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Promoting Online Teaching Arabic Speaking at Indonesian Islamic University: A Lesson from the Era of Covid-19

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Annotation. Nutrition and healthy eating program have been one of the crucial component which can prevent the risk of communicable and non-communicable disease among young generation. In this paper some rules and regulations of keeping diet and eating products have been mentioned. One of the important points of the diet is the prohibition to give children in between feedings any food, and first of all various sweets, cookies, buns. This should be paid special attention to the staff and parents.

Key words: Healthy eating, diet

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all educational entities to carry out distance learning using the internet. Learning, which should be held in direct meetings, must come into an online system. Lecturers do not have to be in the same place and meet their students.

By using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study aims to reveal online learning in the *Al-Kalam* course. Data was collected through observation, interviews and documentation as well as triangulation to test its validity. Data analysis was performed. through three stages, namely data reduction, data display and conclusion. The results of the study show that online learning of al-kalām which is well prepared in terms of platform and material can also be carried out well without eliminating important elements in mahārah al-kalām. Thus, this online mode should be maintained to complement the offline model after the covid pandemic is over.

Key Words: Online Teaching, Arabic Speaking, Covid-19

Arabic is a foreign language and an obligatory course for students of Islamic universities in Indonesia. Studying Arabic as a foreign language aims to master four competencies, namely *fahm al-masmū'* (understanding the utterances listened), *fahm al-maqrū'* (understanding the utterances read), *al-kalām* (giving understanding to others through speech), and *al-kitābah* (giving understanding to others through writing). These skills have two aspects, namely receptive and productive. Listening and reading are those included in receptive skills while speaking and writing are the productive ones (Rahmaini, 2015).

Speaking is a productive skill that aims to make the students communicate verbally, properly, and naturally. It means it can be accepted by others, but reaching the stage of communication skills requires appropriate activities, training, and a contributive learning process (Acep Hermawan, 2011). *Kalām* learning has been done face-to-face. All educational institutions have conducted face-to-face or direct learning, and *al-kalām* learning should also be delivered directly to the students the interlocutor. It is because the essence of *al-kalām* is communication. However, the Covid-19 outbreak forced the search for alternatives to *al-kalām* learning without ignoring the mandatory health protocols.

Online learning requires the total use of technology using the internet. The internet has been widely used in Indonesia but has not been optimized for learning. The *We Are Social* report in 2020 showed that internet users in Indonesia are about 175.4 million. There is an increase of 17%, which is equivalent to 25 million internet users compared to the previous year. Of Indonesia's total population (272.1 million), 64% or more than half of Indonesian people access cyberspace. People from 16 to 64 years have different types of devices. 94% have smartphones, 21% are non-smartphones, 66% for laptops/desktop computers, 23% for tablets, 16%

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for game consoles, and 5.1% for virtual reality devices. From the data, we can see that more than 64% of Indonesian people use the internet quite a lot, as college students.

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all educational entities to carry out distance learning using the internet (Ridwan Sanjaya, 2020). Learning, which should be held in direct meetings, must come into an online system. Lecturers do not have to be in the same place and meet their students. Along with the development of electronic learning sources and media like electronic books or e-books, e-learning, e-libraries, e-forums, and e-journals, this progress helps the entities to hold distance education (Nuril Mufidah, 2018). This online learning seems to be a solution for maintaining and keeping learning running well during a pandemic.

In online learning, the lecturers must be creative and innovative. Thus, the learning process can still run well and is exciting. All educators must also master how to communicate online and convey and receive messages through the internet. They can view that from various sides, there will be more learning materials that must be adjusted to this new learning system, especially in terms of assignments (I Ketut Sudarsana, 20220). It is especially for *al-kalām* learning, where there are more practices than theories. One kind of creativity and innovation is by providing online media or platforms. The lecturers must not only limit their teachings by the rules for choosing media or online learning platforms that will be used later. They can also choose and sort out any online media or platforms that are appropriate for their materials or the assignments given to the students (Albert Efendi Pohan, 2020).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant integration of technology in the classroom. Due to its interactive properties as one multimedia technology, the E-learning platform has become an integral part of learning habits and processes. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that E-learning platforms can revolutionize classrooms, homework, and teaching methods. The teachers who used to rely on whiteboards and textbooks can now shift their old habits to be technology users. Therefore, research on the effectiveness of E-learning is very crucial in understanding and measuring the benefits of using technology in the classroom.

