

DEVELOPMENT OF NAQLI AND AQLI INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE DYSLEXIA ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING TOOLS

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Abstract

This qualitative study addresses a conceptual framework for integrating naqli (religious education) and aqli (conventional knowledge) into Arabic language learning tools for dyslexic students. Literature reviews and document analysis techniques were used in order to study backgrounds and processes related to the proposed framework. The results are then presented narratively, starting with the four identifiable categories of naqli and aqli integration and how it can help determine the set-up of an instrument of Arabic language knowledge transfer, which is designed to help individuals with dyslexia. Each level is established to serve either as an independent entity that balances each other out, or to take the form of a stage in a process that influences other processes. Understanding how the integration works is fundamental to bringing about effective implementation of Dyslexia Arabic Language Learning Tools (DALT). Within the framework of the naqli-aqli integration, knowledge and expertise will have to be coupled with good character to foster learners' civic development.

Keywords: Arabic language learning, Dyslexic Students, Naqli and Aqli knowledge, learning tools, knowledge integration.

BACKGROUND

Whether in a direct or indirect manner, Nurkhamimi (2011) said, a good number of, local and international knowledge experts have distinguished between religious and modern scientific knowledge. The separation seems to be rather

expected since secularism and dualism compliance can be traced in the educational sector. Noor Hisham (2013) pointed out that, due to this disintegration, a wide gap persists between two synchronous education systems that do not meet the requirements of learners.

The excessive offering of knowledge associated with *aqli*, without efforts to learning more about *naqli*, can cause imbalance problems. This uneven depiction may even occur when the focus of *naqli* concerns is above all *aqli* matters, leading to largely uncertain educational consequences. Thus, in making more efficient use of both *aqli* and *naqli* resources, Al-Quran has provided an approach for which numerous principles in regard to scientific and historical facts could be cited in the words of the Creator, Allah SWT. Revealing these principles to mankind was the duty of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, as assigned and mentioned by Allah in the Quran:

"[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought." (Quran, 16:44)

Apart from national transformation and value creation for the *ummah* (people), a wave of new teaching and learning tools is a further aspirational cause of the integration. Furthermore, since 2013, effort has been made to facilitate the integration of *naqli* and *aqli* into Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia's (USIM) Arabic curriculum. The problem is that, in the course of the transformation, participating faculties have documented the *naqli-aqli* integration in much the same way as reported in the literature reviews especially on Arabic language learning tools.

Thus, there are no tangible proof or successful learning implementation reviews to support the use of such dynamic framework for dyslexic learners. Nevertheless, deficiencies in human capital, with its attendant developmental issues, continue to be seen as the main reason for an effective DALT. Though still in its infancy, DALT is a highly unique study, conferred by countless benefits on the students with learning disabilities. To start with, the challenge of developing next-generation leaders has to be recognized, while other issues like neurologically based learning problems, such as dyslexia, have always been a fixed element in the list of the tasks incumbent on teachers to help, if not us all. The civilization is at present under strong pressure and is, therefore, caught up in an ongoing humanistic process of managing diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to International Dyslexia Association (2002), the neurologically based learning disability is associated with reading, writing, spelling and memory deficits. The learning severity has transboundary difference across language orthographies, which is why dyslexia is also known as a language-based learning

disability (Elbeheri et al., 2006). As people of the language study concerned with transparent orthography, the Italians, Spaniards, Turks, Greeks and Germans experience fewer problems than those readers of languages with non-transparent orthography, like the English for instance (Spencer, 1999). The vocabulary of non-transparent orthographic language readers depends on lexical factors, whereas for readers in languages with transparent orthography, this factor is highly unnecessary (Beland, and Z. Mimouni, 2001). On the one hand, Arabic and Hebrew readers whose languages may be interrelated with both types of orthography, may read depending on the type of orthography that calls for immediate attention.

Apart from that, there were relatively few languages that identified the work of initiatives to ease the difficulties experienced by developmental dyslexics, (Smythe & Everatt, 2000), despite worldwide recognition of its importance. In 2000, Miles found that efforts to assist dyslexic individuals in acquiring literacy and coping with phonological disorders were largely recorded by American, Canadian, Scandinavian or British researchers in American/British vernacular. The monolingual English-speaking participants were probably the firsts to pave the way here, by establishing the majority of subjects in such studies, in particular with the nature of dyslexia, which depends on the complex features of that vernacular.

According to Snowling (2000), different writing difficulties have their origin in problems they pose to young readers, as in the uniformity or transparency of their orthographies, between written symbols and language sounds. Apart from being a less transparent script, English for instance, has a much more complex association between its letters and sounds. A transparent script, on the other hand, offers a simpler, one-to-one relationship of symbols and sounds.

