

## **How Do Deaf Students Learn to Shalat? (A Descriptive Study at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School for Deaf Students in Yogyakarta, Indonesia)**

**Bayu Pamungkas\*, Amat Jamaludin, Rochmat Wahab**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Special Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: [bayu.pamungkas@uny.ac.id](mailto:bayu.pamungkas@uny.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This study addresses the lack of inclusive methods for teaching shalat to deaf students by introducing a visual approach using hijaiyah sign letters to enhance understanding and participation. Conducted at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School for the Deaf in Yogyakarta, the research highlights how sign-based instruction makes shalat more accessible for deaf learners. Using a qualitative approach with purposive sampling, the study employed observation, interviews, and documentation of shalat instruction, and the data were analyzed thematically with researcher engagement and field notes ensuring validity. The findings indicate that the use of sign language for Arabic letters in shalat improves both conceptual understanding and practical skills. The step-by-step teaching process, supported by the Riyadh-based sign language system, promotes inclusivity and meaningful participation in religious practices. Although limited by a small sample size and the intensive teacher training required, the study contributes valuable insights into the potential of sign language for religious education of deaf students. The research suggests the development of a structured teaching module based on the successful practices at Darul Ashom, focusing on the use of hijaiyah sign language to teach shalat. Such a module could be adopted by other educational institutions, ensuring accessible and consistent instruction for children with hearing impairments.

**Keywords:** Deaf student; learning; shalat; boarding school.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Law number 20 of 2003 of the Republic of Indonesia on the National Education System states that national education aims to develop learners into individuals who are faithful, pious, noble in character, intelligent, creative, independent, and responsible democratic citizens. This highlights that Indonesian education places strong emphasis on shaping religious character and the proper practice of religious teachings, alongside strengthening knowledge, creativity, and independence. In line with this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation Number 13 of 2014 of the Republic of Indonesia affirms that Islamic education aims to instill faith, piety, noble character, and the ability to practice Islamic teachings in daily life.

Shalat is one of the pillars of Islam that must be performed by every Muslim as an act of obedience to Allah SWT. In Islamic education, teaching shalat is a fundamental aspect that should be introduced from an early age, including to children with special needs such as those with hearing impairments. However, empirical realities indicate that children with hearing impairments often face significant challenges in fully understanding the procedures of shalat. This is due to limited access to verbal instructions, which are commonly used in teaching worship, making it difficult for them to grasp the movements, recitations, and meanings of shalat (Canida et al., 2022; Al-Ibrahim, 2019; AbdElghfar, 2023).

Most existing methods of teaching shalat still rely on audio-based media or written texts, which indirectly hinder deaf students from comprehensively understanding the content. The absence of visual and communicative media based on sign language makes the learning process non-inclusive. In fact, deaf students have the potential to understand and perform worship independently if provided with methods that are aligned with their learning characteristics (Mardiyanti & Haryanthi, 2016; Mud et al., 2021). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emphasizes that every learner has the right to accessible and responsive

instruction that accommodates diverse abilities, encouraging schools to design flexible and barrier-free learning environments from the outset. This framework provides a strong foundation for developing truly inclusive religious education for deaf students (Anggraini & Subasno, 2024). Therefore, it is urgent to develop a shalat learning model that is responsive to the needs of deaf students, particularly through a sign language-based approach that is communicative and easy to understand.

Several studies have attempted to address this issue by proposing various approaches to shalat learning for children with hearing impairments. Khair and Lukmenda (2025) found that picture media, combined with sign language and teacher demonstration, effectively enhanced deaf students' ability to master both shalat movements and recitations. Similarly, Hasanah, Nursyamsi, and Wiratman (2025) highlighted adaptive strategies applied by Islamic education teachers, such as visual media, kinesthetic demonstrations, and individualized support, which significantly improved students' comprehension of shalat. Meanwhile, Apriani, Shalihah, and Hamzah (2023) demonstrated the combined use of demonstration methods, sign language, and oral (lip-reading) techniques, while also noting challenges such as teachers' limited sign language skills and the diverse levels of hearing loss among students. Together, these findings confirm that deaf students can learn and perform shalat effectively when teachers utilize multisensory and adaptive methods tailored to their learning characteristics.

