



Alfiyah Memorization Tradition as Learning Evaluation and Qiroaatul Kutub Competency Strengthening at MA TBS Kudus

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Abstract:

This study aims to describe and analyze the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah by Ibn Malik as a learning assessment system and its role in strengthening qiraatul kutub competencies at MA Tasywiquth Thullab Salafiyah in Kudus. Unlike prior studies that position Alfiyah memorization primarily as a moral-education or general grammar-learning practice, this study highlights its novelty in demonstrating how the tradition has been institutionally transformed into a formal assessment instrument evidenced by a Madrasah Decree that ties memorization achievement to student promotion and graduation criteria. This study employs a qualitative approach using field research methods. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving the madrasah principal, teachers, and students. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, while data validity was tested using source and method triangulation techniques. at MA TBS Kudus is carried out systematically and continuously as part of the learning assessment process, formalized through institutional policy that makes memorization a prerequisite for academic advancement. Beyond its function as an assessment tool, the findings show that Alfiyah memorization strengthens qiraatul kutub competency by improving students' accuracy in determining grammatical case (i'rab), understanding sentence structure, and explaining relationships between sentence components-competencies that directly translate into more fluent and accurate reading of unvocalized classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning). Thus, this study contributes empirical evidence that a classical memorization tradition, when formally embedded into institutional assessment policy, can function as an effective and sustainable mechanism for developing pesantren-based Arabic literacy competencies.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Learning assessment is a crucial part of the educational process because it serves to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. In the context of Islamic education, assessment evaluates not only knowledge but also students' attitudes and skills (Sari, 2018). Various Islamic educational institutions have developed assessment models tailored to their respective characteristics and academic cultures. Therefore, assessment serves as a vital tool for determining the effectiveness of the learning process and as a basis for educational decision making (Rohman, 2020).

Conceptually, evaluation is a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information used as the basis for educational decision-making. According to Suharsimi Arikunto, evaluation is the activity of gathering information about the performance of a program, which is then used as the basis for determining future policies (Rohman, 2020). In line with this view, Mehrens and Lehmann explain that evaluation is the process of planning, acquiring, and providing the information needed to determine various decision alternatives (Sawaluddin, 2018). Thus, evaluation serves not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as an instrument for improving and developing the quality of education.

In educational practice, evaluation can take various forms, including diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation. Diagnostic evaluation identifies students' initial abilities before instruction begins; formative evaluation monitors students' progress and provides ongoing feedback during the learning process; summative evaluation determines the overall level of students' competency achievement at the end of a learning program (Fatmawati Putri Astuti & Mika Edison, 2026). This diversity of assessment forms indicates that every educational institution has the freedom to develop an assessment model aligned with its own characteristics and academic culture including institutions that rely on non-conventional, tradition-based forms of evaluation, such as pesantren.

Within pesantren-based Islamic education, memorization has long been studied as a learning practice, but the literature on it has developed along two largely separate tracks. The first track treats memorization of texts such as the Nadzom Alfiyah by Ibn Malik primarily as a pedagogical and moral-formation strategy (Muhid et al., 2018) examine how memorizing the Alfiyah cultivates moral values (Aditya Kurniawan Saleh, 2025) frames it as a strategy for learning nahwu and instilling discipline. The second track quantifies its instructional payoff (Maftukhin, 2026) reports a statistical correlation between Alfiyah memorization and students' understanding of qawaid nahwiyah. Both tracks illuminate why memorization matters pedagogically, but neither examines memorization as a formal, institutionally binding assessment instrument in its own right.

A parallel and equally relevant body of work concerns the evaluation of memorization-based programs more broadly. Studies applying structured evaluation models — such as the Discrepancy-model evaluation of a Tahfiz Qur'an program (Tawakkal et al., 2025) and evaluations of tahfiz programs in secondary schools using the CIPP model frameworks. However, this evaluative lens has rarely been extended to Arabic-grammar memorization traditions like the Alfiyah, and none of these studies trace how a memorization tradition becomes embedded in binding institutional policy, such as a decree linking memorization achievement to grade promotion or graduation.

A third relevant strand concerns qiraatul kutub itself the ability to read, understand, and analyze classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning). Research in this area has largely focused on

classroom methods and evaluation strategies for building this competency, such as the "Kitab Demonstration" strategy used as a final evaluation tool in nahwu learning to achieve international-level competency in reading kitab kuning (Maarif & Rochmah, 2018). This study establishes qiraatul kutub as a measurable, evaluable outcome but does not connect it back to a specific memorization-based assessment mechanism as its structural input that is, it examines the output (reading competency) and its evaluation method without examining the institutionalized memorization process that produces it.

