



Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al Qur'an dan Tafsir

ISSN 1907-7246 E-ISSN 2502-6402

Tersedia online di <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Hermeneutik/index>

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v17i2.18858>

Lecturers' View towards the Role of English in the Spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*

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Abstract

Lecturers' view towards the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*. This study aimed at describing and investigating the beliefs of lecturers about the role of English in spreading *Tafsir Nusantara*. This research is descriptive qualitative study. There are six lecturers who were involved as participants in this study. In collecting the data, the researcher used questionnaires and brief interviews to find out what beliefs the lecturers have about the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*. From the research data, researcher found various assumptions about the role of English in spreading *Tafsir Nusantara* which showed that English has an important role in the spread or introducing *Tafsir Nusantara* to the global world. The findings of this research can be a positive contribution in the development of *Tafsir Nusantara*.

Keywords: *Tafsir Nusantara*, Lecturers, Role Of English, View.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menginvestigasi pandangan dosen tentang peran bahasa Inggris dalam penyebaran *Tafsir Nusantara*. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Ada enam dosen yang terlibat sebagai partisipan dalam penelitian ini. Dalam mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan questionnaire dan wawancara singkat untuk mengetahui keyakinan apa yang dimiliki para dosen tentang peran bahasa Inggris dalam menyebarkan *Tafsir Nusantara*. Dari data penelitian tersebut, peneliti menemukan berbagai asumsi tentang peran bahasa Inggris dalam menyebarkan *Tafsir Nusantara* yang menunjukkan pentingnya peran bahasa Inggris dalam penyebaran dan pengenalan *Tafsir Nusantara*. Temuan penelitian ini dapat menjadi kontribusi positif dalam pengembangan *Tafsir Nusantara*.

Kata kunci: *Tafsir Nusantara*, Dosen, Peran Bahasa Inggris, Persepsi.

Introduction

Tafsir Nusantara has a unique history of development. The development of this interpretation is inseparable from the influence of language, culture, and socio-cultural which is very diverse (Faiqoh, 2018). *Tafsir Nusantara* has existed since the 16th century with evidence of the discovery of the book of interpretations of surah *Al-Kahf*, although until now it is not known who the author was. In the 17th century (1675 AD) there was also found a complete interpretation of 30 *Juzu'* by KH. Abd. Al-Ra'uf al-Singkili with the title *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafidh* which made him known as an Indonesian Malay *Mufassir* who had successfully completed the complete interpretation of the Qur'an 30 *Juz* (Abdullah & Masduki, 2017; Faiqoh, 2018; Fikri Ys, 2021).

Then in the 19th century, a book of interpretation entitled *Kitab Fars'idul Qur'an* was found which was written using the Malay-Jawi language. In the same century, there also appeared an interpretation entitled *Tafsir Munir li Ma'ālim at-Tanzil* written by Muhammad Nawawi al-Bantani (1813-1879 AD) a native Indonesian scholar (Parhani, 2013). The concept of his interpretation was written in Arabic because he wrote while

living in the city of Makkah and it was completed on Wednesday 5 *Rabi'ul Akhir* 1305 H.

In the Archipelago region, the first tafsir written and translated into Indonesian is tafsir written by Mahmud Yunus entitled *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* at the beginning of the 20th century. This book of interpretation was written in 1938 gradually, followed by Ilyas Muhammad Ali and H. M. Kasim Bakry. At the same time there also appeared a book of interpretation written by A. Hassan entitled *Al-Furqan Tafsir Al-Qur'an*. Then *Tafsir al-Qur'an An-Nur* written by T.M. Hasbi Ash-Shiddiqiey in 1956 AD. Furthermore, there appeared the book of *Tafsir Al-Ibriz* written in Javanese with Arabic *pegon* by KH. Bisri Mustofa in 1960 AD. Thereafter also appeared the book of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* which was written in full as many as 30 *Juzu'* by Hamka using Indonesian in 1967 AD. There was also a Javanese-language tafsir entitled *Tafsir al-Hudā* in 1972 AD, written by Bakri Shahid (Gusmian, 2015).

