AIMC 2017
Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference

DEVELOPING NEW INSTRUMENT FOR QURANIC UNDERSTANDING AMONG DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE

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Abstract

This article was initiated to develop a new instrument in the understanding of Quran among a diverse group of people. Due to time and modernity, the study of Quran and its interpretation methods are evolved tremendously. There are many different approaches developed to assist Muslims and non-Muslims alike to understand the teachings of Quran. However, there are still those who are unable to grasp the teachings due to the unsuitability of the approaches. Thus, this study aimed to identify the factors that may contribute to the understanding of the Quran. This study involved 5000 respondents nationwide, which use a survey methods benefits from a self-develop and self-administered set of questionnaires. It reveals that comprehension, religious practice, belief, language literacy and learning style significantly contribute as factors for Quranic understanding. It is imperative in order to deliver an enhanced understanding of a diverse group of people in this modern age, especially among the multi-cultural society in Malaysia in particular and the general mass.

1. Introduction

Understanding reading text be it literary, scientific or religious texts requires content knowledge on the part of the readers. Reading the Holy Quran is unexceptional plus it is the primary source of reference for Muslims. Due to its importance, non-Muslims are also attracted to read and try to understand its contents. In order to understand the concepts, various methods of interpretation have been proposed by Muslim scholars. Apart from having the relevant content knowledge, literature has shown that there are other pertinent factors that contribute a person's understanding. In the semantic analysis, six multi-relational of semantic components have yet to be applied. While in socio-linguistic, three fundamental variables have yet to be investigated. While the combination of these two approaches has not been extensively explored. Therefore, we propose a combination of these two approaches to create a new instrument to understand the contents of the Quran for a diverse group of people. Hence, this paper aims to identify the factors that contribute people's understanding when reading the Quran. It is based on the findings, it is hoped that a new instrument to classify the people can be developed and suitable approaches for each group can be designed. In doing so, this study begs on two research questions as (1) how do the diverse group of people in a modern society classify? And (2) what is the contributing factors in understanding Quran among the diverse group of people?

2. Problem Statement

As Quran is the most important book that works as a source of reference for Muslims, it is vital that its contents are comprehensively studied and understood. The study to understand the contents of the Quran is not an easy feat, be it for the believers, what more the non-believers. Efforts have been made by companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Muslim scholars to interpret the Quran for the people to comprehend its contents (Pakeeza & Chishti, 2012). They have industriously worked on methods to interpret the contents of the Quran. It requires special knowledge and superb language abilities. Each word and each letter in the Quran has their own faces of meaning and interpretation (Al-Nursi, 1995). Thus, it is important to understand them in order to design certain tafsir that could be acceptable for all, despite their knowledge and socio-cultural backgrounds. Two of the earliest prominent methodologies were the (1) Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur, (2) Tafsir bi al-Ra'yi. However, current Muslim scholars realize that there is a need to evolve in the way the interpretation is made in order to provide an understanding which is in line with the present new theories and disciplines of knowledge (Campanini, 2011). Further, Amin Ahsan Islahi suggest that there are different types of Quranic exegesis: traditionalist, theological, literary- philosophical and juridical (Pakeeza & Chishti, 2012). The interpretation of Holy Quran has to be pragmatic and modern in its approach while at the same time steadfastly embracing the Islamic turath. In the modern era, Muslim scholars have begun to offer new approaches to redefining the understanding of Quran in the light of modernity. Their efforts evidenced in numerous methodologies such as thematic approach (Muhammad, 2001; Shatnawi, 2010), comparative approach (Al-'Ak, 1994; Al-Dzahabiy, 2000), tahlili approach (Shatnawi, 2010), and ilmiy approach (Muslim, 2005; Zayid, 2008) among others. For example, Campanini (2011) realizes that in the modern age, the interpretation of Holy Quran has to be pragmatic or practical in its approach. This is to ensure that the teachings of Islam and the contents of the Quran could reach a bigger

and more diverse group of people. Thus, he took the liberty by exploring early methodologies to the understanding of the Qur'an in order to offer an appropriate manual to Muslims on how to read the Qur'an. These new scholarly methodologies to the Qur'an have led to an increasing appreciation for the numerous of ways in which the Qur'an has been established and deduced by Muslims. This is significant especially for contemporary Muslim in understandings of the text.