Taken together, these three literatures leave a specific gap: research on Alfiyah memorization has bifurcated into pedagogical/moral studies and quantitative correlational studies; research on memorization-based assessment has developed formal evaluation frameworks without applying them to grammar-memorization traditions; and research on qiraatul kutub has documented instructional methods without linking them back to an institutionalized assessment mechanism. What remains unexamined is how a classical memorization tradition, once formalized as institutional assessment policy, functions as the mechanism that produces qiraatul kutub competency.

MA Tasywiquth Thullab Salafiyah (TBS) Kudus offers a strategic case for closing this gap. It is an educational institution that integrates the formal education system with pesantren traditions, and one of its distinctive practices the memorization of the Nadzom Alfiyah by Ibn Malik has evolved from an academic practice for instilling a love of nahwu into a component of the institution's formal learning assessment system. The specific problem this study addresses is how this memorization tradition has been formalized into a binding institutional assessment mechanism at MA TBS Kudus, and how that institutionalized mechanism contributes to strengthening students' qiraatul kutub competency. The originality of this study lies in these two-dimensions institutional assessment policy and qiraatul kutub outcomes which prior studies on Alfiyah memorization, pesantren-based assessment, and qiraatul kutub have, until now, examined only separately.



Method (منهج)

This study employs a qualitative approach using field research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibn Malik as a learning evaluation system, as well as its contribution to strengthening qiraatul kutub competencies at MA TBS Kudus. Through this approach, the researcher can obtain a comprehensive and picture of the process of implementing the memorization tradition, the meanings contained within it, and its implications for student learning (Inayah et al., 2025).

The research subjects consisted of the madrasah principal, teachers in charge of subjects related to the study of classical Islamic texts and Arabic grammar, as well as students participating in the Nadzom Alfiyah memorization program. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they possess the knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the practice of the Alfiyah memorization tradition within the madrasah setting. Through this technique, the data collected is expected to provide an in-depth and accurate portrayal of the reality of the memorization tradition's implementation (Ali, 2020).

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, the researcher applied a triangulation strategy that included source, technique, and time triangulation, as well as peer debriefing (Rahayu & Rindrayani, 2025). In addition, observations were conducted consistently to identify significant elements in the learning process. All research procedures were carried out

systematically through four main phases: the pre-field stage, fieldwork, data analysis, and the preparation of the final report in accordance with applicable scientific principles.

Result (نتائج)

The Tradition of Memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah as a Learning Evaluation System

This study found that the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah by Ibn Malik at the Tasywiquth Thullab Salafiyah (TBS) Islamic High School in Kudus has undergone a functional transformation from a pesantren learning tradition into a structured learning evaluation system integrated into the madrasah's academic policies. This finding indicates that the memorization of the Alfiyah is no longer positioned as a preparatory activity prior to learning, as it was during the madrasah's early years, but has evolved into an assessment tool used to measure students' mastery of Arabic grammar.

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it is known that the tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah has been practiced since the founding of MA TBS Kudus in 1928, on the initiative of KH. Nur Cudlrin, KH. Abdul Jalil, and KH. Abdul Muhith. In the early stages of its implementation, this tradition served as an academic practice aimed at instilling a love for the science of nahwu and fostering discipline in students' learning. However, as the educational system in the madrasah evolved, the tradition's role expanded, becoming an integral part of the learning assessment system (K. Syafi'i, 2026).

These findings were obtained through observations of learning activities, interviews with the madrasah principal, subject teachers, and students, as well as documentation of the implementation of the Alfiyah memorization program at MA TBS Kudus.

Based on the results of field observations and interviews, the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah at MA TBS Kudus has become part of an academic culture passed down from generation to generation. Its implementation is carried out systematically through the processes of memorization, review (*muraja'ah*), recitation of memorized material, and periodic testing. This tradition not only serves as a medium for learning Arabic grammar (*nahwu*), but is also an integral part of the learning evaluation system implemented by the madrasah (K. Syafi'i, 2026). The existence of this tradition demonstrates that learning evaluation in a pesantren educational setting is not always carried out in the form of written tests as is commonly practiced in formal education but can also be achieved through the mastery of academic competencies that are continuously assessed via memorization and academic practice (Arif Murtandho, 2026).

This study also found that the memorization evaluation process was systematically designed through planning that involved teachers and madrasah officials. This planning includes setting memorization targets for each grade level, dividing the verses that students must master, scheduling memorization recitations, and developing assessment indicators that cover the aspects of fluency in recitation, accuracy of pronunciation, comprehension of meaning, and the ability to apply grammatical rules in the study of classical Islamic texts. Thus, evaluation is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects such as memorization ability but also assesses students' level of conceptual understanding and their ability to apply what they have learned.

