

FUN LEARNING FOR ISLAMIC LEARNERS: THE INFLUENCE OF FUN-BASED ENGLISH LEARNING ON SANTRI RESPONSES AT TPQ AT-TAQWA SUKADANA VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method on santri responses toward English learning at TPQ At-Taqwa, Sukadana Village. The study was conducted within the framework of a community service program of Universitas Hamzanwadi. A quantitative pre-experimental design with a One Group Pre-Test Post-Test approach was employed, involving 25 santri aged 7 to 13 years selected through purposive sampling from a total population of 45 registered santri. Data were collected using a five-item Likert-scale questionnaire measuring santri responses across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, which was confirmed to be valid and reliable. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied as the primary analytical method following normality testing. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in santri response scores before and after the implementation of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method. The study concludes that fun-based, value-integrated English instruction is effective in improving the engagement and responsiveness of young learners in non-formal Islamic educational settings.

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant international language in the era of globalization, serving as a vital medium for communication, education, and access to global knowledge (Cameron, 2001). In Indonesia, the demand for English proficiency has grown significantly, including among learners in non-formal Islamic educational settings. For Muslim learners enrolled in Taman Pendidikan Qur'an (TPQ), developing English competence is increasingly important as a means of engaging with the global world while maintaining Islamic identity and values (Rohmah, 2012, pp. 157–165). However, the integration of English learning into TPQ contexts remains highly limited, constrained by the absence of qualified English instructors, insufficient teaching resources, and the perceived tension between foreign language learning and Islamic educational values.

In Indonesia, TPQs function as foundational centers of non-formal Islamic education, focusing primarily on Qur'anic recitation, Islamic moral formation, and religious knowledge. Academic enrichment programs particularly those involving foreign language learning remain largely absent from the TPQ curriculum. At TPQ At-Taqwa, Desa Sukadana, the total registered santri population consists of 45 individuals across various age groups. Applying Cameron's (2001) framework of young learners as the most receptive stage for foreign language acquisition, only santri aged 7 to 13 years were selected as research participants, resulting in a purposive sample of 25 santri. Preliminary observations and needs-analysis questionnaires conducted during the Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) community service program of Universitas Hamzanwadi revealed that the majority of santri in this age group demonstrated low enthusiasm, passive classroom behavior, limited confidence in using English, and minimal motivation to engage in English learning activities. These conditions were largely attributed to the use of monotonous, teacher-centered instructional approaches that failed to provide meaningful interaction or culturally resonant learning experiences.

The challenge of engaging young learners in foreign language learning has been widely documented in the literature. Cameron (2001) asserts that young learners are most responsive to meaning-focused, enjoyable, and contextualized language activities, and that instructional methods must accommodate their short attention spans and preference for active, play-based engagement. Consistent with this view, Safnidar et al. (2020, pp. 11–19) demonstrated that fun learning methods significantly enhanced English vocabulary understanding and learning motivation among young learners in community-based settings. Astari et al. (2020) further found that interactive instructional methods including singing, games, and Total Physical Response effectively developed listening and speaking skills among early childhood learners in Islamic educational contexts. Purwanti (2020) confirmed that movement-and-song approaches fostered high motivation, speaking proficiency, and enthusiastic participation among young EFL learners in non-formal settings. These findings collectively suggest that fun-based instructional approaches hold strong potential for improving learner engagement and response in contexts similar to TPQ.

Despite this growing body of evidence, a significant research gap remains. Existing studies on fun learning and interactive English instruction have predominantly been conducted in formal school settings or general community programs, with little attention directed toward non-formal Islamic educational institutions such as TPQs. Moreover, few studies have examined how fun-based approaches specifically influence the multidimensional responses affective, cognitive, and behavioral of young santri learners in TPQ environments. Santri's responses in this study are operationally defined as learners' affective reactions (interest, enjoyment, and motivation), cognitive reactions (understanding and knowledge acquisition), and behavioral reactions (active participation and willingness to engage). The absence of contextually appropriate, empirically validated instructional models for this population represents a clear gap that the present study seeks to address.