Literature reviews

The use of the internet for learning has been going on for a long time. However, it has become more massive after the covid 19 pandemic. More than 50% of world investment has been made in developing information and communication technology (Grammenos, D., Savidis, A., Georgalis, Y., Bourdenas, T., & Stephanidis, 2007). This radical step calls for a change in the teachers' attitudes and perceptions. Many teachers have applied the E-learning platform only to increase student productivity and assist the learning process (Ohanu, I.B., Chukwuone, 2018).

E-learning can have positive effects on learning. It is also effective in improving learning quality and developing the student's metacognitive skills in physics experimental courses (Odabasi, M., Uzunboylu, H., Popova, O., Kosarenko, N., & Ishmuradova, 2019). Another study (Caliskan, S., Guney, Z., Sakhieva, R., Vasbieva, D., & Zaitseva, 2019) found that the advancement of cellular technology makes it easier to demonstrate and explain examples for the students in class.

Besides, science teachers also feel that technology is familiar and easily accessible to the students because the system is easy to understand and learn (Mewburn, I., Thomson, P., & Lupton, 2017). They have also supported the use of technology because according to a study (Botes, R., & Zeeman, 2019), e-learning platforms offer special benefits as a substitute for high costs.

There are only a few studies regarding the implementation of online lectures for *al-kalām* courses in Islamic tertiary institutions. However, some researchers have studied the implementation of online learning in tertiary institutions. Nabila Hilmy Zhafira, et al, studied online learning during the Covid-19 quarantine. Their findings showed that the students feel more comfortable having online learning using WhatsApp and Google Classroom. It is because they have been familiar with those applications. This is also supported by their learning styles (visual) which fit media images, writings, or pictures (Nabila Hilmy Zhafira, Yenny Ertika, 2020).

Another similar research (Abd. Syakur, Sugirin, Margana, Esti Junining, 2020) focused on online English learning courses. The results indicated that there is a significant influence of using the information gap technique and website-based online learning that triggered the students' mastery of the concept of achievement in learning. Another study involving the students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (Wildana Wargadinata, 2020) showed that the Arabic language learning media applied during the Covid-19

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situation are helpful for the students. The media include WhatsApp and online platforms. Their study found that there is a shift in learning Arabic by the students of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang from personal to instrumental due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. A shift has also occurred in the teachers' dependence on technology.

These studies conclude that online learning for subjects other than Arabic implemented in tertiary institutions generally shows positive results. This method also provides convenience in learning and improves the students' achievement. Besides, online learning can reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus due to physical contact. Even so, online learning still presents a new problem. It is a little bit shocking for the students when they were introduced to technology for the first time. So, the question is do all of the higher institutions have the readiness to provide online learning media to support the learning without any direct meetings?

In contrast to direct *al-kalām* learning and other online lectures, the researcher has revealed the implementation of online learning for *al-kalām* courses at the tertiary level in terms of planning, processing, and learning outcomes. This research provides benefits for many parties. For the lecturers, this research can contribute to finding the best online learning model by utilizing the devices they have. The findings of this study can also motivate students to utilize technology for useful things.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach. The data are taken from the lecturer of the *al-kalām* course at the Arabic language education program (PBA) of IAIN Pekalongan, and ten third-semester students of the PBA. The data are collected using observation by joining the Google Classroom application. There are two-month observations carried out in October and November 2020 with an intensity of one meeting every week. To complete and guarantee the data reliability, the researcher uses interviews and document review techniques. The collected data are analyzed within some stages proposed by Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display (presentation), and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2016).

Result and Discussion

The *mahārah al-kalām* online learning is different from face-to-face learning. Some matters must be prepared carefully like lesson plans, learning orientation, calendar and learning materials, types of evaluation, supporting facilities, and selection of media and learning platforms. The lecturers can choose whether *al-kalām* material in online learning is the same as direct meetings like daily *ḥiwār* under normal conditions. The only difference is that the students don't meet each other. Instead, they must share edited videos and put them together into a *ḥiwār* video by utilizing various applications. They must also prepare the learning materials in advance and virtual classes and immediately practice debating on that theme.

The platforms for online *al-kalām* learning may be synchronous or asynchronous. If the lecturer wants to have a virtual meeting for facilitating *ḥiwār* or *muḥādaṡah* activities, he can use the cloud meeting zoom platform, google meeting, or WhatsApp video call. However, a synchronous platform requires a strong internet connection and quite a lot of quota. Thus, the lecturers must also consider the students' network connections and financial abilities. If it is impossible to use a synchronous platform, the lecturers can choose asynchronous platforms like e-learning, Google Classroom, WhatsApp group, and Facebook messenger. bt is Because the asynchronous platform does not require a stable internet connection and does not consume a lot of quotas. also, the asynchronous platform allows the students to access the learning materials not only during the lectures but also anytime and anywhere. The platform chosen by the lecturer must be accessible to the students using the facilities like smartphones, laptops, and tablets. At least, they should have had smartphones to take part in online learning. The choice of platforms is either synchronous or asynchronous. It must be adjusted to the learning objectives of *al-kalām* and the students' conditions. The platforms must be in line with the principles of online learning (contemporariness, flexibility, suitability, and efficiency).

