

Designing an Online Quranic Recitation (*Qirā'āt*) Framework Using Massive Open Online Courses

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How to cite this paper: Wahid, F. N., Norman, H., Nordin, N., Baharudin, H., Aziz, R., & Ibrahim, R. (2019). Designing an Online Quranic Recitation (*Qirā'āt*) Framework Using Massive Open Online Courses. *Creative Education*, 10, 3153-3162. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2019.1012239>

Received: October 21, 2019

Accepted: November 26, 2019

Published: November 29, 2019

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Abstract

Understanding variations in Quranic recitations is essential in ensuring that the recitations convey the actual meaning of Quranic verses. Traditionally, in increasing the levels of accuracy and precision of the verses, extensive practice sessions are conducted with instructors via individual face-to-face session. Yet, this is problematic with large groups of learners, as individualized learning sessions cannot be conducted. Moreover, there is also the issue of pace of learning in which some learners require higher levels of learning times that are compared to others. Previous studies have indicated that integration of technology via massive open online courses could potentially solve these problems. As such, this study proposes a Design Framework to develop MOOCs for Quranic recitation. This design was based on findings gathered from experts' judgement and consensus. Various approaches and different learning activities have resulted in the failure of correct pronunciation in Quranic recitation. Therefore, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to determine suitable elements for MOOC learning content design with regards to Quranic recitation learning. 15 experts from different fields of study were involved as experts in the FGD session. The findings were analyzed using a thematic analysis. This study concludes by highlighting the proposed framework by verifying Quranic recitation (*Qirā'āt*) constructs needed for the development of MOOC.

Keywords

Online Quranic Recitation Learning, *Qirā'āt*, Massive Open Online Courses, MOOC Learning Framework, Focus Group Discussion, *Manhaj*

1. Introduction

Reading ability plays an important role in human life in this modern age. With the rapid advancement of science and technology, humans have to renew their knowledge and skills acquired through reading. However, the ability to acquire reading skill varied among people. Some of them are fluent while others require their own pace to understand and accomplish reading skills. Statistics from the Ministry of Education found that the literacy level of Malaysians should not be appreciated if compared to the reading culture of the people in developing countries such as Japan (National Library of Malaysia, 2007). Based on the report of reading habits by (UNESCO, 2006) and (Library of Malaysia, 2006), Malaysians read two books a year, as compared to just two pages a year in 1984. However, research conducted by (Library of Malaysia, 2015) found that the number of books read by Malaysians on average increased from 2 to 15 books a year. Also, statistics by the Malaysian Youth Index Index (IYRES) (Outcome Evaluation of Malaysian Youth Index (IBM'16), 2016) shows that from 2015 to 2017, Malaysian youths spend 1 - 2 hours a day to read books including magazines and newspapers. This finding shows that Malaysia's curriculum or reading literacy indicators in 2017 is at a satisfactory level compared to the previous year.

(Mechener, 1995) states that the Quran is the most widely read book in the world. The *Qirā'āt* is generally understood as the manner of the pronunciation of the Quran during recitation. As learning Quranic recitation or *Qirā'āt* is quite a complex process, the learning process usually requires guidance by a teacher or coach who is well-versed in the field of study. The current practice of studying *Qirā'āt* is done through traditional ways of learning using the face-to-face method (Czerepinski & Swayd, 2016). It is typically learned through individual extensive practice sessions with a teacher who listens to the learner's recitation, identifies recitation errors, and instructs the trainee with the proper corrections (called *talaqqi* and *musyafahah* in Arabic). Therefore, both students and teachers need to be at the same location and time during the lessons (Qadi & Ghani, 2003). This process of learning *Qirā'āt* requires extensive training and high levels of time consumption as each of the *Qirā'āt* types has their own rules of recitations and variations (Al-Suyuti & Din, 2005).

