

The Hermeneutics of Qur'anic Translation into Sign Language: A Study of Inclusive Pedagogy by the Qur'an Indonesia Project

Hermeneutika Terjemahan Al-Qur'an ke dalam Bahasa Isyarat: Studi Pedagogi Inklusif oleh Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP)

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of inclusive Qur'anic pedagogy by the Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP), with a focus on its Sign Language translation initiative and inclusive teaching methods. QIP, in collaboration with The Little Hijabi Home Schooling, has launched QuranIDprojectISYARAT, a digital-based endeavor aiming to improve access to the Qur'an and its translations, especially for individuals with disabilities. The QuranIDProjectISYARAT program, developed by QIP, targets the deaf community and provides Qur'anic education through platforms like Instagram and YouTube, utilizing audio, visuals, and Sign Language demonstrations. While QIP utilizes Arabic Sign Language for Qur'an translation, their interpretive process prioritizes understanding Qur'anic meanings over morphemes. This study delves into QIP's Qur'an translation process and inclusive teaching practices, particularly focusing on the experiences of deaf or hearing-impaired individuals. By employing a netnography approach and conducting interviews with QIP's YouTube viewers, the research investigates interactions within QIP's online platforms and gathers insights into viewers' perspectives. The findings suggest that QIP's Qur'an translation incorporates Arabic Sign Language and volunteers' interpretations or improvisations of verses, fostering comprehension and a sense of inclusion among learners in their online Qur'anic education initiatives.

Keyword: *Sign Language, Qur'an Indonesia Project, Inclusive Pedagogy, Qur'an Translation Process, the Quran*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki implementasi pedagogi Al-Qur'an inklusif yang dilakukan oleh Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP), dengan fokus pada inisiatif penerjemahan Bahasa Isyarat dan metode pengajaran inklusif. QIP, bekerja sama dengan The Little Hijabi Home Schooling, telah meluncurkan QuranIDprojectISYARAT, sebuah upaya berbasis digital yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan akses terhadap Al-Qur'an dan terjemahannya, terutama bagi penyandang disabilitas. Program QuranIDprojectISYARAT, yang dikembangkan oleh QIP, menargetkan komunitas tuna rungu dan menyediakan pendidikan Al-Qur'an melalui platform seperti Instagram dan YouTube, dengan memanfaatkan audio, visual, dan demonstrasi Bahasa Isyarat. Meskipun QIP menggunakan Bahasa Isyarat Arab untuk menerjemahkan Al-Qur'an, proses penerjemahannya lebih mengutamakan pemahaman makna Al-Qur'an daripada morfem. Penelitian ini menggali proses penerjemahan Al-Qur'an dan praktik pengajaran inklusif yang dilakukan oleh QIP, khususnya berfokus pada pengalaman individu dengan gangguan pendengaran atau tuli. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan



netnografi dan melakukan wawancara dengan penonton YouTube QIP, penelitian ini menyelidiki interaksi dalam platform online QIP dan mengumpulkan wawasan tentang perspektif penonton. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa terjemahan Al-Qur'an QIP menggabungkan Bahasa Isyarat Arab dan interpretasi atau improvisasi ayat-ayat oleh para sukarelawan, yang mendorong pemahaman dan rasa inklusi di antara para pelajar dalam inisiatif pendidikan Al-Qur'an online mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Bahasa Isyarat, Qur'an Indonesia Project, Pedagogi Inklusif, Proses Terjemahan Al-Quran, Al-Quran*

Introduction

Qur'anic education faces with persistent challenges related to accessibility and representation, notably affecting women and individuals with disabilities.¹ Responses to these obstacles have emerged with an awareness of the importance of inclusive Qur'anic pedagogy, aiming to alleviate the barriers faced by marginalized groups. Scholars and activists alike are actively delving into various issues within Qur'anic education, including the development of inclusive curricula, integration of gender perspectives, and provision of diverse learning materials. The rise of digital technology has facilitated the proliferation of learning resources emphasizing inclusive Qur'anic pedagogy, warranting academic scrutiny encompassing content and social context. One such platform promoting inclusive Qur'anic pedagogy is the Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP).

This research aims to elucidate the implementation of online Qur'anic education by the Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP), a religious community in Indonesia. QIP initiated the Qur'an Teaching Program on March 17, 2018, with the specific objective of aiding deaf communities in Qur'anic learning. This program, dubbed QuranIDprojectISYARAT, is outlined on QIP's YouTube account.² In collaboration with The Little Hijabi Home Schooling, an institution employing Sign Language as the medium of instruction, QIP facilitates QuranIDprojectISYARAT. Utilizing platforms like YouTube and Instagram, QIP delivers the program to its target audience.

The QuranIDprojectISYARAT initiative attempts to facilitate access to Islamic teachings in the Qur'an for the deaf community, recognizing its scarcity in Indonesia. In the online teaching and learning framework, the initiative offers audio-visual recordings of Qur'anic recitations, supplemented with Arabic, Indonesian, and English translations—a feature distinct from others due to its Sign Language

1 R. Hassan, "Women in Islam: Qur'anic Ideals versus Muslim Realities," *Planned Parenthood Challenges*, no. 2 (1995): 5–9.

