

Adapting Tahfidz Technique in Learning English for Pesantren Students

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Abstract

This study is to discover whether adapting the tahfidz technique to memorize words, phrases, and sentences can be applied in learning English for pesantren students (santri). The tahfidz technique used was talaqqi, which is delivering students' memorization to teachers, to make students easier in remembering the learning materials. A pre-experimental study with a one-group pre-test and post-test design is conducted in this research to analyze the participant of 40 students in first grade in MA Pondok Tremas, Pacitan. The instrument used in this research is a pre-test from some verses of the Quran and a post-test from Arabic mahfudzat. By adapting the tahfidz technique in learning English, the teacher's goal to gain students' better scores in English had been achieved. This is closely related to the fact that pesantren students familiarized to memorize Qur'an and their religious subject. It turns out that the traditional pesantren learning method can also be applied to modern science.

Keywords

Tahfidz Technique; Memorization; EFL; Pre-Experimental Design

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, a long-rooted Islamic boarding school in the Archipelago, is a well-established religious institution which specifically concerns with studying traditional religious sciences preserved in Kitab Kuning (Yusri, 2020). To stay relevant in the modern world, an increasing number of traditional pesantren starts to include secular subjects, such as learning international languages, especially English. It is very common for pesantren to have English as the language of instruction and daily conversation (Fakhruddin & Megawati, 2018; Susylowati et al., 2019; Ulfiah et al., 2021; Bin-Tahir et al., 2019). The importance and popularity of English as the first foreign language widely studied in some schools is an impetus for the introduction of learning English in pesantren throughout Indonesia. Hence, good command of this language is considered a crucial tool for the pesantren students (*santri*) to compete in the modern world upon their completion of the study.

However, despite the high expectations of the teachers, the majority of *santri* show a meager level of interest and motivation (Setyawan & Agung, 2019). The tilt toward traditional Islamic studies is more apparent among the majority of *santri* who spend a considerable amount of their time studying Kitab Kuning instead of learning general subjects. It does not come as a surprise that teachers often find a lack of enthusiasm among *santri* when it comes to learning English.

Pesantren students face many difficulties in learning English (Umar, 2021), which were associated with the habitual use of traditional methods focused on memorizing and rote learning. In the world of *santri* and Pesantren, memorizing is important. Abdul Qayyum As-Suhaibani suggests that memorizing knowledge in the chest is very important (Nurdin, 2019). Without memorization, knowledge seekers will not be able to continue their journey. One reason why this technique is also good to be applied in other fields of knowledge is because it is very related to the pesantren's life. When someone has memorized the Qur'an and understands its contents, they immediately encounter a problem, so it is easy to solve (Engkizar et al., 2022).

The memorization technique is called *tahfidz*, it comes from Arabic which means to maintain, guard and memorize (Maskur, 2018). It also means memorizing, the process of repeating something, either by reading or listening. *Tahfidz* is part of rote learning, memorizing bit by bit the verses of the Al-Qur'an that have been read over and over again. It is the oldest tradition in the effort to preserve the Qur'an (Istramin, 2019). Being a *Hafidz* (memorizer of the Qur'an) is not enough just to memorize, in addition, they have to know the meaning and explanation of the verses (Sulastini & Zamili, 2019). After knowing the meaning of the translation of several phrases, it is hoped that students will also be able to understand their meaning. Abide by its learning culture, teaching English in pesantren is carried out by integrating Islamic values into English subjects (Maisarah, 2018).

This brought the idea of adapting the memorization technique to be implemented in learning English. *Tahfidz* is memorizing the Qur'an which involves a process of thinking, remembering, and repetition that will train memory muscles so that the brain is regularly trained and can retain more information. The *tahfidz* technique is that students memorize assisted by a teacher with a predetermined target then recite their memorization. It is commonly used by Pesantren students. The *tahfidz* technique used as the treatment is *talaqqi*, it is a method of learning the Qur'an in which students directly face the teacher, listen, then repeat by themselves, deliver to the teacher while listening and correcting student (Nurzannah & Ginting, 2022).