The Fun Learning for Islamic Learners (FLIL) method implemented in this study integrates game-based activities, communicative tasks, and Islamic content adaptation into a cohesive instructional framework tailored to young santri learners. The novelty of this study lies in its application of a fun-based, value-integrated English learning approach within a non-formal Islamic educational setting a context that has received insufficient empirical attention in the existing literature. This study therefore aims to examine the influence of the FLIL method on santri responses toward English learning at TPQ At-Taqwa, Desa Sukadana, with the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant difference in the overall response scores of santri before and after the implementation of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method. To test this hypothesis, the study employs a quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach, involving 25 santri aged 7 to 13 years as participants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental approach with the One Group Pre-Test Post-Test Design (Sugiyono, 2020), in which a single group was observed before and after treatment without a control group. This design was selected given the contextual nature of the study, which was carried out as part of the KKN community service program of Universitas Hamzanwadi at TPQ At-Taqwa, Sukadana Village. The design follows the pattern:

$$O_1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O_2,$$

where O₁ is the pre-test, X is the implementation of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method, and O₂ is the post-test. The population of this study comprised all 45 santri actively enrolled at TPQ At-Taqwa, Sukadana Village. A purposive sample of 25 santri aged 7 to 13 years was drawn based on three considerations: active enrollment at the institution, an age range consistent with Cameron's (2001) young learner framework as the most developmentally receptive period for foreign language acquisition, and active participation in the KKN program. The remaining 20 santri were excluded as they did not meet the age criterion.

The research instrument was a five-item structured questionnaire designed to measure santri responses across three dimensions: affective, covering interest, enjoyment, and motivation; cognitive, addressing understanding and knowledge acquisition; and behavioral, reflecting active participation and willingness to engage in English learning activities. The questionnaire was administered in Indonesian using a three-point Likert scale with response options of Setuju (Agree), Ragu-ragu (Uncertain), and Tidak Setuju (Disagree).

Prior to data collection, validity and reliability of the instrument were established. Validity was assessed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, with an r table value of 0.396 at a significance level of .05 and n of 25. Three items yielded r values of 0.743, 0.879, and 0.883, all surpassing the r table threshold and declared valid. The remaining two items demonstrated strong content validity, as all respondents responded uniformly. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, producing a coefficient of 0.646, categorized as high reliability (Sugiyono, 2020), indicating that the instrument was consistent and dependable for use in this study.

Data were collected through direct questionnaire administration during the KKN program activities. All participants were informed of the research purpose and provided voluntary consent prior to participation. Data were subsequently analyzed using SPSS for Windows. A normality test via the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods indicated that both pre-test and post-test data were not normally distributed, with significance values of .000, falling below the .05 threshold. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was therefore applied as the non-parametric hypothesis testing method. H₀ was rejected and H₁ accepted when the Asymp. Sig. two-tailed value was less than .05, signifying a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The validity test was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient with an r table value of 0.396 at a significance level of .05 and n of 25. Table 1 presents the validity test results for the research instrument.

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Item	r Calculated	r Table	Sig.	Status
P1	0.743	0.396	.000	Valid
P2	0.879	0.396	.000	Valid
P3	—	0.396	—	Valid
P4	—	0.396	—	Valid
P5	0.883	0.396	.000	Valid

Table 1 shows that three items yielded r calculated values of 0.743, 0.879, and 0.883, all of which exceeded the r table value of 0.396 and were therefore declared valid. The remaining two items, P3 and P4, could not be computed statistically as all 25 respondents responded uniformly with the highest score, indicating that these items were clearly understood and strongly endorsed by all participants. These two items were therefore declared valid based on content validity. Overall, all five items of the instrument were declared valid and suitable for use in data collection. Following validity testing, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Threshold	Status
Santri Response Questionnaire	5	0.646	0.60	Reliable

Table 2 shows that the instrument produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.646, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.60 and falls within the high reliability category (Sugiyono, 2020). This result confirms that the instrument demonstrated sufficient internal consistency and was reliable for use in measuring santri responses toward English learning activities. Prior to hypothesis testing, a normality test was conducted to determine the appropriate statistical method.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
posttest	.506	25	.000	.445	25	.000
pretest	.316	25	.000	.783	25	.000

Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3 shows that the post-test data yielded a significance value of .000 in both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, while the pre-test data similarly produced significance values of .000 in both tests. Since all significance values fall below the threshold of .05, H_0 is rejected and it can be concluded that neither the pre-test nor post-test data follow a normal distribution. It should be noted that for the purpose of determining the appropriateness

of a paired t-test, the normality assumption applies to the difference scores between post-test and pre-test, rather than to each dataset separately. As the difference scores also did not meet the normality assumption, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied as the appropriate non-parametric alternative to the paired t-test for hypothesis testing in this study. Although the normality assumption was not met, the Paired Sample T-Test was additionally conducted as a supplementary analysis to provide a broader picture of the mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test Results

Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences					t
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
					Lower	Upper	
Pair 1	posttest - pretest	1.640	2.307	.461	.688	2.592	3.554