2. Overview

2.1. The Concept of Reading

Reading is one of the sources of knowledge and the foundation of self-formation towards acquiring knowledge (Baroody, Alison, & Diamond, 2012; Carron & Bordia, 1985; Kadir, 2011). Reading skills are defined as the ability of someone to visualize the visual form, recognize the letters and pronounce the vocals, read and understand the words, sentences and paragraphs and also links between forms with sound and through experience as well as able to interpret the meaning (Curriculum Development Center, Minister of Education, 1982; Jamian, 2011; Othman, 2007). The purpose of reading is to understand texts and textual

content that give readers the meaning (Mohd@Man, 2005; Othman, 2005). Reading comprehension depends on the combination of language knowledge, cognitive style, and reading experience, and the basic skills of this reading need to be strengthened before being taught to read directly. Mastering the reading skills related to the learning autonomy allows reader to freely decide their pace in reading (Morris, Wu, & Finnegan, 2005). In other words, allowing the reader to cater for different pace of reading skills is important to increase readers' understanding or increase level of competency in reading.

2.2. Quranic Recitation (*Qirā'āt*)

Historically, Quranic education has been reported to be the first type of education in Islamic history, in which memorizing the Quran was aimed in keeping the number of *mutawatir* (more than three) members to memorize the Quran to avoid the allegations of Quranic misleads (Kelly, 2012). The ability to read the Quran is a crucial element in ensuring the recitations convey the accurate meaning *Qirā'āt* is defined as a knowledge of Quranic pronunciations as well as the differences that are attributed to its carriers (Al-Suyuti, 1987). *Qirā'āt* is a procedural knowledge or practice of agreed or disputed Quranic words that are pledged to the bearer.

2.3. Background of *Qirā'āt* Learning

Previous studies have recommended the presence of experienced teachers or scholars, to ensure that the understanding does not deviate from the true meanings of the Holy book. The objective of *Qirā'āt* learning is to preserve from any recitation mistakes or to word pronunciations of Quranic verses, to maintain the original meaning of the verse, to know the reading of the leaders of *Qirā'āt* and to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable reading approaches. Previous scholars have indicated that there are six approaches in learning *Qirā'āt* based on the *manhaj* of Prophet Muhammad (Diah & Zin, 2013; Bidin et al., 2011);

- *Talaqqi* (To recite the Quran, student sitting in front of the teacher directly while listening to the lectures delivered via face-to-face delivery. In the *talaqqi* method language and communication skills plays an important role, and thus given priority (Nor Adha, 2013);
- *Musyafahah* (students first listen to the teacher and then repeat the reading before teacher;
- *Tasmi'* (students memorize and recite in front of the teacher);
- *Tikrar* (students read repeatedly for error reduction and fluency);
- *Muraja'ah* (memorization practice);
- *Tadarus* (recite loudly and others listening with a focus) to correct errors if any, either between the student and the teacher or between the student and another student.

Among these six methods, *talaqqi* and *musyafahah* methods were also practiced and recognized by the pious predecessors and scholars as the best way of learning the Quran (Norasikin et al., 2005; Hashim & Tamuri, 2012). This method is important for ensuring the continuous credentialson the chain of indi-

viduals experts connected to the Quran recitation (*sanad*) from Prophet Muhammad and authenticate the recitation of the Quran (Amin, 2012). This is due to the fact that there are a number of Quranic words that have different pronunciations as compared to their written forms. These words cannot be learned and recited by only referring to their writings in the *mushaf*, but to learn via *talaqqi musyafahah* with a qualified teacher (Jaafar@Ramli, Engkizar, & Hamzah, 2017; Yusof, Razali, Omar, Abdelgelil, & Hamzah, 2018) emphasized that there is no specific approach to learn *Qirā'āt* and rather teacher-dependent.

Previous research has indicated that there are several issues in learning about Quranic recitations. The main issue that has been reported is that current practices of face-to-face learning are problematic with large groups of learners, as individualized learning sessions cannot be conducted (Gürsula & Keser, 2009). In addition, there is also the issue of pace of learning in which some learners require higher levels of learning times are compared to others (Anderson, Annand, & Wark, 2005). In other words, slow learners require more time on learning while fast learners require less time.