Further findings indicate that the evaluation process is conducted on an ongoing basis through the stages of memorization, *muraja'ah*, recitation of memorized material to the teacher, and periodic testing. This continuous evaluation model allows teachers to monitor students' progress while providing timely feedback on any shortcomings identified during the learning process. Therefore, memorizing the Alfiyah is not viewed as the ultimate goal of learning, but rather as a means to build a deep and sustainable mastery of Arabic grammar.

The most significant finding of this study is that the tradition of memorizing the Alfiah holds both academic and institutional significance. This is evidenced by the existence of a Madrasah Decree (SK) that stipulates the achievement of memorization targets as one of the requirements for students to advance to the next grade and graduate. Consequently, students who have not met the memorization targets cannot be promoted to the next grade or graduate. This finding indicates that the tradition of memorizing the Alfiah at MA TBS Kudus has evolved into an authentic assessment tool that not only measures memorization achievement but also ensures the quality of students' mastery of Arabic grammar through a systematic, ongoing, and institutionally legitimate assessment mechanism.

Based on the Decision Letter of the Principal of MA TBS Kudus No. 023/MA-TBS/SK/V/2025 regarding the Criteria for Promotion and Graduation, students' promotion and graduation are determined based on their memorization performance, as indicated in the documents we have obtained from the MA TBS Kudus archives.

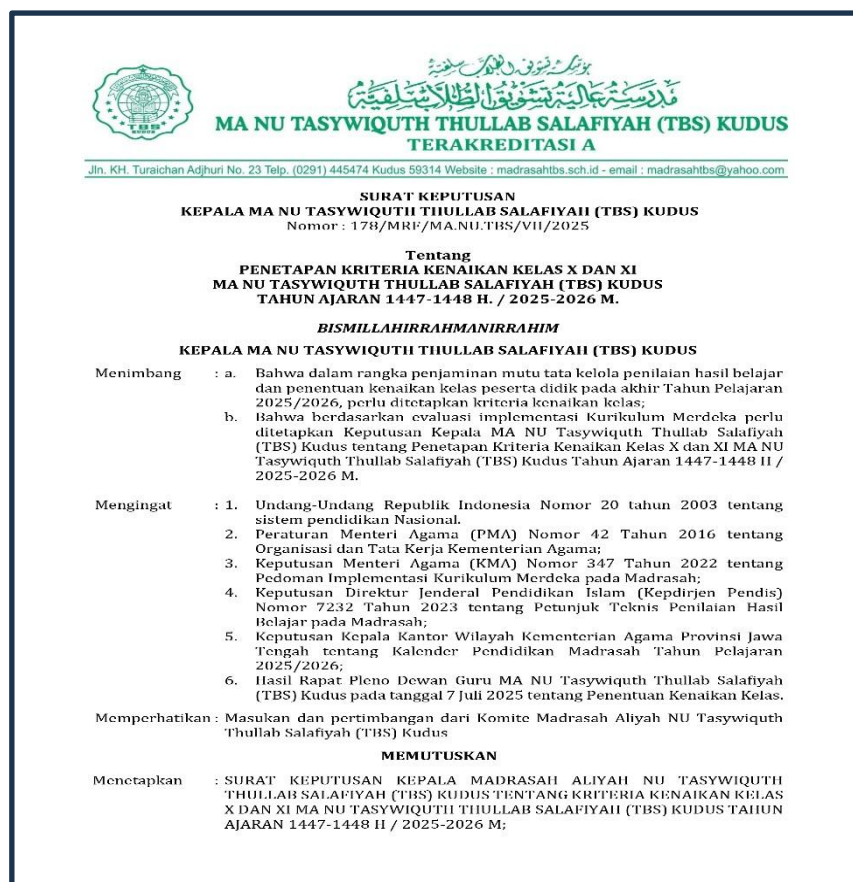


Figure 1: Decree on Student Promotion and Graduation (MA TBS Kudus, 2026)

Based on the contents of this decision, students are required to complete the memorization targets corresponding to their grade level as set by the madrasah. Achievement of these targets is assessed through a process of memorization recitation and verification by the subject teacher based on predetermined indicators. If a student has not achieved the required memorization target, then that student has not met one of the criteria for grade promotion as stipulated in the madrasah's academic policy.

The existence of this decree also reinforces research findings that the tradition of memorizing Ibn Malik's Nadzom Alfiah has transformed into a binding mechanism for evaluating learning. What was originally a tradition serving as an academic practice has now become part of the assessment standards that determine students' success in completing their

education at MA TBS Kudus. Therefore, the decree serves not only as an administrative regulation but also as empirical evidence that memorization-based learning assessment has been institutionalized within the madrasah's academic governance.