As a result of the study, many researchers have shown interest in the application of memorization or *tahfidz* in other fields of knowledge. The results also distribute a complex point of view and thoughts about the topic because several studies have provided satisfactory results on the success of **the** *tahfidz* technique in memorizing the Qur'an (al Baqi & Asterisk, 2022; Athiyah & Islam, 2019; Ismail & Muhid, 2020; Khafidah & Raden, 2020; Kibtiyah et al., 2020; Susanto et al., 2021). It is widely confirmed by researchers in their studies of memorizing **techniques** that **were** conducted in memorizing Al-Qur'an or *tahfidz*.

Moreover, some researchers also correlate the memorization technique with another field of study. Erlina et al. (2022) analyzed 53 students in tenth grade and found there was a favorable correlation between Qur'an memorization and learning achievement in Arabic. Novebri & Dewi (2020) researched the correlation between students' ability to memorize the Qur'an and their learning achievement at Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Students who can memorize the Al-Qur'an have a strong, detailed memory and their thinking tends to be more brilliant because students practice a lot of matching the verses in the Al-Qur'an with their memorization or reading.

Although there has been a lot of study of memorization or *tahfidz* technique, there are still no studies on how it is applied in learning English. Therefore, a long-practices program of memorizing the Qur'an called *tahfidz* is adopted in the process of learning and teaching English in this study. While the technique used in the *tahfidz* program is believed to stimulate students' memory by training senses, especially hearing and vision, which is directly related to the memory function in the brain, can a similar program be used effectively in learning English? For that reason, the purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of adapting the *tahfidz* technique in memorizing words, phrases, and sentences for Pesantren students (*santri*).

2. METHODS

This research is a pre-experimental study with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. Pre-experiment also known as the 'before and after' or 'pre-and post-test design is an assessment that relies on the single group research design. Besides, it has the purpose to test whether what has been planned will work or not (Blas, 2013). Like another experimental design, pre-experimental is tend to be more descriptive and quantitative in analyzing the data.

Typically, in this design, participants were systematically selected, which later involved a group of students who will take part in an English language learning program using the *tahfidz* technique. The data were collected in the form of a test on a sample of 40 first-grade students at MA Pondok Tremas, Pacitan. Under the procedure of a pre-experimental study that used a one-group pre-test and post-test design:

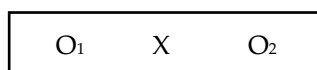


Figure 1. The procedure of the pre-experimental study

O₁: Pre-test before the treatment is implemented, participants will be assessed in advance the extent of knowledge of vocabulary in English using a pre-test instrument taken from 3 verses of the Qur'an which has the lowest level of difficulty and the most repetitions in the Qur'an.

X: The treatment carried out to memorize was the provision of 10 *mahfudzat* (Arabic Quotes) in English and translated to Bahasa Indonesia. The use of this *mahfudzat* is to integrate religious values and learning English related to the pesantren's life to gain students' enthusiasm. The technique is the *talaqqi* method, which is delivering or listening to a teacher what they have memorized (Akbar & Ismail, 2016; Kartika, 2019; Rohmah et al., 2022). In this phase, the process of the *tahfidz* technique is applied, in which students were asked to memorize materials, then come forward to the teacher one by one. Students directly face the teacher, they listen to the correct spelling of words and the translation in Bahasa Indonesia, then repeat by themselves, and deliver to the teacher what they have memorized while the teacher listens and corrects the student. This is where the process of applying the *tahfidz* method, delivering their memorization to teachers, makes students easier in remembering learning material.

O₂: Post-test after the treatment of the *tahfidz* technique was completed, a post-test was held to find out more about student memorization. The data is obtained from the answers of the students, with the suitability level of students' understanding which is divided into; students interpreting it according to

their understanding, only memorizing and having the same translation, only memorizing some familiar words, or not being able to remember their memorization at all. The post-test is five famous Arabic *mahfudzhat* taken from ten materials that had been given in the treatment.

The effectiveness of the *tahfidz* technique was tested based on the difference in students' average scores before and after applying the technique. The effect size test was carried out to determine the magnitude of the influence of the application of the *tahfidz* technique.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This test is used to cultivate students' abilities in several aspects; 1) pronunciation to help students read words correctly, 2) improve the ability to remember vocabulary and pronunciation, and 3) understanding the meaning of words from several quotes at a level that is easy to remember. In addition, this test improves vocabulary use through the idea of the "trying to recall" process. In particular, students recite the vocabulary several times, where questions were inserted randomly for students to remember the meaning in Bahasa Indonesia. The use of Qur'an verses and *mahfudzhat* aims to merge English and pesantren's life.