2 "(16) #QuranIDprojectISYARAT: YouTube," accessed May 6, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w.

component. This approach not only serves as an online Qur'anic education activity but also embodies inclusive pedagogy, with the Qur'an as the central theme. Disability activists, acting as instructors under the guidance of Galuh Sukmara, the deaf founder of The Little Hijabi Home Schooling, teach Sign Language to deaf students. During instruction, teachers are tasked with comprehending Qur'anic verses before translating them into Sign Language. Emphasis is placed on the translation process rather than solely on extracting meaning from the Qur'anic verses.³

This research aims to examine two facets of translation: the process of comprehending Qur'anic meanings, primarily by instructors, and the subsequent translation of these understandings into Sign Language. Furthermore, the study aims to elucidate the implementation of inclusive pedagogy in Qur'anic education online, particularly concerning QIP's role as a religious organization striving to make the Qur'an and its translations accessible to younger generations through contemporary media. In this context, inclusive pedagogy denotes a teaching and learning approach that readily provides additional support to students without causing them to feel marginalized. This pedagogical model addresses the question of how students can receive supplementary assistance without experiencing differentiation.⁴

Within the framework of Qur'anic inclusive pedagogy, this study examines QIP's approach to engaging with deaf individuals, acknowledging the inherent challenge of providing extra assistance without fostering differentiation. To evaluate QIP's understanding of the Qur'an and its translation into Sign Language, the research concentrates on key linguistic aspects such as syntax, semantics, phonetics, morphemes, pragmatics, and rhetoric. These elements are essential for comprehending the Quran's intricate linguistic and rhetorical structures, which are vital for appreciation.⁵

The research will also assess the extent to which QIP considers these linguistic aspects in conveying and translating Qur'anic meaning into Sign Language, given its mission to disseminate the Quran's message to the younger generation via social media platforms.⁶ To gather data, the study employs a netnography approach and conducts interviews with QIP YouTube viewers, particularly focusing on videos

3 Risha Shafira Deskhansa, "Strategi Komunikasi *Qur'an Indonesia Project* dalam Menyampaikan Al-Qur'an Berbahasa Isyarat kepada Penyandang Tuli", *Skrripsi*, Fakultas Ilmu Dakwah dan Ilmu Komunikasi UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2019, 50 – 53.

4 Lani Florian & Mhairi Beaton, "Inclusive Pedagogy in Action: Getting it Right for Every Child", *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22:8 (2017), 870-884

5 Hussein Abdul-Rouf, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture, and Exegesis* (London, Routledge, 2001), 1-3.

6 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/home>. See also <https://www.youtube.com/quranindonesia>

within the QuranIDprojectISYARAT initiative. This methodology aims to explore the dynamics of interactions on QIP's YouTube and Instagram platforms among viewers, creative teams, volunteers, and QIP's broader network. Additionally, interviews with viewers serve to validate the collected data, providing insights into their perspectives and experiences.

Recent studies on Quran and pedagogy mostly focus on authority and the culture of muslim society in which the actors of Islamic teaching initiate to engage specific methods to penetrate their teaching into public religious discourse. Ikhwan, for instance, mentions the enterprise of Quraish Shihab to enhance his authority as a religious scholar through his involvement with television programs and the foundation of Pusat Studi Quran (PSQ) or the Center for Qur'anic Studies.⁷ Millie also delineates the best way for preachers to dominate public discourse namely monologic strategy, even though it depends on the culture of their society.⁸ Nurtawab goes beyond by which he argues that Islamic pedagogy is not only about interpretation of the Quran and enhancement of personal authority, but also about mobilization between differing muslim groups,⁹ although according to Daneshgar, Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia is apologetic practices in the sense that the subjects always shield muslim from critical thinking regarding Islam and the Quran.¹⁰ However, Fina finds that Daneshgar's thesis is a gross simplification of what actually happened.¹¹

To date, research on inclusive pedagogy of the Quran—as far as we are concerned—has not yet been initiated and this research seeks to analyze how QIP translates the Quran into Sign Language and inclusive pedagogy occurs in it. Knowing that Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Quran (LPMQ) of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia had been preparing the Sign Language translation of the Quran—which on June 1, 2022, it completed chapter 30 and on April 17, 2023, successfully launched the translation on Google Play Store—this research can contribute to being one of the Government's considerations in making this inclusive project more accessible and well-received concerning the method of

7 Munirul Ikhwan, "An Indonesian Initiative to Make the Qur'an Down-to-Earth: Muhammad Quraish Shihab and His School of Exegesis", *Disertasi*, am Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften der Freien Universität Berlin, 2015.

8 Julian Millie, "The public metaculture of islamic preaching" in Matt Tomlinson dan Julian Millie (eds.), *The Monologic Imagination* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017), 231–249

9 Ervan Nurtawab, "Jalalayn pedagogical practice: Styles of Qur'an and *tafsir* learning in contemporary Indonesia", *Disertasi*, Anthropology - School of Social Science Faculty of Arts, Monash University, 2018.