A learning environment that potentially solves these issues is massive open online courses (MOOCs). MOOCs have been reported to help create a “tutor-like” learning space (Adams, Yin, Vargas Madriz, & Mullen, 2014). They further reported that the scenario creates a learning sphere between students and teachers (Nordin, Norman, & Hamdan, 2018; Anderson, Annand, & Wark, 2005). In the context of *Qirā'āt* learning, MOOCs could provide two types of experiences, both synchronous and asynchronous. In asynchronous mode, pre-recorded online videos in MOOCs, with tutors as talking-heads, could re-create a “tutor-like” or a *musyafahah* (students first listen to the teacher and then repeat the reading before teacher) experience (Rozali, Jasmi, & Yusoff, 2012; Burd, Smith, & Reisman, 2015). In synchronous mode, online teachers could implement the *talaqqi* approach with a larger group of online students. The *tasmī'* (students memorize and recite to the teacher) and *tikrar* (students read repeatedly for error reduction and fluency) can be done via video recordings or synchronous sessions via MOOCs (Andersen, Na-songkhla, Hasse, Nordin, & Norman, 2018; Nordin, Norman, & Embi, 2015). The *tadarus* (recite loudly and others listening with a focus) could be also done both synchronously via group live chats, and asynchronously via online forums (Dogan, Norman, Alrobai, Jiang, Nordin, & Adnan, 2019; Adnan & Ritzhaupt, 2018; Kim, 2016; Anderson, 2013; Margaryan, Bianco, & Littlejohn, 2015; Md Khudzari, Yusoff, & Hamzah, 2013).

Therefore, this study emphasized on the aim to achieve these research objectives:

- To determine elements of MOOC learning content for *Qirā'āt* learning; and
- To determine elements of MOOC learning activities for *Qirā'āt* learning.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 15 experts from various field of studies. They

consisted of 8 subject matter experts (*Qirā'āt* teaching and learning), 4 instructional designers, and 3 curriculum developers.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Focus group discussion (FGD) was selected due to the qualitative method of inquiry gathering data (Morgan, 1996). In the study, a moderator was selected to lead the discussion on *Qirā'āt* teaching and learning with a panel of experts (i.e. 15 experts) (Wong, 2008). The implementation implemented four phases which included (Wilkinson, 1998, 1999): 1) research design; 2) data collection; 3) analysis; and 4) reporting of results.

Before FGD was conducted, empirical studies related to *Qirā'āt* studies from academic literature repositories were gathered. During the FGD session, the experts reviewed and classified elements and constructs into relevant sections and subsections. After that, experts determined the *Qirā'āt* elements to be implemented in the development of a MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning. The findings of the discussions were then analyzed using thematic analysis (Figure 1).

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Elements of *Qirā'āt* Learning Framework

The results indicate various construct proposed based on the literature reviewed. The constructs were classified into: 1) techniques of learning *Qirā'āt*; 2) content of *manhaj Qirā'āt* and 3) learning activities.

Based on Table 1 from construct above all the techniques of learning *Qirā'āt* were accepted by the experts, but only *talaqqi*, *musyafahah* and *murajaah* were viewed as suitable for MOOC development.

Based on Table 2, all items for the *manhaj* of *Qirā'āt* were accepted by experts and all items were to be used in developing the MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning.

In terms of learning activities in MOOCs for *Qirā'āt* learning, experts agreed

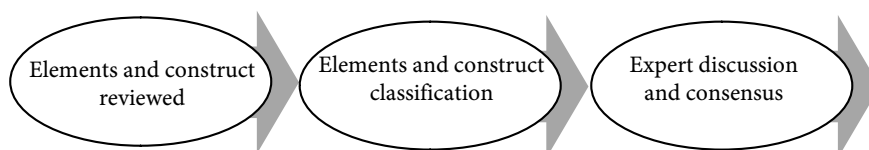


Figure 1. Focus Group Discussion FGD procedure.

Table 1. Techniques of learning *Qirā'āt*.

	Item	GD Result
1.	<i>Talaqqi and Musyafahah</i>	Accepted
2.	<i>Hafazan</i>	Accepted
3.	<i>Tahriri</i>	Accepted
4.	<i>Tasmī</i>	Accepted
5.	<i>Murajaah</i>	Accepted

that five *Qirā'āt* activities were suitable in the development of a MOOC. Three items were also added, which were; slide show, mind map and simulation (Table 3).