As a traditional mode for a long time, online learning already has specific national standards, namely the National Standards for Quality Online Learning. These standards can be for *al-kalām* learning online in higher education institutions. For Professional Responsibilities and Digital Pedagogy Standards, the lecturers must create and provide their best teaching through pre-selected online platforms. If they want to use the synchronous platforms, *al-kalām* can directly provide material or explanations, but the materials must be as attractive as possible using media like PowerPoint, videos, and quizzes. The materials can later be shared

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directly in the synchronous forum like the share screen feature on Zoom cloud meetings or Google meetings. If the platform is asynchronous, the lecturers can still explain through discussion forums and comments.

Besides, in this asynchronous platform, the lecturers can provide the packaged materials in more attractive ways via PowerPoint, learning videos, and quizzes. However, they are first uploaded so that the students can download them all. Next, in the Professional Responsibilities standard, the lecturers must also be reflective practitioners. Besides having prepared online learning plans, they must also provide opportunities for the students to express their opinions regarding the learning process. If the students feel learning is too difficult and want another model, the lecturers must accept their suggestions.

For Community Building and Learner Engagement Standards, the lecturers can apply collaborative *al-kalām* learning strategies in the form of small groups. The lecturers can divide the students into groups and then decide the theme of discussion for each group. The topics can be presented in the form of roll playing/drama, and *ḥiwār* or debate. For the higher education level, the learning demands of *al-kalām* are categorized into middle (*mutawassiṭ*) and upper levels (*mutaqaddim*). For the *mutawassiṭ* level, speaking activities include role-playing activities and discussions about certain themes (thematic). In this case, each student has the opportunity to express and cross their opinions with their friends. They can also tell stories about events that have happened to them, the latest news from television, radio, and serial stories. This method still has some problems. Geographical aspects often do not enable face-to-face meetings. Therefore, the lecturer should not only conduct face-to-face *ḥiwār* videos. Instead, he should also direct the students to share their roles in *ḥiwār* which are then individually recorded and edited to become one full video.

After fulfilling the task of making a *ḥiwār* video, the students will send the video to the asynchronous discussion forum by uploading it. Other students must download, analyze, and correct the video if there are errors or inputs. Only after the discussion forum has started, the students can interact with each other in the comments column for expressing their opinions. The lecturer also has to take part in correcting the students' work after the discussion process. At the *mutaqaddim* level, the demands of *kalam* are debates, where the lecturer will decide on a theme for practicing *kalam*, speaking freely about the proposed problem. Because the debate is not possible to be carried out asynchronously, the lecturer must provide a virtual class like a Zoom meeting. The lecturer must also divide the students into two groups; pros and cons. He should advise the students to prepare supporting materials in advance so that they are ready to discuss the topic.

However, there may be many students who make some noise by themselves or don't listen to their friends' presentations. Thus, at the beginning of the meeting, the lecturer must convey the rules for the discussion. In the learning process, the lecturer starts the learning and invites the debate to take place. The lecturer also always reminds the students other than those on duty to keep listening and provides opportunities if later some want to participate. Online *al-kalām* learning must remain interactive and student-centered. The lecturer should only supervise and provide corrections and input if there are errors or oversights during the debate. In this synchronous debate model, the internet network must be stable and there must be a lot of quota supplies, and compatible devices.

Another standard is Assessment and Measurement. Even though learning is online, al-kalām learning must still have a specific assessment design that fits the learning objectives. For example, the purpose of learning *al-kalām* in tertiary institutions is to talk about a theme that has been determined by the lecturer. Therefore, the assessment made by the lecturer of *al-kalām* is to ask the students to make a *ḥiwār* video that raises a certain topic while still paying attention to the elements of *al-kalām*. The students should be able to conduct *jidāl*/online debate carried out synchronously from the Zoom cloud meeting or Google meeting. Some basic elements in learning *al-kalām* online are *nahwiyyah* rules, Arabic sentence structure, intonation, and body language.