10 Majid Daneshgar, *Studying the Quran in the Muslim Academy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

11 Lien Iffah Naf'atu Fina, "Studying the Qur'an in the Context of Indonesian Islamic Higher Education", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, 2 (2020): 139-161.

Quran translation into Sign Language and how it can be effectively accepted by the deaf.

QIP as Nonprofit Oriented Program

Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP), a youth initiative, aims to disseminate Qur'anic values through audio-visual recordings of Qur'anic recitations accompanied by Indonesian and English translations, fostering a deeper connection to the Quran. Established in 2015, QIP set out to record approximately 4000 verses of the Quran, alongside their Indonesian and English translations. To execute this program, QIP initiated volunteer recruitment, spearheaded by Archie Wirija and Pasha Chrismansyah, the initiator-producer and co-producer of QIP.¹² Emphasizing its non-profit status, QIP relies on volunteers and fundraising events for sustainability. Despite the apparent challenges, QIP swiftly garnered success. In its inception, QIP attracted significant attention, boasting 960,000 listeners across 50 countries on Soundcloud. The project received widespread support from various sectors, including musicians, artists, reporters, actors, doctors, entrepreneurs, and young activists.¹³ This accomplishment is attributed to the stringent quality standards upheld during the recording process. Every Qur'anic reciter involved in the project underwent rigorous testing conducted by Drs. H. Uci Armisi, the head of Lembaga Pelatihan dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Al-Qur'an Madani, QIP's collaborating institution.¹⁴

The Qur'an Indonesia Project (QIP) has experienced steady progress since its inception. By 2016, QIP had completed 700 recordings of Qur'anic verses.¹⁵ A year later, this number increased significantly to 2,236 recordings. In 2018, QIP reached its peak, achieving 4,365 recordings of Qur'anic verses.¹⁶ Furthermore, QIP's outreach expanded over time. As of May 18, 2017, it garnered over 1,500,000 listeners from 50 countries on Soundcloud.¹⁷ This remarkable achievement prompted QIP to initiate a donation campaign through Kitabisa.com, marking a significant

12 <https://kitabisa.com/campaign/quranidproject/story>

13 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/Quran-Indonesia-Project-Mengajak-Generasi-Muda-Ikut-Kontribusi-Merekam-Ayat-Melalui-QIPmycontribution>

14 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/audio-quran-dari-dan-untuk-generasi-muda-di-era-mobile>

15 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/Quran-Indonesia-Project-Mengajak-Generasi-Muda-Ikut-Kontribusi-Merekam-Ayat-Melalui-QIPmycontribution>

16 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/PERMUDAH-AKSES-TEMAN-TULI-MELALUI-QURAN-INDONESIA-PROJECT-ISYARAT>

17 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/QURAN-INDONESIA-PROJECT-KINI-HADIR-LEBIH-DEKAT-SEDEKAT-GENGGAMAN-TANGAN>

milestone in its journey.¹⁸

At the conclusion of the Qur'an recording program on March 16, 2018, QIP introduced two new initiatives: QuranIDprojectISYARAT and ceritadari1ayat. These programs were launched with sponsorship from Wardah and received support from their new collaborator, The Little Hijabi Homeschooling. Three months later, QIP, in partnership with The Little Hijabi Homeschooling, initiated another program titled "Cahaya dalam Sunyi," focusing on fundraising events. This endeavor aimed to provide improved access to Islamic education for deaf children through a comprehensive and genuine approach, utilizing innovative, creative, and accessible Sign Language.¹⁹ To further support this cause, QIP collaborated with Dompot Dhuafa. QIP's fundraising efforts persisted until September 27, 2018, utilizing platforms such as Bawaberkah.org, Kitabisa.com, and their own website.²⁰

Organizing initiatives like QuranIDprojectISYARAT, ceritadari1ayat, and "Cahaya dalam Sunyi" poses significant challenges and financial constraints, particularly due to their video-oriented nature and the involvement of multiple stakeholders in tasks such as translating the Qur'an into Sign Language and video editing. Despite these challenges, QIP continuously hosts fundraising events and seeks new collaborations to alleviate the burden. Unlike typical money-driven initiatives promoted on social media, QIP's approach is distinct.²¹ Instead of focusing solely on economic gain, QIP prioritizes social and religious issues, actively engaging in volunteer recruitment and collaboration strategies to mobilize support and maintain civic engagement.²² In essence, QIP operates as a social entrepreneur, prioritizing social impact over profit-making, thereby distinguishing itself as a socially driven organization rather than a purely commercial entity.

