

THE CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS IN LEARNING ARABIC AT QURROTA A'YUN INTEGRATED ISLAMIC SCHOOL IN PONOROGO

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by students in learning Arabic at Qurrota A'yun Integrated Islamic School in Ponorogo. Learning Arabic, as a foreign language, presents distinct difficulties for students, particularly in an environment where exposure to the language is limited. The research aims to identify and analyze these challenges to provide insights that can enhance the learning experience and support academic outcomes. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study gathered data through observations, interviews with teachers and documentations, focusing on areas that impact Arabic language acquisition. The findings reveal several key challenges: difficulties in reading and language comprehension, internal issues related to students' interest and learning abilities, and varying levels of motivation. These obstacles are significant in limiting students' progress, as many struggle to grasp the fundamentals of Arabic, which hinders both language acquisition and enthusiasm for learning. The impact of these challenges is evident in the classroom, affecting students' confidence and engagement. In conclusion, the study underscores the need for targeted instructional strategies and motivational approaches to support students in overcoming these difficulties. Addressing these challenges can foster a more supportive learning environment, encouraging students to engage more deeply with Arabic and build their proficiency.

Keywords: *Arabic linguistics, Arabic literature, Arabic teaching, Article, Journal*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi siswa dalam belajar bahasa Arab di Sekolah Islam Terpadu Qurrota A'yun di Ponorogo. Pembelajaran bahasa Arab, sebagai bahasa asing, menghadirkan kesulitan yang khas bagi siswa, terutama dalam lingkungan yang memiliki keterbatasan paparan terhadap bahasa tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis tantangan ini guna memberikan wawasan yang dapat meningkatkan pengalaman belajar dan mendukung hasil akademik. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara dengan guru, dan dokumentasi, yang berfokus pada area yang mempengaruhi perolehan bahasa Arab. Temuan menunjukkan beberapa tantangan utama: kesulitan dalam membaca dan pemahaman bahasa, masalah internal terkait minat dan kemampuan belajar siswa, serta tingkat motivasi yang bervariasi. Hambatan-hambatan ini secara signifikan membatasi kemajuan siswa, karena banyak yang kesulitan memahami dasar-dasar bahasa Arab, yang menghambat perolehan bahasa sekaligus antusiasme dalam belajar. Dampak dari tantangan ini tampak di dalam kelas, memengaruhi kepercayaan diri dan keterlibatan siswa. Kesimpulannya, studi ini menekankan perlunya strategi pengajaran yang terarah dan pendekatan motivasional untuk mendukung siswa dalam mengatasi kesulitan ini. Mengatasi tantangan-tantangan ini dapat menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih mendukung, mendorong siswa untuk lebih mendalami bahasa Arab dan membangun kemahiran mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Lingustik Arab, Literatur Arab, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Artikel, Jurnal*

Introduction

The ability to communicate in Arabic holds immense significance in the contemporary educational landscape, particularly within Islamic schools where the language is integral to both religious and academic pursuits.¹ Arabic serves as the key to accessing Islamic texts, facilitating a deeper understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and connecting students to a rich cultural and historical heritage.² At Qurrota A'yun Integrated Islamic School in Ponorogo, the teaching and learning of Arabic has an important role in shaping students' linguistic and spiritual growth. However, the journey of mastering Arabic is not without challenges, particularly for young learners who encounter difficulties related to language acquisition, curriculum, and resource availability.³ This study aims to explore the specific challenges faced by students at this institution, providing a comprehensive analysis that contributes to the broader discourse on Arabic language education.

The urgency of this research lies in addressing the critical need for effective Arabic language instruction in Islamic schools. With the growing recognition of Arabic as a cornerstone of Islamic education, understanding the obstacles students face is essential for developing practical solutions.⁴ This study seeks to shed light on these challenges, offering actionable insights to improve teaching strategies, curriculum design, and resource allocation. Such an understanding is crucial not only for enhancing the educational outcomes of Qurrota A'yun's students but also for informing similar efforts in other institutions. By tackling these issues, the study contributes to fostering a robust academic and spiritual foundation for students in Islamic educational settings.

One of the previous studies has conducted research on students' challenges in learning Arabic. One of these studies is Muhammad Wahyudi's research which focuses on the challenges of students at the modern Islamic boarding school Darel Azhar in learning Arabic. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Arabic

¹ Ayu Sekarsari et al., "The Role of Arabic in Islamic Education," *Quality: Journal of Education, Arabic And Islamic Studies* 2, no. 3 (2024): 177, <https://doi.org/10.58355/qwt.v2i3.65>.