4.2. Prototype of a MOOC for *Qirā'āt* Learning Based on the Developed Framework

Based on the FGD discussion and developed framework, a prototype of a MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning was developed. Figure 2 shows the sharing information feature, while Figure 3 shows the *manhaj* learning section (where video files are available for learning). Here, in Figure 3, the video consists of Quranic recitations for *manhaj Basmallah*. The videos describe the differences of Quranic recitations of *Imam Qirā'āt*.

Table 2. Learning content for *Manhaj Qirā'āt* in a MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning.

	Item	FGD Result
1.	<i>Istia' zah</i>	Accepted
2.	<i>Basmallah</i>	Accepted
3.	<i>Ummul Quran</i>	Accepted
4.	<i>Idgham</i>	Accepted
5.	<i>Ha kinayah</i>	Accepted
6.	<i>Mad and qasar</i>	Accepted
7.	<i>Hamzah</i>	Accepted
8.	<i>Izhar</i>	Accepted
9.	Consonants of <i>Dzal</i>	Accepted
10.	Consonants of <i>Dhal</i>	Accepted
11.	Consonants of <i>Ta ta' nis</i>	Accepted
12.	Consonants of <i>Lam</i>	Accepted
13.	<i>Nun sukun</i> and <i>tanwin</i>	Accepted
14.	<i>Fathah, imalah</i> and <i>taqlil</i>	Accepted
15.	Consonants of <i>Ro'</i>	Accepted
17.	<i>Waqaf</i>	Accepted
18.	Consonants of <i>Ya</i>	Accepted

Table 3. Learning activities in a MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning.

	Learning activities	FGD Result
1.	Online video	Accepted
2.	Quiz	Accepted
3.	Task	Accepted
4.	Discussion/Forum	Accepted
5.	Sharing information	Accepted
6.	Mind map	Added
7.	Slide show	Added
8.	Simulation	Added

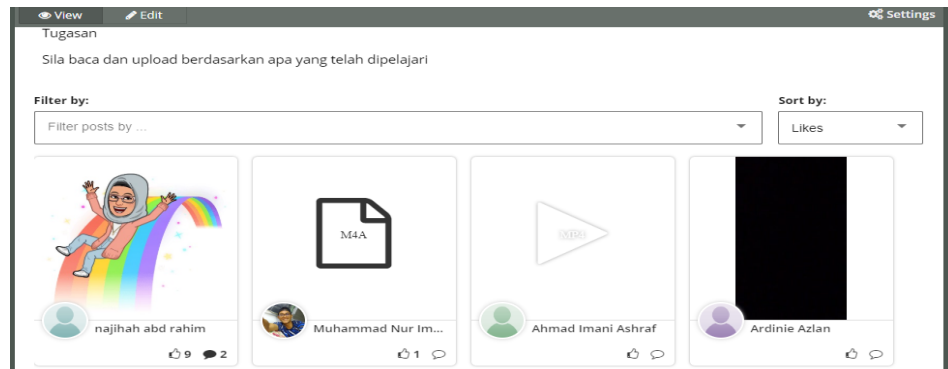


Figure 2. The *sharing information* feature in the MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning prototype.



Figure 3. *Manhaj* learning page in the MOOC for *Qirā'āt* learning prototype.

5. Conclusion

The study has produced a framework for MOOC development in *Qirā'āt* learning using the focus group discussion technique. The constructs of framework were: 1) five techniques of learning *Qirā'āt*; 2) 18 elements of learning content of *manhaj Qirā'āt* for MOOC development in *Qirā'āt* learning; and 3) eight learning activities for MOOC development in *Qirā'āt* learning. The framework developed could potentially solve current issues of Quranic recitations such as large groups learning and pace of learning. In sum, it is to be hoped that the framework developed could be used for educators and researchers interested in development of MOOCs for *Qirā'āt* learning.

Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the Translational MRUN Rakan-RU Program Grant (Grant no. MRUN-RAKAN RU-2019-003/2) and Dana Pecutan Penerbitan FPend (grant no. PP-FPEND-2019).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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