

Tahfidz and English language learning: Exploring cognitive habitus through huffaz narratives

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ABSTRACT

Qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz*) has been extensively discussed in relation to memory, attention, and other cognitive capacities, while second language acquisition research has studied parallel processes through learning constructs such as working memory, motivation, and self-regulated learning. Nevertheless, these two research bodies infrequently examine through a lens how *tahfidz* practices experienced by *huffaz* (person who practices *tahfidz*) work comparably in the English learning practice. This research, therefore, explores how *huffaz* experience and interpret their English learning in relation to their *tahfidz* practices, with particular concern for cognitive and behavioral patterns that associate the two learning contexts. This qualitative research uses narrative inquiry as the approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six *huffaz* and analyzed thematically. The narratives indicate four noticeable features of English learning: structured learning behaviors, intrinsic motivation, supportive learning environments, and independence and discipline. Participants also articulated similarities between *tahfidz* and English learning in terms of repetition, auditory attention, effort, and systematic processing. These patterns are interpreted through the concept of cognitive habitus as a way of understanding how participants perceive enduring learning dispositions developed through their long-term *tahfidz* experiences. Rather than demonstrating direct neurocognitive effects, the findings propose an interpretive account of how participants comprehend the transfer of learning dispositions from *tahfidz* to English learning. Ultimately, the research contributes to English learning by intersecting religious learning traditions and cognitive habitus into the dialogue. Further research with cognitive, neurophysiological, or longitudinal methods is necessary to scrutinize whether the connections identified in these narratives can be empirically validated.

Keywords: cognitive habitus; English learning; neurocognitive perspective; tahfidz process

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INTRODUCTION

With a total of 6.236 verses across 114 chapters, the Qur'an is considered one of the most widely memorized texts in human history (Shabrina & Lhaksmana, 2024). In Indonesia, the country with the

largest Muslim population in the world, thousands of students dedicate several years of their lives to memorizing the Qur'an in full (Maziyah & Amiruddin, 2024). These individuals are known as Qur'an memorizers, or more commonly referred to as *huffaz* for plural or *hafidz* for singular male and *hafidzah* for singular female. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the number of certified *huffaz* continues to grow, supported by the rapid development of *tahfidz*-based *pesantren* throughout the country (Deliana & Jahroni, 2024). Moreover, this trend is further supported by many university scholarship programs dedicated specifically to *huffaz*. Interestingly, after doing a preliminary observation in universities in Indonesia, the researcher found that in English education departments, *huffaz* tend to show greater academic discipline and stronger language retention skills compared to their peers. This distinctive learning experience provokes an inquiry: might there be a relation between the memorization methods used in Qur'anic learning and the strategies used to study English as a foreign language? This is the starting point of this research.

Previous research has progressively scrutinised Qur'anic memorization beyond its spiritual and religious dimensions by studying its cognitive and academic implications. Studies have connected *tahfidz* with memory, attention, verbal fluency, and academic performance, which signify how it goes beyond simple information retention (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Faidah, 2020; Sirin et al., 2021). The practices universally associated with *tahfidz*, including repetition, auditory recall, and review, have also been argued as learning processes involving engagement with linguistic aspects (Agustono & Firdaus, 2025). In parallel, research in English language learning has exhibited that successful language learning implicates a range of cognitive and metacognitive processes, containing working memory, attention, self-regulation, repetition, motivation, and strategic engagement with learning assignments or tasks (Baddeley, 2017; Bai & Wang, 2023; Shurovi et al., 2025). Repetition, for example, is recognised as an imperative element of language learning because repeated engagement with language forms can accelerate eloquence and accuracy (Arredondo-Tapia & Garcia-Ponce, 2021). These resemblances suggest that Qur'anic memorization and English learning can involve intersecting demands in terms of attention, repetition, persistence, and regulation.

The association between these two learning contexts can be additionally comprehended through the concept of cognitive habitus. Drawing on Bourdieu's term of habitus, cognitive habitus refers to patterns of thought and reaction that grow through repeated cognitive experiences and social practices (Riawanti, 2017). This *disposition* internalises and influences how the individual directs attention, organises information, responds to challenge, and approaches learning tasks (Clark et al., 2020). From a neurocognitive perspective, repeated engagement in activities such as reading, memorizing, listening, and receiving information can contribute to patterns of cognitive involvement, although the recent study indirectly measures neurological alteration (Gallese, 2021). In the *tahfidz* context, repeated memorization, *tikrar*, *muraja'ah*, auditory practice, and persistent attention may therefore be envisaged as habitual learning experiences through which certain *dispositions* are developed. These dispositions may be relevant when learners face another demanding learning context, such as English, in which repetition, attention, memory, persistence, and self-regulation are inevitably necessary. Therefore, the neurocognitive perspective in this study works primarily as an interpretive framework for reflecting how repeated or habitual learning experiences can be interlined with consistent learning dispositions, rather than as evidence or indication of direct neurophysiological consequences.

Previous studies have predominantly scrutinised Qur'anic memorization in relation to cognitive performance, memory, attention, or academic achievement, while research in English as a second language acquisition has studied cognitive and motivational variables mainly within conventional language-learning contexts (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Bai & Wang, 2023; Shurovi et al., 2025; Sirin et al., 2021). These two bodies of referential literature have therefore cultivated distinctly, with limited attention to how long-term *tahfidz* practices are experienced as consistent learning dispositions and how such dispositions form learners' approaches to English. In particular, slight attention has been given to the role of cognitive habitus in interpreting the potential continuity between religious memorization practices and English (foreign/second) language learning. The gap, consequently, locates not merely in the absence of research concerning Qur'anic memorization with English, but in

the limited comprehensive understanding of how habitual religious learning practices potentially turns into internalised dispositions that participants recognise as relevant to their English learning experiences.

Addressing this gap, this research scaffolds Qur'anic memorization and English language learning into a discursive dialogue through the concept of cognitive habitus. Instead of recognising *tahfidz* as a direct *source* of neurocognitive development, the research scrutinises how *huffaz* narrate and interpret their learning experiences and recognise the parallels between the practices developed through Qur'anic memorization and in English learning. The novelty of the research lies in the use of cognitive habitus as an interpretive lens to associate a religious learning tradition with English language learning, thereby encompassing discussion beyond the conventional treatment of *tahfidz* as either a spiritual practice or a cognitive activity. Through this approach, the research contributes to English language learning by emphasising how learners' experiences in religiously situated learning environments shape the ways they approach language learning.

Accordingly, this research proposes to explore how *huffaz* learn English and how they perceive the correlation between the learning processes in *tahfidz* and English. Using qualitative narrative inquiry, the research focuses on participants' experiences, learning routines, motivational orientations, and reflections on repetition, attention, persistence, discipline, and self-regulation. The research is channelled by the following research inquiries: 1) How do *huffaz* learn English? and 2) What perceived cognitive similarities do *huffaz* describe between *tahfidz* and English learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tahfidz as a neurocognitive practice

Tahfidz is a very structured and intensive mental exercise which involves complex brain work, including rhythmic repetition, connecting sounds with meanings, visualization, and deep inner reflection (Suryana et al., 2024). *Huffaz* usually follow a disciplined routine such as reading the same verses many times, listening carefully to correct pronunciation, and linking the verses to their meanings and contexts (Agustono & Firdaus, 2025). This habit directly trains the brain to absorb, store, and recall information more efficiently. Several studies have shown that *tahfidz* gives strong benefits to cognitive function. In a study from Istanbul, students who joined a Qur'an memorization program showed measurable improvements in verbal memory, focus, and fluent thinking. These results were seen using the California verbal learning test and the verbal fluency test (Sirin et al., 2021). The California verbal learning test is used to measure short and long verbal memory, and the Verbal Fluency Test is used to measure verbal thinking skills. In Indonesia, the positive relationship between *tahfidz* and academic achievement has also been confirmed. Qur'anic memorization activities had a significant correlation with students' academic performance in several faculties. Moreover, consistent involvement in *tahfidz* activities helped improve overall academic performance (Faidah, 2020).