² Mohammad Ridwan, "Membuka Wawasan Keislaman: Kebermaknaan Bahasa Arab Dalam Pemahaman Islam," *Jazirah: Jurnal Peradaban dan Kebudayaan* 4, no. 2 (December 5, 2023): 98, <https://doi.org/10.51190/jazirah.v4i2.100>.

³ Syaipuddin Ritonga, "Strategi Dalam Mengatasi Tantangan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Bagi Guru Di Era Teknologi Modern," *HIKMAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 2 (2023): 382.

⁴ Fadlan Masykura Setiadi and Khairunnisa, "Arabic Language Learning: An In-Depth Examination of Students' Challenges and Solutions," *The Progress: Journal of Language and Ethnicity* 2, no. 2 (2023): 64.

language education at Darel Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Banten. The implications of these challenges extend to the broader educational context, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.⁵ Despite these findings, there remains a gap in understanding how specific schools like Qurrota A'yun address these challenges, particularly in the context of an integrated Islamic educational framework.

While existing research provides a strong foundation, there is limited exploration of how schools with unique curriculums such as integrated Islamic institutions adapt to these challenges. This gap underscores the importance of this study, which aims to bridge the disconnect between general theories and their practical application in specific educational contexts. By concentrating on Qurrota A'yun Integrated Islamic School, the research seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of the interplay between institutional frameworks, teaching strategies, and student challenges.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on an integrated Islamic school, a setting that combines religious and general education within a single curriculum. Unlike conventional studies that examine Arabic language learning in isolation, this research contextualizes the challenges within a holistic educational environment. It also explores the impact of innovative teaching methods and school-specific strategies, contributing unique insights to the field of Arabic language education. This fresh perspective not only enriches academic discourse but also provides actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers.

Ultimately, the objectives of this study are to identify the specific challenges faced by students at Qurrota A'yun Integrated Islamic School in learning Arabic, analyze the underlying causes of these challenges, and propose effective solutions. By doing so, the research aims to enhance the quality of Arabic language education at the institution, support students in their academic and spiritual journeys, and contribute to the broader development of Arabic language pedagogy in integrated Islamic schools.⁶

⁵ Muhammad Wahyudi et al., "The Challenges of Students in Learning Arabic at Darel Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Banten," *ANCOLT: International Proceeding on Language Teaching* 1, no. 1 (2024): 278–288.

⁶ Dedi Mulyanto et al., "Two Second Languages at Once," in *7th International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture, and Education (ICOLLITE 2023)* (Atlantis Press, 2024), 84–92, <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icollite-23/125998805>.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach with an ethnographic type, focusing on understanding the challenges faced by students in learning Arabic at Qurrota A'yun Islamic Integrated Elementary School in Ponorogo.⁷ The ethnographic design enables an in-depth exploration of the cultural, academic, and social contexts influencing Arabic language learning within the school. The researchers conducted interviews with key stakeholders, including Wijati, the headmaster, and Rimun Ibnu Wady, the fourth-grade homeroom teacher who also serves as the Arabic instructor. These interviews provided valuable insights into the school's curriculum, teaching methodologies, and student engagement.⁸ Additionally, researchers observed all Arabic teaching and learning activities within the school environment, capturing real-time interactions between teachers and students and identifying the specific difficulties students face in mastering Arabic.⁹ This immersive approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and motivational challenges encountered by the learners.

Data collection and analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.¹⁰ During the data reduction phase, observations and interview transcripts were carefully categorized to highlight recurring themes, such as difficulties in reading comprehension, student motivation, and interest levels.¹¹ The researchers actively engaged with the school community throughout the study, building rapport with teachers and students to ensure authentic and contextually rich data. Procedural steps included preliminary visits to familiarize themselves with the school setting, sequential data collection through interviews and observations, and iterative data analysis conducted concurrently with fieldwork. The results were synthesized into meaningful conclusions that address the challenges of Arabic language learning, offering practical recommendations for improving teaching strategies and student outcomes in the school.

⁷ Chinyere Ugwu and Val Eze, "Qualitative Research," *International Digital Organization for Scientific Research IDOSR* 8, no. 1 (January 18, 2023): 20–35.

⁸ Pamela B. Rutledge and Jerri Lynn C. Hogg, "In-Depth Interviews," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, ed. Jan Bulck, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2020), 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0019>.

⁹ Barbara B Kawulich, "Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (2005).

¹⁰ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd ed. (United States of America: SAGE Publication, 1994).