Existing studies, however, remain fragmented, focusing mainly on partial strategies such as visual aids, demonstration, or sign-supported communication. They have not yet produced a comprehensive learning model that systematically integrates movements, recitations, and meanings of shalat into a unified pedagogical framework. This creates a gap in knowledge regarding how inclusive shalat instruction can be holistically designed and implemented across diverse educational contexts. Addressing this gap is crucial to ensure that deaf students are not only able to imitate the physical aspects of shalat but also internalize its spiritual meaning as part of their religious development.

Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School has emerged as a pioneering Islamic educational institution specifically for deaf students in Indonesia. This school consistently develops a sign language-based learning approach in all religious activities, including the teaching of shalat. Currently, the school accommodates 175 students, with 80 percent classified as profoundly deaf and 20 percent as hard of hearing. The uniqueness of its approach lies not only in the use of sign language but also in the integration of Islamic values through visualization, direct modeling, and reinforcement of daily practices. Empirical evidence shows that the students at Darul Ashom are not only able to memorize the movements and recitations of shalat but also to perform them consistently and with full concentration. This success has been widely reported in national and international media (Republika, 2021; BBC, 2022; VOA, 2022), indicating that the sign language-based shalat learning method implemented at this school is highly effective and has strong potential for replication. Nevertheless, the approach applied at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School has not yet been widely adopted by other institutions serving deaf students. Meanwhile, the need for shalat learning that is inclusive and aligned with the characteristics of deaf students is essential to realizing an equitable and just Islamic education system. Based on this background, this study aims to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of the sign language-based shalat learning approach at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference and recommendation for other educational institutions in developing adaptive, participatory, and inclusive shalat learning methods for deaf students.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of study aimed at describing how teachers implement shalat learning for deaf students. The population in this study includes all deaf students participating in the shalat learning program, with the sampling technique used being purposive sampling, which is a sampling method based on specific criteria and considerations set by the researcher (Creswell, 2018). The participant in this study is detailed in the following table.

**Table 1. Teacher Partisipants**

No	Participants	Criteria	Amount
1	Teacher	(a) Have more than five years of teaching experience at Pondok Pesantren Tunarungu Darul Ashom Yogyakarta; (b) Specialize in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), particularly in shalat learning;	3
2	Students	(a) Have mastered huruf hijaiyah isyarat as a prerequisite for Qur'anic and shalat learning; (b) Have acquired the basic movements and recitations of shalat	3

**Table 2. Student Partisipants**

No	Participants	Hearing Status	Age	Educational Background
1	Student A	Totally deaf	10	No prior educational experience before entering the pesantren
2	Student B	Totally deaf	12	No prior educational experience before entering the pesantren
3	Student C	Hard of hearing	18	Has previous experience in formal schooling

The three students and three teachers were selected purposely based on specific criteria: the teachers had more than five years of teaching experience, and the students had already mastered the complete movements and recitations of shalat. Despite the small sample, data saturation was ensured through repeated observations and in-depth interviews, where similar patterns, behaviors, and responses emerged consistently across participants, indicating that additional data collection would likely not yield new information.

Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of teaching materials. The instruments employed were observation guides and interview guides, both developed based on relevant learning indicators. The interviews in this study were mainly directed at obtaining comprehensive data regarding the steps carried out in the series of shalat instructional activities for deaf students. The interviews took approximately 45–90 minutes for each teacher and deaf student respondent.

In conducting interviews with deaf students, the researcher directly used Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) without the assistance of an interpreter. This approach was possible because the researcher is a specialist in special education, particularly in the education of children with hearing impairments, and has advanced proficiency in BISINDO. Such expertise ensured accurate communication, minimized the risk of misinterpretation, and strengthened the authenticity of the data obtained. Nevertheless, the researcher acknowledges that their dual role as both expert and interviewer may have influenced participant responses, potentially creating a sense of authority or expectation that could shape how students expressed their experiences. To mitigate this, the researcher employed rapport-building strategies, maintained a neutral interviewing stance, and triangulated interview findings with observational data to reduce potential bias arising from this dual role.