Neurocognitive in language learning

Language learning is not only a linguistic activity, but also a complex neurocognitive process that involves many areas of the brain working at the same time (Feng et al., 2021; Roger et al., 2022). Additionally, individual differences in language learning outcomes (LOs) are strongly related to how the brain works through connected and changing processes during learning, rather than being only determined by fixed intelligence or memory ability. Neural dynamics, which refer to the changing patterns of brain activity that continue throughout the learning process, function as time-sensitive fingerprints that can predict the direction and success of learning across different components and stages of instruction (Feng et al., 2021). It is also worth noting that the brain's ability to process language is very complex and highly interconnected (Roger et al., 2022). This process not only involves understanding the meaning of words or building sentences, but also depends on other skills such as keeping attention, making predictions about meaning, and remembering information that was previously learned. To perform all these functions, the brain uses many systems that are connected and work together, not just one specific part. Interestingly, the way these brain networks work can

change depending on the type of task, the person's age, or even their gender. These findings suggest that success in language learning depends greatly on how flexibly and adaptively the brain can adjust during the learning process.

Cognitive habitus

Cognitive habitus refers to a pattern of thinking that gradually develops through repeated cognitive experiences over a long period of time (Clark et al., 2020). It includes the way individuals direct their attention, organize memory, respond to new information, and develop thinking strategies that are not always consciously recognized. They add that, unlike learning strategies, which are usually intentional and can be adjusted quickly, cognitive habitus is more latent; it works beneath the surface and shapes automatic responses when facing learning situations. This concept is adapted from Pierre Bourdieu's idea of habitus, which explains that a person's behaviors and preferences are not simply individual choices but the result of deeply internalized social and historical structures, repeatedly experienced until they become common habits in thinking and actions (Riawanti, 2017). When applied to the cognitive domain, this habitus is not only reflected in how one thinks, but also in how one processes, stores, and uses information, especially in areas related to memory, attention, and decision-making.

In a neurocognitive framework, cognitive habitus can be understood as a stable form of cognitive network shaped by repeated mental activities. These activities, such as reading, memorizing, writing, or listening, create consistent thinking pathways. As a result, the way a person perceives and responds to information becomes relatively fixed. This pattern is not biologically inherited, but rather the outcome of long-term interactions between the brain and its environment (Gallese, 2021). Research in areas such as bilingualism, memorization habits, and language use also shows that certain cognitive habits can develop into complex thinking systems, even involving unconscious self-regulation. For instance, bilinguals who frequently engage in code-switching tend to demonstrate higher accuracy and reduced cognitive interference in tasks requiring executive control, indicating enhanced cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control (Kheder & Kaan, 2021). These findings reinforce the notion that repeated patterns of bilingual language use can shape enduring cognitive styles, influencing how individuals process, retain, and interpret information.

METHOD

Research design

This research uses a qualitative interpretative approach to explore the internal experiences of *huffaz* in learning English. The research design applied is narrative inquiry, which enables the researcher to explore participants' life experiences, identity formation, and meaning-making processes related to *tahfidz* and English learning. Through their narratives, the research examines how memorization habits, cognitive patterns, and learning strategies developed through *tahfidz* are perceived and related to their English learning experiences. The main instrument for data collection in this research is an interview blueprint, carefully designed to provide a structured path while still allowing flexibility in exploring the data. To support the exploration of informants' life experiences, this research uses semi-structured interviews, which allow for consistency between sessions while remaining open to new insights that may appear. The interview consists of ten key questions that are thoughtfully prepared to capture the unique learning narratives of the six selected participants. Through these questions, the research aims to gather rich descriptions of how *tahfidz* practices may be in line with their approach to learning English.

Participants

Data were collected through interviews with six Indonesian *huffaz*. All participants were Indonesian nationals, although they were studying in different educational contexts: three in Indonesia, two in Egypt, and one in Turkey. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) They have a sustained *tahfidz* background and experience in Qur'anic memorization practices; and (2) experience in learning English through formal education, multilingual education, or other meaningful English-

learning contexts. The inclusion of participants studying in Indonesia, Egypt, and Turkey was intended to capture variation in educational and sociocultural contexts rather than differences in nationality. Pseudonyms were used to protect confidentiality, and detailed participant backgrounds are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Informant Data

No	Source	Gender	Juz memorized	Tahfidz Experience	Educational Level	Major	Country of Study	Age	English Learning Background
1.	Medina	Female	30 juz	5 years	Undergraduate / 6th semester	English Department	Indonesia	25	Formal English learning in university
2.	Mecca	Female	20 juz	7 years	Undergraduate / 4th semester	English Department	Indonesia	22	Formal English learning in university
3.	Riyadh	Male	30 juz	8 years	Undergraduate / 6th semester	Tafsir Al Quran	Egypt	23	School-based English education
4.	Yazid	Male	5 juz	6 years	Undergraduate / 8th semester	Comparative Religion	Turkey	25	English exposure through multilingual education
5.	Ahsa	Male	30 juz	8 years	Undergraduate / 7th semester	Tafsir Al Quran	Egypt	22	School-based English education
6.	Jeddah	Male	5 juz	3 years	Undergraduate / 8th semester	Informatics Engineering	Indonesia	22	School-based English education

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview guide. The instrument was designed to explore participants' experiences, learning behaviours, perceptions, and cognitive reflections regarding the relationship between *tahfidz* practices and English learning. The interview guide consisted of ten open-ended questions as follows:

Table 2

Interview Blueprint

Code	Interview Question	Purpose	Link to RQ
Q1	Could you describe your process of memorizing the Qur'an? Since when did you start, and what is your daily routine?	To explore the depth of <i>tahfidz</i> experience and initial cognitive-spiritual context	RQ2
Q2	How would you describe yourself as a learner? Do you feel that memorizing the Qur'an has shaped your way of thinking or learning?	To trigger reflection on the influence of <i>tahfidz</i> on learning disposition	RQ1 RQ2
Q3	Could you tell me about your experience in learning English? What do you enjoy the most and what do you find most difficult?	To capture authentic narratives of emotional and cognitive experiences	RQ1
Q4	Do you find similarities or differences between learning English and memorizing the Qur'an? In what way?	To compare strategies and inner perceptions	RQ1 RQ2
Q5	Have you ever consciously applied strategies from Qur'anic memorization when learning English (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar)?	To trace explicit transfer of learning strategies	RQ1 RQ2