The Role of the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik Memorization Tradition in Strengthening Qiraatul Kutub Competencies at MA TBS Kudus

This study found that the tradition of memorizing Ibn Malik's Alfiyah serves as the primary foundation for strengthening students' Qira'atul Kutub competencies at the Tasywiquth Thullab Salafiyah (TBS) Islamic High School in Kudus. These findings indicate that the memorization of the Alfiyah is not only aimed at mastering the verses of the poem but also serves as a means of internalizing the rules of Arabic grammar, which form the basis for understanding and reading Arabic texts without vowel marks (*kitab kuning*).

In addition to serving as an assessment tool, the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah by Ibn Malik also plays a crucial role in strengthening students' proficiency in qiraatul kutub. This tradition is viewed not merely as a memorization activity, but as a process of internalizing the rules of nahwu, which form the foundation for reading, understanding, and analyzing classical Islamic texts. Mr. Mohamad Abdurrouf, Lc., M.A., a nahwu teacher, explained that nahwu instruction in the classroom is essentially an application of the memorization material that students have already mastered (Mohamad Abdurrouf, 2026).

This study also found that the tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah contributes to improving students' accuracy in determining the grammatical case (*i'rab*) of words, understanding sentence structure, and explaining the relationships between sentence components in Arabic texts. Mastery of these rules enables students to read classical Arabic texts more fluently and accurately. This indicates that the success of Qira'atul Kutub is influenced not only by the intensity of reading practice but also by the mastery of grammatical rules acquired through the tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah.

This enhancement of competencies was also showcased through an open recitation exam of the Nadzom Alfiyah, attended by homeroom teachers, all faculty members, students, and parents, as a demonstration that the tradition of memorization remains relevant and worthy of cultivation in this modern age.



Figure 2: Open Alfiyah Recitation Exam

Based on these findings, this study concludes that the primary role of the tradition of memorizing Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik at MA TBS Kudus is not only as a means of preserving the pesantren's scholarly tradition but also as a learning model that strengthens Qira'atul Kutub

competencies through the integration of memorization, an understanding of nahwu rules, and direct application in reading *kitab kuning*. These findings indicate that the memorization tradition serves a strategic pedagogical function in producing students who are capable of systematically reading, understanding, and explaining classical Arabic texts.

The principal, Mr. Syafi'i, emphasized that the essence of memorization is not merely sound or pronunciation without understanding, but rather the foundation for reading unvocalized classical Islamic texts (*gundul*). The competency in "qiraatul kutub" at MA TBS Kudus is understood as the students' ability to accurately read unvoweled Arabic texts, understand the grammatical structure, determine the grammatical function (*i'rab*) of words within a sentence, and explain the text's meaning (K. Syafi'i, 2026). Mastery of Arabic grammar (*nahwu*) is an inseparable prerequisite for this competency; therefore, memorizing the "Nadzom Alfiyah" is used as one of the primary means to strengthen it. This was emphasized by the Deputy Head of Curriculum, Mr. Arif Murtandho, S.Ag., M.Pd (Arif Murtandho, 2026).

This support is reflected in a curriculum that allocates a significant portion to local Islamic boarding school content, as explained by the Deputy Head of Curriculum below, and is also reflected in the list of religious text courses or local content at MA TBS Kudus.

Classroom observations reinforce these findings: students who have a solid grasp of the Alfiyah tend to find it easier to determine *i'rab*, understand sentence structure, and participate more actively in scripture reading and class discussions. The numerous achievements of MA TBS Kudus in the field of qiraatul kutub indicate that the madrasah takes this system seriously, not only requiring memorization but also reading, understanding, and applying the book's content in real life.

Cultural, Social, and Institutional Factors in the Tradition of Memorizing the Alfiyah by Ibn Malik

This study found that the continuity of the tradition of memorizing Ibn Malik's Nadzom Alfiyah at the Tasywiquth Thullab Salafiyah (TBS) Islamic High School in Kudus is influenced by the synergy between cultural, social, and institutional factors that mutually reinforce one another in shaping the madrasah's academic culture. These findings indicate that the success of the memorization tradition is determined not only by the individual abilities of the students but also by the value system, social interactions, and institutional policies that support its sustainable implementation.

From a cultural perspective, the study found that the tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah is part of the pesantren's scholarly heritage that has been preserved since the founding of MA TBS Kudus in 1928. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation as part of the madrasah's academic identity and as a means of preserving the study of Arabic grammar (*nahwu*). The culture of memorization, review (*muraja'ah*), reciting memorized material, and respect for teachers (*ta'dzim*) are values internalized by students through consistent practice in the learning process. Thus, the tradition of memorization serves not only as a learning method but also as a mechanism for passing down the pesantren's scholarly culture. This finding aligns with studies on pesantren culture that position the tradition of studying classical texts as a cultural identity continuously reproduced through values, customs, and scholarly authority.