The fieldwork was carried out over six months, from November 2024 to April 2025, at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School, located at Jalan Sumatera, Kayen C11/C13, Condong Catur, Depok, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta. In this study, the researcher emphasized observation on five aspects:

**Table 3. Observed Aspects**

No	Aspect
1	The general process of shalat instruction
2	The shalat instructional methods used
3	The shalat instructional media used
4	The performance of obligatory shalat by the students outside the instructional sessions
5	The performance of sunnah shalat by the students outside the instructional sessions

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis. The researcher familiarized themselves with transcripts and notes, generated initial codes manually, and grouped similar codes into preliminary themes. Overlapping codes, such as gesture clarification, visual modeling, and movement correction, were merged into broader categories. Codes without sufficient support were discarded. Themes were refined iteratively and validated through peer debriefing to ensure alignment with participants' experiences, involving six recursive phases: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) constructing themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up. This structured process facilitated a flexible and reflective interpretation of qualitative data, allowing the researcher to identify complex patterns and meanings grounded in participants' lived experiences.

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through multiple strategies. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, teachers, and documents. Method triangulation was also applied by combining observation, interviews, and documentation. Prolonged engagement in the field strengthened the researcher's familiarity with the research context and built trust with participants. Reflective journaling was employed to record positionality, analytic decisions, and researcher reflexivity throughout the process. Peer debriefing with colleagues in special education research further enhanced analytical rigor. In line with Nowell et al. (2017), audit trails, reflexivity, and triangulation were applied to support credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend strategies such as thick description, member checking, and peer review, which were also considered to improve the rigor and transparency of the qualitative findings.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Finding(s)

The findings of this study show that shalat instruction for deaf students at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School begins with the introduction of the significance and virtues of shalat. Based on interview data, ustadz reported that the initial step of instruction is ensuring that students have mastered the sign language representations of Arabic letters, followed by exposure to selected hadiths about the virtues of shalat. The following excerpt illustrates this:

*Q: "According to you, Ustadz, what is the first step needed to help deaf students learn shalat?"*

*A: "The very first thing we do is ensure that the students have already mastered the sign language version of the Arabic letters. This is a fundamental prerequisite before they begin memorizing the recitations in shalat, as Arabic letters form the basis of the shalats. After that, we focus more on helping the students understand that shalat is important, so we present hadiths about the virtues of shalat before they start learning. This helps to motivate them to study more earnestly."*

Observations confirmed that several hadiths related to the virtues of shalat were taught using sign language. The hadiths were presented in simplified sentence structures and delivered visually through BISINDO. Table 3 displays the interpreted meanings (mafhum) of the hadiths used during instruction.

**Table 4. Hadiths on the virtues of shalat delivered by the ustadz.**

No	Aspects
1	The Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever guards their shalat, Allah will protect them."
2	The Prophet Muhammad said: "The first deed to be asked about on the Day of Judgment is shalat; if it is good, all other deeds will be good; if it is bad, all other deeds will be bad."
3	The Prophet Muhammad said: "Seek help from Allah through patience and shalat."
4	The Prophet Muhammad said, "The difference between a Muslim and a disbeliever is shalat."
5	The Prophet Muhammad said, "Shalat is like the head to the body."

Interview data also indicated that after receiving theoretical instruction, students practiced both sunnah and obligatory shalat. The ustadz explained this sequence as follows:

*Q: "How do you train deaf students to remember each movement and shalat in shalat?"*

*A: "So, after the students learn the movements and recitations of shalat, they immediately practice them repeatedly. They begin by learning to express the recitations using sign language during shalat sunnah, and we allow this as a form of rukhsah (concession) for them, if the wrists are not lifted. Later, they gradually learn to internalize the recitations in their hearts for use during shalat wajib."*

The responses from deaf students corresponded with this instructional practice:

*Q: "How do you remember the recitations in shalat?"*

*A: "I use sign language to express the shalat recitations during shalat dhuha, tahajjud, and other sunnah shalats. During the five obligatory shalat, I recall the recitations in my heart."*

*Q: "Is it difficult for you to memorize the shalat recitations?"*

*A: "It's not difficult. The recitations are repeated, and alhamdulillah, over time, I have memorized them."*

Observational data further showed that during sunnah shalat, students used subtle sign movements to express recitations, while during congregational obligatory prayers, they followed the imam as typically practiced in group prayer.