Code	Interview Question	Purpose	Link to RQ
Q6	When you face difficulties in learning English, how do you usually deal with them? Do you think your perseverance comes from <i>tahfidz</i> training?	To uncover emotional regulation, patience, and endurance	RQ2
Q7	Do you think being a <i>hafiz</i> / <i>hafizah</i> gives you certain advantages or disadvantages in learning a foreign language? Please give examples.	To reveal possible benefits or internal conflicts	RQ1 RQ2
Q8	If you could design an English learning method for <i>tahfidz</i> students, what would you change from the usual classroom practice?	To highlight their agency and critical voice as learners	RQ1
Q9	How do you interpret learning English as a Qur'an memorizer? Do you see it as worship, a challenge, or a necessity of modern times?	To uncover personal meaning and spiritual orientation	RQ2
Q10	Is there anything important I haven't asked about the relation between <i>tahfidz</i> and your English learning experience?	To provide space for emergent data and unexpected insights	RQ1 RQ2

The questions were constructed to encourage participants to share detailed personal narratives while maintaining alignment with the research objectives and research questions. Practically, the instrument was administered to six participants with *tahfidz* backgrounds who were also engaged in English learning in different educational contexts. In addition, each interview question was linked to specific analytical focuses to support the thematic analysis process. The interview blueprint is presented in [Table 2](#).

Data collection procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted both offline and online via Zoom, depending on participants' availability and location. Two participants studying in Indonesia were interviewed offline, while the remaining participants were interviewed online. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide a balance between guiding questions and flexibility, allowing participants to express their experiences and reflections in depth. Participants were selected purposively based on two criteria: having experience in English learning and possessing a *tahfidz* background. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 80 minutes and was audio-recorded. The interviews were conducted primarily in Indonesian, with occasional use of Arabic for participants studying in Egypt and limited use of English when necessary. Follow-up questions were asked to clarify responses and explore emerging insights. The recordings were transcribed verbatim using TurboScribe and checked by the researcher by replaying the audio recordings and comparing them with the transcripts to correct omissions or inaccuracies, particularly those resulting from mixed-language use. The transcripts were then translated into English using DeepL. The researcher manually reviewed the translations against the original transcripts and audio recordings to verify accuracy and preserve the intended meaning. Although back-translation was not conducted, translation accuracy was verified through this manual comparison. After transcription and translation, the relevant transcripts or summaries were returned to the respective participants for member checking, allowing them to confirm, clarify, or correct their statements. Their feedback was incorporated into the subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) six-phase thematic analysis. Given the broad and detailed narratives generated through the narrative inquiry, the coding process was conducted inductively, allowing patterns to emerge from participants' accounts of *tahfidz* and English learning. In the initial coding phase, NVivo was used to assist in identifying and organizing potential initial codes. The three researchers then repeatedly reviewed the transcripts and manually examined the coded segments to assess their relevance to the emerging codes. Similar codes were grouped according to recurring patterns, and potential themes were subsequently reviewed and refined through discussion

among the researchers by comparing them with the coded extracts and the overall dataset. The final themes were defined and interpreted based on the participants' narratives. NVivo was used as an initial coding aid, while subsequent coding, theme refinement, and interpretation were conducted collaboratively by the three researchers. Here is the table that presents the sub-themes derived from the analysis in relation to each research question.

Table 3*Sub-Themes*

Research Question	Sub Themes	Focus of Finding
RQ1: How do <i>Huffaz</i> learn English?	Learning Behavior of <i>huffaz</i>	Daily memorization routines cultivate consistency, structured learning patterns, and strategic regulation of learning activities.
	Intrinsic Motivation	Learning is interpreted as an act of worship, generating strong intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience that sustains long-term engagement.
	Environment	Teachers, peers, and <i>pesantren</i> structures provide affective support, normative discipline, and continuous linguistic input.
	Independence and Discipline	Repeated <i>tafhidz</i> together with the supportive environment practices internalize self-discipline, learner autonomy, and sustain self-control as enduring learning dispositions.
RQ2: What perceived cognitive similarities do <i>huffaz</i> describe between <i>tafhidz</i> and English learning?	Repetition and Auditory Sensitivity Strengthen Language Memory	Phonological loop training in <i>tafhidz</i> enhances vocabulary retention and pronunciation
	Structured Thinking and Attentive Endurance	Long-term memorization develops cognitive discipline, sustained attention, and endurance in processing complex linguistic input.
	Latent Cognitive Habitus as Dispositional Outcomes	Implicit and unconscious transfer of memorization routines forms a stable cognitive habitus shaping foreign language learning behavior.

Some participants' responses extended beyond the questions asked, which is consistent with the narrative inquiry approach. All relevant responses were analyzed using the same thematic analysis process. During the reporting of the findings, excerpts that did not directly answer the interview questions but remained relevant to the research focus were labeled SN (*Supporting Narrative*). This label was used only to identify quotations that could provide additional context or support the interpretation of the themes and did not represent a separate coding category. Thus, SN excerpts did not generate themes independently but were used to enrich the presentation and interpretation of the findings.

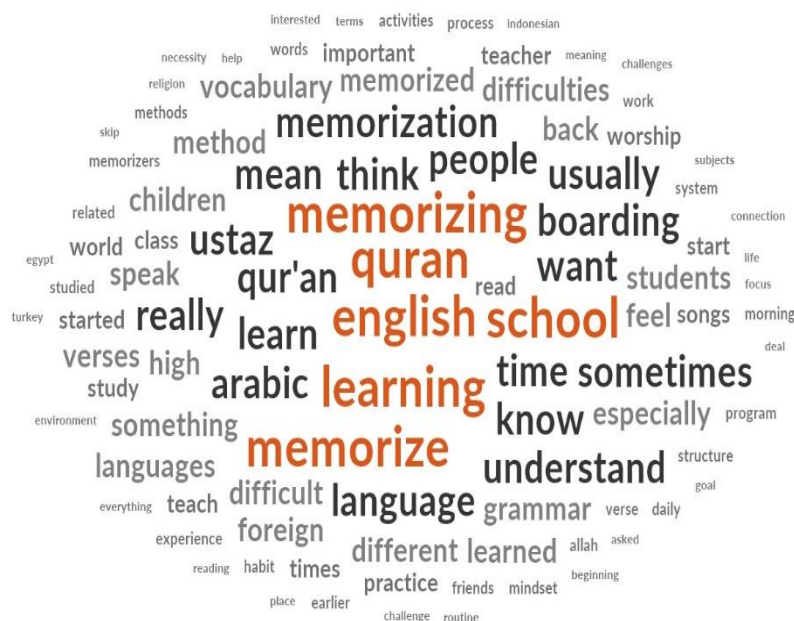
Also, the trustworthiness of the research was established using four criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Firstly, credibility was enhanced through member checking, in which participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their responses and the researcher's interpretation of their experiences. Then, transferability was addressed through thick descriptions of the research context and participant backgrounds. While dependability was maintained by systematically documenting each stage of the research process, confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in direct data excerpts and sustaining a reflexive stance to minimize researcher bias.

