

# Technology-Based Arabic Calligraphy Learning in a New Era

## (Study on the Online Khat Learning Community)

Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding Author. Email: [abdulmuntaqim@bsa.uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:abdulmuntaqim@bsa.uin-malang.ac.id)*

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe: (1) the concepts and strategies of technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community, and (2) students' opinions on learning Arabic calligraphy in this community. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. Data collection techniques are observation, interview, and documentation. Data analysis techniques are qualitative data analysis techniques in data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The results showed that: (1) the concept of Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community was adapted from the Hamidy method, which consists of imitation (*taqlidiyyah*), stabilization exams, in-depth mastery, *tamrin*, and *ijazah*. Technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community, in general, uses WhatsApp and email media. It can be seen in the following steps: (a) preparation, (b) material explanation, the material can be in the form of videos, pictures, and explanations shared in the WhatsApp group, (c) questions and answers, (d) students write and send their works to the teacher's email, (e) the teacher provides feedback via email to each student. Because each student's abilities are different, the teaching material at each meeting is different from one student to another. (2) Students think that this community is outstanding because it is an alternative for learning Arabic calligraphy online in a new era that does not allow face-to-face learning. They are happy to study in this community because, in addition to getting Arabic calligraphy material, they also get material on motivation and values to form a robust Islamic calligrapher character.

**Keywords:** *Arabic Calligraphy, Learning, Technology*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, technology is proliferating. The development and widespread use of technology provides many benefits for life, including the field of education. It also forces the world of education to make positive innovations for the advancement of education. One of the functions of educational technology is to change conventional learning methods to become non-conventional ones. In the framework of innovative learning, the learning process must respond to increasingly sophisticated technological developments that provide a myriad of knowledge.

With the practical nature of technology, it can be applied in learning to make it easier to convey information. Thus, technology becomes a means of developing learning. There are many technological media such as television, information technology, and

multimedia as educational media in the present era. If the infrastructure is adequate, and students can properly provide material through modern technology, it will facilitate the learning process. With free technological media, students can develop on their own without depending on the teacher. Education can make optimal use of the positive functions of technology. Therefore, the use of technology is needed as a medium of learning in education.

Arabic calligraphy is an essential decorative heritage in Islamic art due to its qualities, which enables it to express aesthetic values to distinguish about other artworks. Various forms of this calligraphy characterized by its creative designs and precise execution. So, Arabic calligraphy emerges in Islamic art history and has a prominent position, and unique personality leads him to be distinct art [1].

With its significant characteristics and role as a form of Islamic culture, Arabic calligraphy learning has grown from time to time. It takes the form of conventional learning models to technology-based learning models. In the new era, technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning is a must, including online learning. Online Arabic calligraphy learning provides ample opportunity for every student to learn Arabic calligraphy anywhere and anytime.

In this study, the researcher was interested in studying the concepts and strategies of learning Arabic calligraphy based on the technology at the Online Khat Learning community and student opinions on learning Arabic calligraphy. Online Khat Learning community is one of the online calligraphy learning communities in Indonesia. It was formed by an Indonesian female calligrapher, Fitria Dewi Masyitoh. She studied with Sheikh Belaid Hamidi from Morocco and completed 3 *Khat* diplomas (*Riq'ah*, *Diwani*, *Diwani Jali*) within two years, which then led Fitria to win several pure Khat championships at the national, ASEAN, and International levels in 2018 and 2019. The Online Khat Learning community was formed in March 2019. Even though it has only been running for one year, this community has many students from Indonesia, and some students come from outside Indonesia, such as Pakistan, Palestine, Bangladesh, Libya, and Thailand.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. Qualitative research is a method that is considered a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior [2]. It aims to naturally understand a phenomenon in a social context by promoting an in-depth communication interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied [3].

This study uses primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the first data source to be selected and analyzed [4]. The researcher's primary data sources were teacher, students, and the learning process in the Online Khat Learning community. Meanwhile, the secondary data source is the second data source as a supporting data source [5]. The secondary data sources used were books or other literature related to the content of the research.

This study used observation, interview, and documentation techniques as data collection. Observation is one of the methods used to gain experience and knowledge based on what is seen and heard [6]. An interview collects data through verbal communication to

obtain information directly from the source [7]. Meanwhile, collecting data with documentation is the collection of data obtained through documents [8]. The researcher used Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis model with three steps in data analysis, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification [9].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Educational Technology and Arabic calligraphy

#### 3.1.1. Educational Technology

According to AECT (The Association for Education Communications & Technology), the definition of educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources [10].