Even though it is carried out online, the *al-kalām* learning process in higher education must still consist of preliminary, core, and closing activities. If the learning is done synchronously using Zoom or Google meeting, the lecturer can start their virtual meeting with greetings, review previous material, start the learning, and end it by giving inputs and closing greetings. Meanwhile, if it is asynchronous, the lecturer should start and end the activities in the comments or discussion columns as in the Google Classroom platform.

Online *kalam* learning can also apply to direct teaching. However, the jigsaw strategy does not seem to fit this model. In the jigsaw, one has to exchange group members to share materials. That is why it is only

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suitable for direct teachings, small groups, and picture-seeing strategies. The following is an elaboration of online *kalam* learning strategies:

1)   Direct Strategy

The direct strategy trains the students to tell everything they see orally and in writing in the Arabic language. Online learning, it can be done with a synchronous model. This strategy is suitable for the beginner level with the techniques of learning to say, look and say, ask and answer, and practice sentence patterns. It can also be done in a synchronous style using Google meet, Zoom meetings, and WhatsApp video calls. The steps are:

a. The lecturer chooses pictures that match the theme.

b. The lecturer displays a simple picture of an incident or event on the share screen.

c. The lecturer asks the students to pay attention to the share screen and mention the names of objects or parts in the picture in Arabic individually.

d. Next, the lecturer performs his Arabic vocabulary and the students imitate him simultaneously or individually.

e. The lecturer points out and randomly asks the students to compose sentences from the pictures they have seen orally.

f. The lecturer asks each student to compose sentences in writing and read them in turn.

g. The lecturer provides corrections and clarifications on the students' works.

2)   Small group strategy

This strategy aims to improve the students' activeness, so they can experience the same learning process. In this case, the lecturer divides the students into several groups. Each group will be given the task of presenting their respective themes. This strategy is better using the asynchronous model, where the discussion does not occur directly but from comments. Online learning can use an asynchronous model for *mutawassit* level students. Meanwhile, the learning techniques are playing messages/role playing, or discussing certain themes.

a. The lecturer sets the topic of discussion or *hiwār*

b. The lecturer divides the students into several groups with 4-5 students in each group.

c. The lecturer decides on the *hiwār* assignment for recording and editing into a video with a certain discussion or *hiwār* theme.

d. During the learning, the lecturer orders the group in charge to upload their *hiwār* video to the discussion column.

e. The lecturer asks the group in charge to discuss the *hiwār* they have presented and other groups should provide criticism, suggestions, and responses.

f. The lecturer gives corrections to the students' assignments

3)   Seeing picture strategy

This strategy aims to train the student's ability to understand the contents of the reading. Next, they should be able to describe it in a visual form. From this picture, the students can memorize more easily and remember the contents of the reading longer. This strategy can use a synchronous model or direct virtual face-to-face such as Zoom. The steps are:

a. The lecturer sets the themes and readings.

b. The lecturer divides the students into several groups with different reading themes in the form of reading files and distributes all pictures that match the readings.

c. Each group creates a WA group for discussion and the students read the contents of the reading from the theme.

d. The students describe the reading in pictures (visualization) or choose one of the pictures that the lecturer has shared.

e. The lecturer asks the students one by one from each group to share the screen (Zoom) or the current presentation (Google meet) pictures that they have understood the contents of their reading.

f. Each group representative that is having share screens or presentations explains what the contents of the reading are in Arabic assisted by his colleagues if the explanation is incomplete.

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g. Other groups prepare themselves to take turns presenting their assignment.

h. The lecturer provides corrections and clarifications on the students' assignments

Online learning was initially for anticipating the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we never know when the pandemic will end. After the pandemic ends, the learning process may return to normal conditions (face-to-face meetings). However, online learning for the *kalām* learning should not be abandoned immediately. Online learning still has some advantages as a learning companion or supplement to face-to-face learning. Thus, the blended learning model can be one alternative for improving the students' outcomes. Some examples of its application are:

1) In the face-to-face learning process, the lecturer occasionally presents native speakers synchronously to practice the students' mental abilities.

2) The lecturer occasionally assigns the students to make video conversations uploaded to social media such as YouTube and then corrected together during face-to-face learning.

3) The lecturer sends additional materials like vocabulary or *hiwār* videos to online platforms such as WhatsApp groups for the student's independent learning at home.

4) The lecturer assigns the students to practice *kalām* with native speakers through social media outside of class hours.

Conclusions

Online teaching has complied with the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, Professional Responsibilities, Digital Pedagogy, Community Building, Learner Engagement, Assessment and Measurement, and Instructional Design. Therefore, it can achieve relatively the same results as offline learning. This online mode should be maintained to complement the offline model after the covid pandemic is over.

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