**Figure 1. During shalat wajib (obligatory prayers), deaf students fully followed the imam, as is commonly practiced in congregational prayer.**



Figure 2. During shalat sunnah (non-obligatory prayers), they used subtle sign movements without raising their wrists to express the prayer recitations.



Figure 3. Al-Fatiha in hijaiyah sign letters



Figure 4. Hijaiyah sign letters

Observations documented the use of images depicting steps of wudhu and shalat movements. Observations documented the use of images depicting steps of wudhu and shalat movements. The ustadz confirmed this during interviews:

*Q: "I also noticed several images showing the steps of wudhu and shalat movements. Could you explain their importance, Ustadz?"*

*A: "Oh yes, we use those images to help visualize what we're teaching, so it becomes easier for the students to learn shalat, because the images reinforce what we demonstrate."*

Student interviews supported this finding:

*Q: "How does the ustadz teach the movements and recitations of shalat?"*

*A: The ustadz demonstrates them, and we observe. Then he asks if we are confused or not. If someone is confused, the ustadz explains and points to the pictures to make it clearer."*

*Q: "What do you do if you still don't understand after the ustadz explains?"*

*A: "I usually ask again using sign language. The ustadz answers patiently and sometimes repeats the demonstration until we understand."*

From the triangulation of interview and observational data, the shalat instruction process at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School was found to consist of six sequential stages, summarized as follows:

**Table 5. Stage of shalat Instruction**

No	Stage	Description
1	Introducing the Virtues and Legal Rulings of <i>Shalat</i>	Before learning the technical aspects of <i>shalat</i> , the <i>ustadz</i> explains the importance, virtues, and legal rulings of <i>shalat</i> in Islam. This aims to help students approach the learning process wholeheartedly.
2	Demonstration of <i>Shalat</i> Movements	The <i>ustadz</i> demonstrates the <i>shalat</i> movements, and the students imitate them gradually and repeatedly.
3	Reading and Memorizing <i>Shalat</i> Recitations Using Sign Language	Students learn to read and memorize <i>shalat</i> recitations through sign-based representations of the Arabic letters
4	Integration of Recitations with <i>Shalat</i> Movements	Memorized recitations are practiced together with the full sequence of <i>shalat</i> movements.
5	Comprehension of the Meaning of Recitations and Movements	Students are given simplified explanations of the meaning behind the <i>shalat</i> movements and recitations to support deeper understanding.
6	Habit Formation and Daily Practice of <i>Shalat</i>	Students are encouraged to regularly and consistently perform daily and congregational <i>shalat</i> as part of the implementation of what they have learned.

School is carried out through six stages, namely: Introducing the Virtues and Legal Rulings of Shalat, Demonstration of Shalat Movements, Reading and Memorizing Shalat Recitations Using Sign Language, Integration of Recitations with Shalat Movements, Comprehension of the Meaning of Recitations and Movements, and Habit Formation and Daily Practice of Shalat. The findings of this study show that students' progress in completing the stages of shalat learning varies considerably. These differences are influenced by a range of individual factors, particularly cognitive abilities, learning motivation, and each student's internal readiness. This condition presents a significant challenge for teachers, as they must adjust their instructional strategies to accommodate the differing learning paces across the six stages of shalat instruction.

## **Discussion**

This research shows that the use of sign language in shalat instruction at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School plays a highly significant role in enhancing both the conceptual understanding and practical skills of performing shalat among deaf students. In practice, the sign language applied in the shalat lessons at this pesantren does not merely involve general gestures or symbols but is specifically developed using sign language for Arabic letters. This system is used by the students in the process of reading, memorizing, and understanding the shalat recitations visually and kinesthetically. Interestingly, the sign language for Arabic letters implemented here has a scholarly chain of transmission (*sanad*) originating from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Agency, 2021), which affirms the validity and authenticity of this approach within the context of global Islamic education.