From a social perspective, the study found that the continuity of the memorization tradition is reinforced by intensive interaction between teachers and students, as well as support from the madrasah environment. The process of *muraja'ah*, reciting memorized material, teacher guidance, and peer motivation among students foster a collaborative learning culture. As explained by the school principal, these relationships not only strengthen mastery of memorization but also foster a sense of responsibility, discipline, and academic solidarity in

achieving memorization goals (K. Syafi'i, 2026). The memorization tradition thus serves as a means of building social capital that strengthens students' learning processes. This finding aligns with research showing that pesantren traditions develop through social interaction, respect for teachers, and the formation of learning communities that support successful learning.

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From an institutional perspective, the madrasah provides full support through the establishment of programs, achievement targets for each level, submission schedules, guidance teachers, and periodic evaluations. As stated by the principal, the tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah has been in place for a long time and is an integral part of the educational culture at MA TBS Kudus. The madrasah provides support through the establishment of memorization programs, achievement targets for each level, submission schedules, and periodic evaluations. The madrasah also assigns instructors tasked with monitoring students' memorization progress (K. Syafi'i, 2026)

From a cultural perspective, this tradition derives its value from the legacy of the masyayikh who founded the madrasah who believed that mastery of the Alfiyah was the key to understanding the classical Islamic texts and thus the tradition continues to be upheld as part of the madrasah's academic identity, as stated by the Vice Principal for Curriculum. The tradition of memorizing the Alfiyah at TBS is not a new program but has long been a cultural practice passed down by the masyayikh. To this day, this value is still upheld by both teachers and students (Arif Murtandho, 2026).

Teachers play a central role in facilitating the interaction among these three factors. They act not only as instructors but also as mentors, supervisors, and role models in fostering an academic culture rooted in pesantren traditions, as explained by the homeroom teacher who emphasized that teachers serve as the primary benchmark for learning, with the homeroom teacher's role being particularly prominent in this regard. As a parent-figure at school, the homeroom teacher always ensures that students are able to complete their memorization and maintain an optimistic attitude when facing exams (Abdul Kholiq, 2026)



Figure 3: A teacher listening to students recite their memorized material and guiding them

Based on these three factors, this study found that the continuity of the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik at MA TBS Kudus is sustained through the integration of pesantren culture, social support from the madrasah community, and institutional legitimacy. The integration of these three factors enables the memorization tradition to endure as

a distinctive feature of the madrasah while also serving as an instrument for developing students' scholarly competencies, character, and academic culture. Thus, this study confirms that the existence of the memorization tradition depends not only on cultural inheritance but also on the strengthening of social systems and institutional policies that consistently support its implementation.



Discussion (مناقشة)

Rather than treating memorization and assessment as two separate functions that happen to coexist, this finding suggests a more fundamental reconfiguration of what counts as evidence of learning within the pesantren tradition: the Alfiyah recitation itself becomes the unit of measurement, replacing the written test as the primary evidentiary basis for promotion decisions. This distinguishes the present case from Tyler's original goal-oriented model, which was designed around measurable behavioral objectives assessed through standardized instruments here, the 'instrument' is an oral, memorization-based performance embedded in a centuries-old pedagogical ritual, raising the question of whether Tyler's framework adequately captures the validity and reliability concerns specific to oral, tradition-based assessment.

The Tradition of Memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik as a Learning Evaluation System at MA TBS Kudus

The research findings indicate that the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibn Malik at MA TBS Kudus has undergone a transformation from merely a pesantren scholarly tradition into a structured, sustainable, and integrated learning evaluation system aligned with the learning objectives of qiraatul kutub. This evaluation system differs from conventional evaluation because it not only measures mastery of the material but also tests students' readiness to apply grammatical rules (nahwu) in reading and understanding classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning).

Recitation has proven to serve as both a formative and summative assessment. As a formative assessment, recitation is conducted routinely so that teachers can monitor students' progress and provide feedback on any shortcomings identified. As a summative assessment, recitation achievement serves as an indicator of learning success and a requirement for advancing to a certain level. The evaluation process takes place in stages through memorization submissions, review sessions (murojaah), and periodic oral exams, making it authentic because it measures knowledge, skills, and learning attitudes simultaneously. This characteristic differs from formal evaluations, which generally rely on written tests, as evaluation through the memorization of the Alfiyah is oriented toward competencies that can be directly observed through students' performance.

From an educational evaluation perspective, the memorization system implemented at MA TBS Kudus can be categorized as authentic assessment that is, an evaluation conducted through observation of students' actual abilities in mastering specific competencies (Fitria Lutfiana et al., 2024). Teachers do not merely assess the fluency of recitation but also pay attention to the accuracy of reading, comprehension of meaning, the ability to explain the rules of nahwu, and the application of these rules in reading classical Islamic texts. Therefore, the evaluation process is comprehensive and ongoing throughout the learning process.