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings derived from the informants' narratives. An initial immersion in their narratives already reflects a shared learning landscape, where certain words recur across participants, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Lexical Landscape of Huffaz Narratives in English Learning



Source: Author's analysis using NVivo15

Figure 1 presents the lexical landscape generated from participants' narratives using NVivo 15. The visualization highlights several dominant and recurring terms, including *memorizing*, *Qur'an*, *English*, *learning*, and *language*, which appear as central lexical clusters across participants' accounts. Other frequently occurring expressions, such as *understand*, *time*, *boarding school*, *grammar*, and *practice*, further indicate that participants associate English learning with disciplined routines, repetition, comprehension, and structured learning experiences developed through *tahfidz* practices. The interconnection among these lexical patterns suggests that Qur'anic memorization and English learning are not perceived as separate activities, but as interconnected learning processes shaped by similar cognitive and behavioural orientations. This preliminary lexical pattern provides an initial overview of how *tahfidz* practices influence participants' approaches to English learning. Although these lexical patterns facilitate the researchers' areas of discussion, they were not used to determine or validate the themes. The themes are developed based on systematic coding and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Therefore, Figure 1 provides a descriptive context for the findings that follow, while the interpretation of the association between *tahfidz* and English learning is taken from the thematic analysis, not word frequency alone. Building on these patterns, the findings are ordered into two major sections corresponding to the research inquiries, consisting of four thematic patterns in the first research question and three thematic patterns in the second.

RQ 1: Huffaz's style of English learning

Findings show that *huffaz* approach English learning not from a neutral cognitive stance but from a habitus shaped by years of *tahfidz*. Their learning is guided by routines fostering persistence, repetition, time discipline, and spiritually grounded motivation. Four sub-themes characterize this style: (1) learning behaviour, (2) intrinsic motivation, (3) environment, and (4) independence and discipline. The following sections illustrate how these elements collectively shape *huffaz* engagement with English.

Learning behaviour of huffaz

The daily routine of memorizing the Qur'an appears to influence how *huffaz* engage with learning, particularly through the formation of concrete learning behaviours and structured learning strategies.

This sub-theme examines observable learning practices and cognitive routines cultivated through *tahfidz*. Mecca, for example, stated how she motivated herself within the *tahfidz* process which she eventually adapted it into their language learning. She said, “When we memorise the Quran, we obviously need to be highly motivated. If we don’t have [it] ... we sometimes feel lazy ... no inspiration, no motivation ... I apply the same principle to learning. You have to be motivated to learn” (Mecca, Q2).

The experience of memorizing the Qur’an has assisted the students in developing a specific schedule for learning. All informants share the same time to begin their memorization or study sessions, which is after *Subuh*, the specific time from the beginning of dawn. For them, *Subuh* serves as a crucial moment to start everything. Yazid mentioned, “in the boarding school, it started after *Subuh*, we already memorized Quran by ourselves...” (Yazid, Q1). Mecca also emphasized, “so, after *Subuh* until around five or half past five, that’s the time for doing *muraja’ah* and adding two, three, four, or five new verses” (Mecca, Q1). *Subuh* is considered a very important mark as a demonstration of a Muslim’s devotion and discipline. The participants feel more comfortable starting their learning at this time.

Beyond these shared routines, one participant specifically highlighted how he *manages emotional exhaustion* when facing mental fatigue. Riyadh explained that although memorizing the Qur’an appears to be a still, quiet activity, it actually consumes a great deal of mental energy. As he put it, “When I feel too tired or bored, I stop for a while. I take a break because tomorrow is another chance” (Riyadh, Q6). This reflective and self-regulated habit, shaped by his *tahfidz* experience, has become a helpful strategy not only in memorizing the Qur’an but also in learning English. It teaches him to recognize the importance of rest, emotional balance, and consistent effort in the face of cognitive challenges when he learns English in Egypt. In addition to emotional control, Riyadh reflected on how the daily practice of memorizing Quran routines became a reference point for his approach to learning English, he stated, “when learning English, I found that memorization only worked after I understood the meaning, especially unfamiliar *vocabulary*. I would analyse the words first, then memorize them. I later realized that the Qur’anic memorization process is very similar, repetition alone is not enough; understanding the meaning, particularly in narrative verses, makes memorization easier” (Riyadh, Q8). While in grammar learning, Medina added, “years of Qur’anic memorization gradually trained my mind to work systematically. When learning English *tenses*, I did not memorize them instantly ... I studied them step by step, one tense at a time, practicing it repeatedly and then reviewing previous tenses. I applied the same structured learning pattern in both contexts” (Medina, Q2, SN).

The narratives indicate that learning behaviours developed through *tahfidz*, such as breaking tasks into smaller units, prioritizing understanding before memorization, practicing regularly, and choosing appropriate study times, transferred into English learning, enabling structured and deliberate engagement. These routines, emerging habitually rather than as explicit strategies, guided the organization of learning activities, time management, and cognitive effort. The *convergence* crystallises in the participants’ preference for regularity and continuity. Mecca and Yazid emphasised fixed routines, while Riyadh depicts a more adaptable form of self-regulation to memorization in the available time.

Intrinsic motivation

One of the strongest influences of *tahfidz* on English learning is intrinsic motivation. Participants revealed that their enthusiasm was driven not by grades but by the belief that learning is part of *ibadah* and a Muslim’s responsibility, creating enduring internal drive and consistency even in challenges. They also valued the intrinsic honour and spiritual fulfilment in Qur’an memorization, finding meaning and reward despite its demands. Mecca expressed this sentiment clearly, highlighting that the difficulty of *tahfidz* was inseparable from the dignity it carried. She said, “The process of memorizing the Qur’an may indeed be quite challenging, but it also carries its own distinct nobility” (Mecca, Q1, SN). Similarly, Riyadh stated, “worship has a broad scope ... from my personal perspective, English can be seen in three ways: it can serve as a means of worship, it can be a personal challenge, and it can also be a tool to keep up with the modern era” (Riyadh, Q7, SN). This recognition of both challenge and nobility

underscores how spiritual motivation is often intertwined with resilience. This sense of purpose was particularly emphasized by Yazid, who viewed *tahfidz* not as an endpoint, but as a foundation for broader contributions to society, stated, “Memorizing the Qur’an should not be seen as the ultimate goal, but as added value. The true aim is to contribute meaningfully to the progress of the *ummah* [community/society]. Without overcoming language barriers, particularly through mastering English, our knowledge will be hard to be reached and beneficial to others” (Yazid, Q9). He further emphasised that the spiritual value of *tahfidz* should not lead to academic or intellectual complacency, “Qur’an memorization should be the primary standard. After that, go ahead to pursue other standards. But do not let memorizing the Qur’an be the only standard” (Yazid, Q9). Riyadh also stressed that all matters often become easier because of the blessings (*wasilah*) of the Qur’an, and that its influence extends beyond the spiritual realm into daily life. He shared, “I personally feel that many worldly matters become easier through the Qur’an as a means. Miracles often appear in moments of difficulty, and they are closely connected to the Qur’an” (Riyadh, Q10). These reflections reveal that spiritual motivation in learning English goes far beyond personal achievement. It is deeply rooted in a worldview where acquiring language skills is a form of *ibadah*, a tool for *da’wah*, and a way to amplify the benefits one can bring to the *ummah*. Mecca accentuated the intrinsic dignity of difficult learning, Riyadh outlined English as potentially part of *ibadah*, whereas Yazid linked English proficiency to larger service to the *ummah*. Therefore, the collective pattern was not an identical form of motivation, but a spiritual orientation in which learning is developed beyond grades or instrumental achievement.