As the natural language for individuals with hearing impairments (Snoddon & De Meulder, 2020), sign language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an effective pedagogical tool. Through sign language, information regarding the movements, recitations, and spiritual meanings of shalat can be conveyed in a more comprehensive, concrete, and visually appropriate manner for deaf learners. Consequently, this approach enables students to access religious material in a more meaningful way. Furthermore, several studies have shown that the consistent use of sign language can enhance language acquisition, communication skills, and the effectiveness of interaction between teachers and deaf students (Khamaruddin et al., 2020; Fitriyani et al., 2024). This indicates that sign language is inseparable from the learning process of deaf students, including in Islamic education, which encompasses rich symbolic, ritualistic, and spiritual dimensions.

The findings of this study also show that shalat learning for deaf students represents not only a pedagogical strategy but also a form of *rukhsah* that enables them to access and understand religious teachings functionally. From the perspective of religious inclusion, this approach reflects the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, where Islamic law provides flexibility for individuals with limitations to fulfill their religious duties. However, although religious rights for persons with disabilities are guaranteed, implementation at the local level still faces obstacles, such as limited socialization and weak institutional coordination (Yasin, 2021). Religious organizations have begun offering disability-friendly initiatives, including services for Umrah pilgrims with special needs (Ortega & Amin, 2023). Yet these remain partial and do not systematically address foundational religious education, particularly the teaching of shalat to deaf students. Many religious institutions still lack adequate accessibility facilities (Nurhakim, 2019).

Beyond these practical findings, the results also align with disability studies perspectives that highlight a theoretical shift from the medical model to the cultural-linguistic model of deafness. The medical model, still dominant in many Indonesian educational and religious settings, views deafness as a deficit to be corrected through oral or technological interventions (Aydođdu & Canel, 2025). In contrast, the cultural-linguistic model recognizes deafness as a valid linguistic and cultural identity. The use of sign language as the primary medium of religious learning at Darul Ashom reflects the cultural-linguistic approach by enabling deaf students to understand Islamic teachings through their natural language. This orientation legitimizes the linguistic identity of deaf learners and challenges deeply rooted assumptions that religious mastery requires auditory-verbal ability.

Moreover, the integration of sign language in shalat instruction challenges normative expectations that “proper” worship depends on hearing and verbally reciting ritual instructions. Disability perspectives argue that such orientations reproduce ableist standards within religious education (Katsui, 2025). The practice at Darul Ashom expands accepted

forms of ritual participation while remaining aligned with Islamic theological principles of dignity, spiritual equality, and permissible concessions for individuals facing limitations (Hassan & Hussain, 2025). Thus, sign-language-based shalat learning not only facilitates accessibility but also affirms the linguistic and spiritual identity of deaf students.

The findings also resonate with research on deaf identity development, which emphasizes that linguistic accessibility and social acceptance are essential for positive identity formation (Aydoğdu & Canel, 2025). Through structured use of sign language, Darul Ashom provides a religious learning environment that supports healthy identity development for deaf students.

Additionally, these findings point to the need for systemic reform in Indonesian Islamic education. The experience of Darul Ashom illustrates how curriculum design, teacher training, and accessibility policies can be aligned with inclusive linguistic and cultural rights frameworks. This demonstrates how Islamic educational institutions can transform to reduce structural barriers and ensure equitable participation for persons with disabilities.

The results of this study further show that shalat, as one dimension of religiosity, must be taught practically and contextually for deaf students. It cannot be conveyed solely through theoretical instruction but must be realized through direct practice. At Darul Ashom, students are guided visually and kinesthetically so that they can perform shalat independently and with awareness. This finding aligns with Nasution (2020), who emphasizes that shalat encompasses faith, ritual, and moral formation. Carlisle (2019) adds that spiritual practices represent the human desire to connect with God through meaningful repetition, forming spiritual habits. Deaf students at Darul Ashom demonstrate this through their ability to perform both obligatory and sunnah prayers.

