



IMPLEMENTING THE HIJAIYAH LETTER RECOGNITION METHOD IN QUR'ANIC READING INSTRUCTION AT MIN MEDAN CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method in learning to read the Qur'an at State Islamic Elementary Schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri/MIN) in Medan City, as well as to analyze the obstacles encountered and its impact on improving students' Qur'anic reading ability. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included Qur'an-Hadith teachers, school principals, and students at MIN 1, MIN 7, and MIN 12 Medan. The findings indicate that Qur'anic reading instruction was conducted using the Iqra' method combined with a gradual Hijaiyah letter recognition approach. This method was implemented in several stages, including the introduction of Hijaiyah letters, the introduction of vowel marks (harakat), sukun, and shaddah (tasydid), as well as manipulative exercises in arranging letters and modifying vowel signs. The results reveal that some students still experienced difficulties in recognizing Hijaiyah letters, reading connected letters, and understanding Qur'anic diacritical marks. However, after the intensive and systematic application of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method, there was a significant improvement in students' reading fluency and confidence in reciting the Qur'an. The supporting factors for the success of this method included a structured teaching strategy, active teacher involvement, and the availability of additional guidance programs outside regular class hours. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors consisted of limited instructional time, low learning motivation among some students, and a lack of support from the family environment. Therefore, the Hijaiyah letter recognition method can be recommended as an effective alternative approach to improving Qur'anic reading skills among students at the elementary madrasah level.

Keywords: *Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Method, Qur'anic Learning, Islamic Elementary School (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), Qur'anic Reading Ability, Islamic Education*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teachings, providing guidance for humanity and serving as a moral, spiritual, and social compass. The obligation to learn and teach the Qur'an was emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who stated, "The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." Despite this emphasis, the level of Qur'anic literacy in Indonesia remains relatively low (Usiono et al., 2021). According to a 2024 survey conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, approximately 72.25% of Muslims in Indonesia are unable to read the Qur'an correctly in accordance with the rules of tajwid. This finding indicates that Qur'anic reading proficiency continues to be a fundamental challenge in Islamic education.

Implementation refers to the process of putting ideas, policies, or innovations into practice with the aim of producing changes in behavior, knowledge, or skills. In the educational context, instructional implementation is the process of executing planned learning activities to ensure that educational objectives are achieved effectively (Dinayah et



al., 2025). A learning method is a systematic approach employed by teachers to organize the learning process so that students can attain predetermined educational goals. In Qur'anic instruction, the selection of an appropriate teaching method plays a significant role in determining students' success in reading and understanding the Qur'an. An effective method should be adapted to students' characteristics as well as the nature of the learning materials (Ana et al., 2023).

The ability to recognize the Arabic (Hijaiyah) letters constitutes the first essential step before students can learn to read the Qur'an. Letter recognition is generally defined as the ability to identify symbols or characters that represent language sounds. In the context of Qur'anic learning, mastery of the Hijaiyah letters forms the foundation for accurate Qur'anic recitation in accordance with the principles of tajwid (Nur et al., 2025). Learning to read the Qur'an is an educational process designed to enable students to acquire the skills to read, write, understand, and practice the teachings of the Qur'an. Its primary objective is not merely to develop students' mechanical reading ability but also to foster an understanding of the spiritual meaning of the verses they recite.

As an Islamic elementary educational institution, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) plays a crucial role in developing Qur'anic literacy from an early age. However, preliminary observations conducted in three public Islamic elementary schools in Medan City (MIN 1, MIN 7, and MIN 12) revealed that many students were still unable to recognize the Hijaiyah letters correctly. An initial survey involving 29 students at MIN 1 found that only 16 students could recite Qur'anic verses fluently, while only five demonstrated an understanding of the rules of tajwid. Similar conditions were identified at MIN 7 and MIN 12, where students' proficiency levels were even lower. These findings indicate a considerable gap between the objectives of Qur'anic education in madrasahs and the actual reading abilities of students (Assidiki et al., 2026).

