

Al-Quran Reading Abilities of Students in Musa-Asiah Integrated School Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Khmer Rouge regime conflict 25 years ago has enabled Islamic education to take place again in Cambodia. This study aims to review the readiness of students in the Musa Asiah Intergrated School to learn the Quran and their level of porficiency after receiving five years of formal education. Results show high readiness to learn the Quran where 91% of the respondents have their own Quran. 82% allocates a specific time each day to read the Quran. Result is poor from the aspect of capability of reading the Quran. Only surah al-Fatihah shows 48% of the respondents being able to read well with proper tajwid. As for Surah Maryam versus 1 to 3 and ayatul Kursyi, 70% are very weak and are unable to read it. These findings demonstrate the urgent need to provide training and skills of teaching and learning to the teacher involved.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of Muslim minorities in Cambodia and Vietnam began in the Champa Kingdom since the 10th century AD. It has commenced to flourish in the 11th century AD as as recorded by the Song China dynasty (Siddik Taouti 1985: 197). However, according to Mohd Zain Musa (2003: 23), Islam was accepted by the Cham community when Bo Tri Tri, the leader of the Champa Government in 1478, embraced Islam which was brought through the ports of Panduranga and Kauthara.

According to Mohd Zain Musa (2003: 37) many Cham people leave their beloved homeland due to Nam tien, the movement of Vietnam to the south, in search for refuge to continue living. Most of them lived in Cambodia or Kampuchea. In Kampuchea they met their relatives, Malays who came from the archipelago. Since their arrival in Cambodia, the Malays and Cham have been called the Cham-Malay community, living peacefully with the Khmer people who formed the Cambodian-majority community.

Although the majority of Cambodians are Buddhists, Islam remains accepted with the number of Muslim Cambodians around 800,000 in 1975 (Jhon L. E, 2001). However, the massacre by Khmer Rouge occurred around year 1975 to 1979 to the Cambodian Muslim minorities. Many Muslim scholars, professionals and religious teachers was detained and killed. Religious symbols and places of worship were also destroyed. Only about 150, 000 Muslims survived and only 20 out of 122 mosques were not demolished (Ajid Thohir, 2011). 25 years later, the Cambodian Muslims have started rebuilding better lives. According to Jhon L.E (2001), the number of Cambodian Muslims today is about 1% or around 700, 000 people.

From 1979 until today, the development of Islam continues to progress. Around 800 mosques throughout Cambodia have been built. Quran and religious classes were available at mosque institutions and madrasah especially at the Muslim settlements all over Cambodia.

However, the effectiveness of the Islamic education should be reviewed, especially with the shortage of religious and Quran teachers there.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Through the literature review conducted, there are still many issues and problems with the children's Quran reading skills in Cambodia. There is a lack of study on the effectiveness and the mastery of the Islamic education especially the Quran among the Muslim minorities of Cambodia (Mohamad Zain Musa, 2016). Writings by Mohamad Zain Musa (2011) and Berhanuddin Abdullah et.al (2016) about the Quran and Islamic education in Cambodia also touched on the effectiveness and the practice of Islam in the Muslim Cambodian society.

The existence of Quranic learning centers in Cambodia, and around 800 mosques and schools are established either by individuals or Islamic organizations. Among them is the Musa-Asiah Integrated School. Musa Asiah Integrated School started operating in 2011 by Dr Mohamad Zain Musa and his family (Mohamad Zain Musa, 2015). The two-storey building is a heritage family home located in the village of Syay Khleang, 170 km north of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The school has a vision on ensuring that Islamic education is available to Muslim children of this village and its nearby areas.

The Musa-Asiah Intergrated School in Cambodia uses integrated national curriculum from Cambodia and religious syllabus and text books from the Selangor Islamic Department (JAIS). The students follows the national Cambodian curriculum using the Khmer language, and religious education using Jawi which uses Arabic alphabets for writing the Malay language. They are emphasized religious studies besides learning English and the Khmer language. The Quran is taught from Year 1 until Year 6. The school is in its sixth year of operation. There should be a certain level of Quran reading proficiency during this period. After more than five years of introducing religious education, the students achievement and proficiency level should be measureable.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to:

1. Review the students' readiness to learn the Quran
2. Identify the students' Quran reading abilities

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach using a questionnaire and a reading test. The quantitative approach involves all the students in Year 4 and Year 5 in the Musa-Asiah Integrated School. The questionnaire was adapted from the instrument from Ajmain (1996) which consists of the readiness and the abilities to read the Quran. Next, this study suggests the improvements that can guide the development of the Quran education to the Muslim minorities in Cambodia.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings are divided into two parts. The first part discusses the profiles of the respondents and their readiness towards the Quran. The second part discusses on the respondents abilities to read the Quran.

Profiles of the Respondents

The study was conducted on 33 students of Musa-Asiah Integrated School, Cambodia. Table 1 shows the number of samples according to gender. A total of 15 male students (45%) and 18 female students (55%) were involved in the study.