QIP's organizational approach includes transparently sharing donation amounts, such as the Rp352,188,053 reported on Instagram as of September 4, 2018, after a five-month fundraising campaign involving multiple collaborators. To achieve this fundraising success, QIP collaborated with various entities, including Dompot Dhuafa, Kitabisa.com, Bawaberkah.org., and Launchgood, while leveraging

18 <https://kitabisa.com/campaign/quranidproject/story>

19 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/PERMUDAH-AKSES-TEMAN-TULI-MELALUI-QURAN-INDONESIA-PROJECT-ISYARAT>

20 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/SIARAN-PERS-CAHAYA-DALAM-SUNYI-RAYAKAN-KEMENANGAN-DENGAN-TAKBIRAN-BERSAMA-TEMAN-TULI>

21 Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia", *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, 5 (2018), 68-99.

22 For further discussion on what social entrepreneurship is, see A.H.J. Helmsing "Conditions for Social Entrepreneurship." *The International Journal of Social Quality* 5, no. 1 (2015): 51–66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26179347>.

the influence of actors and actresses with substantial followings to attract donors.²³ QIP strategically frames its fundraising events around three key concepts: Qur'an values, youth, and technology. These concepts are translated into initiatives like QuranIDprojectISYARAT and "Cahaya dalam Sunyi," aimed at aiding deaf children to experience the essence of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr.²⁴ By evoking empathy in potential donors, QIP effectively encourages donations to support its cause.

QuranIDprojectISYARAT and Its Implications for Qur'anic Understanding

QuranIDprojectISYARAT, one of QIP's flagship initiatives, comprises four videos teaching the Qur'an through Sign Language, featuring surahs al-Fatihah, al-Nas, al-Falaq, al-Ikhlash, and an additional video of the call to prayer (adzan). As of April 3, 2024, these five videos remain the sole uploads on the QuranIDprojectISYARAT, indicating the completion of the project.²⁵ Contrary to QIP's initial project, which aimed to record over 4000 Qur'anic verses with dual translations for broader accessibility, QuranIDprojectISYARAT, along with *ceritadari1ayat*²⁶ and "Cahaya dalam Sunyi,"²⁷ focuses on aiding deaf children in self-awareness and seeking wisdom for the sake of Allah's cause.²⁸ This targeted approach differs from QIP's earlier endeavor, which aimed for comprehensive Qur'anic understanding through extensive verse recordings with dual translations.

In each video, a deaf activist demonstrates the content through Sign Language, aligning with the audio narration, such as reciting surah al-Fatihah. The Sign Language used is consistent throughout, specifically Arabic Sign Language, as confirmed in the video credits. This uniformity ensures ease of understanding for viewers, particularly the deaf audience, facilitating comprehension when transitioning between different surahs. In translating the word "al-Rahman," the signer places their hand in front of the left chest, forming an upward triangle with their fingers.

23 https://www.instagram.com/p/BnTdhwyImdo/?utm_source=qr&igsh=Zms1dXp1c214ejE2

24 <https://quranindonesiaproject.com/#/kabar/isi/SIARAN-PERS-CAHAYA-DALAM-SUNYI-RAYAKAN-KEMENANGAN-DENGAN-TAKBIRAN-BERSAMA-TEMAN-TULI>

25 https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&si=t7WCrh7-SiVcr-6e

26 https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkmaT7iel_CG69SMWp2Q0y9jnwFMg4qd8&si=N8msthE5Gv6P2ZdF

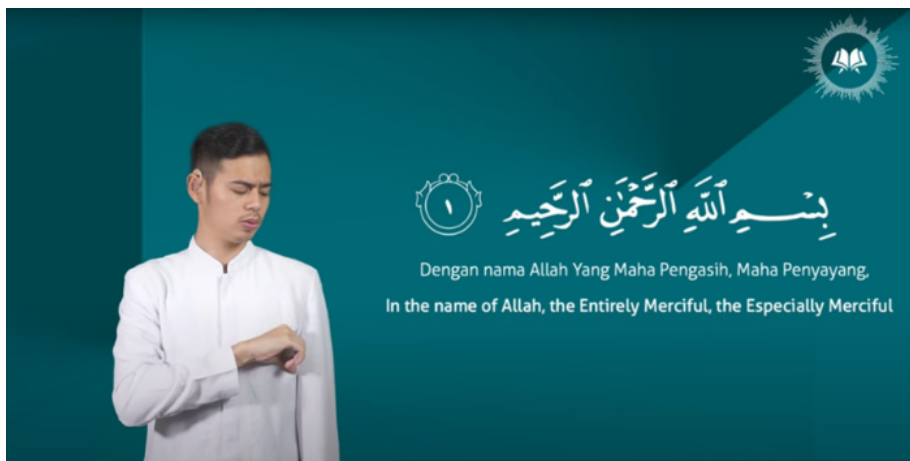
27 https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkmaT7iel_CEG6VymLRCD9YzQbwcdokUF&si=Md7z5S95B7yLvUy8

28 See Official Press Release of Qur'an Indonesia Project, "Permudah Akses Teman Tuli Melalui Qur'an Indonesia Project Isyarat," 2018. We have approached QIP, but the official said that they still can not receive any questions regarding their project in light of their bustle in a new program until we are pointed to their official press release of QuranIDproject ISYARAT.