The memorization of the Nadzom Alfiyah is then carried out systematically through several stages, namely the memorization process, muraja'ah, recitation of memorized material, and testing of memorization by the teacher. Each student is required to memorize verses of the Alfiyah according to targets set by the madrasah. Thus, memorization is not positioned as the

ultimate goal of learning but rather as a means to understand the structure of the Arabic language, which serves as the foundation for studying classical Islamic texts (Maftukhin, 2026).

This finding contributes to the development of research on Islamic learning evaluation by demonstrating that Ralph W. Tyler's concept of Goal-Oriented Evaluation can be implemented in the context of pesantren education through the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah, while also broadening the understanding that tradition-based evaluation also functions as a mechanism for competency development supported by meaningful learning and the sustainability of the pesantren's academic culture (Soda Betu, 2023).

Learning evaluation is a systematic process to determine the effectiveness of a method in achieving learning objectives, which, according to A. Jauhar Fuad, is not only oriented toward learning outcomes but also toward the ability of the learning method to develop students' competencies, particularly critical thinking (Fuad, 2020a).

This finding correlates with research by Aditya Kurniawan Saleh, who concluded that memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah serves as a *nahwu* learning strategy that helps pesantren students understand Arabic grammar rules while fostering a disciplined and responsible character although that study focused more on learning methods and values formation than on the function of assessment (Aditya Kurniawan Saleh, 2025). From the perspective of memorization-based learning theory, this finding aligns with (Ikhwanuddin & Hashim, 2014) study of Qur'an-memorizing students, which found that the *technique* used to memorize rather than memorization volume alone determined how well memorization translated into deeper language mastery and comprehension.

This suggests that the effectiveness of Alfiyah memorization in strengthening qiraatul kutub at MA TBS Kudus depends not merely on the fact of memorization, but on its structured accompaniment by murojaah, oral testing, and explicit rule application precisely the mechanism this study documents. This qualifies a common assumption in memorization-based learning literature (e.g., the critique raised in Kodifikasia's review of memorization curricula in Islamic institutions) that memorization and understanding are inherently opposed; here, memorization functions as a scaffold for understanding only because it is structurally integrated with comprehension-oriented practice, not because memorization alone is sufficient

This finding is also consistent with the research by Devita Kharisma Mardani and Makhfud, which states that learning evaluation serves to identify students' abilities, characteristics, and development so that teachers can adapt the learning process to their needs (Mardani, 2024).

In the context of MA TBS Kudus, this function is realized through the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik, where recitation tests not only assess the number of verses memorized but also serve as a means to evaluate students' understanding of Arabic grammar (*nahwu*), discipline, consistency in studying, and readiness to participate in qiraatul kutub instruction. In contrast to the study by Mardani and Makhfud, which employed non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, this research demonstrates that the memorization tradition rooted in pesantren culture can function as an effective learning evaluation system while simultaneously strengthening students' "qiraatul kutub" competencies.

This finding is also relevant to the study by Muhammad Alif Antarikza, which explains that learning evaluation in the pesantren environment serves to monitor skill development, identify learning needs, and determine appropriate follow-up learning strategies tailored to students' characteristics through formative and ongoing evaluation (Muhammad Alif Antarikza, 2021).

Similarly, the study by Rahmadani and Nurhidin on the modernization of education at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo in Kediri found that learning evaluation is conducted comprehensively, taking into account the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of students in line with the nature of evaluation through the memorization of the Alfiyah at MA TBS in Kudus (Rahmadani & Nurhidin, 2025).

The findings of this study confirm that memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah plays a role in improving mastery of nahwu rules, but it also serves a broader function namely, as a learning evaluation tool to measure the attainment of competencies in qiraatul kutub. Thus, this study expands the function of memorization from merely a learning strategy to an evaluation system integrated into the educational process.

This aligns with the research by Alfain and Anwar, which shows that the use of the Alfiyah textbook in learning consists of three main stages: planning, the learning process, and evaluation proving that Alfiyah learning cannot be separated from a systematic evaluation process (Alfain & Anwar, 2024).

Compared to the research by Nurul Afifa et al. on the Qawaid wa Tarjamah and Mauquiful 'rab methods which also identified the stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation in qiraatul kutub learning this study found that evaluation is inherent in the Alfiyah memorization tradition through the mechanisms of setoran, murojaah, and the practice of qiraatul kutub, thereby positioning the memorization tradition as an evaluation system that directly measures the achievement of learning objectives in accordance with Ralph W. Tyler's Goal-Oriented Evaluation perspective (Afifa et al., 2024).

