



Application of the Qur'anic Pedagogical Style Through Repetition (Tikrar) to Improve Students' Memory Retention and Its Relevance to Islamic Theology

Laila Auni^{1*}, Eka Zuliana², Nur Azizah Nasution³

^{1,2,3}Alwashliyah University Medan

*Corresponding author: laila.auni90@gmail.com

Abstract

A major challenge for education in the era of information disruption is the decline in students' memory retention and level of tauhid (monotheistic conviction) caused by excessive exposure to social media. The pedagogical style of the Qur'an possesses distinctive characteristics in conveying its message. This study aims to explore the richness of the Qur'an's pedagogical style, specifically the method of repetition (tikrar), and to analyze its role in enhancing learners' memory retention during the learning process. The research method used is library research. Data were collected from various sources on exegesis (tafsir), cognitive psychology, and learning theory. The findings indicate that repetition in the Qur'an is not merely a reiteration of words, but rather a strategy for conveying messages or information from educator to learner, facilitating the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory, with the aim that the message be implemented in daily life. The practical implications of this research can be realized through the design of a repetition-based curriculum and interactive classroom teaching methods. In terms of its relevance to Islamic theology, repetition in the Qur'an fosters a steadfast conviction in learners regarding their Lord, thereby shaping a mindset, attitude, and behavior consistent with Islamic teachings.

Keywords: Qur'anic Pedagogy, Repetition, Memory Retention, Islamic Theology

Introduction

The world of education in the current era of digital transformation is facing the phenomenon of information overload. Learners are presented with millions of visual and auditory stimuli every day, causing them to experience cognitive overload, which shortens their attention span and reduces their memory retention of learning material (Sweller, 1994). The information and messages conveyed by educators almost disappear without a trace; even when retained, they last only a few minutes in short-term memory without ever reaching long-term memory. Learners who lack strong faith and conviction become highly susceptible to the influence of advanced technology, so that the lower their memory retention becomes, the further they drift

from Islamic values in daily life, to the point that the Qur'an is no longer used as a guide. To address this negative phenomenon, a reconstruction of learning methods must be carried out. A reliable and guaranteed source of pedagogical inspiration is the Qur'an. The Qur'an is not merely a theological scripture, but the ultimate pedagogical guide for the human soul and intellect (Natta, 2011).

The Qur'an serves as a magnificent pedagogical guide. In conveying its messages, the Qur'an employs various linguistic styles (uslub) rich in psychological and educational content. One of the most prominent and striking pedagogical styles in the Qur'an is repetition (tikrar), whether in the form of stories, laws, promises, and warnings, or the literal repetition of certain verses (Al-Kahlani, 2021).

In the context of modern education, the world of education is currently facing low memory retention among learners with regard to learning material. Information delivered by teachers is often lost soon after evaluation is completed. This phenomenon is consistent with the forgetting curve theory proposed by Hermann Ebbinghaus, which states that humans lose up to 56% of newly learned information within the first hour if no reinforcement effort is made (Ebbinghaus, 2013).

Around 14 centuries ago, the Qur'an had already anticipated this human cognitive weakness through the pedagogical design of repetition (tikrar), as stated in the word of Allah SWT in Surah Thaha, verse 113:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا

"And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, and We have set out the warnings within it in various ways, so that people may become mindful of God, or so that it may serve as a reminder for them."

Psychologically, repetition functions to strengthen synaptic pathways in the brain, thereby facilitating the process of memory consolidation (Effendy, 2015). This article therefore aims to elaborate on how the pedagogical style of repetition in the Qur'an can be transformed into a learning strategy to improve students' memory retention.

Method

This research is a qualitative study employing a library research approach. The primary data in this study were drawn from Qur'anic verses containing elements of repetition, reinforced by relevant hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW related to repetition-based teaching methods. In addition, data were drawn from standard works of exegesis (tafsir), such as Tafsir Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab, Fi Zilal al-Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb, and others.

The secondary sources of this research come from books, scientific journals, and articles related to cognitive psychology, memory theory, and Islamic religious education methods. Data analysis employed content analysis and a descriptive-theoretical method to connect theological concepts with modern educational applications (Sugiono, 2020).

Results and Discussion

A. The Concept of Repetition in Qur'anic Verses

The Qur'an affirms that the essence of revealing its verses repeatedly and in varied forms is to make it easier for humans to understand, internalize, and remember them. Allah SWT states in Surah az-Zumar, verse 23:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مّتَابِرًا تَتَجَسَّعُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۖ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

"Allah has sent down the best of speech: a Scripture that is consistent, oft-repeated. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver because of it; then their skins and their hearts soften at the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah, by which He guides whoever He wills, and whoever Allah leaves to stray has no guide. (RI, 2019)"

The word matsani in this verse is interpreted by scholars as referring to text that is repeated in terms of law, story, promise, and warning. According to Thabathaba'i, this repetition serves to firmly embed the divine message within the structure of human consciousness (Thabathaba'i, 1997).