Environment

Participants’ motivation and consistency in learning English and Qur’an were also strengthened by a supportive environment. The structured *tahfidz* setting fostered discipline, mutual assistance, and positive peer pressure, reinforcing consistent learning. As what Jeddah said about choosing a supportive place, “I think boarding school students actually have great potential because they have a conducive environment, and if that conducive environment is implemented in English, it could be a good thing. It just depends on whether the execution is serious or not” (Jeddah, Q8, SN). In such cases, other forms of support, particularly from family, can play a compensatory role. Parents facilitate the learning process, for example, by creating a conducive home environment to study. Mecca explained “It’s my parents who always support me...” (Mecca, Q1, SN) whilst, Yazid added, “If we learn English purely out of our own willingness, voluntarily, without any pressure from anyone, we will find it easier to learn. We can learn it from anyone” (Yazid, Q4), which means that internal willingness is a vital factor that strengthens the impact of any external support. Participants’ experiences indicate that supportive environments, peers, family, institutions, and real-world opportunities sustain motivation and consistency in learning English. Structured settings foster discipline and positive influence, while other contexts offer authentic practice. Even with limited support, learners seek exposure, showing that success emerges from the interplay of external conditions and internal motivation. Jeddah emphasised the institutional environment as a condition to learn; Mecca underlined family support as an affective resource. Yazid, by contrast, accentuated that environmental support works only when it is supplemented by internal willingness. The theme, therefore, epitomises not merely “support,” but a dynamic connection between contextual affordances and learner agency.

Independence and discipline

The Qur’an memorization process cultivated students’ independence and discipline, fostering self-managed, organized, and responsible lifestyles, as exemplified by Yazid, who practiced early-morning independent memorization in Islamic boarding school “The memorization routine began after dawn with individual practice, followed by revision in the evening of what had been memorized earlier” (Yazid, Q1). Riyadh also began his daily activities right after *Subuh* and even utilised short breaks amidst his busy schedule to continue memorizing, “personally, memorizing after *Subuh* was a necessity ... one of my favourite times for muraja’ah was actually when I was on public transportation ... I got

used to making my own schedule for learning English, so I wouldn't forget it either" (Riyadh, Q1). For him, the discipline cultivated through consistent memorization practices instilled a sense of responsibility and time-awareness that transferred into his approach to language learning, where consistency, focus, and independent effort became key principles. Additionally, the daily memorizing habits- consistently keeping the memorization strong, and managing their own time without strict supervision have helped the participants to develop a more organized and responsible lifestyle, including learning foreign languages. In Medina's opinion, the mental strength built from this routine gave a positive impact on her overall learning attitude, "... and eventually I learned ... it turns out you really have to be consistent, and actually, that's the learning mindset needed, and it's formed through *tahfidz*, so it's not about becoming academically smart right away, but it shapes your character, or eventually you develop a good learning mindset" (Medina, Q2).

These narratives demonstrate that consistent *tahfidz* routines, accompanied by intrinsic motivation and supportive environmental conditions, foster responsibility, time management, and self-directed learning beyond religious study, extending into areas such as English learning. Participants, who often began their activities after Subuh, independently engaged in memorization, *muraja'ah*, and language practice, reflecting disciplined learning habits and a strong awareness of time. Although rarely labelled as such, practices like studying daily, acting without instruction, and following morning routines reveal internalized autonomy and discipline.

RQ 2: Tahfidz practices, English learning, and neurocognitive

The second set of findings examines how *tahfidz* practices intersect with English learning through underlying neurocognitive processes. The participants' narratives show that Qur'anic memorization functions not only as a spiritual discipline but also as systematic mental training that strengthens attention, memory retention, and phonological sensitivity, cognitive domains essential for second language acquisition, especially vocabulary development, pronunciation, and sustained focus. From the analysis, three sub-themes emerged that illustrate how these neurocognitive elements connect *tahfidz* with English learning.

Repetition and auditory sensitivity as memory reinforcement

This subtheme highlights how repetitive practice and auditory sensitivity function as key mechanisms in strengthening memory and sustaining motivation in Qur'anic memorization, which later shape participants' approaches to English learning. The data indicate that visual repetition, auditory exposure, melody, and technological mediation play a crucial role in maintaining engagement and facilitating retention. Mecca expressed, "We introduced new approaches to memorise. It uses technology, such as listening to recitations from *YouTube* or audio played through speakers. For me, melody plays a crucial role; when I like the rhythm of a recitation, it sticks more easily and makes memorization more enjoyable and engaging" (Mecca, Q8, SN). Rather than highlighting a specific technique, Mecca shows how learners develop a tendency to actively seek meaningful and motivating forms of engagement when facing monotony. Additionally, Medina described how she directly applied the systematic repetition pattern during *tahfidz* in learning English grammar. She said, "When learning tenses, I did not directly memorise them. One day I learn one tense, then the next day another new tense. I used the same learning way like *muroja'ah* ... it really supports, because I already have habits of struggling like that which automatically formed" (Medina, Q4).

Moreover, the *muroja'ah* practice combines structured repetition with auditory training. During collective recitation, students read different portions, requiring constant attention. Instead of verbal correction, the teacher signals errors nonverbally, prompting students to independently identify mistakes in order, wording, pronunciation, or tajwid. This method strengthens self-monitoring and auditory sensitivity, which can be transferred to English learning, particularly in pronunciation accuracy and phonetic awareness. Medina added, "During group memorization, everyone recites different sections, so full focus is essential. When a mistake occurs, it is not corrected verbally, only a subtle tap on the table, forcing us to identify the error ourselves, whether it is in the verse order,

wording, pronunciation, or *tajwid*” (Medina, Q1). In addition, Jeddah also emphasized that the process of memorizing Qur’anic verses trains the neuron connections continuously, so it forms a natural habit to train the sounds of language. He informed, “the memorizing process is how we repeat it again and again. It is the same with English, if you do not want to train it again and again, then you will not be fluent in speaking English” (Jeddah, Q4). Participants perceived repetitive memorization as mentally strengthening fluency and pronunciation accuracy. Overall, the findings indicate that scheduled repetition, contextual review, and auditory sensitivity within the *tafhidz* function as transferable neurocognitive assets for English learning, enhancing focused listening, structured repetition, self-correction, and vocabulary retention. For Mecca, auditory repetition reinforced engagement and retention; for Medina, repetition reinforced structural principles in grammar learning; and for Jeddah, repetition primarily reinforced oral eloquence. Therefore, repetition appears to be a common learning tendency, expressed in different ways across various linguistic tasks, rather than simply a single technique that can be applied in a variety of contexts.