Conversely, for the word “al-Rahim,” the triangle is inverted, and the fingers slowly close into a fist, maintaining the position in front of the left chest.



Picture 1. *volunteers are translating al-rahman into Sign Language*²⁹



Picture 2. *volunteers are translating al-rahim into Sign Language*³⁰

Indeed, variations exist among translators in their Sign Language interpretations. Some translators exhibit fast-paced movements with standard expressions, while others employ slower, more deliberate movements characterized by strong and emotionally expressive gestures. These nuances in translation style provide valuable insights into the translators' understanding of the Qur'anic verses. Evaluating these details aids in assessing the depth of comprehension and interpretation conveyed through Sign Language, enriching the overall understanding and communication

²⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTGzCA0uOME&list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w

³⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTGzCA0uOME&list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w

of the Qur'anic message. While the primary reference for translation is Arabic Sign Language, translators often draw upon their understanding of the verse to convey its meaning effectively. For instance, when translating the phrase “bismillah,” rather than demonstrating the signs for the individual letters “ba’, sin, mim,” they opt to convey the broader meaning of the phrase as “in the name of Allah.”



Picture 3. *volunteers are translating bismillah into Sign Language*³¹

The translation process is primarily guided by an understanding of the verses rather than relying on Indonesian or English translations, as emphasized by Galuh Sukmara, the founder of The Little Hijabi Homeschooling. Their approach involves conveying the meaning of the verses, as exemplified by the translation of “bismillah” to “dengan nama Allah” or “in the name of Allah,” instead of focusing solely on literal translations. In demonstrating the sign for “bismillah,” they do not adhere strictly to the translation, opting instead for gestures that convey the essence of the phrase, such as pointing to the lips and lifting the index finger up and to the right, followed by a motion of the head upward while looking at the finger. While their translation process predominantly relies on understanding the verses,³² they occasionally incorporate Arabic Sign Language, particularly when translating the word “Allah.”³³

Galuh Sukmara, the coach of translators for the QuranIDprojectISYARAT,

31 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXIzTUy4pbk&list=PLkmaT7ielCF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&index=4>

32 The system and dictionary of Arabic Sign Language discussed here can be accessed in M. A. Abdel-Fattah, “Arabic Sign Language: A Perspective,” *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* vol. 10 no. 2, 2005.

33 Qatar Society For Rehabilitation and Special Needs, *Al-Qamus al-Isyari al-'Arabi li al-Sum* (Doha: Lajnah al-Tahdiriyyah wa al-Tansiqiyyah, 2014), 41. It is worth noting that Arabic Sign Language has many varieties, including Qatar Sign Language and Arabia Sign Language. Nevertheless, they closely relate to each other.

emphasized the use of an innovative and accessible Sign Language system for the program, rather than traditional methods like BISINDO or SIBI. Sukmara's preference for Sign Language that is creative and tailored to the needs of deaf children suggests a departure from conventional approaches.³⁴ However, despite this preference, the translators utilize BISINDO for their translations, as it accommodates various Sign Language variations in Indonesia, despite some scholarly and activist opposition to its use.³⁵

Pertaining to this issue, Hussein Abdul-Raof argued that achieving equivalence between languages in translation, particularly between Sign Language and spoken language, is unattainable due to inherent cultural and linguistic disparities.³⁶ Abdul-Raof emphasized that a translated work can never fully capture the essence of the original, citing the existence of a cultural gap as a significant obstacle. He pointed out that Sign Language, despite its complexity compared to spoken language, offers a unique avenue for engaging with the meaning of the Quran, potentially enhancing comprehension compared to solely relying on spoken language. However, Abdul-Raof underscored that regardless of the variety of Sign Language used in translation efforts, it cannot replace the authenticity of the original Quran.³⁷

Abdul-Raof also emphasized that achieving equivalence in translation requires translators to ensure that every word they translate has a counterpart in the target language, underscoring the challenge posed by cultural differences. He highlighted the inherent connection between language and culture, noting that individuals raised in harmonious societies may lack vocabulary for concepts like "tolerance," while those from prosperous societies may be unfamiliar with terms like "slave." This cultural disparity presents significant obstacles in the translation process, as conveying nuanced meanings across languages requires careful consideration of cultural contexts.

Abdul-Raof contends that achieving equivalence in translation extends beyond linguistic terms to encompass cultural practices acknowledged by the community, highlighting the challenge of ensuring familiarity with translated concepts. For example, when translating a term like "muzah," the translator must ensure that their

34 Official Press Release of Qur'an Indonesia Project, "Permudah Akses Teman Tuli Melalui Qur'an Indonesia Project Isyarat," 2018.

35 Nick Palfreyman, *Variation in Indonesian Sign Language: A Typological and Sociolinguistic Analysis* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), 283–286.

36 Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture, and Exegesis*, 6.

37 Nick Palfreyman, *Variation in Indonesian Sign Language: A Typological and Sociolinguistic Analysis*, 135–138

audience is acquainted with the concept, as failure to do so results in a lack of equivalence. Abdul-Raof's assertion that equivalence in translation is utopian stems from the difficulty of bridging not only linguistic gaps but also cultural disparities.