Table 1: *Respondents' Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	15	45
Female	18	55
TOTAL	33	100

Table 2 shows the age of the respondents that are involved in the study. A total of 21 respondents (64%) are 10 years old, 7 of them are 11 years old (21%), and the remainders 5 of them are 13 years old (15%).

Table 2: *Respondents' Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10	21	64
11	7	21
13	5	15
TOTAL	33	100

Table 3 shows the respondents' level of education. 9 of the respondents (27%) are at level or year 4 while the remainder 24 respondents (73%) are at level 5 or have been schooling there for five years.

Table 3: *Respondents' Level of Education*

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
4	9	27
5	24	73
TOTAL	33	100

Table 4 shows a total 16 respondents (49%) stated that their mother or father works as a farmer. Only 2 respondents stated that their parents worked with an employer. The remainder 15% of the respondents (45%) did not mention their parents' occupation.

Table 4: *Parents' Occupation*

Parents' Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farmer	16	49
Works with an employer	2	6
Did not mention	15	45

Readiness to read the Quran

In the aspects of readiness to read the Quran, Table 5 shows whether the respondents have their own Quran or not. A total of 30 respondents (91%) have their own Quran compared to 2 respondents (6%) who borrows a Quran and only 1 respondent (3%) does not own a Quran.

Table 5: *Quran Ownership*

Owens a Quran	Frequency	Percentage
No	1	3
Yes	30	91
Borrows	2	6
TOTAL	33	100

Table 6 shows the respondents enthusiasm in allocating specific time each day to read the Quran. Results show 27 respondents (82%) allocates a specific time each day to read the Quran. However, 6 respondents (18%) do not have a specific time each day to read the Quran.

Table 6: *Specific Time Allocation*

Allocates specific time each day to read the Quran	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	82
No	6	18
TOTAL	33	100

From the aspect of completing reading the whole Quran (khatam alQuran) table 7 shows that nearly all of the respondents, 32 respondents (97%) have not completed reading the Quran. Only 1 respondent have finished the whole Quran.

Table 7: *Have completed reading the Quran*

Completed reading the whole Quran	Frequency	Percentage
Never	32	97
Once	1	3
More than once	0	0
TOTAL	33	100

Table 8 shows the respondents' abilities to read the Quran. Results shows that no respondents are still reading the beginning stage of the Quran using the Iqra book or Muqaddam which emphasizes on the introduction of hijaiyah letters or only memorizing certain surah. Results show that all respondents (100%) reads the Quran using the whole mushaf.

Table 8: *Quran Proficiency Level*

Quran Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percentage
Introduction to hijaiyah letters (Iqra' book, muqadam)	0	0
Memorizing certain surah	0	0
Reads the Quran	33	100
TOTAL	33	100

Results shows that all respondents (100%) have learnt the Quran for more than two years. Table 9 shows that all respondents that have been schooling here have been reading the Quran since they started school.

Table 9: *Periods of Learning the Quran*

Periods of Learning the Quran	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one year	0	
1-2 years	0	
More than 2 years	33	100

QURAN READING ABILITY

To ensure the abilities to read the Quran among respondents, reading tests are divided into two parts. The first part encompasses three chosen verses to be read by the respondents. The sentences are from Surah al-Fatihah, ayat al-Kursiy and verse 1-5 from Surah Maryam. Respondents are asked to read all three categories without being told the origin of the surah. Respondents are given a card with written sentences according to its category.

The second part of the reading test has words and phrases from the Iqra module, and is divided into four groups. The first group has words and phrases from module 2 of Iqra to test for correct word and makhrāj pronunciation. The second group includes words that have long pronunciations (madd) and short pronunciations taken from module 3. The third group has phrases that have tanwin and nun sakin which are izhar and idgham taken from Iqra module 4 and 5. The fourth group has phrases that have the madd lazim rule. The evaluation of this part are divided into five categories:

1. Excellent and correct Quran reading with proper tajwid.
2. Satisfactory Quran reading (can read the Quran but does not adhere to tajwid rules)
3. Poor Quran reading (can read the Quran but has falters and does not adhere to tajwid rules)
4. Very poor Quran reading (can only read a few letters and the words of Quran)
5. Incapable of reading the Quran or the words given.

Table 10: *Ability to read al-Fatihah*

Ability to read Quran sentences from Surah al-Fatihah	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent with proper tajwid	16	48
Satisfactory (can read the Quran but does not adhere to tajwid rules)	13	40
Poor (can read the Quran but has falters and does not adhere to tajwid rules)	3	9
Very poor	1	3
Incapable of reading	-	-

Table 10 demonstrates the percentage of the respondents' abilities to read Surah al-Fatihah. Results show 16 respondents (48%) are excellent in reading Surah al-Fatihah with proper tajwid. 13 respondents (40%) are satisfactory, they can read the Quran but does not adhere to the tajwid rules. There are 3 respondents (9%) who have poor ability to read Surah al-Fatihah and one respondent (3%) who is very poor in reading (did not recognize the sentence is from Surah al-Fatihah).