Structured thinking and attentive endurance

Participants reported that Qur’anic memorization also fosters structured thinking and strong attentional endurance. This disciplined systematic approach goes beyond memorizing verses, promoting methodical processing, organization, and retention of information. In language learning, such structured thinking helps learners break down complex concepts, identify key points, and apply knowledge effectively. Medina illustrated how the structure of memorization enforces perseverance in handling difficult material, without skipping challenging sections. She informed, “for instance, if this page is difficult, I directly jump to page five. Of course, that is not allowed. In the end, we have to struggle with that verse until we truly memorize it. That’s how it teaches me the perseverance, because we cannot skip, so we have to learn whether we like it or not” (Medina, Q6). She added how mastery in Qur’anic memorization is valued in other demanding disciplines, such as medicine, because it reflects the ability to persist and work systematically through complex challenges, “people who have memorized the Qur’an can enter medical school without tests in some universities because their perseverance shows they can learn anything. Memorizing long passages in a foreign language like Arabic trains the brain to complete tasks thoroughly, be responsible, consistent, and careful. Qualities that transfer into academic success” (Medina, Q10). Ahsa contributed another dimension to structured thinking by connecting the concise yet meaningful nature of Qur’anic language to effective communication strategies. He stated, “when memorizing the Qur’an, I noticed its language is concise yet deeply meaningful. It taught me to speak without unnecessary words, a principle I apply to English as well, using familiar, common language that learners can easily understand” (Ahsa, Q4). He further reflected on how certain chapters of the Qur’an posed unique challenges, and how this experience parallels difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. He stated, “when memorizing the Qur’an, I find short verses in long surah more challenging because they demand greater concentration. Similarly in English, the more uncommon the vocabulary, the harder it is, but continuous study is essential, whether we enjoy it or not” (Ahsa, Q6).

These experiences show that structured thinking, effective communication, and perseverance build mental stamina, which supports consistent learning and is especially valuable in language learning, where patience and persistence are key. Moreover, Medina highlighted how emotional intelligence complements intellectual ability, enabling individuals to persist even when their IQ is average. She said, “even if someone is not very smart, at least they are enthusiastic, persistent, and willing to keep trying until the end. That means they have high emotional intelligence, even if their intellectual intelligence is average” (Medina, Q10). In addition, Yazid observed that the struggle involved in Qur’anic memorization equips individuals to handle future academic, professional, and personal challenges. He shared, “memorizing the Qur’an builds courage, courage to submit one’s recitation to the teacher and to face challenges. This mental strength carries over to other areas, from academic struggles like thesis writing and presentations to professional and entrepreneurial

endeavours. In this sense, Qur'anic memorization is not the goal itself, but a key that opens many doors" (Yazid, Q10).

Overall, the narratives above suggest that what the participants took away from the *tahfidz* programme was not merely a memorization technique, but a broader approach to learning. In the various stories recounted, repetition, perseverance, self-monitoring, structured practice and a willingness to face difficulties recur frequently, although how these are expressed vary amongst the participants. These interrelated characteristics, rather than identical learning strategies, form the strongest foundation for interpreting these narratives through the concept of cognitive habitus.

Latent cognitive habitus as dispositional outcomes

Latent cognitive habitus refers to deeply rooted mental patterns shaping learning, problem-solving, and perseverance, often unconsciously. In participants, it developed through long-term Qur'an memorization, which demands consistency, strategy, and resilience. Over time, these dispositions became internalized, guiding learners' approach to challenges and transferring to other areas, including English learning and broader academic or professional tasks. Medina described in the previous subtheme how the non-negotiable structure of Qur'anic memorization, where one cannot simply skip difficult sections, taught her persistence and problem-solving. This experience reflects an emerging self-positioning as an autonomous learner who refuses to avoid cognitive difficulty. Mecca similarly reflected that the process naturally instilled perseverance. She shared, "The Qur'an teaches you to be persistent. If you haven't memorized it yet, you keep memorizing. If you still can't, you read it again and again until you memorize it. Without realizing it, you're learning to be persistent" (Mecca, Q5). Here, perseverance appears not as a consciously chosen strategy, but as an internalized disposition that operates almost automatically during learning. For Yazid, the cognitive habitus extended beyond persistence, shaping a systematic approach to comprehension before memorization, which was then applied to other languages and subjects. He shared, "To understand reading comprehension, I first need to master the grammar, similar to memorizing the Qur'an. I rarely memorize lessons. Instead, I understand them first, and only then can I memorize. I eventually apply this approach to other subjects as well, including when learning Turkish" (Yazid, Q5). This reflects not merely a learning technique, but a stable epistemic orientation toward knowledge, indicating a habitual preference for conceptual clarity rather than mechanical learning. He also emphasized the transfer of mental resilience from Qur'anic memorization to broader academic and professional struggles. He expressed, "Memorizing the Qur'an requires courage, especially to recite it to a teacher. In English, you also need courage to practice. This mentality can be gained through Quran memorization ..." (Yazid, Q10). This narrative frames struggle not as an obstacle, but as a transferable mental resource that shapes the learner's identity across academic and professional domains.

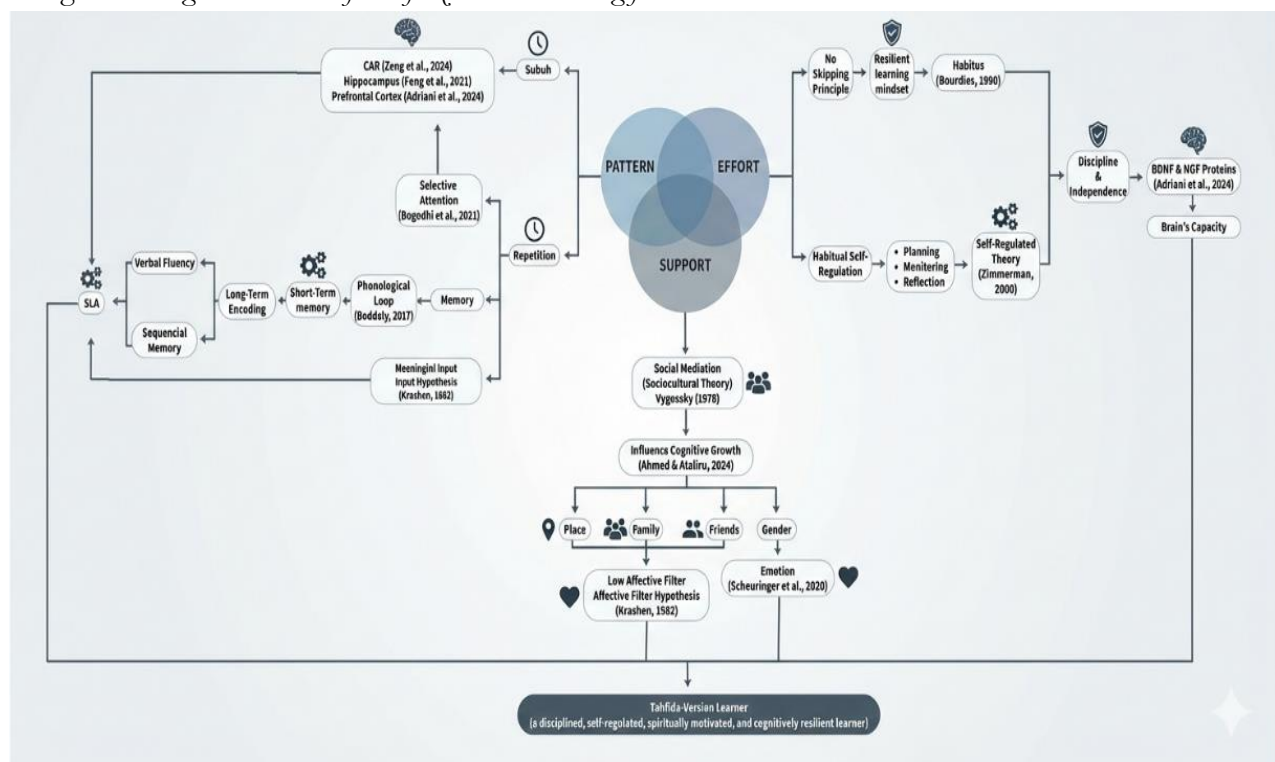
These narratives reveal how the disciplined routines, repeated exposure to difficulty, and sustained self-regulation cultivated through Qur'anic memorization gradually form a latent cognitive habitus. This habitus does not operate as a conscious learning strategy, but as an internalized disposition that shapes how learners perceive difficulty, position themselves as persistent learners, and engage in intellectual struggle. Across participants, a common orientation emerges: the refusal to skip challenges, the tendency to regulate one's own learning, and the readiness to confront cognitive demands. Rather than remaining confined to the religious domain, these dispositions become transferable orientations that influence English learning and broader academic practices. Among the participants, discipline emerged not as rigid compliance, but as a learnt orientation towards continuity. Yazid described discipline through stable daily routines, whilst Riyadh demonstrated a more adaptive form by integrating *muraja'ah* into essentially unstructured moments. Medina interprets the same experience at a more reflective level, describing it as a 'learning mindset'. Thus, the commonality lies in the internalisation of consistency, rather than in identical routines. This distinction is significant as it indicates that what participants perceive as transferable from *tahfidz* to English language learning is not a fixed memorization procedure, but rather a tendency to organise, maintain and control learning amidst constantly changing circumstances.