Before applying the treatment of the *tahfidz* technique in memorizing *mahfudzhat*, students' vocabularies were very minimum. This test was carried out without preparation so that the researcher knows the pure abilities of the students. It is not the problem, but this is a starting point to find out the extent of the student's ability. This is shown from the students' correct answers gained in the pre-test even though the materials given were in the easiest level and frequently appear in everyday life. The pre-test score is presented in the following table.

Table 1. Pre-test score

Correct answer	Number of students
3	4
2	12
1	14
0	11

The number of students with correct answers was very small compared to those who answered slightly or even not at all. Among 40 students, only 4 students could answer all numbers correctly, 12 students only got 1 wrong answer, 14 students got 2 wrong answers, and the rest 11 students were not having correct answers.

The *talaqqi* treatment that is carried out was, students were asked to come forward one by one to deliver their memorization randomly, they can start from whichever they want. Most importantly, students must memorize all 10 quotes and their meanings with the correct pronunciation as well. During treatment, the teacher not only gains students' better scores but also enthusiasm from students. Ideally, students should have an interest in the subject so that they can learn seriously. While giving materials that related to their background of knowledge, which is about Islam and living quotes, their enthusiasm increased. It is shown from the participation students follow in the class. Not only giving a written form of quotes, students were asked to come forward one by one to memorize in front of the class. They show their interest by competing to the front of the class who will be the fastest.

This is based on the process of vocabulary acquisition, students need some time to memorize words but in a quite traditional way like remembering with the help of fixed word lists from textbooks (Afzal, 2019). Even though this method looks very traditional, in some ways, it works well. It is different when they were asked to do the task or even only write an answer in front of the board, they seem reluctant, and there are only a few students who often come forward to do the task. In line with task-based learning that was implemented in groups discussion, most of the passive students barely rely on the leaders of the groups (Agung, 2019).

There are several ways students strengthen their memorization; those who memorized after many repetitions, students whose memory is strong with slight repetition, and students who need to raise their voices while studying so that they can hear their voices. This activity of memorizing relies on the echoic memory sensory, stimulation of the ability to listen and record each syllable or sound and connects it to the next syllables, which helps the brain in recognizing words and sentences understandable (WebMD, 2021). What the ears hear, sticks firmly in the heart. For this reason, humans are more in control of what they hear than what they read. However, understanding is the base of memorization, *santri* has to understand what they had memorized so that the material obtained is not easily forgotten.

On the post-test, the researcher took five out of ten famous *mahfudz* that had already been given in the previous meeting. The researcher asked students to memorize all of them without telling them which one would appear on the test. And the result is incredibly better than the previous one.

Table 2. Post-test score

Correct answer	Number of students
5	18
4	7
3	4
2	1
1	3
0	7

18 students answered correctly overall whereas on the pre-test only 4. Unfortunately, students who get 0 scores are still quite a lot, 7 students. This number is beyond the researcher's expectations, considering that previously the students had delivered their memorization. Maybe this is the effect of the test given without prior notification. Because sometimes, when someone is so nervous, they panic so much that they can't remember anything.

According to Mondria & Mondria-De Vries, four factors could affect students' weak memory in remembering vocabulary, those are; 1) the difficulty level of the words to be learned has too many varies, 2) vocabulary size is very different for each student, 3) students only remember familiar words, and 4) forgetting, over time, the size of the vocabulary is reduced (Afzal, 2019). For that reason, these students have a very minimum enthusiasm for English, so they are having less interest to hold the material intentionally in their memory for a long period. It is very unfortunate considering they are at a young age.

The whole process recorded student difficulty points for teachers to formulate target indicators. From the post-test, students' data was also obtained in the form of the suitability level of students' understanding;

Table 3. Suitability level of students' understanding

Level	Descriptions	Number of students
1	interpreting according to their understanding	9
2	only memorizing and having the same translation	19
3	only memorizing some familiar words	5
4	not being able to remember their memorization at all	7