¹¹ Milles and Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press, 1992).

Result and Discussion

Challenges Faced by SDIT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo in Teaching Arabic

Reading and Language Comprehension Challenges

One of the major challenges students face in learning Arabic is the difficulty they encounter in reading the Quran. As the Quran is a primary Arabic text taught at the school, students who have not learned to read it often struggle significantly in acquiring the Arabic language in general. This challenge arises because students who can read the Quran correctly typically have a solid foundation in Arabic, enabling them to understand and apply grammar rules more effectively.¹²

Students who have not yet developed strong reading skills encounter difficulties in learning Arabic. Reading is a fundamental skill upon which other abilities such as writing, speaking, and listening are built. This issue creates a significant barrier that prevents these students from progressing in learning the language and gaining the confidence needed to use it in everyday life.

Internal Issues Related to Interest

Another challenge students face is the lack of interest in learning Arabic. This issue stems from several factors, including a lack of awareness about the importance of Arabic, particularly outside religious contexts. Some students perceive learning Arabic as solely tied to reading the Quran or fulfilling religious duties. This belief diminishes their desire to learn the language more broadly or use it in other areas.¹³

Interest is a crucial element for the success of any educational process.¹⁴ When interest in learning the language is weak, it becomes challenging for teachers to motivate students and capture their attention. Additionally, a lack of interest makes it difficult for students to persist in learning the language and commit to improving their skills.¹⁵

¹² Rimun Ibnu Wady, Challenges in Learning Arabic: Difficulty in Reading the Qur'an as the Main Obstacle at SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo, July 18, 2024, (030/W/VII/2024).

¹³ Rimun Ibnu Wady, Low Interest in Learning Arabic at SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo, July 18, 2024, (031/W/VII/2024).

¹⁴ Andi Achru, "Pengembangan Minat Belajar Dalam Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Idaarah* III, no. 2 (2019): 211.

¹⁵ Muhammad Zaki, "Lack of Interest in Learning Arabic at SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo," Observation (SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo, 2024), (05/O/VIII/2024).

Students' Learning Abilities

Students' learning abilities present another challenge for the school, as their capacity to absorb and understand information varies greatly.¹⁶ Some students can learn quickly and easily, while others struggle to keep up with lessons and grasp new concepts. This disparity in abilities can affect students' academic performance and make it difficult for teachers to deliver lessons in a way that suits all levels.

Students who face learning difficulties require additional support and innovative teaching methods to help them understand the material. Teachers also need to recognize these differences among students and adopt flexible teaching approaches that accommodate each student's individual abilities.

Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important factors influencing students' learning.¹⁷ It is the internal drive that pushes students to persist in learning and overcome challenges.¹⁸ At Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo School, some students face issues with motivation, which leads to a lack of commitment to learning and a decline in their academic performance.¹⁹

Low motivation can result from various factors, including the learning environment, social pressures, or even failure to achieve satisfactory results.²⁰ When students feel they are not making progress in their learning, they may lose motivation and become less willing to put in additional effort. Addressing this issue requires interventions from both teachers and parents to inspire and encourage students to persevere and continue their educational journey.

To address the identified challenges in teaching Arabic at Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo Elementary School, several proposed solutions aim to improve the effectiveness of the

¹⁶ Rimun Ibnu Wady, Variation in Students' Learning Abilities as a Challenge in Arabic Language Education at SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo, July 18, 2024, (032/W/VII/2024).

¹⁷ Sunarti Rahman, "Pentingnya Motivasi Belajar Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Dasar* (Gorontalo, 2021), 292.

¹⁸ Dedi Dwi Cahyono, Mohammad Khusnul Hamda, and Eka Danik Prahastiwi, "Pemikiran Abraham Maslow Tentang Motivasi Dalam Belajar," *Tajdid: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Kemanusiaan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 39, <https://doi.org/doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52266/>.

¹⁹ Rimun Ibnu Wady, Student Motivation Problems and Their Influence on Academic Achievement at SD IT Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo, July 18, 2024, (033/W/VII/2024).

²⁰ Muhammad C Moslem and Mumu Komaro, "Faktor-Faktor Yang Menyebabkan Rendahnya Motivasi Belajar Siswa Dalam Mata Pelajaran Aircraft Drawing Di SMK," *Journal of Mechanical Engineering Education*, 6, no. 2 (2019): 262.

educational process and overcome the obstacles hindering the achievement of educational goals. Below are some possible solutions:

Enhancing Quran Reading Skills

To tackle the difficulty of learning Arabic among students who are not proficient in reading the Quran, additional educational programs focusing on improving Quran reading skills can be organized. Special reinforcement lessons could be provided to enable students to read Quranic texts correctly.²¹ Furthermore, students can be encouraged to practice reading at home, with dedicated time for daily group reading sessions in class. Once students become proficient in reading the Quran, the process of learning Arabic will become smoother and more integrated.