Religious practices are also flexible and evolve in response to human needs. Wuthnow (2020) argues that religious practice is adaptive rather than rigid. Therefore, sign-language-based shalat learning at Darul Ashom reflects pedagogical innovation that addresses communication needs while upholding equal spiritual meaning for deaf students. This continuity is supported by the structured stages of shalat learning. Before learning the technical aspects of shalat, teachers ensure that students master sign language for Arabic letters. Pamungkas and Hermanto (2022) affirm that this system is effective for understanding Qur'anic Arabic and suits visual-kinesthetic learning styles. Overall, sign-language-based shalat learning at Darul Ashom strengthens ritual competence, affirms linguistic identity, challenges ableist norms in religious education, and offers a model of inclusive Islamic pedagogy aligned with the principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

To operationalize these inclusive principles within the classroom, the teaching of shalat at Darul Ashom is organized through a structured and sequential model that integrates linguistic accessibility, visual-kinesthetic scaffolding, and gradual mastery of ritual components. A key foundation of this model is the acquisition of sign-based Arabic literacy, which enables deaf students to comprehend the recitations used in shalat. Before progressing to the technical aspects of shalat, teachers ensure that students have fully mastered the sign language system for Arabic letters, as this linguistic foundation allows them to understand the Arabic formulations of the recitations. With this foundation established, the instructional process then transitions into a series of structured stages that guide students from conceptual understanding to complete and independent performance of shalat.

### ***Stage 1. Introducing the Virtues and Legal Rulings of Shalat***

The first stage in the shalat learning process at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School aims to provide students with an understanding of both the virtues (fadhillah) of performing shalat and the Islamic legal rulings (ahkam) governing its practice. Educators emphasize the spiritual and theological rationale behind worship to ensure that students engage in shalat with sincerity, awareness, and deep religious meaning, rather than merely completing rituals. This approach aligns with Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning, which states that new concepts are best understood when linked to students' existing cognitive frameworks (Ausubel, 1968). It also supports the deep learning model proposed by Biggs and Tang (2011), where learners internalize values that lead to long-term behavioral and attitudinal change. For deaf students, such an approach helps them perceive shalat not as a burden but as a spiritually enriching experience. Andrews et al. (2023) further affirm that meaningful learning promotes greater student engagement, knowledge retention, and transfer of learning to different settings.

From an Islamic jurisprudential perspective, deaf students remain religiously obligated to perform shalat to the best of their abilities. Islamic law recognizes the principle of at-taisir (facilitation) and the Qur'anic maxim *la yukallifullahu nafsan illa wus'aha* (Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity), which permits adaptations in acts of worship for individuals with disabilities. These theological foundations allow for alternative methods of fulfilling religious duties, such as using sign language or visual cues in place of verbal components. Rahmat et al. (2018) emphasize that the validity of shalat remains intact when performed with modified techniques by deaf individuals. Incorporating this inclusive understanding early in the learning process not only validates the spiritual rights of deaf students but also fosters a sense of religious confidence and belonging within Islamic education.

### ***Stage 2. Demonstration of Shalat Movements***

The second stage is learning the proper way to perform shalat through direct demonstration. The teacher demonstrates each movement clearly and repeatedly, while the students follow by imitating step by step. This process creates concrete motor-visual learning that is easy to follow for deaf students. This approach aligns with several principles of learning for deaf students that can be implemented in teaching to facilitate the special needs of students, including the principles of visualization, learning by doing, face orientation, and demonstration (Kemendikbud, 2017; Suradi & Mawardi, 2020; Meutia & Mursita, 2018).