DISCUSSION

These findings suggest that the participants' English language learning was influenced by a series of learning tendencies linked to their long-term *tahfidz* experience, particularly structured routines, sustained effort and a supportive learning environment. Rather than demonstrating direct neurocognitive effects of memorizing the Qur'an, these narratives suggest that the participants perceive a continuity between the practices developed through *tahfidz* and the way they approach English language learning. This connection is most evident in their descriptions of regular practice, repetition, perseverance, self-regulation, and a willingness to engage with challenging learning tasks. These findings extend previous research that has linked Qur'an memorization to cognitive and academic processes such as memory, attention, verbal fluency, and academic achievement (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Faidah, 2020; Sirin et al., 2021), whilst also linking these processes to established perspectives on working memory and self-regulated language learning (Baddeley, 2017; Bai & Wang, 2023; Panadero, 2017). The results of this research highlight the learning styles of *huffaz* and how their *habitus* aligns with their language acquisition when viewed from a neuroscience perspective. First, *huffaz* tend to demonstrate certain patterns within learning. Second, their *tahfidz* *habitus* effectively shapes a cognitive *habitus*, which provides significant advantages for language acquisition. Third, *huffaz* succeed in cultivating a strong *habitus* through *tahfidz* largely due to the surrounding support they receive from family, peers, environment, and even gender-related dynamics. These three points collectively reflect a deeper discussion through Figure 2 below:

Figure 2

Integrative Model of Tahfidz-Based Learning for SLA



Source: Author's own conceptualization based on the findings and discussion

Pattern: From repeated practice to learning dispositions

One key finding relates to the role of routine and repetitive practice in the participants' English language learning process. Several participants described how they began their daily activities after the Fajr prayer, maintained a regular habit of *muraja'ah*, divided their learning into manageable units, and repeatedly reviewed material they had previously learnt. Riyadh, for example, explained that he

incorporated revision into his spare moments within his daily routine, whilst Medina described applying a similar approach involving step-by-step learning and review when studying English grammar. These accounts demonstrate that the common feature amongst the participants is not adherence to identical routines, but rather a shared focus on continuity, repetition, and planned engagement with learning tasks. Consequently, these findings extend previous research on *tahfidz* by suggesting that what participants regard as transferable is not the content of the Qur'an or specific memorization techniques, but rather a broader approach to organising learning.

This pattern aligns with research emphasising the role of repetition and working memory in language learning. Baddeley (2017) highlights the relevance of working memory processes to language acquisition, whilst Arredondo-Tapia and Garcia-Ponce (2021) demonstrate the importance of task repetition for developing fluency and accuracy in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The findings of this study generally confirm the relevance of repetition, but also add an important contextual dimension: the participants understood repetition through religiously structured practices that had been carried out over a long period of time. In this regard, repetition is not merely a classroom technique, but rather part of an established learning routine. This distinction contributes to the existing literature by suggesting that the significance of repetition may depend not only on the frequency of practice, but also on learning dispositions and the meaning attached to the practice.

A neurocognitive perspective may offer a theoretical explanation as to why repetition and sustained attention are relevant in these various contexts. Previous research has linked repetitive learning experiences to memory-related processes and has investigated the neural complexity underpinning language learning (Feng et al., 2021; Roger et al., 2022). However, these studies should be used here solely as interpretative background. This study did not measure neural activity, working memory capacity, or other neurophysiological outcomes. Therefore, the participants' accounts should be understood as evidence of a perceived continuity between the practice of repetitive memorization and English language learning, rather than as evidence that *tahfidz* directly alters their neural functioning.

Effort: Persistence as an internalized learning orientation

The second prominent dimension in the *huffaz*'s learning process lies in effort, rooted in discipline, perseverance, and cognitive endurance. Participants consistently adhered to the principle of "no skipping" difficult verses, reflecting that success in *tahfidz* is measured by consistency and willingness to struggle, not speed. Medina, Ahsa and Yazid repeatedly described the principle of *tahfidz*, which teaches one not to avoid difficult sections and to continue practising until mastery is achieved. In their English language learning, the participants also described similar perseverance when dealing with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and other challenges. Although the participants differed in the ways they expressed this perseverance, their narratives converged on the idea that difficulties must be overcome through sustained engagement, rather than by avoiding them.

These findings are consistent with the literature on self-regulated learning, particularly regarding the importance of planning, monitoring, perseverance, and reflection in sustaining learning efforts (Panadero, 2017). These findings also complement research on motivation and self-regulated English language learning, which emphasises the contribution of learners' beliefs, intrinsic values, and self-regulatory capacities to sustained engagement (Bai & Wang, 2023). However, the current findings add a faith-based dimension to this discussion. Participants did not describe perseverance solely as an academic strategy. Rather, perseverance is embedded within a moral and spiritual understanding of learning, in which difficulties can be interpreted as part of a meaningful process of self-development. For some participants, learning English is therefore linked to worship, personal challenges, or a contribution to the community of believers. These findings ultimately expand the concept of self-regulation by demonstrating that perseverance can be shaped by a learner's broader system of meaning-making. This is significant as it indicates that learning dispositions are not always formed solely within the language classroom. Such dispositions can also be developed through ongoing participation in other cultural and religious practices, and subsequently interpreted as relevant to

language learning. From the perspective of cognitive habitus, repeated experiences of facing difficulties can lead to a relatively enduring orientation towards learning. Here, cognitive habitus is not viewed as a directly measurable cognitive structure, but rather as an interpretative concept to explain why participants repeatedly described perseverance, discipline and self-regulation as distinctive ways of approaching learning.