The Role of the Ibn Malik's Nadzom Alfiyah Memorization Tradition in Strengthening Qiraatul Kutub Competencies

The memorization tradition of Ibn Malik's Nadzom Alfiyah plays a significant role in strengthening students' qiraatul kutub competencies at MA TBS Kudus. This tradition not only serves as a means of mastering nahwu theory but also forms the primary foundation for developing the ability to read, understand, analyze, and explain the contents of classical Islamic texts systematically.

The Alfiyah Ibn Malik is a poem memorized with great enthusiasm, making it highly effective and easily retained in memory; when students encounter problems that need to be solved, the knowledge they have absorbed will readily surface to address those problems (Alfain & Anwar, 2024).

Furthermore, this memorization tradition serves not only as a learning activity but also as part of an evaluation system that measures students' competency achievement, with memorization serving as one of the requirements for promotion to the next grade based on the (minimum competency standards) and tailored assessment criteria. This aligns with the concept of learning competencies according to A. Jauhar Fuad, which refers to Bloom's taxonomy encompassing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, ensuring that evaluation comprehensively measures not only students' knowledge but also their attitudes and skills (Fuad, 2020).

This finding is related to the research by M. Ali Irsyad and Makhromi on the deliberation method in fiqh instruction at Ma'had Aly Lirboyo in Kediri, which showed that deliberation also functions as an evaluation tool to measure students' understanding through discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and argumentation based on textual references (Irsyad & Makhromi, 2021).

This situation parallels the tradition of memorizing Ibn Malik's Alfiyah at MA TBS Kudus: the memorization tradition does not merely assess students' ability to recall the verses of the

Alfiyah, but is also used by teachers to evaluate their mastery of grammatical rules as the foundation for studying classical Islamic texts qiraatul kutub, so that each recitation of the memorized material serves as an indicator of students' understanding of the material and their readiness to read and explain classical Islamic texts (Mudzakkir, 2022; Rahayu & Rindrayani, 2022).

Research on the Alfiyah memorization method also indicates that memorization achievement is significantly correlated with improved ability to read and understand classical Islamic texts, where memorization serves as a means of internalizing the rules of Arabic grammar, which are subsequently applied in the practice of qiraatul kutub. The mechanism underlying this correlation can be explained through the mediating role of grammatical competence. A quantitative study at a comparable salafiyah pesantren found that grammatical mastery (nahwu) had a significant positive effect on students' reading proficiency for unvocalized classical texts, with an average Normalized Gain of 0.974 categorized as 'high' on Hake's scale indicating that stronger grammatical competence directly enhances students' capacity to decode and comprehend kitab kuning (Risky Samina Simamora & Yunalidi, 2025).

Applied to the present case, Alfiyah memorization strengthens qiraatul kutub not directly, but through an intermediate step: memorized verses encode grammatical rules (i'rab patterns, sentence structure principles) in a retrievable form; murojaah and oral testing force students to apply not merely recall these rules; and this repeated application is what transfers into the ability to independently determine grammatical function and meaning in unvocalized texts. This is consistent with findings on integrated nahwu instruction, which show that grammar mastery cannot be treated as a discrete skill but must be developed in tandem with reading practice to produce transferable reading competency (Habibi, 2022).

Based on these findings, the strengthening of "qiraatul kutub" competencies through the Alfiyah memorization tradition occurs across three interrelated dimensions: first, the cognitive dimension, namely the increased mastery of Arabic grammatical rules as the foundation for understanding Arabic texts; second, the skill dimension, namely the improved ability to accurately read, interpret, and analyze classical Islamic texts; and third, the affective dimension, namely the development of discipline, perseverance, patience, and responsibility in the learning process. The better the mastery of the Alfiyah through memorization, the better the students' ability to read classical Arabic texts, determine i'rab, understand meaning, and explain Arabic sentence structure.

These findings are reinforced by Theguh Saumantri's research, which explains that qiraatul kutub competency in the Musabaqah Qira'atil Kutub is assessed based on several components: maqra' (accuracy of reading), comprehension of meaning, accuracy of i'rab, and depth of textual analysis components that align with the dimensions of qiraatul kutub competency identified in this study (Saumantri, 2023).

Cultural, Social, and Institutional Factors in the Tradition of Memorizing the Alfiyah Ibn Malik

The research findings indicate that cultural, social, and institutional factors do not operate in isolation but rather interact with one another to form an educational ecosystem that supports the continuity of the Alfiyah memorization tradition. In summary, cultural factors provide the foundation of values and legitimacy for the tradition; social factors offer support and reinforcement in daily practice; while institutional factors ensure the tradition is implemented in a structured manner through madrasah policies and programs.

The continuity of the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibnu Malik is influenced not only by academic goals but also by the strong pesantren culture, which regards

memorization as an integral part of character building, discipline, and the scholarly identity of students. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and is thus accepted as a shared value upheld by the entire madrasah community.