Basil Hatim and Ian Mason identified the challenge of cultural disparity between source and target languages in translation, referring to it as the "world experience" dilemma, where each text is embedded in its unique cultural context.³⁸ They emphasized that texts are intricately linked to their respective cultural backgrounds, which may not be shared by other cultures. Hatim proposed a solution to this obstacle through meticulous compilation of text typologies and consideration of the discursive context.³⁹

When considering the translation of the Qur'an into Sign Language, a medium that transcends the constraints of sound and word order, the focus shifts from the Qur'an itself to its translation, thus presenting a distinct challenge. Translators involved in projects like QIP must navigate this distinction carefully, as their translations are based on interpretations of the Qur'an rather than direct references to the scripture. While Sign Language offers a unique avenue for conveying meaning beyond spoken words, the translated content cannot be categorized as directly related to the Quran, but rather as interpretations of its message.

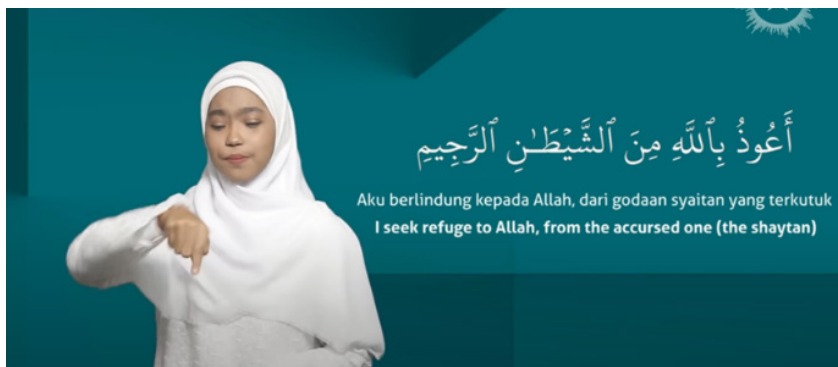
Nevertheless, what we found is that the process of translating the Qur'an into Sign Language by QIP does not fully refer to the Qur'an translation. At some points, the translators went beyond Indonesian and English translations, which one might even say, they provide a solution to something that cannot be done through languages except Sign Language. In the case of translation of the words *al-rahman* and *al-rahim*, when these words are translated into English they become "entirely merciful" and "especially merciful" or into Indonesian they become "pengasih" and "penyayang". In terms of syntax, there is closeness between them, but not in terms of phonetics and prosody. Exploring the meaning of the Qur'an cannot be done only through the first two but also the last two, moreover it is known that phonetics and prosody have more potential to copy or reiterate the emotions or feelings that are inherent in a language. To translate the tone and rhythm of the letter *mim* in *al-rahman* or *ha'* in *al-rahim*, Indonesian and English have no power, even though this has an emotional impact on meaning. Meanwhile, through Sign Language someone has the opportunity to do so, that is through hand signals with special improvisations—such as repetition, finger movements, or emphasis—and supported by appropriate expressions.

38 Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London: Longman, 1990), 48.

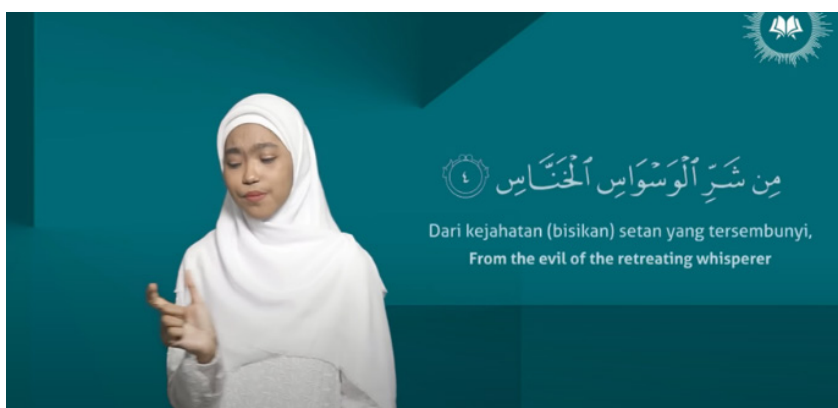
39 Basil Hatim, *Communication Across Cultures: Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 35.

This potential is related to the distinctive position of Sign Language. It is attached to the speaker's body, feelings, thoughts, and consciousness.⁴⁰ Just as there is a distance between language and awareness, Sign Language speakers are closer than Non-Sign Language speakers, so this can open gaps to overcome the problem of translating the Qur'an into other languages, especially in terms of phonetics and prosody.

In some verses, the tendency to translate the text based on understanding does not apply. For the case of surah al-Falaq: 2 - 5 and al-Nas: 4 and 6, they translate the word *min* not from the aspect of understanding or translation, but from the morpheme, so the basis is Arabic Sign Language. *Min* is translated with the sign letters *mim* and *nun*. Interestingly, the same thing is not done for the word *min* in *taawuz* readings. *Min* in the sentence *A'udzu bi allahi min al-syaitan al-rajim* is not translated based on Arabic Sign Language, but understanding.



