



Students and the Problems in Learning Arabic

Ahmad Akmal Abdillah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

Corresponding Author: Ahmad Akmal Abdillah: mentorgr1357@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Student,
Problem, Learning, Arabic

Received : 20, August

Revised : 25, September

Accepted: 15, October

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the problems faced by students in the process of learning Arabic. The study was conducted on students of the Arabic language education study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang using a qualitative approach. Research data were collected using in-depth interviews and analyzed using interactive techniques through the stages of data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that in learning Arabic, students experience several difficulties such as difficulty in understanding the science of nahwu and sarf, lack of Arabic vocabulary, low motivation, an inconducive learning environment, and ineffective learning methods. The results of this study confirm several previous studies on the various problems in learning Arabic among students. The researcher recommends that further research be conducted to find solutions to these problems.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is an international language that has a strategic position in the world of education, religion, and civilization. Arabic is the official language of more than twenty countries and one of the six official languages of the United Nations (UN) which has been established since 1973 (Nisa, 2017). Some countries that use Arabic as an official language are Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia and Comoros. Arabic is also used as a second language in several Asian and African countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, West Africa and Nigeria. Arabic has a large global influence among Muslims, namely occupying a central position as the language of the Qur'an, hadith, and various classical and contemporary Islamic literature (Ahmadi & Awaluddin, 2024; Muhammad et al., 2023).

In the world of education, Arabic plays a crucial role, particularly in the Islamic education system (Ahmadi & Awaluddin, 2024). This language is the primary means of understanding Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Hadith (Muhammad et al., 2023). Therefore, mastery of Arabic is essential for a direct and in-depth understanding of its content and meaning. Arabic also provides broad access to the treasures of classical Islamic scholarship (Nasution & Lubis, 2023). Many scientific works in various fields such as philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and literature are written in Arabic. Mastery of this language allows for the study of sciences directly from the original texts (Auliani et al., 2024). Arabic also provides significant opportunities for students to access studies in Middle Eastern countries, participate in student exchange programs, or obtain international scholarships. Thus, Arabic not only enhances academic competence but also serves as a bridge to global mobility.

In a religious context, Arabic holds a very noble and irreplaceable position. The Quran was revealed in Arabic, making it the language of revelation. Understanding the Quran's contents requires a thorough mastery of Arabic, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, and the beauty of language. Without this mastery, understanding of Islamic teachings tends to be limited and dependent on interpretations or translations. The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him were also delivered in Arabic. Therefore, to fully understand the Prophet's teachings, both in terms of meaning and context, one must be able to read and understand Arabic (Pane Akhiril, 2018).

In daily religious practice, Arabic is also used in essential religious practices such as prayer, reciting prayers, dhikr, and reciting the Quran (Muhammad et al., 2023). Some recitations must even be recited in Arabic, making it an integral language of worship in the lives of Muslims. Arabic plays a role in shaping Islamic identity, strengthening religious values, and instilling a love for Islamic teachings and its scientific culture (Ahmadi & Awaluddin, 2024). Arabic also serves as a unifying language for Muslims worldwide. It serves as a symbol of solidarity and unity on a global scale (Pane Akhiril, 2018).

In the context of civilization, through Arabic, Greek, Persian, and Indian knowledge was translated and developed by Muslim scholars, then

disseminated to Europe. Arabic became a crucial bridge in the transfer of knowledge from East to West, which subsequently contributed to the rise of Europe during the Renaissance (Mulawarman, 2022).

The above reality demonstrates the urgency of mastering Arabic, not only as a means of understanding religious teachings directly from their original sources, but also as a key to accessing the vast intellectual treasures of Islam. The importance of learning Arabic lies not only in aspects of worship and spirituality, but also closely related to character development, critical thinking skills, and strengthening Islamic identity (Nasution & Lubis, 2023).

Arabic language learning has become an essential part of the Islamic education system in various countries, including Indonesia. Arabic serves not only as a means of communication but also as the liturgical language of Muslims. Arabic has established a scholarly tradition in Islam, as works by classical scholars on tafsir, fiqh, hadith, and aqidah were written in Arabic (Nasution & Lubis, 2023). Therefore, mastery of Arabic is key to strengthening the religious understanding of Muslims and developing Islamic knowledge. Therefore, it is a necessity for students studying Islam.

Currently, interest in Arabic in Indonesia has increased. However, the process of learning Arabic in Indonesia remains beset by numerous problems. Many people experience difficulties learning Arabic, either due to linguistic factors, such as Arabic itself, which has a different writing, vocabulary, and sentence structure than Indonesian, or due to educational factors such as inappropriate methods, irrelevant materials, ineffective media, and an uncondusive environment (Ritonga et al., 2023).

In the Arabic Language Education study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, students also experience the conditions described above. Some students still experience difficulties in learning Arabic, and some even end up withdrawing from the study altogether. For this reason, the author was interested in conducting research focused on student challenges in learning Arabic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In learning Arabic in higher education, many students still experience difficulties in understanding Arabic syntax (nahwu), especially in determining harakat, constructing sentences, and distinguishing terms and grammatical structures (M. Hadi Sutiyo & Zizi Nurhikmah, 2025). Non-madrasah graduates face double challenges, both in terms of linguistics such as vocabulary, sentence structure and non-linguistics such as low motivation, uninteresting learning methods, limited facilities and time (Tungkagi et al., 2022).

Factors that make learning Arabic difficult include phonological issues, lack of vocabulary mastery, weak mastery of qawaid, and psychological factors, as well as an unsupportive social environment (Zakiatunnisa et al., 2020).