The problem is further exacerbated by limited parental involvement in supporting children's Qur'anic reading skills, low student motivation, and insufficient instructional time allocated for Qur'anic learning in madrasahs (Rahman et al., 2025). Given that Qur'anic education serves as the foundation for children's moral and spiritual development, the implementation of effective instructional methods is essential for improving Qur'anic reading proficiency. One promising approach is the Hijaiyah letter recognition method, which emphasizes students' fundamental ability to identify, pronounce, and write the Arabic letters of the Qur'an through a gradual and systematic learning process. Based on this background, this study seeks to address three research questions: (1) how is the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method planned in Qur'anic reading instruction at public Islamic elementary schools in Medan City; (2) how is the method implemented in classroom practice; and (3) how effective is the method, and what are the evaluation results in improving students' Qur'anic reading abilities? It is expected that this study will provide meaningful contributions to improving the quality of Qur'anic instruction in Islamic elementary schools.

METOHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method in three public Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri or MIN) in Medan City. The



research was conducted at MIN 1, MIN 7, and MIN 12 Medan, which were purposively selected because they share similar characteristics in the implementation of Qur'anic reading instruction. Primary data were collected through direct classroom observations of Qur'anic reading instruction in Grade V, in-depth interviews with Qur'an-Hadith teachers, school principals, and selected students, as well as documentation consisting of lesson plans, attendance records, and students' learning assessment results. Secondary data were obtained from relevant literature, including books, scholarly journals, and government regulations concerning Qur'anic and religious education.

Data collection was carried out using three complementary techniques. Participatory observation was conducted to examine the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method and students' responses during classroom instruction. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the method, while document analysis was employed to provide additional empirical evidence supporting the validity of the findings. The collected data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and official school documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Qur'anic Reading Instruction

Qur'anic reading instruction at the public Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri or MIN) in Medan City is delivered through the Qur'an-Hadith subject. Before the instructional process begins, teachers prepare a lesson plan (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran or RPP) as a guide for classroom activities (Iqbal et al., 2025). Each lesson typically starts with an opening greeting, followed by a collective prayer, an explanation of the learning objectives, recitation and memorization of selected short chapters (surahs) of the Qur'an, and individual as well as group reading exercises (Nurdyansyah & Pujiati, 2023).

The Iqra' method serves as the primary instructional approach and is complemented by an intensive and gradual Hijaiyah letter recognition method. Classroom observations, however, revealed that a considerable number of students were still unable to read the Qur'an fluently, while some had not yet mastered the recognition of the Hijaiyah letters. In one Grade V class at MIN 1 Medan, approximately 12–15 students were still studying at Iqra' Levels 2–5, and several students had not yet mastered the basic vowel marks (harakat), sukun, or tasydid. Interviews with teachers and school principals further indicated that not all students possessed strong motivation to learn Qur'anic reading, many received limited guidance from their families at home, and some students who had formally completed the Iqra' program still demonstrated inadequate reading proficiency in practice (Daulay & Hasibuan, 2024).

Students' Learning Difficulties

The findings identified three major categories of learning difficulties experienced by students in reading the Qur'an. The first involved limited ability to recognize the Hijaiyah letters and their corresponding vowel marks. The second concerned difficulties in reading connected Arabic letters, while the third related to challenges in reading long vowels (mad)



and special orthographic symbols such as tasydid and sukun (Fadila et al., 2022). In addition, several students had not yet fully mastered basic Latin literacy skills, making the transition from the Latin alphabet to Arabic script more challenging. This situation was regarded with concern by teachers, particularly because the participating schools are Islamic elementary institutions expected to demonstrate strong achievement in Qur'anic education.

Implementation of the Hijaiyah Letter Recognition Method

To address these challenges, teachers implemented a structured Hijaiyah letter recognition method consisting of several sequential stages. The first stage focused on introducing the Hijaiyah letters. Students were gradually required to memorize and read all thirty Hijaiyah letters through repeated practice until they achieved fluency. Their mastery was then assessed through direct oral questioning, in which teachers pointed to individual letters and asked students to identify and pronounce them correctly. For students who required additional support, the instruction was divided into three progressive learning stages.

Table 1. Three progressive learning stages.

Learning Stage	Hijaiyah Letter Range	Learning Objective	Target Students
Stage 1	Alif (ا) to Ra (ر)	To develop students' ability to recognize and read the basic Hijaiyah letters sequentially and fluently.	Beginning learners with little or no prior knowledge of the Hijaiyah letters.
Stage 2	Zay (ز) to Qaf (ق)	To improve students' fluency in recognizing and reading intermediate-level Hijaiyah letters.	Students who had successfully mastered Stage 1.
Stage 3	Kaf (ك) to Ya (ي)	To complete students' mastery of the entire Hijaiyah alphabet before introducing connected-word reading exercises.	Students who had completed the previous instructional stages.