The technology used in education aims to facilitate learning. Therefore, all existing technology and educational technology products produced must be selected and built based on an analysis of a particular learning environment's needs. In determining the technology to be used, one must look at learning as a system and think systemically. All elements and learning objectives must be determined to see it as a unit so that the learning objectives to be achieved can be met. With the right technology, the function of technology as a learning facility can improve learning performance for both teachers and students.

#### 3.1.2. Arabic Calligraphy and Its Learning Objectives

Etymologically, the word 'calligraphy' comes from Greek, namely *kallos*: beauty and *graphein*: to write, which means beautiful writing. In Arabic, it is usually called *khat*, which means the lines or strokes of the pen that form handwriting. It is also called *fann al-khat*, which is the art of refining writing or improving writing. Meanwhile, the word 'arabic' refers to a community originating from a Semitic family. This Semitic term is attributed to Sam, son of Noah. Its native region is called the Arabian Peninsula because rivers and sea surround this area. Thus, Arabic calligraphy is beautiful writing that originated and developed in the Arab region. In Arabic, it is called *al-khat al-'Araby*. There are also several other terms such as Islamic calligraphy, *fann al-khat al-'Araby*, or Qur'anic calligraphy, which refer to the same thing, namely Arabic Calligraphy [11].

In general, calligraphy learning is training someone to have the technical ability to write calligraphy well. Even learning calligraphy also improves or changes a person's character to become more refined, polite, and others [12].

It is also in line with Fauzi Salim Afifi, who detailed the objectives of learning Arabic calligraphy, namely: (1) Educating various abilities, including supervision, careful viewing, and refinement in all matters, (2) Forming character and habits such as discipline, order, cleanliness, patience, and persistence, (3) Obtaining hand skills when refining writing in practice, (4) Cultivating the ability to criticize and explore the sense of art after knowing the elements of beauty in good calligraphy, (5) Gaining a sense of pleasure and deepening a sense of peace in the soul when getting progress in practice, and (6) Increase interest in the soul of students to increase love, attention, nurture, and careers in calligraphy [13].

### **3.2. The Concepts Of Arabic Calligraphy Learning in the Online Khat Learning Community**

The concept of Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community refers to the Hamidi method (manhaj Hamidy). Manhaj Hamidy is a development of the classical method (taqlidi), which has long been used in learning Arabic calligraphy in Turkey and other countries. This manhaj was formulated by al-Ustadz Belaid Hamidi, the great calligrapher from Morocco. He received diplomas in five types of khot from the calligrapher's maestro (masyayikh) in Turkey. In this manhaj, the subject matter starts from the khat *riq'ah*, then *diwani*, *diwani jali*, *nasta'liq*, *naskhi* dan *tsuluts* [14]. The *Riq'ah* style is a beautiful line characterized by letter accuracy and extension. It is also characterized by ease and clarity. The line of *Riq'ah* is simple, easy to write, read, and not complex [15].

In learning Arabic calligraphy in the Online Khat Learning community, a student learns it in several stages, such as in the following types of khat *riq'ah* learning.

- (1) Imitating (taqlidiyah): Students learn the basics of writing Arabic letters starting from point writing techniques. At this stage, the material is taken from a textbook entitled *Durus wa Qawaa'id Khat Ar-Riq'ah* by Syeikh Yusuf Dzannun. Students are required to rewrite the material in the book.
- (2) Consolidation: namely, students are asked to write the *Surah Al-Insyirah* or *Al-Ashr*. This stage is a test to assess students' ability at the imitation stage and students' readiness to continue at the next stage.
- (3) Deep mastery: or commonly called the flexibility stage. Students are trained to recognize Arabic letters in detail and write them with great sensitivity, both

when the letter stands alone and connected to other letters. At this stage, students recognize various variations of letter writing. The main book used is the book *Khat Riq'ah* by Syeikh Muhammad Izzat.

- (4) *Tamrin*: namely, students write several letters from the Alquran or hadith. This stage is a test to assess the student's ability and readiness to continue at the next stage.
- (5) *Ijazah*, the final study type of khat. It becomes the identity of a student as a descendant of khat, which continues from teacher to teacher and so on, or so-called sanad. In this phase, the students write directly the *high syarifah* text, a hadith that describes the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, narrated by Imam Tirmidhi in the book *Asy-Syamaail al-Muhammadiyah* and several verses of the Alquran.