The sociolinguistic approach is among the new approaches that have been explored and used. Socio linguistic is particularly overwhelmed with the determinants of the construct that promote and mapping of these onto the language itself and the generalisability such phenomena (Holt, 2006) which includes differences of regional, class, occupational dialect, gender, and bilingualism. It has been applied on Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism scriptures and Quran and Hadith. However, studies using the socio-linguistic approach have only focused on incorporating between religious text, scientific findings, logical approaches to enhancing the understanding of Quran (Al-Nursi, 1995) while some others focused on the diversity of the Al Qur'an to the meaning with social norms that exist in the language of the user community (Ruslan, 2014). Furthermore, previous studies did not focus three fundamental sociolinguistic attributes, which are (1) social attributes, (2) social factors and (3) group of people. By focusing on these three primary sociolinguistic attributes, researchers would be able to provide a more comprehensive method/way of interpreting the contents of the al-Quran.

Apart from the sociolinguistic approach, the linguistic approach is equally important. The semantic analysis focuses on the study of meaning as an element of language and how it is constructed by language as well as interpreted, obscured and negotiated by speakers and listeners of language. The Recent semantic approach is more applied with computational analysis which called Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA), which focuses on extracting and representing the contextual-usage meaning of words. The approach has some limitations especially in terms of statistical computation, such as difficulty in differentiating fine-grained relations between lexical semantics, synonyms, antonyms, and hypernyms. Due to those limitations, various studies have been carried out to overcome these weaknesses of Latent Semantic Analysis by introducing Multi-Relational Latent Semantic Analysis using a synonym, antonym, and hypernym (Chang, Yih, & Meek, 2013) and it has since been used to extract and represent the contextual-usage meaning of words. However, an area that is under-explored is a combination of six relations, which are a synonym, polysemy, hypernym, hyponym, holonym, antonym in extracting the contextual-usage meaning of words from various data.

3.   Research Questions

In doing so, this study begs on two research questions as

3.1. How do the diverse group of people in a modern society classify?

3.2. What is the contributing factors in understanding Quran among the diverse group of people

4.   Purpose of the Study

Based on the brief literature, there exists a need and possibility to combine the semantic analysis and the sociolinguistic approach in order to create a new model for understanding the contents of the Quran.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, there exists a new aspect that has not been explored in order to offer an improved understanding of Quran. It is using the three fundamental variables in understanding the religious text in a diverse group of people within a multi-cultural and multi-religion community. Age, education/knowledge background as suggested by Said Nursi and religions. Semantic analysis on the hand will help on analysis of the respondent point of view to differentiate the diverse meaning from right one using a combination of six multiple relations between words, which are a synonym, antonym, hypernym, hyponym, holonym, and meronym. This is an effort to offer an acceptable and practical interpretation of the Quran in afford of understanding of a diverse group of people in this modern age who are willing to know about Islam and to read Quran as Islamic theology text. Therefore, we propose a new model for understanding the content of Quran using a combination of semantic analysis and sociolinguistic approaches. But, in this specific article, we are verifying the validity and reliability of a new instrument for determining Quranic understanding among a diverse group of people.

5. Research Methods

Based on previous studies (Al-Nursi, 1995; Chang et al., 2013; Holt, 2006; Ruslan, 2014), five major dimensions were identified. The dimensions in focus were comprehension, religious practices, belief, language literacy and learning styles. Further sub-dimensions were identified. The researchers identified specific items representing each determined sub-dimension. Each sub-dimension was further elaborated with a minimum of 3 items. Because data later will be examine using Structural Equation Modeling, therefore minimum 3 items is considered sufficient or otherwise it should be regarded as unmeasured latent (Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah, Ku Hasnita Ku Samsu, Muhammad Shamshinor Abdul Azzis, & Afi Roshezry Abu Bakar, 2017; Zainudin Awang, 2014). A reliability test was conducted to ensure that the items were acceptable for this research. The researchers applied Cronbach's Alpha as the tool to measure the reliability of the items. Based on all the dimensions, sub-dimensions and items, a set of questionnaires consisting of 100 items was developed to identify factors that would affect or contribute or perhaps facilitate people's understanding when reading the Quran. The detail of the dimensions and their sub-dimensions are presented in the table below:

Table 01. Dimension of Questionnaire

No.	Major dimension	Sub-dimension
1.	Comprehension	• Textual
		• Contextual
		• *Tadabbur*
		• *Balaghah*
2.	Religious practices	• Prayer frequency
		• Religious text study
		• Saying grace
		• Financial contribution
		• Watching religious program
		• Listening religious program
		• Read religious books or materials
		• Requesting pray from others

3.	Belief	-
4.	Language literacy	• Expert • Intermediate • Novice
5.	Learning styles	• Visual • Auditory • Kinesthetic

Using multi stage clustered sampling technique, respondents comprising a minimum of 100 from each state in Peninsular Malaysia took part in the study. In total 5000 respondents answered the questionnaire.