Improving Motivation and Interest in Learning Arabic

To foster students' interest in Arabic, teaching methods can be made more interactive and engaging. Modern technological tools, such as language learning apps and educational games, can be used to make lessons more enjoyable and appealing. Additionally, competitions and motivational activities related to Arabic, such as speech, poetry, and spelling contests, can be organized to encourage active participation and increase interest.²²

Addressing Differences in Students' Abilities

To overcome disparities in students' abilities, differentiated instruction strategies can be implemented. Activities can be tailored to each student's level, with students grouped based on their abilities, and educational activities provided accordingly. Additional reinforcement lessons can be offered to students struggling to grasp the material, ensuring they keep up with their peers and achieve the required progress.

²¹ Edo Kurniawan et al., "Strategi Pengintegrasian Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Bahasa Arab dalam Membangun Karakter Islami di MI Pesantren Anak Sholeh Baitul Qur'an Gontor," in *Konferensi Nasional Tarbiyah UNIDA Gontor*, vol. 2 (EDUFEST, Fakultas Tarbiyah Universitas Darussalam Gontor, 2023), 761–73.

²² Ifa Rodifah Nur, Muhammad Zaki, and Ahmad Gagah Gattuso, "Innovative Strategies for Fostering Language Proficiency in the Classroom," in *Proceeding of Annual International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL)*, 2023, 362–371.

Boosting Motivation and Encouraging Students

To motivate students and enhance their drive to learn Arabic, incentives and rewards can be offered to those who show significant progress. These could include certificates of appreciation, tangible or symbolic rewards, and opportunities to showcase their achievements to their peers. Moreover, intrinsic motivation can be reinforced by emphasizing the importance of Arabic in daily life, academic success, and professional development.

Engaging Parents

Involving parents in the process of learning Arabic can have a significant positive impact on student motivation. Workshops or regular meetings with parents can be organized to explain the importance of their support in teaching their children Arabic. Additionally, parents can be provided with guidance on how to help their children practice Arabic at home, such as reading Arabic stories or participating in home-based activities related to the language.

Qurrota A'yun Ponorogo Elementary School faces several major challenges affecting the effectiveness of Arabic language teaching. These challenges include some students' inability to read the Quran, lack of interest in learning Arabic, disparities in students' abilities, and low motivation levels. Combined, these factors create a challenging educational environment that requires careful attention to ensure the achievement of educational objectives and the development of students' Arabic language skills.

By implementing these solutions, the school can overcome the challenges it faces in teaching Arabic. These solutions require collaboration among teachers, students, and parents to ensure a positive learning environment that supports educational goals and sustainably enhances students' Arabic language skills.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by students in learning Arabic at Qurrota A'yun Integrated Islamic School in Ponorogo reveal critical insights into the dynamics of language acquisition in a formal educational setting. The findings demonstrate that students struggle significantly with reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and overall engagement with the Arabic language. These difficulties are compounded by internal factors such as low motivation, limited prior exposure to Arabic, and varying levels of interest and

learning capabilities among students. Furthermore, the teaching environment, although well-structured, faces constraints in addressing the diverse needs of learners effectively. The study underscores the importance of addressing these challenges holistically, as they directly impact students' academic progress and their ability to connect with Arabic as a key component of their religious and cultural education. By systematically identifying and analyzing these obstacles, the research offers valuable perspectives on the ways in which educators can enhance teaching strategies and create a more supportive learning atmosphere.

To overcome these challenges, it is recommended that the school adopts innovative and technology-driven approaches to Arabic language education. Interactive digital tools, such as gamified learning platforms and multimedia resources, can enhance student engagement and motivation, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective. Additionally, integrating immersive learning experiences, such as conversational practice with native speakers through virtual exchanges, can provide students with meaningful exposure to real-life Arabic usage. The school could also consider adopting differentiated instruction methods to cater to students' varying levels of proficiency and interest. Furthermore, ongoing teacher training programs focusing on modern pedagogical techniques and the effective integration of technology into the classroom will ensure that educators are equipped to address students' specific needs. These strategies, rooted in innovative ideas and emerging technologies, have the potential to transform the teaching and learning of Arabic, ultimately enabling students to achieve greater proficiency and confidence in the language.

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