Teaching deaf students in elementary schools requires using concrete examples to facilitate learning (Kurniaman et al, 2021). In this context, the demonstration of shalat movements enables deaf students to gain a clear and concrete reference for performing the movements correctly and in detail. Teaching deaf students in elementary schools requires using concrete examples to facilitate learning (Kurniaman et al., 2021). In this context, the demonstration of shalat movements plays a crucial role in providing deaf students with a visual and tangible reference, allowing them to observe each stage of the prayer sequence. Deaf students as visual learners (Sansao, 2021; Yurmalina & Hasanah, 2022) need such visualizations by visually modeling the correct posture, gestures, and transitions between movements. Teachers help students internalize the physical aspects of shalat more effectively. This method not only enhances their ability to imitate and practice the movements accurately but also addresses the unique learning styles of deaf students who rely heavily on visual and kinesthetic input.

### ***Stage 3. Reading and Memorizing Shalat Recitations Using Sign Language***

The third stage is reading and memorizing the shalat recitations using sign language. This stage marks a significant cognitive and practical transition, requiring students to move from recognizing individual Arabic letters to internalizing the full content of the shalat recitations. At Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School, this process is facilitated using huruf hijaiyah isyarat (sign language for Arabic letters), allowing deaf students to access religious texts in a modality aligned with their visual learning style. Pamungkas et al. (2023) emphasize that this stage is critical because it bridges visual letter recognition with deeper memorization and meaning-making processes. Given the motor and cognitive demands involved, the process requires individualized instruction and consistent teacher guidance, which aligns with best practices in special education that highlight the need for tailored approaches to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities (Arianti et al., 2022; Ningrum, 2022).

Several recent studies further support the integration of Arabic sign language in Islamic education for deaf students. Rashid et al. (2021) demonstrated that Arabic sign language can be effectively adapted to teach the fundamentals of fardhu ain, thereby supporting the religious comprehension of hearing-impaired learners. Similarly, Febriani et al. (2023) emphasized the urgency of implementing Qur'anic sign language instruction for Islamic education students, noting its potential to improve conceptual understanding. Winangsih et al. (2020) also stressed the importance of visual reinforcements and individualized learning in religious instruction for deaf learners, especially in special education contexts. Rofiah et al. (2018) underscored the utility of Indonesian Sign Language and total communication strategies for inclusive religious teaching. Notably, Pamungkas and Hermanto (2022) found that sign language-based instruction in huruf hijaiyah effectively supports Qur'anic learning and may also serve as a foundation for broader religious practices such as shalat. These findings collectively affirm the importance of visual, structured, and sign language-based learning methods for making Islamic education more accessible, meaningful, and inclusive for deaf students.

The use of visual image media as part of the learning process at Darul Ashom is also an important aspect. Terlekti et al. (2019) state that the use of visual media in deaf education improves access to abstract information and strengthens understanding through direct observation. Irfani and Suwanto (2025) reinforce this by showing that visual aids such as images are highly effective in teaching worship practices, especially shalat, as they help students understand the sequence of movements and recitations through visual tools like colored posters. This approach also fosters enthusiasm for learning and strengthens the spiritual independence of the students (Munichah, 2023).

### ***Stage 4. Integration of Recitations with Shalat Movements***

The fourth stage is the integration of memorization into the actual movements of shalat. Rather than separating recitation drills from physical practice, deaf students are guided to memorize the required shalat recitations while simultaneously performing the associated movements. This approach ensures a holistic learning experience in which cognitive, spiritual, and motor aspects are developed together.

Supporting this integrated method, a study conducted in Salatiga State Special Middle Schools showed that placing memorization within the actual prayer setting, such as in prayer rooms with direct teacher supervision, improves both memory retention and the embodiment of worship practices (Amila and Ostadmohamadi, 2024). In this model, teachers implement structured routines, repeated practice, and multisensory strategies. These include the use of visual and motor cues, which help students not only memorize the words of the recitation

but also associate them accurately with the movements of shalat. The findings highlight the effectiveness of synchronizing memorization with bodily actions, especially for deaf students who benefit from visual-motor reinforcement.

#### ***Stage 5. Comprehension of the Meaning of Recitations and Movements***

The fifth stage is providing an understanding of the meaning behind each movement and recitation in shalat. This explanation is delivered using simple and easy-to-understand language and is connected to spiritual values and closeness to Allah. This approach allows students to view shalat as a meaningful act of worship, rather than merely a routine. The use of simple and clear language is especially effective in teaching deaf students, as it helps address the language deprivation, they often experience due to limited verbal information (Cheng et al., 2019).