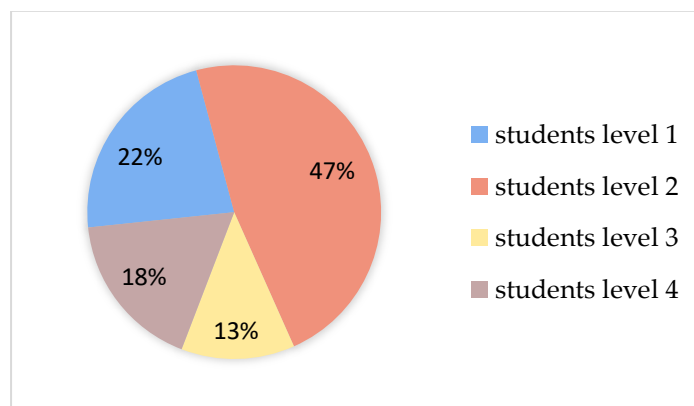


Figure 2. Suitability level of students' understanding in percentage

47% of students who only memorize and have the same translation as what the teacher had given is the highest number among the others. Showed that pesantren students rely heavily on memorization techniques in learning. 22% of students were able to understand the material and explain their understanding in their language. This shows that no more than half of the students in the class understand English in terms of the vocabulary they have. Then students who only memorize some words are those who only answer less than 3 questions correctly which is only 13%. Some just answered as they remembered which is still close to the answer, some also answered randomly and answered the meaning of other quotes. The last was 7 students who were not able to remember their memorization at all and were students who got 0 scores on the post-test reaching 18%. It does not mean that these number of students did not answer at all, they responded with only yes or no, or some Bahasa Indonesia, such as "*tidak tahu artinya, Bu*", "*Bahasa inggris sulit Bu*", or "*maaf, nggak bisa Bu*". They may experience anxiety because English is a foreign language (Zakiya et al, 2022).

The researcher also provides a graphic of the development of students' scores before and after receiving treatment, where there is a significant increase after the application of the *tahfidz* technique.

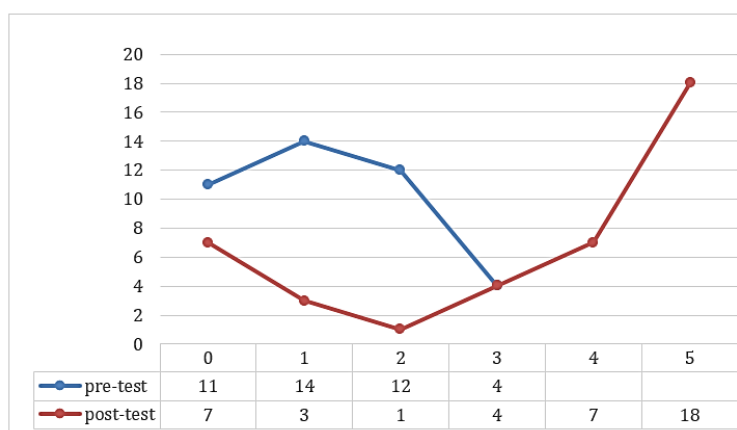


Figure 3. Pre and post-test score development

Whereas the increase in the number of students who had more than 3 correct answers amounted to 29 students. Indicating that 29/40 as a percent is 72.5%, shows that the adaptation of the *tahfidz* method is effective for achieving a better score. This shows that they enjoy this learning method because they are used to memorizing. However, like memorizing the Al-Qur'an which must be repeated continuously, the language must also be honed so that one will get used to using it. Unlike the *santri* from modern pesantren who use English and Arabic in their daily lives, the *santri* from traditional pesantren are more focused on deepening religious knowledge. But the so-called *santri* in traditional

pesantren are different from the *santri* in modern pesantren, their interest in English must also be honed continuously.

Gaining students' interest is more important than encouragement which comes from extrinsic goals such as getting good scores, competing with other students, increasing social prestige, or gaining praise from important people. Therefore, it is necessary to find out how to stimulate their interest. Moreover, students in pesantren are different from students in public schools. They have more subjects and activities that are bound by regulations. They also seemed to lack motivation to study over again the materials they have got in the class.

Their interest is very low beneath English because their focus on studying is higher on religious subjects i.e.; *Qur'an*, *sunnah*, *fiqh*, *aqidah*, and *muamalah*. Generally, there are ten sources of *Kitab kuning* studied in pesantren; Ta'lim Muta'allim (Adab / ethics), Jurumiyah (Nahwu / linguistics), Matan Taqrib (Fiqh), Arbain Nawawi (Hadiths), Jauharul Maknun (Balaghah / linguistics), Waraqat (Ushul Fiqh), Sulamul Munawwaraq (Mantiq / logics), Aqidatul Awam (Aqidah / ethics), Amsilah Tasrifayah (Sharaf / linguistics), Tafsir Jalalain (Tafsir/translations).

