the intended accuracy of waqf wa

ibtidâ'. Following the lectures is the post-test. The post-test is carried out by Qur'anic reading in group and individual. Errors of reading are found and then corrected according to the theory of waqf wa ibtidâ' and also to the interpretation of the verse based on basic Arabic which has already been learned.

Based on the post-test, an obtained assessment shows that the participants as a whole understand the presented materials, especially about the importance of waqf reading in al-Qur'an. Improvements are made, there is an increase in the frequency of reading al-Qur'an—due to rise in self-confidence, better pronunciation of *hurûf hijâiyy* is achieved, there are no many errors in its pronunciation and understanding the signs put by 'ulamâ' of reading al-Qur'an. Especially for high-level and intermediate knowledge of Arabic, a continuity in the guidance and instruction is still in high demand though.

CONCLUSION

Members of majlis taklim Aisyiyah as participants in the community service activities have received basic Arabic language teaching and reading training in al-Qur'an with emphasis on application of waqf wa ibtidâ'. The participants have received sufficient day trainings which bring about expected results. There are changes in the Qur'an's reading, it becomes better and frequent. Being trained in basic knowledge Arabic language has helped them understand the meaning of some Arabic words in al-Quran, so that they know when to stop and start all over again reading its verses without violating its correct interpretation.

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