Following mastery of the alphabet, students were introduced to the vowel marks (fathah, kasrah, and dhammah). Rather than spelling each letter individually, students were encouraged to pronounce the letters directly according to their vowel markings through repeated practice with both isolated and connected letters written on the classroom board. Instruction then continued with the introduction of sukun, during which teachers explained its function by comparing it with familiar pronunciation patterns in the Latin alphabet to facilitate understanding (Abid, 2025). The concept of tasydid was subsequently introduced as a consonant-doubling marker, with teachers providing direct demonstrations of how the symbol affects pronunciation.

The final instructional component consisted of manipulative practice activities. Teachers varied the arrangement of Hijaiyah letters and modified their vowel markings to encourage students to recognize letter-sound relationships rather than relying solely on memorization. This instructional strategy was found to improve students' speed in



recognizing Hijaiyah letters, increase their confidence in reading the Qur'an aloud, and strengthen their understanding of fundamental tajwid principles.

Learning Evaluation

Student achievement was evaluated across three domains of learning. The cognitive domain was assessed through written examinations consisting of objective test items, the affective domain was evaluated through observations of students' attitudes and learning behaviors, and the psychomotor domain was measured through practical Qur'anic reading performance. Student achievement was determined based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (*Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* or KKM). The evaluation results demonstrated that students who participated in intensive Hijaiyah letter recognition training showed substantial improvements in reading fluency. To further support students experiencing reading difficulties, the participating schools also implemented an additional thirty-minute remedial guidance program conducted before the beginning of regular classroom instruction (Gerhana et al., 2022).

Discussion

The findings indicate that Qur'anic reading instruction at the public Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri or MIN) in Medan City has not yet fully achieved the objectives established in the madrasah curriculum. Although Qur'anic instruction is delivered regularly through the Qur'an-Hadith subject, a considerable gap remains between the intended learning outcomes and students' actual reading abilities. Students' limited proficiency in reading the Qur'an is not merely an academic concern but also relates to their spiritual development and the formation of religious character (Maturidi et al., 2025). As the primary source of guidance for Muslims, the Qur'an should become a familiar text from an early age. However, the findings reveal that many students are still at the introductory stage of learning and have not yet mastered the recognition of the Hijaiyah letters (Yafi et al., 2023). Since the ability to recognize letters and their corresponding sounds forms the foundation of reading, students' weak mastery of the Hijaiyah alphabet represents a fundamental issue that requires serious attention.

The study also found that the Iqra' method remains the dominant instructional approach used by teachers. Although this method has been widely recognized as effective in many Islamic educational institutions, its implementation in the participating schools has not produced optimal results. Several students who had formally completed the Iqra' program still experienced difficulty reading the Qur'an fluently. These findings suggest that instructional methods should be adapted to students' learning characteristics and individual needs. Furthermore, limited instructional time significantly affects learning outcomes, as classroom sessions often do not provide sufficient opportunities for individualized guidance for students experiencing reading difficulties (Shahbal & Nurrohim, 2024).

Family involvement also emerged as an important factor influencing students' Qur'anic reading ability. Interviews revealed that many parents provide limited support for their children's Qur'anic learning at home. These findings indicate that successful Qur'anic education depends not only on schools but also on active parental involvement in reinforcing learning outside the classroom. In response to these challenges, teachers



implemented an additional instructional approach known as the Hijaiyah letter recognition method. This method emphasizes mastery of the Hijaiyah alphabet before students progress to reading words, phrases, and Qur'anic verses. Letter recognition serves as the fundamental basis of reading proficiency (Bz et al., 2024). The instructional process begins with the sequential introduction of the Hijaiyah letters, allowing students to learn both the visual form and pronunciation of each letter through repeated and structured practice. This approach helps students establish strong visual and auditory memory of the Arabic alphabet.