This finding aligns with the research by Muhammad Zainal Abidin and Wasito, which explains that pesantren education takes place through a process of transinternalization of values that is, the instillation of values carried out not only through the delivery of subject matter but also through habit formation, social interaction, and exemplary behavior in daily life (Abidin & Wasito, 2019).

In the context of MA TBS Kudus, the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah is a form of the transinternalization of the pesantren's academic culture: students are not only required to memorize the verses of the Alfiyah but are also accustomed to discipline in review, respecting teachers, maintaining consistency in their studies, and developing a sense of responsibility toward the pursuit of knowledge; thus, memorizing the Alfiyah also serves as a means of internalizing the moral values, ethics, and culture of the pesantren.

The verses of the Alfiyah are understood to embody the values of humility, respect for teachers, sincerity, patience, discipline, responsibility, and a passion for seeking knowledge values that are subsequently reflected in the students' daily lives (Aditya Kurniawan Saleh, 2025).

At MA TBS Kudus, this is manifested in the collective belief among the madrasah community that memorizing the Alfiyah is part of an academic tradition that must be preserved; thus, cultural factors serve as the primary foundation supporting the continuity of the Alfiyah memorization tradition as a system for evaluating and developing qiraatul kutub competencies.

From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah can be understood not merely as a learning method but as a social practice that is continuously reproduced through the interaction between students' habitus, their cultural-social-symbolic capital, and the supportive environment of the pesantren; the interaction of these three elements ensures that the memorization tradition endures and effectively strengthens qiraatul kutub competencies while also functioning as a distinctive learning evaluation system at MA TBS Kudus (Darmawan, 2024).

While formalizing Alfiyah memorization as a promotion and graduation requirement strengthens the seriousness with which students approach the tradition, this policy also carries potential risks that merit critical reflection. First, a memorization-based, high-stakes requirement risks producing a *washback effect* in which students prioritize verse retention over grammatical comprehension precisely the tension identified in broader debates on memorization-based Islamic education, where memorization achievement can be reached even as understanding lags behind (Yunita et al., 2023). Second, using memorization ability as a graduation criterion raises equity concerns for students with differing memory capacities, learning speeds, or prior exposure to Arabic, potentially disadvantaging otherwise academically capable students who struggle specifically with rote retention. Third, because recitation is evaluated by individual teachers, the subjectivity inherent in oral assessment compared to the standardization of written tests — introduces a validity concern not addressed by the data collected in this study. Future research should examine how MA TBS Kudus mitigates these risks in practice, for instance through remedial mechanisms for students who struggle with memorization, or through inter-rater calibration among teachers conducting recitation assessments.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study set out to describe and analyze the tradition of memorizing the Nadzom Alfiyah Ibn Malik as a learning assessment system at MA TBS Kudus and to examine its role in

strengthening students' qiraatul kutub competency. In relation to the first objective, the findings show that this memorization tradition has been formalized into a structured, ongoing evaluation mechanism carried out through memorization submission, murojaah, oral recitation testing, and periodic assessment and institutionalized through a madrasah policy that ties memorization achievement to grade promotion and graduation.

These findings carry practical implications for pesantren-based madrasahs seeking to design assessment systems rooted in their own scholarly traditions rather than relying solely on conventional written testing. Institutions with a strong nazham- or matn-memorization culture may consider formalizing memorization into a structured, staged assessment mechanism combining submission, review, and oral testing as a way to link classical pedagogical practices to measurable competency outcomes, provided that memorization is explicitly paired with grammatical application rather than treated as an end in itself. At the same time, madrasahs adopting memorization as a promotion or graduation requirement should anticipate the risks discussed earlier, particularly the potential for rote retention without comprehension and the equity implications for students with differing memorization capacities, and should consider complementary or remedial measures for students who struggle specifically with memorization rather than with grammatical understanding.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, as a qualitative case study conducted at a single institution, its findings describe the mechanism and its perceived effects in depth but cannot be statistically generalized to other pesantren-based madrasahs with different institutional cultures or policies. Second, the study relies primarily on observation, interviews, and documentation rather than standardized measures of qiraatul kutub competency, meaning that the reported relationship between memorization and reading skill reflects participants' and researchers' interpretations rather than quantified performance data.

Third, the study does not examine longitudinal outcomes such as whether qiraatul kutub gains are retained after students graduate nor does it capture the experiences of students who struggled with or were adversely affected by the memorization requirement.

Future research could address these limitations by employing mixed-methods or quantitative designs that measure the correlation between memorization achievement and qiraatul kutub performance using standardized instruments, by conducting comparative studies across multiple pesantren-based madrasahs with differing assessment policies, and by investigating the experiences of students who face difficulty meeting memorization-based promotion requirements. Such research would help clarify the boundary conditions under which memorization-based assessment is most effective, and would inform more equitable implementation of this model in pesantren-based Islamic education.

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