6. Findings

The result shows that most of the sub-dimensions along with their items are above the minimum requirement for alpha values of 0.70 (Pallant, 2011). However, there are several sub-dimensions are removed because of the reliability test result shows below the minimum of 0.70. The following tables encapsulate all the Cronbach's Alpha's result for the accepted sub-dimensions descriptively.

6.1. Comprehension Textual

Table 02. Reliability Statistics for Comprehension Textual Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.742	.744	5

There were 5 items that measured comprehension textual. Based on the alpha value of .742, which exceeded the minimum requirement for reliability test (Pallant, 2011), all 5 items are believed to be appropriate to measure textual comprehension.

6.2. Comprehension Contextual

Table 03. Reliability Statistics for Comprehension Contextual Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.791	.803	6

A total of 6 items were prepared to measure the contextual sub-dimension. Table 3 shows the reliability test of the prepared items. Based on the alpha value (.791), all 6 items are acceptable to be used to measure contextual comprehension.

6.3. Comprehension *Tadabbur*

Table 04. Reliability Statistics for Comprehension Tadabbur Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.728	.746	5

A total 5 items were identified to measure *tadabbur* comprehension. Based on the reliability test result, the alpha value (.728) exceeded the minimum value required for reliability test. Therefore, all the items are appropriate to be used in measuring *tadabbur* comprehension.

6.4. Religious practice and religious text study

Table 05. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice Religious Text Study Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.851	.865	6

Religious text study is the sub-dimension for the religious practice dimension. In this study, 6 items were developed to measure religious text study. Based on the reliability test result, all the items are accepted. The alpha value was shown (.851) exceeded the minimum possible value (Pallant, 2011).

6.5. Religious practice with saying grace

Table 06. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice Saying Grace Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.841	.844	4

Initially, there was a total of 5 items used to determine the religious practice of saying grace. However, the reliability test showed that the alpha value was below the minimum possible value to be accepted. One of the items was found to be inappropriate to be included to measure this dimension. Therefore, the researchers decided to exclude that particular item. The reliability test was run for the second time. The result showed that the alpha value was .844, which ascertained the reliability of the rest items for this dimension.

6.6. Religious practice of financial contribution

Table 07. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice of Financial Contribution Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.811	.817	5

Financial contribution is one of the sub-dimensions under the religious practice dimension. 5 items were used to measure financial contribution. All the items were considered appropriate to measure the sub-dimension of financial contribution since the reliability value result was .811, which was greater than the minimum possible value to be accepted.

6.7. Religious practice of watching religious program

Table 08. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice Watch Religious Program Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.856	.863	5

The other sub-dimension under the dimension of religious practice is watching religious programs. 5 items were prepared related to this sub-dimension. Based on the result from the reliability test conducted, all the items were accepted as the result showed the alpha value was .856.

6.8. Religious practice by listening to religious program

Table 09. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice by Listen to Religious Program Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.907	.916	5

Listening to religious programs was also considered as a sub-dimension under the religious practice dimension. In this study, all the prepared items passed the reliability test with .907 alpha value. Therefore, all the items were considered as appropriate to measure part of religious practices.

6.9. Religious practice by reading religious materials

Table 10. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice by Reading Religious Materials Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.888	.902	5

Besides watching and listening to religious programs, reading religious materials also contributes to improving religious practice. Therefore, the item was placed under the dimension of religious practices. A total 5 items were identified to represent this sub-dimension. The alpha value showed that all the items were appropriate with the alpha value of .888.