### **3.3. The Strategies Of Technology-Based Arabic Calligraphy Learning in the Online Khat Learning Community**

Technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning activities on the Online Khat Learning community use mobile internet applications in the form of social media WhatsApp and email. The use of mobile internet and social media applications is recognized as appropriate because Indonesians widely use it.

Indonesia is one of the most vulnerable mobile internet users in Southeast Asia, with 21% of mobile internet users in Indonesia being under 18 years of age, followed by 32% of users aged 18-24 years, 33% in the range aged 25-35 years, and most recently 14% of mobile internet users in Indonesia are in the age range of more than 35 years [16].

They were even based on Digital 2020 reports published by WeAreSocial and Hootsuite that digital, mobile, and social media have become an indispensable part of everyday life for people worldwide. More than 4.5 billion people now use the internet, while social media users have passed the 3.8 billion mark. Nearly 60 percent of the world's population is already online, and the latest trends suggest that more than half of the world's total population will use social media by the middle of this year. WhatsApp is ranked third after Facebook and YouTube [17].

Meanwhile, email is an easy-to-use social media because users only need to type in the name of the intended address and send text or images. Until now, many email facilities are provided free of charge by internet sites, both local and international, such as

www.telkom.net, www.yahoo.com, www.gmail.com, and others [18].

Therefore, WhatsApp and email are the most influential social media and are widely used by people in Indonesia, but their use does not cost much money. Thus, the two media become useful in learning in the online learning community. It follows one of the criteria for the use of appropriate technology in learning, namely the cost of technology. The device's cost must be such that the people in developing regions can afford it [19].

In general, the learning strategy in the Online Khat Learning community consists of the following steps.

- (1) Preparation, namely the teacher, prepares teaching materials and media.
- (2) The teacher sends and explains the material in the WhatsApp group. The material is accompanied by written explanations or instructions and several pictures.
- (3) Students are allowed to ask questions if the material explanation has not been understood.
- (4) Students write and send their work to the teacher's email
- (5) The teacher provides feedback on student work and sends it to the student's email.

Here it can be seen that email can be used as a medium to provide feedback to students. Students do not just send an email containing their work, but the teacher checks and sends back student assignments for better correction. So those students are indirectly given the motivation to rework their assignments that are not quite right. This way can trigger students' memory in solving problems. [20].

Each student's abilities are different, so the teaching material at each meeting is different from one student to another. This strategy is adopted from the learning system in Manhaj Hamidy. Learning calligraphy is not measured by the teacher's time unit but is measured by students' mastery of imitating predetermined material. If a student has completed the specified material and has mastered the rules well, then that is when he is deemed worthy of continuing on the next material.

In the online khat learning community, the WhatsApp group is used for khat material and used by the teacher to provide motivation, values, direction, and information about khat and learning.

### **3.4. Student Opinions on Online Khat Learning Community**

Based on online interviews with several students, researchers found that they were delighted with the

Arabic calligraphy learning strategy applied to the Online Khat Learning community. According to them, this program is outstanding and helps the continuity of khat learning continuously. This program is considered very suitable for the new era because there is no opportunity to learn face-to-face.

Students consider that this program has many advantages, including learning more details, getting motivation, and positive values that can improve spiritual aspects, understanding Arabic calligraphers who can be emulated, and m. Students' obstacles are the challenge or always to be consistent (istiqomah) and manage time well for studying because they have different backgrounds of work routines.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of this study, the researcher can conclude that (1) the concept of technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community was adapted from the Hamidy method, which consists of imitation (taqlidiyyah), stabilization with exams, in-depth mastery, *tamrin*, and *ijazah*. Technology-based Arabic calligraphy learning in the Online Khat Learning community, in general, uses WhatsApp and email media. It can be seen in the following steps: (a) preparation, (b) material explanation, the material can be in the form of videos, pictures, and explanations shared in the WhatsApp group, (c) questions and answers, (d) students write and send their works to the teacher's email, (e) the teacher provides feedback via email to each student. Because each student's abilities are different, the teaching material at each meeting is different from one student to another. (2) Students think that this community is outstanding because it is an alternative for learning Arabic calligraphy online in a new era that does not allow face-to-face learning. They are happy to study in this community because, in addition to getting Arabic calligraphy material, they also get material on motivation and values to form a robust Islamic calligrapher character.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

The author carried out all research stages, starting from the formulation of topics, research problems, research frameworks, theory, data collection, data analysis, and conclusions.

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