It can be determined, several factors influence the low memorization ability in English material; 1) a greater interest in studying religious sciences so that they are less enthusiastic about learning English, 2) the dormitory activities were very tight so they did not have much time to repeat the material in their room, 3) the students' memory is indeed weak so they can memorize but cannot recall at other times., and 4) there is no seriousness students in learning. Even though in their daily lives, *santri* are accustomed to using memorization methods this does not rule out the possibility that there are indeed some people who have a weak memory.

Another example of learning to use the memorization method was studying the Kitab Kuning with the *sorogan* method. They can memorize the material in the Kitab Kuning they have learned and practice during the deliberations (Suteja et al., 2022). Sorogan is similar with the *tahfidz* technique, the difference is in the object of memorization. *Sorogan* uses the Kitab Kuning and *tahfidz* uses the Al-Qur'an. Both of these techniques prove that students rely on their memory immensely. They are accustomed to applying memorization techniques for several subjects in Arabic linguistics which are best known as *lalaran* or *nadzoman*, these are a term commonly mentioned for the technique of memorizing *nahwu* lessons at their school.

For that reason, the usage of *mahfudzat* translation and Qur'an verses was to integrate English and Islamic value. Hopefully, students could apply the materials which are related to their social life. It is important because Islamic value is designed to form students' spiritual and social attitude, knowledge, and skills (Kuswanto et al., 2022). Another hindrance that contributes to the low retention rate of English is the learning technique that the *santri* are accustomed to; it is none other than rote learning (Khoiruddin & Mauludi, 2019). Rote learning engaged with memorizing, is the ability to recall or automatically remember data stored in the human brain. The memorization technique is part of fast-tracked learning, which is an effective learning program that is faster and more understandable than conventional techniques. So that, it would be more appropriate for test preparedness only.

On the other hand, the researcher also found a factor that probably became the factor that might inhibit the memorizing technique even though it is still the main learning technique used by teachers and students. This common rote learning technique is known as cramming, it is recalling pieces of information in a short period. Nevertheless, to have a deeper understanding, students suggested having different techniques of learning, that is meaningful learning. Ausubel maintains that if a learner intends to memorize the lesson verbatim, as a series of arbitrarily related words, both the learning process and the learning outcome must necessarily be rote and meaningless (Hanani, 2020). He argues that memorization is not suitable for higher learning purposes, because meaningful learning is a process of relating new information to relevant concepts contained in a person's cognitive structure. So, some people do not apply the learning method of memorizing. Because the world of education is increasingly

developing in collaboration with technology, bringing up fresh and fun learning methods. However, for some schools such as Pesantren which do not have facilities like public schools, the memorization technique is still often used to be applied to other subjects besides *tahfidz*.

Despite all the criticism against rote learning, the researchers beg to differ and try to find the silver lining in the cloud by implementing it in English learning among *santri*. Unfortunately, this technique has a weakness, students will not have meaningful learning and their memory of English can be no longer in their brains if they do not recall it over and over again. Just like memorizing the Holy Qur'an, it needs to be re-memorized continually within a certain period. It is the same as language. If it is not often practiced, with time, it will fade.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering the improvement in the number of students who got better scores in answering the post-test, it can be concluded that the memorizing technique is effective, at least the goal to have a better score in English had been achieved. The results of the post-test of students who answered correctly above 3 were 72.5% indicating that this treatment was successful. Even though some views of this technique were still considered a traditional technique, in some places, it can be the answer to difficulties. It turns out that the traditional pesantren learning system can also be applied to modern science. Even though every technique has its positivity and negativity, the adaptation of the *tahfidz* technique in learning English is somehow useful to increase students' enthusiasm. Since *santri* have been familiarized to memorize Qur'an and other religious subjects.

This study was only carried out on 40 students in a pesantren. Therefore, the following question arises: Does this work reflect the situation of students in other pesantren? Do they have the same vocabulary learning concepts and strategies? There are not enough subjects to represent all students. Future research is expected to recruit more students and teachers for more complete and convincing results. Second, this work has not carried out in-depth and systematic multi-directional exploration. Further research is expected to be more systematic and comprehensive to obtain more diverse conclusions.

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