6.10. Religious practice by pray for or from others

Table 11. Reliability Statistics for Religious Practice Pray for or from Others Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.870	.878	5

Pray for or from others is the other sub-dimension that group under the dimension of religious practice. The researcher prepared 6 items at the beginning to measure this sub-dimension. However, one of the items is deleted because the items seem to be problematic which causes the alpha value did not reach the minimum possible value. After deletion process, the result shows a better alpha value (.870) for

reliability test for this sub-dimension. Therefore, only 5 items are accepted for this sub-dimension for further investigation.

6.11. Belief

Table 12. Reliability Statistics for Belief Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.865	.881	5

Belief is the only dimension without any sub-dimension under it. The researcher prepared 5 items for this dimension. All the items are considered as appropriate to measure the dimension of belief among respondent since the alpha value (.865) exceeds the minimum possible value

6.12. Language literacy indicating expert level

Table 13. Reliability Statistics for Language Literacy Expert Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.904	.907	6

There are 7 items are prepared for the sub-dimension of expert language literacy. However, the reliability test results in less than the minimum possible value for this study. One of the items has identified did not relate to this sub-dimension. Therefore, the researcher has removed the item. The rest 6 items have resulted in alpha value .904 which is considered as appropriate to this study.

6.13. Language literacy indicating intermediate level

Table 14. Reliability Statistics for Language Literacy Intermediate Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.925	.928	5

Table 14 shows a reliability test result of the intermediate language literacy sub-dimension. Based on the result, the alpha value (.925) shown a greater value than the minimum possible value. This sub-dimension contains 5 items. Therefore, all the items are accepted to be used in measuring this dimension for this study.

6.14. Language literacy indicating novice level

Table 15. Reliability Statistics for Language Literacy Novice Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.861	.860	4

The last sub-dimension of language literacy is the group of a novice. There are 5 items has been prepared for the measure this sub-dimension. However, the reliability test has resulted in a lower value from the minimum possible value. Therefore, the problematic item is identified and removed. The second reliability test shows a better result as presented in table 15. All the 4 items are accepted to measure the sub-dimension of novice language literacy in this study.

6.15. Learning style with visual

Table 16. Reliability Statistics for Learning Style Visual Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.891	.894	4

As mentioned in the previous discussion, dimension of learning style is divided into three sub-dimensions. One of them is sub-dimension of visual. Table 16 shows the result of the reliable test for visual sub-dimension. It contains 4 items in total. The alpha value shows .891 which is greater than the minimum possible value for this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the prepared items are accepted for this study.

6.16. Learning style with auditory

Table 17. Reliability Statistics for Learning Style Auditory Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.783	.797	5

Auditory is the second sub-dimension of the learning style dimension. The researcher has prepared 5 items to measure the sub-dimension. Based on the reliability test that has been conducted, all the items prepared are accepted for this study. The alpha value of the reliability test shown .783 which is exceeded the minimum possible value to be accepted.

6.17. Learning style with kinesthetic

Table 18. Reliability Statistics for Learning Style Kinesthetic Dimension

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.922	.928	5

The last sub-dimension of the dimension of learning style is kinesthetic. 5 items have been prepared for this dimension. Reliability test has been conducted to this sub-dimension. The result of the reliability test is presented in table 18. As shown, the alpha value is exceeded the minimum possible value to be accepted. Therefore, all the items are considered as reliable to be used in this study.

Thus, descriptive analysis from all examining factors as the above, the researchers confirmed that comprehension, religious practice, belief, language literacy and learning styles domain may contribute to understanding Quran among diverse people.

To answer the question of what type of diverse group of people, this article supported by a conceptual study of Rahman et al., (2017).

To answer the question of what factors that contribute towards Qur'anic understanding, it is statistically significant that comprehension, religious practice, belief, language literacy and learning style domain contributes to al-Quran understanding. Although this paper descriptively analysed those factors, further investigation is imperative to confirm the significant contributions of these factors.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed at understanding the factors that may contribute to the understanding of the Quran among diverse groups of people. Based on descriptive analysis on the factors above, it can be concluded that comprehension, religious practice, belief, language literacy and learning styles domains may contribute to the understanding Quran among diverse groups of people. To answer the question of what contributes towards the understanding of the Quran, it is statistically significant that comprehension, religious practice, belief, language literacy and learning style domains contribute to al-Quran understanding. Thus, with the ability to classify diverse of groups of people, it is believed that a more suitable approach to understanding the Quran can be designed to suit specific groups of people.

Acknowledgments

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