A particularly striking example of the Qur'an's pedagogical style is found in Surah ar-Rahman, in the verse:

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

"Then which of the favors of your Lord will you both deny?"

This verse is repeated 31 times throughout the surah. This repetition is not regarded as a waste of words, but rather as a technique of psychological emphasis (ta'kid) intended to awaken human cognitive and affective awareness so that people do not forget the blessings of their Creator (Shihab, 2002).

This verse poses a question to two of God's creations, namely humans and jinn. Both are called upon by God to become aware of their existence and of their relationship with Allah as their Creator. In Surah ar-Rahman, humans and jinn are thus made aware of their position within the order of the universe (Hamka, 1990).

B. Principles of Repetition in the Qur'an

In the use of repetition (tikrar), there are several principles, each differing from the others in its operational aspects. Scholars have therefore classified them into the following principles:

- First Principle: "Repetition sometimes occurs because of the multiplicity of meanings intended to be conveyed."
- Second Principle: "There is no difference in wording except that there is a difference in meaning."
- Third Principle: "The Arabs repeat something in the form of a question in order to avert its occurrence."

- d. Fourth Principle: "Repetition indicates particular attention to the matter."
- e. Fifth Principle: "If an indefinite noun (nakirah) is repeated, it indicates plurality, whereas the opposite holds for a definite noun (ma'rifah)." (Alimuddin, 2023)

C. Practical Repetition-Based Learning in Hadith

As the central figure of Qur'anic pedagogy, the Prophet Muhammad SAW consistently applied verbal repetition techniques when conveying important messages to his companions. Anas ibn Malik r.a. reported:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا تَكَلَّمَ بِكَلِمَةٍ أَعَادَهَا ثَلَاثًا حَتَّى تُفْهَمَ عَنْهُ

"When the Prophet SAW spoke a word (of teaching), he would repeat it three times until it was fully understood. (Narrated by Bukhari) (Al-Bukhari, n.d.)"

One of the pedagogical styles applied by the Prophet SAW to his companions is illustrated in the following account: Mu'awiyah ibn Haidah al-Qusyairi radhiallahu 'anhu asked the Prophet:

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَبْرُّ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ، قُلْتُ: مَنْ أَبْرُّ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ، قُلْتُ: مَنْ أَبْرُّ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ، قُلْتُ: مَنْ أَبْرُّ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ، قُلْتُ: مَنْ أَبْرُّ؟ قَالَ: أَبَاكَ، ثُمَّ الْأَقْرَبُ فَالْأَقْرَبُ

"O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good treatment? The Prophet replied: Your mother. I asked, Then who? He replied: Your mother. I asked again, Then who? He replied: Your mother. I asked again, Then who? He replied: Your father, then the next closest relative, and so on. (Narrated by Bukhari in Adab al-Mufrad, with a hasan chain of transmission)"

The Prophet SAW's answer to his companion's question about treating one's parents well, in which he repeated the word "your mother" three times, indicates a particular virtue, reinforcement, and emphasis intended to make it firmly embedded in the companions' consciousness — that treating one's mother well takes precedence, without diminishing the honor owed to the father.

Thus, the repetition explicitly employed by the Prophet SAW became the sociological and pedagogical basis establishing that the ideal limit for repeating information in the process of knowledge transfer is three times, in order to ensure complete understanding and minimize memory distortion.

D. Memory Retention Mechanisms and Modern Cognitive Theory

Memory retention is the brain's ability to store, maintain, and recall information that has been learned over a given period of time (Santrock, 2011). In the information-processing model of cognitive psychology, Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin divided human memory into three main stages. The relationship between information stimulation,

storage duration, and the intervention of repetition (tikrar) methods is mapped in the following table:

Memory Stage	Capacity and Duration	Impact Without Repetition	Pedagogical Repetition Intervention
Sensory Memory	Very large capacity, but duration < 1 second	Information is immediately lost and forgotten	Capturing attention through the beauty of rhythm and intonation of repeated words
Short-Term Memory	Limited capacity, duration 15-30 seconds	Decay occurs due to interference from new data	Retaining information through periodic repetition (maintenance rehearsal)
Long-Term Memory	Unlimited capacity, permanent or semi-permanent duration	Difficult to access without reinforcement of synaptic pathways	Consolidating memory permanently through strengthening of cognitive neural pathways

Neuroscientifically, when information is repeated through the tikrar method, a biochemical process known as Long-Term Potentiation (LTP) occurs, which strengthens synaptic connections between neurons in the hippocampal area of the brain (Whishaw, 2015). The more frequently the same stimulus travels along a given synaptic pathway, the thicker the myelin sheath around the axon becomes, making the future recall of learning material considerably faster and more accurate.