Then in the 21st century, many new interpretations have emerged such as Prof. Dr. M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir al-Misbah*. As for the contemporary era, the interpretation of the Qur'an was officially initiated by the Indonesian government under the auspices and direction of the Ministry of Religion is a thematic work of interpretation. It was issued by *Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an* Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia with the title "The Qur'an and Its Interpretation" (Faiqoh, 2018). The diversity of scripts and languages used by the *mufassir* of the Qur'an in the archipelago, not only gives rise to a hieracia and a certain purpose in grounding the values contained in the Qur'an. But it also reflects on the existence of a form of distinctiveness and authorship of the socio-cultural space in which the interpretation is written.

The interpretation of the Qur'an, which was written using the concept of diverse scripts and languages, proves the concern of the Nusantara scholars for the *pribumization* of the values contained in the holy verses of the Qur'an in the general public, the place where the interpretation was written (Fikri Ys, 2021). However, at a certain level, in the Indonesian interpretation environment, even the interpretation model that uses a certain language, also in the end cannot avoid the nature of its limitations. This is because the Nusantara interpretation works written in a certain

language are only easy to understand specifically by the Muslim community who use that language. Thus, more efforts need to be made to introduce the works of Nusantara scholars so that their benefits are not only enjoyed by certain circles. One of them is by translating and spreading the views and thoughts of Indonesian scholars using English.

Studies of *Tafsir Nusantara* have been carried out by many previous researchers. These studies focused a lot on the history of the *Tafsir Nusantara* which traces the roots of the origin of the discovery of interpretation in Indonesia (Ari, 2019; Komarudin et al., 2018; Said, 2018), characteristics of the manuscripts of the *Tafsir Nusantara* (Abdullah & Masduki, 2017) locality of *Tafsir Nusantara* (Zaiyadi, 2018) and thematic studies in the *Tafsir Nusantara*. From the studies of previous researchers, it is clear that the difference with this study focuses on the views of lecturers about the importance of English to promote the *Tafsir Nusantara* to the world.

Relevant Theory

The Concept of Tafsir Nusantara

In identifying the interpretation of the Qur'an in the archipelago, at least according to Gusmian (2013), there are five things that must be considered: First, the purpose and function of writing interpretation, as well as its diverse practices. Second, the region of the Archipelago where it appeared. Third, the forms of interpretive works are diverse, both in the use of writing techniques, languages, and scripts. Included in this point is the completeness of the interpretation written because the works of interpretation that have been produced by the *mufassir* are not always complete 30 *juz*. Some *mufassir* write partially and based on a specific theme. Fourth, the figures of the archipelago who produced the work. Fifth, the socio-cultural basis in the process of writing interpretations and their practices. If concocted in a definition, *Tafsir Nusantara*, for Gusmian, can be interpreted as an interpretation of the Qur'an that is not only written, but also practiced (living interpretation) in the five reviews above. He himself mentioned four forms of *Tafsir Nusantara*: (1) Manuscripts, (2) Print (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.), (3) Digital (e-books, digital pages, etc.), and (4) Oral (offline/online recitation).

The early tradition of qur'anic interpretation in the archipelago, as widely informed by researchers such as Riddell, A.H. Johns, Salman Harun, Azyumardi Azra, Ervan Nurtawab and others states that around the XVII century AD there has been found the earliest evidence in the archipelago after more than 300 years since the Nusantara Muslim community began to manifest itself in political power, namely in Cambridge which contains the interpretation of *surat al-Kahfi*. The study of the Qur'an was pioneered by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkīlī who wrote a book entitled *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*. It was these two works that became the embryonic basis for writing qur'anic interpretations in southeast Asia. This pioneering effort was then followed by Shaykh Nawāwī al-Bantānī, Munawar Khalil, A. Hasan Bandung, Mahmud Yunus, Oemar Bakri, Hasbi Ash-Shiddiqy, Hamka, H. Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin Hs, Kasim Bakri (Gusmian, 2015).

In regional languages, this effort was continued by the Islamic Progress of Yogyakarta, Bisyri Muṣṭahafa Rembang, R. Muhammad Adnan, and Bakri Shahid. These efforts are even more seriously taken by the Government of Indonesia through translation projects. In addition, on the proposal of the Deliberation on the work of the Qur'an Scholars to XV (March 23-24, 1989), it was perfected by the center for research and development of Religious Literature with the *Lajnah Pentashih* of the Qur'an. Howard M. Federspiel in his research, more or less called 48 popular interpretations in Indonesia, although it still needs to be criticized what restrictions he considers to be works of interpretation.