After Snowling's findings, other cross-orthographic studies followed, and a comparison was made between readers of English and readers of shallower orthographies. There was a discovery about readers of English being responsible for errors on single-word reading and non-word reading tasks, than the shallower orthographic readers. There was a difference between dyslexics in Arabic and English orthographies, which however made it increasingly clear the key roles language and cultural factors play in the learning specificities associated with dyslexia (Al-Rowais et al., 2014). Thus, these combined elements must be approached with the appropriate level of importance and understanding for the needs of non-Arabic dyslexic students and enhanced coverage within the existing predicaments.

International language studies, including Arabic, are modeled for the most part by many countries including Malaysia on the reading requirement. In the organizational structure of the Malaysian educational syllabus, reading is considered a top learning objective in the hierarchy. Accordingly, somewhere in 2011, Wei et al. said that schools have not been able to reduce the problems faced by students diagnosed with a reading-related disability. Firth et al. (2013) added,

there was an increase in the number of cases across schools within the primary and lower secondary education. In tackling the learning differences faced by dyslexic students, the Ministry of Education declared their commitment to offer various resources and assistance. However, their measures were unsuccessful at the time, resulting in psychological distress among teachers, parents and the society as a whole. As of today, a reduction in linguistic problems, especially in Arabic for non-Arabic dyslexic speakers, is unlikely for the near future. Few studies (Berninger et al., 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2012; Washburn et al., 2011) have been published in this language about the manifestation of dyslexia. The Malaysian curriculum, on the other hand, with its wide open interpretation, provides little guidance on the process for integrating *naqli* and *aqli* into Arabic language instructional methods for students with dyslexia.

Few literatures (Dewey et al., 2013; Winke et al., 2013; Trentman, 2013) reviewed thus far, often address their highly divergent interests in the complexity of the Arabic language for learners. In short, not many documented the knowledge integration of *naqli* and *aqli* within the framework of Arabic learning tools for dyslexic learners, which means that it is necessary to develop an effective set of guidelines for DALT designers. The conceptual framework under study for integrating *naqli* and *aqli* into DALT, is developed in accordance with the Malaysian Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) curriculum.

The reformation of the Arabic language unique features in order to improve its cultural context, should be incorporated into the formulation of DALT. The plan for the future will include strengthening the proposed framework, which is also set to be equipped with guidelines that could positively impact non-Arabic speaking individuals with dyslexia.

METHODOLOGY

This research is, as previously mentioned, a qualitative study on a conceptual framework for integrating *naqli* and *aqli* into DALT. Besides literature reviews, document analysis (proposal and paperwork on how to integrate Aqli and Naqli knowledge in USIM) methods were extended to facilitate discussions on the published contents before translating them into the form of a narrative. The study is based on the following guidelines:

- i. the underlying philosophy, vision, principles and concept of USIM that have been put in place to reflect the university's curriculum
- ii. the international level of ASL content for undergraduate and postgraduate courses; and
- iii. the perceived intangible values of the proposed framework

Proper care was taken to ensure that the published contents would be assessed by subject matter experts (SME) in Arabic language who helped classify the information into three levels; beginner, intermediate and advanced. The SME,

with their wealth of resources, were essentially involved in the development of content for the university's course outline.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The effective integration of *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge can be implemented within the USIM ecosystem if the stakeholders involved at different levels cooperate more closely to turn it into a reality. Described by Cambridge University as the leading Islamic academia, USIM's progressive vision and mission are strongly intertwined with its curriculum philosophy of integrating *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge. In 2016, USIM was recognized as a regional reference university. From thereon, it aims to become a respected institution with referrals received from around the globe by 2025.

The past 5 years have seen important decisions been taken by USIM to embrace international-level knowledge integration. The close intertwining of its instructional methods, research initiatives, administrative management, and professional development are gradual decisions conceived along international standards. Not only that, this development has led to the advancement of a number of financial sustainability and community engagement proposals by the university. These efforts generally aim at upgrading the university within the next five years, based on the four fundamental levels of *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge integration, as suggested by Mohd Rushdan (2013) viz:

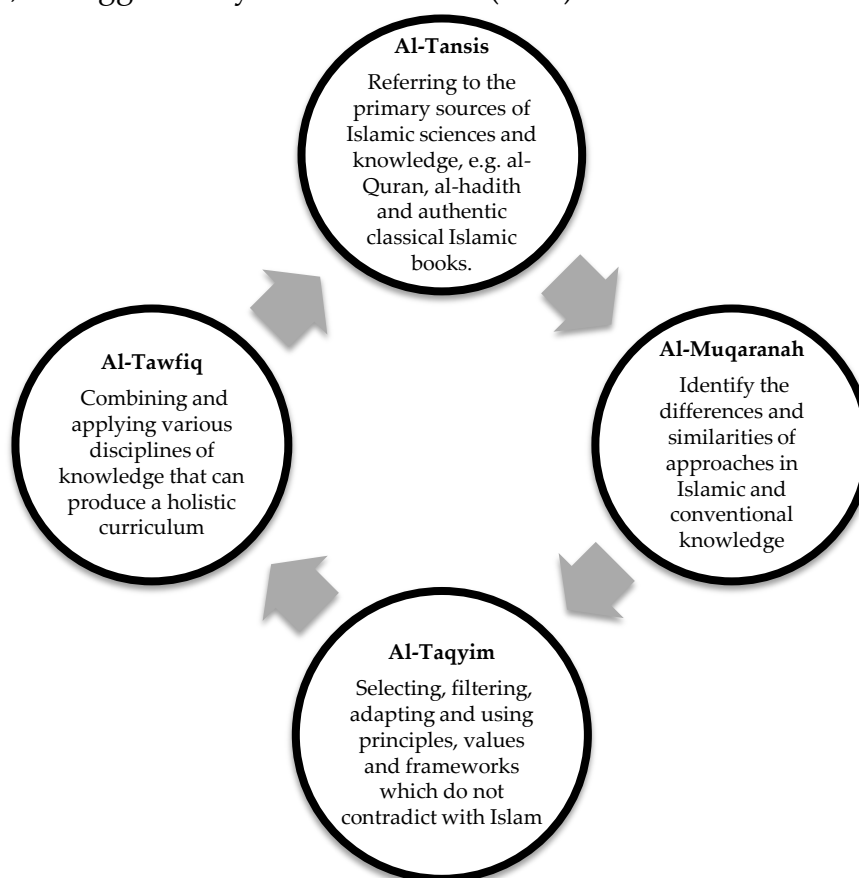


Figure 1: Mohd Rushdan's four fundamental levels of *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge integration

The four levels, as shown in Figure 1, will help determine the set-up of an instrument of Arabic language knowledge transfer, which is designed to help individuals with dyslexia. Each level is established to serve either as an independent entity that balances each other out, or to take the form of a stage in a process that influences other processes.

DALT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT USIM

Acclaimed by the latest rankings as the 12th best public-funded university in Malaysia, USIM aims to tighten its target, setting a dynamic process of enhancing Islamic studies through *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge integration. With internationally oriented programmes envisioned for the future, USIM takes a step forward in emphasizing on the use of information technology to support academic language mastery and research.

A large part of this vision's success thus far, is most often attributed to USIM Arabic programs administered by The Faculty of Major Languages Studies. A look at its quality academic research in various fields may serve to highlight the dynamics of employable graduates that the faculty is producing each year. In the medium to long term, this would create many opportunities for researchers in sharing accurate knowledge about Islam and the Muslim community. Alongside solidly established philosophy of USIM as well as its vision for 2025, the concept of *naqli-aqli* integration is adopted in the faculty's development of DALT in order to transform and create value for the country and *ummah* (humanity as a whole). As previously mentioned, the four fundamental levels of knowledge integration considered for DALT are:

Level 1: Al-Tansis – Ayatization

Ayatization sees the adoption of *naqli* knowledge management with DALT examples, which is designed to regulate the use of Islamic traditions in enhancing Arabic literacy skills among students. For instance, lecturers can now teach effective Arabic essay writing skills by giving a Quran reference for each assignment. For instance, by narrating the lessons learned from the journey of Prophet Ibrahim PBUH, as mentioned in the Quran, students will learn the role of problem statement, hypothesis, methodology and pilot testing. Ayatization shows that it is only through coordinated Islamic sources such as al-Quran, al-hadith and the authentic classical Islamic books that an effective research project can be developed and implemented responsibly. Nevertheless, from the local up to the global level, the challenge now is to use methods of this sort with modern theories in Arabic subjects to meet the learning needs of dyslexic students.

Level 2: Al-Muqaranah – Comparison

Different perspectives and theories under Islamic and Western beliefs have been gaining ground in connection to enhancing Arabic literacy skills among students. Through this method, underpinning Islamic and Western resources are required to extend foundation support in DALT. For instance, educators weigh the pros and cons of both resources during a face-to-face session with students. The educators would then provide the students with consolidated *naqli* and *aqli* examples to enhance engagement in Arabic teaching and learning activities. While this method is an ideal process in DALT, yet it has not been the most common.