Paired Samples Test			
		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	posttest - pretest	24	.002

Table 4 shows that the mean difference between post-test and pre-test scores was 1.640, with a standard deviation of 2.307 and a standard error mean of .461. The 95% confidence interval ranged from .688 to 2.592, not crossing zero, which indicates a consistently positive direction of change. The t value of 3.554 with 24 degrees of freedom yielded a significance value of .002, which falls below the threshold of .05, leading to the rejection of H_0 . The positive mean difference confirms that post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, with an average improvement of 1.640 points. However, as the data did not meet the normality assumption, the Paired T-Test result serves as a supplementary finding only. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test remains the primary basis for hypothesis testing in this study.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted as the primary hypothesis testing method, given that the data did not meet the normality assumption. Unlike the paired t-test, this non-parametric test evaluates the direction and magnitude of differences based on the ranked values of score differences between two paired measurements.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
pretest - posttest	Negative Ranks	12 ^a	9.38	112.50
	Positive Ranks	3 ^b	2.50	7.50
	Ties	10 ^c		
	Total	25		

a. pretest < posttest
b. pretest > posttest
c. pretest = posttest

Table 5 shows that 12 santri obtained higher post-test scores than pre-test scores, indicating a positive improvement following the intervention. Three santri showed lower post-test scores compared to pre-test scores, while 10 santri demonstrated no change between the two measurements. The dominance of negative ranks in the pre-test minus post-test comparison confirms that post-test scores were consistently higher than pre-test scores across the majority of participants. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test yielded a Z value of -2.994 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of .003, which falls below the significance threshold of .05. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, confirming that there is a statistically significant difference in santri response scores before and after the implementation of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method. This result is further supported by the Paired T-Test findings in Table 4, although the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test remains the primary basis for conclusion given the non-normal distribution of the data.

These findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of fun-based approaches in improving young learners' engagement and responses toward English learning. Safnidar et al. (2020) found that fun learning methods significantly enhanced vocabulary understanding and motivation among young learners in community-based settings, a finding that aligns with the improvement observed in the present study. Similarly, Astari et al. (2020) demonstrated that interactive and enjoyable instructional methods, including games and movement-based activities, effectively developed English learning engagement among young learners in Islamic educational contexts. Purwanti (2020) further confirmed that movement-and-song approaches fostered high motivation and enthusiastic participation among young EFL learners, supporting the behavioral dimension of santri responses observed in this study. Cameron (2001) theoretically underpins these findings by asserting that young learners respond most positively to enjoyable, meaning-focused, and contextualized language activities, which is precisely what the FLIL method was designed to provide. The integration of Islamic values within the fun learning framework further contributed to the positive responses observed, as it created a culturally safe and motivating learning environment that reduced potential tensions between foreign language learning and Islamic educational values (Rohmah, 2012).

The improvement was particularly evident in the affective and behavioral dimensions of santri responses. Prior to the intervention, many santri exhibited passive behavior and limited confidence in engaging with English learning activities. Following the FLIL implementation, the majority of participants responded positively across all five questionnaire items, as reflected in the substantially higher post-test mean score and the markedly reduced standard deviation. This pattern suggests that the FLIL method was not only effective in improving individual responses but also successful in creating a more uniformly positive learning experience across the entire group of participants.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method on santri responses toward English learning at TPQ At-Taqla, Sukadana Village. Based on the results of

the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a statistically significant difference was found between pre-test and post-test response scores, with post-test scores substantially higher than pre-test scores. This finding confirms that the implementation of the Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method positively and significantly influenced santri responses across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The integration of game-based activities, movement-and-song techniques, and Islamic content adaptation within the instructional framework proved effective in improving learner engagement, motivation, and willingness to participate in English learning activities among young santri aged 7 to 13 years in a non-formal Islamic educational setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. For TPQ managers and ustadz or ustadzah, it is recommended to consider incorporating fun-based English learning activities into the regular TPQ program as a supplementary enrichment activity, given its demonstrated effectiveness in improving santri engagement and responses. The Fun Learning for Islamic Learners method, which integrates Islamic values into communicative and enjoyable language tasks, offers a culturally appropriate and pedagogically sound approach that is well-suited to the TPQ learning environment.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct studies with larger sample sizes and the inclusion of a control group to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may also consider examining the long-term effects of fun-based English instruction on santri language proficiency, not only their responses and engagement. Additionally, the development of a more comprehensive and standardized FLIL instructional module would contribute to the replicability and scalability of this approach across other TPQ institutions in Indonesia.

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