Tafsir Nusantara has its own style and typology. The style and typology of the interpretation of the archipelago is colored a lot with local Islam, both cultural and the conditions when the verses of the Qur'an are interpreted by the interpreter. The typology and style of interpretation a la Nusantara is certainly slightly different from the interpretation that has been known so far. For example, classical interpretation has its own characteristics compared to modern interpretations. Likewise, the interpretation of the archipelago will be slightly different in color from the model of interpretation produced by interpreters from the Middle East. This is what is interesting about the typical interpretation of the archipelago style.

In addition, the style and typology of the interpretation of the archipelago cannot be separated from the transmission of the *hijaz*, *Azhari*, and Western scholarly traditions of interpretation. The *hijaz* here is a transmission of the way of writing, thinking and tradition of interpretation that developed in both Makkah and Medina. Then, the interpretation of the archipelago also has a strong connection and attachment to the mindset of the Egyptian al-Azhar which gave birth to many Indonesian scholars who indirectly contributed their thoughts in spawning the archipelago interpretation work. These two sides were more condensed in the XVI century to the beginning of the XX century. In addition to these two sides, there is also another side that is no less important, namely the ideas and thoughts of both Indonesian Muslim scholars studying in the West and Western scholars themselves who enliven research and analysis on the interpretation of the archipelago. From all of these sides, what is not important is the local wisdom side of local scholars both related to the social and cultural affairs of the archipelago and the original upbringing scholars of the archipelago which certainly have their own pattern compared to the scientific transmission that learns from Hijazi, *Azhari* and the West.

The Role of English in Information Dissemination

For a long time, mastery of English has become a knowledge that needs to be learned by Indonesians. Starting from the 60's until now, English lessons have become subjects that are no less prestige than other lessons such as Mathematics and Science. The magnitude of the need to learn English cannot be separated from the factors of geography, communication, access to information which are the three reasons that make sense behind the need to learn English, especially for Indonesians.

First, Indonesia is surrounded by countries where most of the population uses English as the first or second language. Those countries are Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea. Geographical factors are the first reason why Indonesians need to learn English. The second and most common reason, English needs to be studied is due to its widespread use as the language of international communication. In order to be able to communicate with people of different cultural and state backgrounds, English is the main choice that is often used in communicating. An easy-to-see example is in the world of tourism. Tourists who travel in foreign countries usually use English to be able to communicate with the native

citizens they visit. Tourism, who does not use English as his mother tongue, also chose English as his lingua franca.

Third, the information that circulates in this world is mostly published in English. Many books are published in English. It doesn't matter who published it, which is certain to gain a wide market many publishers publish readings in English. Scientific books were also published in English. Popular websites in the internet world use English more as an introduction to articles in them, just look at Yahoo, Google, Wikipedia, Amazon, YouTube, and Reuters. Departing from these reasons, he was encouraged to know more about the role of English in life in the world.

Method

Method used in this study is a case study. Data gained from the field was then analyzed descriptive qualitatively. A qualitative case study calls for intensive, holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon in order to investigate how the subject of the study takes role in the real world. Questionnaire and a brief interview were conducted to compile a valid data in which one might clarify the other on gaining a trustable data. Table 1 is a summary of participants' demographic information.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

No	Participant	Age	Sex
1	L1	33	M
2	L2	24	M
3	L3	30	M
4	L4	42	F
5	L5	39	F
6	L6	37	F

Findings and Discussions

Based on the data got from online questionnaire provided by Google which was distributed to some lecturers in an Islamic state institution in Central Java, it was found some findings related to the lecturers' view toward answering the two research statements that were proposed in the beginning of this study. They are the lecturers' view towards *Tafsir Nusantara* and their view towards the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*.

Dealing with the lecturers' view towards *Tafsir Nusantara*, there are four findings based on the data. They are *Tafsir Nusantara* is interpretation based on the geographical area of the archipelago, it accommodates local wisdom, it was written by Ulama Nusantara, and it was written in the language according to the author's nasal. According to the lecturers' view, one of the characteristics of *Tafsir Nusantara* is in the beginning it concerned more to *fiqh* and *sufism* centric, subsequently influenced by modern interpretations. It is inclined to explore local issues and use the local language. The lecturers were also proposed a question dealing with the *contribution* of *Tafsir Nusantara* to the people of Indonesia. Their views on it are explained as follows. *Tafsir Nusantara* can be an early bridge to a more contextual and relevant modern interpretation of Indonesia. It also makes easier for Indonesians to understand the interpretation of the Qur'an because it transforming the wisdom of local cultural arts, and it is more moderate.