Picture 4. volunteers are translating the *min* letters in *taawuz* into Sign Language⁴¹



40 W. J. T. Mitchell, "Preface: Utopian Gestures" in H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose (eds.), *Signing the Body Poetic* (California: University of California Press, 2006), xv-xxiii. See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Origin of Language*, translated by John. H. Moran and Alexander Code (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-2.

41 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJI7S9G5C1s&list=PLkmaT7ielCF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&index=3>

Picture 5. *volunteers are translating the letter min in Surah al-Nas:4 into Sign Language*⁴²

The significance of this distinction should be situated concerning the surah's structure, its abstraction, and the phonetics of each verse within a surah. In the Quran, when repetition occurs or certain letters are reiterated more than twice in consecutive positions, it signifies a special significance awaiting interpretation. The recurring use of the word "min" in surah al-Falaq extends beyond its mere translation as "from"; it implies something deeper. This repetition hints at an underlying message, extending beyond the surface meaning, or perhaps even conveys an emotive tone akin to music when it's played.⁴³

Hatim emphasized the importance for translators dealing with Arabic source texts to grasp either the textual structure or its contextual nuances to avoid misinterpretation.⁴⁴ Translating identical words in different sentence structures requires careful consideration, especially when these structures are embedded in specific contexts. This is evident in the usage of "min" in "taawuz" and Surahs al-Falaq and al-Nas. Translators within the QIP framework refrain from translating "min" in "taawuz" morphemically due to its distinct contextual grounding compared to its usage in Surahs al-Falaq and al-Nas, where conveying the essence of the Surahs relies on morphemic translation.

QIP's Sign Language Initiative on Deaf Learners and Inclusive Pedagogy

The decision of QIP to base its Sign Language translation of the Qur'an on comprehension is positively embraced by internet users, including members of the deaf community. Two factors contribute to the warm reception of the QIP initiative. Firstly, there's a scarcity of youth-driven movements focusing on the Qur'an and individuals with disabilities, especially those emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaboration and incorporating sound, movement, vibrant imagery, and text.⁴⁵ Secondly, QIP's online Qur'an learning platform tailored for the deaf not only provides instructional content but also features Sign Language translation demonstrations, enhancing accessibility and comprehension.⁴⁶

42 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJI7S9G5C1s&list=PLkmaT7ielCF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&index=3>

43 Hadi Atiyah Mathar al-Hilali, *al-Huruf al-'Amilah fi al-Qur'an al-Karim: Baina al-Nahdiyyin wa al-Balaghyyin* (Beirut: Maktabah al-Nahdiyyah al-Arabiyyah, 1986), 193.

44 Basil Hatim, *Communication Across Cultures: Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics*, 68.

45 Netizen's testimonies against the upload could be traced through comments of this content https://www.instagram.com/p/BjHcHrdAl_e/?igsh=MTc5NjR4eXA3aGpmYg==

46 See comments within this video <https://www.youtube.com/>

The demonstration provided by QIP is immensely beneficial for deaf individuals seeking to comprehend the Quran's content. On one hand, QIP's upload offers an Indonesian translation, enabling readers to grasp the meaning. However, translation alone doesn't suffice to capture the intent or essence, which is the ultimate goal. Thankfully, QIP's approach prioritizes comprehension over translation, enabling learners to access insights beyond what Indonesian and English translations offer. This pedagogical approach fosters a unique learning experience, where deaf individuals can absorb Qur'anic teachings through expressive, dynamic body language, fostering engagement and improvisation.

These three elements relate to the experience of indirectly experiencing the recitation of the Quran. Through Indonesian and English translations, the deaf do not get the opportunity to experience reading the Quran. They find it difficult, for example, to feel the tone and rhythm of the mim of the word *al-rahman* when it is read long because it is *mad tabi'i*. However, with the magic of Body Language, they have access to feel it, especially when Sign Language translators move their hands in certain patterns and are accompanied by distinctive facial expressions. In this context, Bauman, Nelson, and Rose suggest that the heart of Sign Language lies in body expressions and facial expressions.⁴⁷ If in the world of poetry, sound consists of boisterous voices and wordings that are prone to manipulation, in the world of gestures poetry is all about movement, expression, facial expressions, and tempo. This includes the Sign Language translation of the Quran. Due to body language, the Sign Language translation of the Qur'an is more likely to be able to "represent" the contents of the Qur'an text. For instance, through certain expressions when the translator is translating a verse, the deaf can perceive that there is something important or something similar that the Qur'an is conveying. This can be in the form of reading or emphasis on meaning. In the QIP case, some translators put on a look between amazement and fear while translating sentences related to God and sour expressions for sentences related to satan or something bad.