Level 3: Al-Taqyim – Reviewing

Improvement is needed in existing coordination of Arabic teaching and learning. This requires a joint initiative for problem solving and reviewing disciplinary individual efforts, which are taken in accordance with developing solutions for the Muslim community and humanity at large. These supportive multi-disciplinary measures do not rule out the fact that humanistic problems are not compartmentalized according to academic disciplines, thus the way to create breakthrough solutions is by the integration of *naqli* and *aqli*. Formal examples, along with direct instruction in language skills, may extend to appreciation for the role of *naqli* knowledge in research among students. Discussion is underway on the full application of *naqli* and *aqli* in team-teaching, for educators to be equally involved in the analysis of problem-based learning. Not only will the students learn better in a team-teaching concept, but also the learning environment continues to be elevated and enhanced for educators to handle case studies. The existing field information is so deep that a person is no longer able to know all of it in full detail, thus team-teaching is a solution to the problem that is practiced worldwide in higher education. Beyond the learning organization, there is a cross-disciplinary relationship between *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge. The best thing about that is, it has the tendency to lead USIM to formalize trans-disciplinary approaches in its research and education offerings. And instead of merely calling for improved coordination, USIM looks into hiring its own dynamic graduates, who are trained in both types of knowledge, to become lecturers in the university.

Level 4: Al-Tawfiq – Integration

Integration is further defined as the act of combining, adapting and incorporating knowledge into something that will be of benefit to students and the community at large. Based on Moodle, an integrated learning program, USIM's e-learning platform is aptly named GOALS (Global Open Access Learning System) (Nurkhamimi, 2014). GOALS has since undergone periodic upgrading process since its inception in 2011 (Alwi et al., 2014). USIM lecturers have fully utilized GOALS in their teaching and learning activities; from uploading course outlines and posting notices, to setting up online quizzes and initiating online forums. Looking at the positive interdependencies, the advantage of GOALS is a further reason for integration to occur through learning, education, observation and the

use of reason. Moodle, with its technical capacities, is an innovative platform to support the running of DALT in USIM. More importantly, the *ummah* must initiate the move towards new scientific research areas, as mentioned in the Quran by Allah SWT:

“And who so brings the truth and believes, therein such are the dutiful”
(Quran, 39:33)

Adapted from the English version of the word chain test developed by Miller-Guron (1999), the implementation of DALT in USIM was done with the use of Arabic word chains. The 25 adapted versions of Arabic words were written with spaces between letters, with some word deletions. Each participating student within the cohort was given the Arabic word chain test presented on a sheet of paper. They were asked to insert lines into the chain in order to discern where one word ended and the next began. To ensure their understanding, instructions with examples were provided before the test began. For every word correctly outlined, the student was awarded one mark for it. The conceptual framework of DALT is illustrated in Figure 2.

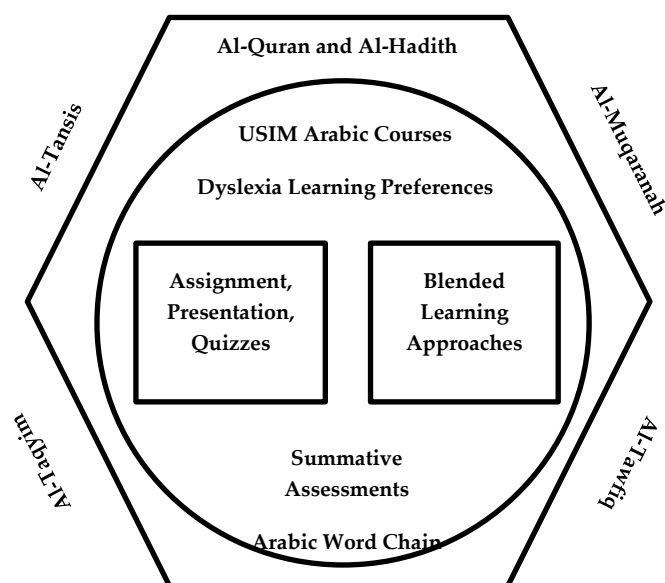


Figure 2: DALT development model

CONCLUSION

Unique Arabic courses have been offered by USIM that aim to harmonize revealed knowledge (*naqli*) with rational knowledge (*aqli*) for diverse student learners, including those diagnosed with dyslexia. To ensure graduates have a firm foundation in their vertical relationship with Allah SWT and a strong commitment in their horizontal relationship with the society, *naqli* and *aqli* integration is the first step towards achieving that long-term aspiration. Furthermore, in the quest to nurture a noble generation and a knowledgeable society, DALT is developed in

accordance with the integration of *naqli* and *aqli*. Its orientation is based on a value system that marries well with elementary and advanced Arabic courses for dyslexic learners, with which emphasis on both types of knowledge is recommended. DALT researchers faced a range of challenges across different dimensions of staff and students, coupled with a lack of study materials. The bigger challenge though, rests on them never losing sight of the underlying principles of knowledge integration and realizing that their effort is necessary in order to save the Muslims and humanity today from issues pertaining to crime towards knowledge. While the integration process does contain a description of intensified strategies of wise manner through family and society, the task of making this a success will eventually fulfil the learning needs of future generations.

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