The existing neuroscience literature offers possible theoretical explanations for the relationship between repeated practice and cognitive adaptation, including discussions of neuroplasticity and memory-related processes. However, this literature should not be interpreted as evidence that participants in this study experienced measurable neurobiological changes. Therefore, claims regarding brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), nerve growth factor (NGF), hippocampal activity, or neuroplasticity remain theoretical possibilities based on previous research, rather than findings substantiated by this research. The contribution of this research lies instead in highlighting how the participants themselves view the sustained practice of *tahfidz* as shaping the way they respond to difficulties in learning English.

Support: Learning as a socially situated process

The final dimension emerging from the findings is support, a multidimensional construct encompassing social, emotional, spiritual, and neurobiological elements. While *huffaz* exhibits strong self-regulation and perseverance, their learning thrives within networks of external and internal scaffolds that provide emotional balance, motivation, and cognitive stability. Support operates as both environmental and embodied, shaping sustained effort, stress processing, and meaningful learning. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, cognitive growth is socially mediated, and for *huffaz*, this manifests through *pesantren* discipline, peer encouragement, and family guidance, fostering a low affective filter for calm, focused, and motivated learning (Poehner & Lantolf, 2022). Empirical accounts illustrate these forms: Yazid highlighted parental encouragement as his emotional foundation, Mecca emphasized a peaceful home environment, and Medina valued peer discussions and group recitations for belonging and confidence, demonstrating how affective support lowers anxiety and enhances receptivity to learning. Therefore, the commonality amongst these accounts relates to the importance of supportive conditions, whilst the differences relate to how the participants positioned external support in relation to their own initiatives.

These findings are important for understanding *tahfidz* as a learning ecology, rather than merely an individual memorization activity. The disciplinary structure of the *pesantren*, peer interactions, family encouragement, and personal commitment collectively shape the conditions in which repetitive practice can be sustained. Thus, the learning dispositions described by the participants cannot be attributed exclusively to individual cognitive processes. These dispositions emerge through the interaction between personal initiative and a socially organised learning environment. This observation reinforces the interpretation of cognitive habitus as a socially contextualised disposition, rather than merely an internal or biological characteristic.

Consequently, this study both confirms and extends the findings of previous research. It confirms the importance of environmental support and motivation in sustaining learning, whilst expanding this understanding by demonstrating how a religiously structured environment can contribute to the normalisation of certain learning practices, including repetition, discipline, self-monitoring and perseverance. The significance of these practices lies not in any presumed biological effects, but in how participants internalise and subsequently recognise these practices within other learning contexts.

Cognitive habitus as an interpretative contribution

Overall, the three dimensions identified in the findings, structured patterns, sustained effort and social support, form the basis for interpreting cognitive habitus as the key conceptual contribution of this study. These findings suggest that what participants perceived as transferable from *tahfidz* to English language learning was not merely a single memorization strategy. Rather, it constituted a broader

orientation towards learning characterised by regularity, perseverance, self-regulation, attention to difficulties, and a willingness to repeatedly engage with challenging material. These characteristics emerged amongst the participants, although their specific manifestations varied according to each individual's experiences and learning context. In this regard, the concept of cognitive habitus expands upon previous discussions of Qur'anic memorization and language learning in two ways. Firstly, this concept shifts the analytical focus from the question of whether *tahfidz* yields measurable cognitive benefits to how long-term participation in *tahfidz* can be perceived as shaping enduring learning tendencies. Secondly, this concept links faith-based learning with second-language acquisition without assuming that the two domains are cognitively or neurologically identical. The relationship identified in this study is therefore one of perceived continuity in learning orientation, rather than proven causal transfer. This distinction is important because this study is qualitative and interpretative. Its findings cannot prove that *tahfidz* causes changes in memory capacity, neural connectivity, hippocampal function, cortisol regulation, or language processing efficiency. Rather, the participants' narratives provide evidence that they themselves perceive their experiences of repetition, discipline, perseverance, and self-regulation as relevant to their English language learning. This interpretation is consistent with the use of 'cognitive habitus' in this study as a theoretical lens, rather than as a neurocognitive construct that can be measured directly.

An integrative model of tahfidz-based learning

Figure 2 presents an integrative model developed from the thematic patterns identified in the participants' narratives. Consequently, this model should be understood as a conceptualisation derived inductively from thematic analysis and subsequently interpreted through existing theoretical perspectives, rather than as a validated causal model. Three dimensions (patterns, efforts and support) emerge from the empirical reports, whilst concepts from self-regulated learning, sociocultural theory and cognitive habitus are used to interpret the relationships between these three (Panadero, 2017; Poehner & Lantolf, 2022; Riawanti, 2017). This model enriches current understanding of English language learning by proposing that learners' approaches to English may be influenced by dispositions developed through prior learning experiences rooted in cultural and religious contexts. Consequently, its contribution lies not in predicting English language learning outcomes or explaining neural mechanisms, but in providing a conceptual framework for understanding how a learner's educational history can shape their orientation towards language learning.

This model also highlights an important caveat. The relationship between *tahfidz* and English language learning should not be interpreted as a simple or universal transfer process. Learners vary in their motivation, study routines, educational environments, and their interpretations of the role of religion in language learning. Consequently, this model represents a heuristic explanation of the patterns identified within this specific group of *huffaz*. Further research utilising longitudinal designs, cognitive assessments, or neurophysiological measurements could investigate whether the relationships identified here correspond to measurable cognitive or neural processes.

Finally, these findings raise broader theoretical issues regarding the dangers of reducing religious practice to merely an instrumental educational value. Although participants described *tahfidz* as influencing their learning dispositions, memorizing the Qur'an is not experienced solely as a cognitive training technique. For some participants, its significance remains fundamentally spiritual, ethical, and communal in nature. Therefore, the contribution of this research is not to redefine *tahfidz* as a cognitive technology for English language learning, but rather to demonstrate how religious learning practices can be experienced as part of a broader learning identity, in which faith, discipline, meaning and academic development intersect. This perspective enables English language education to acknowledge the pre-existing cultural and religious learning histories of learners without reducing those histories to mere cognitive or instrumental functions.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how *huffaz* experience learning English in relation to their long-term *tahfidz* practice. The findings indicate three recurring dimensions in participants' narratives: structured learning patterns, sustained effort, and supportive learning environments, reflected in practices such as repetition, regular routines, self-regulation, perseverance, and sustained attention to challenging tasks. Although these practices varied across participants, their narratives suggest that the perceived relevance of *tahfidz* to English language learning lies less in the direct transfer of specific memorization techniques than in broader learning dispositions developed through sustained and socially embedded learning experiences. Theoretically, the study positions cognitive habitus as an interpretative lens for understanding how repeated learning practices may become relatively enduring dispositions that learners perceive as relevant across learning contexts, while narrative inquiry provides insight into how learners themselves make meaning of these connections. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that English language educators may recognise learners' cultural and religious learning histories as potential resources for engagement, while avoiding the reduction of *tahfidz* to an instrumental cognitive technique. Given the small, context-specific sample and the absence of cognitive or neurophysiological measures, these findings should be understood as interpretative rather than causal evidence. Future research could therefore employ larger, more diverse, mixed-methods, or longitudinal designs, alongside cognitive assessments or neurophysiological measures, to examine whether the learning dispositions identified in these narratives are associated with measurable patterns in language learning and cognition.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

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