When deaf students understand that every movement and recitation in shalat holds deep meaning, such as expressions of surrender, gratitude, and closeness to Allah, they no longer perceive shalat as just a routine obligation. Instead, they experience it as a personal space to express faith and attain inner peace. This internalization of meaning aligns with the findings of Febriana & Qurniati (2021), who noted that meaningful education can provide positive value for students, including in terms of self-acceptance and understanding of their special conditions. In this context, shalat becomes a medium for both spiritual and social adaptation, as explained by Ying et al. (2021), who stated that the adaptation process for individuals with hearing impairments aims to build equal and meaningful relationships in their lives.

#### ***Stage 6. Habit Formation and Daily Practice of Shalat***

The sixth stage is the habituation and practice of daily shalat. Through the gradual and meaningful learning process, students are not only able to perform shalat correctly but also make it a part of their routine and spiritual awareness. Through the internalization of values and repetition in daily routines, shalat becomes a worship practice that is not only understood technically but also emotionally and spiritually experienced. This final stage of habituation and consistent practice is particularly in line with the insights of Fahmi and Rohman (2024), who emphasized that the integration of sign language, structured routines, and repetition forms the foundation for effective religious learning among deaf students.

The shalat learning process at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School not only develops technical competencies but also fosters a profound spiritual awareness. This is due to the teacher's use of a step-by-step, meaning-based instructional approach, which is tailored to the characteristics and needs of deaf students. This strategy demonstrates that with the right method, deaf students can understand, memorize, and practice shalat in its entirety, adapted to their modalities. This is in line with the concept of deep learning, which emphasizes that effective deep learning can be implemented by adjusting the content and pace of instruction to match each learner's individual profile. With the application of deep learning, the learning process becomes more holistic by fostering cognitive and emotional awareness, connecting new knowledge with prior experiences, and creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere that encourages intrinsic motivation (Khalik & Nampira, 2025; Aprilia, et.al, 2025).

A limitation of the current instructional model is its strong reliance on direct teacher presence. Because the learning process is dominated by step-by-step demonstration, students may become dependent on the teacher as the primary source of cues and corrective feedback. This dependency could restrict the development of independent mastery, especially when students are required to perform shalat outside structured lessons. To address this, future work should focus on developing a guided-practice module that enables learners to review, practice, and internalize each stage of shalat autonomously. Such a module whether in the form of visual sequences, self-instructional videos, or structured practice sheets would complement teacher-led instruction while strengthening student independence and reducing over-reliance on direct supervision.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals an important and somewhat unexpected finding: deaf students at Darul Ashom Deaf Islamic Boarding School are able to meaningfully learn and perform shalat through a structured approach that integrates sign language and huruf hijaiyah isyarat. This finding demonstrates that mastery of shalat is not limited by hearing ability but can be achieved through accessible and visually oriented methods.

From a scientific perspective, the study contributes a new pedagogical framework by systematizing shalat instruction into six stages that integrate procedural, conceptual, and habitual aspects. It confirms the central role of sign language in religious education while offering an innovative model that may inspire further inclusive approaches in Islamic learning.

However, the model's implementation is still context-specific and highly dependent on direct teacher guidance. Broader research across diverse institutions, age groups, and learning environments is needed to strengthen generalizability and explore variations in learner outcomes. Based on these findings, several key recommendations are proposed. Islamic education authorities should incorporate sign language based religious instruction into official guidelines and develop standardized visual sign materials for shalat learning. Teacher training programs need to strengthen competencies in sign language, visual pedagogy, and inclusive methods to ensure effective instruction. The six-stage model should also be adapted and tested across various special schools, pesantren, and inclusive settings through collaborative efforts that enable resource sharing and refinement. Additionally, guided-practice materials such as visual sequences, instructional videos, and self-study booklets are needed to support students' independent practice and reduce dependence on direct teacher supervision.

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