The first instructional stage focuses on the letters from Alif to Ra, providing beginners with a solid foundation in recognizing and pronouncing the basic Hijaiyah letters. Classroom observations demonstrated that students at this stage gradually developed greater confidence and willingness to identify letters orally. The second stage introduces the letters from Zay to Qaf and is designed to strengthen students' reading fluency. At this level, students are encouraged not only to memorize the letters but also to distinguish their different shapes and points of articulation (*makhraj*), thereby reducing pronunciation errors that may alter the meaning of Qur'anic recitation (Uriawan et al., 2025). The third stage covers the letters from Kaf to Ya, completing students' mastery of the entire Hijaiyah alphabet. Assessment at this stage includes oral examinations, random letter identification, and writing exercises. Repeated practice enables students to develop automaticity in recognizing and producing the Arabic letters accurately.

Once students have mastered the alphabet, instruction proceeds to the introduction of the vowel marks (*fathah*, *kasrah*, and *dhammah*), which determine pronunciation and meaning. These concepts are taught through contextual examples that help students understand the relationship between written symbols and their corresponding sounds. Students are subsequently introduced to the *sukun* sign, which indicates the absence of a vowel sound. Teachers explain this concept by drawing comparisons with familiar pronunciation patterns in the Indonesian language, making the concept easier for students to comprehend (Susanti et al., 2025). The *tasydid* sign is then introduced as an indicator of consonant doubling, with teachers demonstrating its pronunciation using simple examples presented on the classroom board. This visual and auditory approach enables students to understand the function of the symbol more effectively.

Another important component of the instructional process is manipulative practice, in which teachers modify the arrangement of Hijaiyah letters and alter their vowel markings. These activities encourage students to understand the relationship between letters and sounds rather than relying solely on memorization. The findings indicate that this strategy improves students' cognitive flexibility, strengthens conceptual understanding, increases learning motivation, and encourages more active participation during Qur'anic reading activities (Prasetyo et al., 2020). Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges remain. Students with limited literacy skills in the Latin alphabet tend to experience greater difficulty learning Arabic script, suggesting that deficiencies in basic literacy can directly affect Qur'anic learning. These findings highlight the importance of integrating literacy development in the national language with Qur'anic instruction.

Student achievement was evaluated across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, with practical Qur'anic reading performance serving as the primary indicator of learning success. The evaluation demonstrated that most students who participated in the



intensive Hijaiyah letter recognition program experienced substantial improvements in reading fluency. In addition, the schools implemented a thirty-minute remedial guidance program before the start of regular classes, providing students with additional opportunities to practice reading individually. Teachers also reported that the Hijaiyah letter recognition method was more systematic and easier to implement than previous instructional approaches. They observed that students mastered fundamental reading skills more rapidly, allowing classroom instruction to become more effective. These findings demonstrate that instructional innovation can positively influence both teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

More broadly, the study highlights the strategic role of Islamic elementary schools in improving Qur'anic literacy within the community. Students who acquire strong Qur'anic reading skills are more likely to become positive influences within their families and surrounding communities. Conceptually, the findings reinforce the principle that successful learning begins with mastery of the most fundamental competencies. Difficulties in advanced Qur'anic reading often originate from inadequate mastery of the Hijaiyah letters, making letter recognition a highly effective foundation for subsequent learning. Furthermore, the method offers opportunities for future development through interactive digital media, such as mobile applications and digital flashcards, to enhance students' interest and engagement in learning (Loka et al., 2023). Overall, the success of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method depends not only on the instructional technique itself but also on teachers' commitment, students' motivation, and parental support. The combination of these factors creates a supportive learning environment that contributes significantly to students' Qur'anic reading achievement. Consequently, the implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method in MIN Medan City can be considered effective and appropriate for wider adoption in other madrasahs facing similar challenges.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Hijaiyah letter recognition method in Qur'anic reading instruction at the public Islamic elementary schools in Medan City proved effective in improving students' fundamental Qur'anic reading skills. The instructional process was carried out through systematic planning, gradual implementation beginning with letter recognition and progressing to short Qur'anic passages, and continuous evaluation of student achievement. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including limited instructional time, inadequate learning media, and low student learning motivation.

To optimize learning outcomes, madrasahs should allocate additional instructional time for Qur'anic learning or integrate tahsin activities into extracurricular programs. Stronger collaboration between teachers and parents is also necessary to support students' Qur'anic learning at home. Furthermore, the development of interactive digital learning media based on the Hijaiyah alphabet is recommended to enhance student engagement and facilitate more effective learning. Through these efforts, Qur'anic literacy at the elementary level can be strengthened, providing a solid foundation for the development of students' religious character and lifelong engagement with the Qur'an.

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