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Reciting the Quran Using Symbols: A Global Learning Approach

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Symbols play a crucial role in communication by transcending language barriers and enhancing understanding. In multimedia, they appear as visual icons that convey clear and quick messages. In religious texts like the Quran, and in music, symbols are equally important. These elements significantly influence how the brain processes and interprets information, engaging unique cognitive functions during activities such as Quranic recitation or reading music (Al-Galal et al., 2016).

With the global Muslim population expected to reach 2.03 billion by the end of 2024, Islam will remain the second-largest religion. This growing community spans continents, emphasizing the need for accessible tools to learn Quranic recitation. Correct recitation, governed by tajweed rules, is a fundamental duty in Islam, ensuring proper pronunciation and articulation for a valid and reverent recitation (WorldPopulationReview.com, 2024).

Muslims regard the Quran as the literal word of Allah, offering spiritual guidance, moral instruction, and emotional fulfillment. Reciting the Quran brings comfort and confidence, but it must follow tajweed, which includes specific rules like "izhar" (clear enunciation), "ihfaq" (suppression), and "iqlab" (sound substitution) (Hassan & Zailaini, 2013). Studies show that proper tajweed recitation activates brain regions like the auditory cortex, Broca's area, and cerebellum, enhancing memory, focus, and emotional well-being (Kamal et.al.,2013). However, mastering tajweed can be challenging, especially for beginners, as there are around 28 core rules (Asa'ad, 2019). For many learners, the complexity of these rules can be overwhelming, making recitation stressful rather than fulfilling.

Recent researches highlight how Quranic symbols can ease the process of mastering recitation. These symbols serve as visual aids, guiding reciters through verses and reducing the need to memorise complex tajweed rules. Symbols like "sabdu," "noon," and "meem" with or without "sukoon" prompt specific

pronunciation or articulation adjustments, allowing reciters to follow proper tajweed without recalling every rule. For example, "dengung" (requiring nasalization) symbols, as shown in Figure 1(a), signal reciters to join two letters and apply nasal intonation ("ghunnah") at a 2-beat rhythm known as "harkat" (Asa'ad, 2019). By following these cues, learners can recite accurately without memorizing all tajweed rules. Additionally, "non-dengung" symbols, illustrated in Figure 1(b), guide reciters to articulate sounds clearly without nasalization, ensuring correct pronunciation and clarity.

Figure 1
Example of tajweed symbol usage in Quran
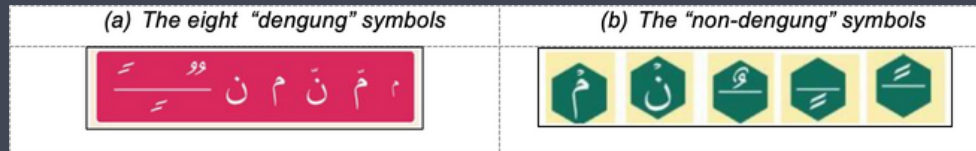
Note. Retrieved from "Oh Mudahnya Tajwid: #GunaSimbolJe: Tak Perlu Ingat Hukum Tajwid Yang Banyak" by A. Asa'ad, 2019. Cetakan ke 5. Infitah Training & Consultancy Sdn. Bhd.

This structured approach to recitation parallels how musicians rely on symbols in musical scores to guide performance. As shown in Figure 2, music symbols provide key information about notes, tempo, rhythm, and pitch, allowing musicians to accurately interpret and perform pieces. Like Quranic reciters, musicians use visual symbols to adjust actions, engaging their brains to translate symbols into precise performances (Fourie, 2004).

Figure 2
Symbols usage in music score

Note. Retrieved from " How to Read Piano Sheet Music" by J. Preis, 2024, Hoffman Academy. https://www.hoffmanacademy.com/blog/how-to-read-piano-sheet-music/

The use of symbols in both music and Quran recitation highlights the cognitive complexity of these tasks. Musicians and Quran reciters must interpret symbolic cues and apply corresponding rules, whether musical or phonetic. This process involves memory, attention, and decision-making, activating both the left and right brain hemispheres. For Quran reciters, recognizing symbols not only ensures correct recitation but also enhances cognitive engagement, making the spiritual experience more mentally stimulating.

In conclusion, the parallels between Quranic recitation and music score interpretation show how both activities engage similar brain functions. The Quran's symbolic language offers Muslims a unique way to deepen their faith while stimulating their intellectual faculties, reinforcing its role in promoting mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Reciting the Quran with "tarteel" (in proper order) is both a religious obligation and an intellectually enriching practice.

For those looking for better understanding Quranic symbols and Tajweed rules, resources such as https://www.ohmudahnyatajwid.com/, offers instructional videos. Additionally, UiTM's UFuture e-learning platform will soon provide a micro-credential course, offering structured guidance on mastering Quranic recitation through symbols.

Reference

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