Hebb's Law states that neurons that fire together wire together. When learning material is repeated periodically, the synaptic pathways between brain cells become thicker and stronger, making the information more resistant to forgetting (Kandel, 2007).

E. Characteristics of the Qur'an's Repetition Pedagogical Style

Repetition in the Qur'an has characteristics that differ from monotonous, tedious repetition. The Qur'an's pedagogical style embraces the concept of Varied and Spiral Repetition:

1. Different Contextualization. This can be seen in the story of the Prophet Musa (Moses) AS, which is repeated across various surahs of the Qur'an, such as al-Baqarah, al-A'raf, Thaha, and Asy-Syu'ara. Yet each repetition is never exactly identical; rather, it carries a different focus of values, a different chronological perspective, and a choice of diction tailored to the overarching theme of that particular surah (Suyuthi, 2006).

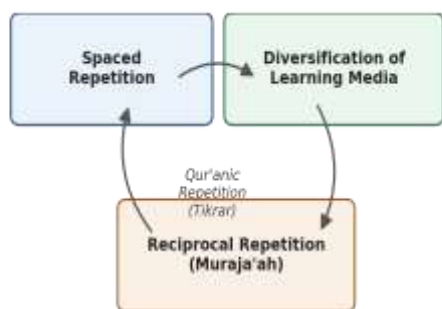
2. Aesthetics of Sound (Aurality). The Qur'an employs a highly refined linguistic beauty (I'jaz lughawi). The repetition of sentences with a rhythmic tone stimulates the right brain, giving information a positive emotional charge that increases its retention in learners' memory.

F. Relevance of the Qur'an's Pedagogical Style to Islamic Theology

The Qur'an serves as a foundation that plays a highly important role in establishing creed (tauhid). The repetition of Allah's attributes, His power, and the creation of the universe throughout the Qur'an functions to instill firm monotheistic conviction within the human soul. The application of the moral lessons contained in the stories of past nations reaffirms the certainty of Allah SWT's promises and warnings. In addition, eschatology and remembrance (dhikr) can serve as a theological reflection for learners in managing and controlling themselves, allowing them to condition their souls and be reminded of the existence and power of God — guiding them toward the deep memory retention that is essential to the true nature of learning.

G. Implementation of the Repetition Pedagogical Style in Modern Learning Design

Educators can adapt the structure of repetition found in the Qur'an into classroom activities through the following scheme:



Application of Spaced Repetition: Following the gradual pattern of Qur'anic revelation (munajjaman), teachers should repeat crucial material at planned intervals — 10 minutes after the material is explained, the following day at the start of class, one week later, and one month later before the exam.

Diversification of Learning Media: Imitating the way the Qur'an repeats its messages through storytelling, parables (amtsal), and logical argument, educators should convey a single core competency repeated through a variety of media, such as verbal lectures, visual infographics, and group case-study analysis.

Reciprocal Repetition (Muraja'ah): Learners test one another's memorization or understanding of the material in turns, as a form of self-evaluation and reinforcement of retention.

Through a combination of the models above, learner fatigue can be minimized. The Qur'an itself, when repeating the story of the Prophet Musa AS, always introduces new details or fragments in each different surah (Qutub, 2014). This teaches that variation within repetition actually stimulates a strong sense of curiosity while simultaneously reinforcing memory.

Conclusion

The Qur'an's pedagogical style through the method of repetition represents an educational paradigm that is highly valid both theologically and scientifically. The Qur'an teaches that repetition is not a regression in the process of thinking, but rather a high-level cognitive strategy for embedding knowledge within the human soul. Through a mechanism of repetition (tikrar) that is varied, meaningful, and appropriately spaced, learners' memory retention can be maximized, so that the information received is absorbed and permanently stored, becoming substantive knowledge that can be applied in daily life.

Repetition in the Qur'an serves a function that extends far beyond simply reinforcing memory. The repetition of verses concerning monotheism (tauhid), prophethood, historical accounts, the Hereafter, and the attributes of Allah instills firm conviction within learners. Through consistent repetition, the Qur'an shapes patterns of thought and behavior consistent with Islamic teachings. Repetition in the Qur'an therefore becomes a means of internalizing faith-based values, so that knowledge does not remain confined to the cognitive level but develops into conviction and lived practice.

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