Riza Novianto, a beneficiary of the QIP program, highlights the significance of these elements in enhancing his comprehension and appreciation of Qur'anic verses and surahs. For Riza, these components offer a pathway to indirectly experiencing the beauty and melodiousness of Qur'anic recitation, a sensation often cherished by most Muslims.⁴⁸ However, he underscores the importance of translation as another facilitator for understanding Qur'anic content. Riza acknowledges that while some

[watch?v=kTGzCA0uOME&list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTGzCA0uOME&list=PLkmaT7iel_CF3Tg8dgBLc6t3OTyAs3v0w&index=2)

47 H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose (eds.), *Signing the Body Poetic* (California: University of California Press, 2006), 1-3.

48 Interview with Riza Novianto on June 9, 2023

individuals may prefer translations due to limited proficiency in Sign Language—whether it's the Indonesian Sign Language System (SIBI) or Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO)—others find Sign Language demonstrations more accessible. Despite facing hearing difficulties since childhood, Riza admits his own proficiency in Sign Language is not fluent.

Ana, a teacher at the Sekolah Luar Biasa (SLB) in Yogyakarta, shares a perspective similar to Riza's regarding the challenges of Sign Language learning among deaf students. Drawing from her experience teaching deaf students with diverse inclinations, Ana asserts that Sign Language, particularly for elementary school-level children, poses considerable difficulty.⁴⁹ Moreover, she observes variations in individuals' comprehension of Sign Language despite the existence of standardized versions like SIBI for Indonesian Sign Language. Therefore, it is prudent for QIP to incorporate Indonesian and English translations alongside Sign Language in its educational videos. These translations serve a crucial role in facilitating comprehension, particularly for individuals reliant on Non-sign Language interpretations. The inclusion of both Sign Language and written translations complements each other, providing comprehensive access to Qur'anic content. This symbiotic relationship underscores the unique capacity of Sign Language to elucidate aspects of the Qur'an that conventional translations may overlook.

Muhammad Daroini Sieradj, the Deputy Head (Waka) of SLB Negeri 1 Bantul Yogyakarta, highlighted that QIP's Sign Language translation prioritizes conveying meaning over Arabic morphemes or written translations in Indonesian or English. During interviews with researchers at SLB Negeri 1 Bantul Yogyakarta, Muhammad Daroini Sieradj emphasized that QIP's Sign Language model diverges from the standard sign language used in daily communication among the deaf, rendering it less universally understandable.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Ana observes that the inclusion of Non-sign Language translations in QIP's pedagogical videos ensures comprehensibility for the audience.

Inclusive pedagogy necessitates open access, shifting the focus from mere availability to ensuring that students feel integrated without distinction while accessing educational resources. Riza articulates that while engaging with QIP videos, he doesn't perceive himself as being treated differently; rather, he learns independently at home. This highlights the potential of online learning, equipped with tailored facilities for individuals with disabilities, to foster inclusivity. Remote learning platforms offer a conducive environment where students can participate

49 Interview with Mbak Ana on June 25, 2023.

50 Interview with Muhammad Daroini Sieradj on June 25, 2023.

freely without feeling singled out, even though their peers may be aware of their disabilities.

Conclusion

QIP's Sign Language translation of the Qur'an prioritizes the translators' comprehension of verses over Arabic Sign Language conventions. However, certain elements, such as morphemes and Arabic Sign Language dictionaries, like in Surah Al-Falaq and "bismillahirrahmanirrahim," are integrated to maintain structural integrity and enhance audience understanding. This dual focus ensures that the surah's abstraction and unique meanings, conveyed through recitation variations and body gestures, remain intact. The incorporation of these aspects underscores how minor differences in presentation or reading can significantly alter interpretation.

Moreover, gestures and facial expressions play a crucial role in making Qur'anic content accessible to individuals with hearing impairments. Through nuanced expressions, such as a blend of resignation and amazement when translating terms like "Allah," deaf students can experience the recitation of the Quran, fostering a sense of normalcy in their learning journey. This inclusive approach, exemplified in online Qur'anic learning platforms like YouTube, ensures that individuals with disabilities can engage in learning without feeling singled out. By creating an inclusive digital environment, QIP facilitates a sense of normalcy in educational endeavors, even amidst isolation at home.

The current research underscores the significance of gestures and facial expressions in Qur'anic Sign Language translation for individuals with hearing impairments, yet it identifies several areas for further investigation and contribution. Future endeavors could focus on establishing standardized guidelines for integrating facial expressions and body gestures into Sign Language translation, while also examining cultural interpretations' impact on translation approaches. Moreover, exploring alternative digital platforms beyond YouTube for Qur'anic Sign Language learning and integrating emerging technologies like virtual reality could enhance accessibility and engagement. Theoretical exploration into the linguistic and cognitive aspects of Sign Language translation could provide insights into comprehension mechanisms, informing the development of more efficient translation methods. Overall, further research in these areas promises to advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications, ultimately fostering greater accessibility and inclusivity in engaging with religious texts for individuals with hearing impairments.

Supplementary Materials

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Authors' contributions

I did this research by myself, from preparing the materials, writing the paper, reviewing, and revising.

Data availability statement

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Conflicts of Interest

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