Challenges in promoting *Tafsir Nusantara* to the global world was also one of discussion in this research. It was found seven challenges based on the lecturers' view. They are the coverage is still local, lack of development of interpretation studies, local languages are less globally acceptable, manuscripts of *Tafsir Nusantara* are sometimes not easily accessible due to weathered conditions or unclear existence, and research on manuscripts of *Tafsir Nusantara* takes a long time, thus reducing research interest in this field.

In correlation with the lecturers' view towards the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*, they were also proposed four questions. The first is related to the view on the role of English in the dissemination of information and science. There are three points as the findings, they are: English as an international language plays a major role in the dissemination of information and science, as a condition of progress in the midst of global and digital civilization, and as a medium for promoting the interpretation of the Archipelago in the global arena in the context of language transfer media, interpretation explanations.

Then, dealing with the views on the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*. Most of the participants explained that English can be a media and language of instruction for promoting *Tafsir Nusantara* in the global arena. It can be in the

context of language transfer media, interpretation explanations, and so on. However, one of them see that English is less effective for the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*. It was because the strategies were not yet maxed out.

Kinds of media used to introduce *Tafsir Nusantara* to the global world based on the participants view are: (1) reputable scientific article writing; (2) international cooperation of universities in interpretation research in the archipelago; (3) periodic reporting in online media; (4) study of *Tafsir Nusantara* through scientific media: journals, books; (5) study of *Tafsir Nusantara* through social media: YouTube, Instagram, Tik-Tok; (6) international conferences; (7) databases catalogs of international and national libraries; (8) expo of manuscripts of local interpretation in international forums; (9) book review /kitab *Tafsir Nusantara* in international publications etc.; (10) e-books and digitization.

Challenges in promoting *Tafsir Nusantara* to the global world through English-language communication media are: (1) there are not many human resources who have good English skills; (2) visualizations and impressions of apologetic interpretations need to be given a fresh touch, such as interpretations in the form of images, videos, podcasts, and most interpretation activists do not understand the media and English, while those who speak English are more dominant to Arabic centric; (3) the global world is not familiar with the figure of the author of the interpretation of the archipelago, so it needs to be introduced using English media; (4) not all tafsir are able to be represented in the English, because the Arabic is very rich in meaning and context; (5) language transfer need high costs; (6) not all English experts truly understand the structure of Arabic; (7) network and understanding of ordinary people (English users) who are just learning to interpret; (8) mastery of the language (local language and English), that is to say before conveying/explaining the content of the interpretation of the archipelago, moreover must first understand the content, and which will then be processed in English to the audience.

In the globalized world, English is used as a tool for international communication (Chang, 2011). The social, political, and economic well-being of the people living in a particular geographic area is significantly influenced by language. Language functions paralleled with cultural embodiment led to a person's depth of

reflection, which extends beyond life's basic necessities to include things like the pursuit of knowledge, education, and cooperation among multiethnic societies. (Danladi, 2013).

Rao (2019) states that influence of the English language on the internet has been discussed in his study, and it has been demonstrated that English is a widely used language for websites. This study supports the participants' view toward English can be a media and language of instruction for promoting Tafsir Nusantara in the global arena, especially via internet.

Dealing with the contribution of Tafsir Nusantara for Indonesia people, Has (2016) even studied the role of Tafsir Nusantara for the world. It was a methodological analysis of M. Quraish Shihab's Tafsir al-Misbah. His result study showed that *Tafsir al-Misbah* tends to be literary in the style of social culture for the reason that this pattern. It is a pattern of interpretation that explains the instructions of verses of the Qur'an that are directly related to people's lives, as well as efforts to overcome their diseases or problems based on the instructions of the verses by putting forward these instructions in easy language understandable yet beautiful to be heard.

Conclusion

The researcher drew some conclusion related to the lecturers' view toward the role of English in the spread of *Tafsir Nusantara*. It was found that lecturers have a positive perspective on it. English has an important role in the spread or introducing *Tafsir Nusantara* to the global world. However, it is still not maxed out. Therefore, some strategies can be used to maximize the efforts and solve some challenges that might be appeared during both in the preparation and the process.

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