Table 11: *Ability to read Quran, Surah Maryam 1 – 3*

Ability to read Quran, Surah Maryam 1 – 3	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent with proper tajwid		
Satisfactory (can read the Quran but does not adhere to tajwid rules)	4	12
Poor (can read the Quran but has falters and does not adhere to tajwid rules)	6	18
Very poor	9	27
Incapable of reading	14	43

Table 11 shows the respondents' abilities to read the Quran that has a Madd Lazim Kalimi rule. No respondents are capable of reading these sentences with proper tajwid. Only 4 respondents (12%) have satisfactory reading ability but does not adhere to tajwid rules. 6 respondents (18%) have poor reading ability and 9 respondents (27%) have very poor reading ability. However, a large amount of 14 respondents (43%) are incapable of reading these sentences. A large sum of 70% is obtained if the percentages of very poor readers are added with the percentages of incapable readers, demonstrating that they are unable to read the Quran of the beginning sentences of Surah Maryam.

Table 12: *Ability to read Ayat Al-Kursiy*

Ability to read Quran, Ayat al-Kursiy	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent with proper tajwid	2	6
Satisfactory (can read the Quran but does not adhere to tajwid rules)	4	12
Poor (can read the Quran but has falters and does not adhere to tajwid rules)	4	12
Very poor	8	24
Incapable of reading	15	46

Table 12 shows the respondents' ability to read ayat al-Kursiy. 2 respondents (6%) are capable of reading it with proper tajwid. 4 respondents (12%) can read it satisfactorily. However, 4 respondents (12%) have poor reading abilities, 8 respondents (24%) falls in the very poor category and 15 respondents (46%) are incapable of reading ayat al-Kursiy. Summing up the percentage of very poor category and the incapable reading category, a large 70% are unable to read ayat al-Kursiy, similar to the 70% result from the inability to read Surah Maryam. It can be concluded that around 70% of the respondents have very poor ability to read the Quran.

DISCUSSION

Reviewing the students' willingness/readiness to learn Quran

Results from the survey conducted demonstrated respondents' excellent readiness to learn Quran. This can be seen from the aspect of owning a Quran where almost all respondents have their own Quran. 30 respondents (91%) have their own Quran compared to 2 respondents

(6%) who borrows and only 1 respondent who does not own a Quran. This is similar to the aspect of the respondents' enthusiasm in allocating specific time everyday to read the Quran. Results show 27 respondents (82%) has a specific time to read the Quran everyday compared to 6 respondents (18%) whom does not allocate a specific time. This is similar to the results obtained by Mohamad Azizul (2016) where 86% of his respondents, Year 6 students of Sekolah Agama Taman Kota Kulai reads the Quran everyday.

However, when referring to the aspect of whether respondents have finished reading the whole Quran (khatam al-Quran), almost all respondents (97%) fall in this category. This is unlike the results from Mohamad Azizul (2016) where only 32% of the Year 6 respondents of Sekolah Agama Taman Kota Kulai Johor have not yet khatam their Quran recitation, and 10% of the respondents have even managed to khatam more than twice. From the aspect of learning period, all respondents have been learning the Quran for more than two years, and all have started reading the Quran mushaf, not the muqaddam nor the Iqra modules.

Determining the proficiency of Quran recitations among the students

Results showed very weak level of proficiency in reading chosen surah and sentences. Only Surah al-Fatihah were managed to be read well with proper tajwid by 16 respondents (48%). 13 respondents (40%) are in the satisfactory category, they can read well but does not follow proper tajwid. There are 3 respondents (9%) who have poor ability to read Surah al-Fatihah and one respondent (3%) who is very poor in reading (did not recognize the sentence is from Surah al-Fatihah).

Findings also showed very poor results where 70% of the respondents failed to read the chosen sentences of the Quran, which are Surah Maryam versus 1-3 and ayat al-Kursiy. This is due to them memorizing versus that they are learning. Most of the respondents are unable to recognize the words. No respondents are able to read versus 1-3 of Surah Maryam. Only 4 respondents (12%) are in the satisfactory category. This is similar to ayat al-Kursiy where only 2 respondents (6%) read well and 4 respondents (12%) read satisfactorily.

These findings are unlike the results from Mohamad Azizul (2016). He made a similar study on Year 6 students of Sekolah Agama Kota Kulai Johor. He obtained a result of 52% respondents having the ability to read the Quran well and only 2% are in the very poor category. These differences might be due to the different Quran education system received, teacher training and exposure, facilities and better environmental factors.

These results show an urgent need to revise the teachers' capabilities in teaching and also the teaching and learning methods used. Even though the school has been operating for five years, the result of their students' capabilities in reading the Quran is at the unsatisfactory level.

CONCLUSION

Learning to read the Quran, reading it, and practicing what it preaches are a requirement for all Muslims. To ensure its effectiveness, institutions especially Musa-Asiah Integrated School, Cambodia needs to revise the methods and approaches used by their teachers. Teachers should also be exposed to a variety of additional skills such as tajweed and taranum as well as up-to-date materials for teaching and learning to be more effective and appropriate to the current situation consistent with the current advancement. Parents and the society also need to work hand in hand to uphold the Quran education of the local children.

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