Several studies have shown that students face diverse problems, ranging from linguistic to non-linguistic, and psychological aspects. Linguistic aspects are divided into two categories: difficulties in understanding grammar and theology

(nahwu) and Arabic vocabulary (Junaedi Abdilah & Al Farisi, 2023)(Yunisa, 2022). Furthermore, students also experience non-linguistic problems such as lack of motivation to learn, lack of self-confidence, and a minimal supportive environment for Arabic language development. Methodological problems also contribute, such as overly traditional teaching methods that make students feel bored, limited facilities, and cultural differences that contribute to difficulties in understanding Arabic. Thus, the problems of learning Arabic for students are multidimensional, requiring an integrative approach through internal motivation, innovative learning methods, and a conducive language environment so that Arabic language skills can develop optimally (Noermayanti & Isnaini, 2022).

From the above studies, it can be seen that Arabic language learning still faces various challenges, both linguistic such as difficulties in understanding the science of nahwu and mufradat, and non-linguistic such as lack of motivation, less interesting teaching methods, and an environment that does not support the use of Arabic in everyday life (Sakdiah & Sihombing, 2023)(Zakiatunnisa et al., 2020). In practice, students still have difficulty in learning Arabic, even students from the Arabic Language Education department also still have difficulty in learning this language. (Ritonga et al., 2023)(Tungkagi et al., 2022). Therefore, serious efforts are needed to improve the quality of Arabic language learning through a more enjoyable, strategic, and contextual approach.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. The purpose of this qualitative method is to gain a deeper understanding of the issues faced by students in the Arabic Language Education study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The case study was chosen based on the research focus, which was interesting to explore.

The subjects in this study were six students in the Arabic Language Education study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang from different educational backgrounds. Data were collected using interviews and analyzed using interactive techniques through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was carried out by selecting and sorting data relevant to the research focus. Data were presented narratively and conclusions were drawn based on field findings.

RESEARCH RESULT

As mentioned above, this research was conducted on six students at the Muhammadiyah University of Malang. Interviews revealed that the students experienced challenges in learning Arabic. The majority complained of difficulties understanding grammar and grammar.

A student named DI stated that they had not yet found the right learning method, making it difficult to understand the material. He stated:

"I find it difficult to understand Arabic grammar, and I haven't found the right method for learning Arabic."

A student named RM added that his lack of Arabic grammar made him confused when speaking and writing articles in Arabic, as he stated:

"I have difficulty speaking Arabic because I lack vocabulary and I have difficulty understanding Arabic grammar."

In addition to grammar, some students also faced obstacles in vocabulary mastery. A student named WB, for example, reported that his limited vocabulary made it difficult to understand Arabic texts, even to the point of choosing to stop studying. This indicates that poor vocabulary mastery also impacts students' motivation to learn. She said:

"I lack understanding of grammar and I don't have a large vocabulary. I feel Arabic is difficult to understand, so I decided to stop learning it."

Several respondents felt that the Arabic learning methods provided by lecturers or teachers were ineffective. A female student from RF emphasized that Arabic teaching would be more successful if accompanied by practice and a supportive environment.

"The teacher who teaches Arabic is not very good in his teaching methods, and I still have difficulty understanding grammar."

The RT student also added that in addition to the problem of grammar, the obstacle they face is the lack of facilities or opportunities for direct Arabic practice.

"In my opinion, learning Arabic is not that difficult; it just requires perseverance. The difficulty I face is understanding grammar and the lack of facilities for practicing Arabic."

Although most respondents found it difficult, some had a more positive view. The RS student assessed that although Arabic is quite difficult, with perseverance, learning becomes easier. This shows that internal factors such as motivation and persistence also play a significant role in successful Arabic learning.

"I think Arabic is quite difficult, but with perseverance, God willing, it will become easier to understand. I am currently learning Arabic through online classes."

DISCUSSION

In general, the research results show that students' problems in learning Arabic stem from the complexity of the nahwu and sharaf materials. These research results are in line with various previous studies which state that one of the biggest obstacles in learning Arabic among non-Arab students is the complexity of grammar and morphological structure (Munawwarah & Hibana, 202; Sumekar et al., 2024). Nahwu and sharaf do require in-depth understanding and repeated practice, therefore without the right method students will easily find it difficult (Supardi et al., 202; Yunisa, 2022). The knowledge of nahwu and sharaf is the foundation for understanding Arabic, both in reading classical and modern texts (M. Hadi Sutiyo & Zizi Nurhikmah, 2025; Thobib & Amirudin, 2023). With its nature full of rules and exceptions, students often find it difficult (Yunisa, 2022). If the process of teaching this science is too theoretical without adequate practice, students will have increasing difficulty connecting theory with real-world applications in speaking or writing.

Furthermore, students also experience limited vocabulary. Several studies have shown that limited vocabulary impacts students' speaking and writing abilities (ALQAHTANI, 2015) (Amin et al., 2022). This can be addressed through context-based learning strategies, such as the use of audiovisual media, language games, and familiarizing themselves with reading popular Arabic texts (Azizah, 2020). Vocabulary should not only be memorized passively but also actively used.

Furthermore, the limited availability of facilitators or tutors to assist students in practicing Arabic is also a barrier. This aligns with research findings that suggest an unsupportive learning environment makes it difficult for students to apply Arabic outside the classroom. Environmental factors are crucial in strengthening language skills (Sumekar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, learning motivation is also a barrier for students learning Arabic. This aligns with research findings that suggest that Arabic learning challenges stem not only from linguistic factors but also from non-linguistic factors such as limited methods, limited practice, and motivational factors (Ritonga et al., 2023)(Takdir, 2020)(Amirudin, 2017). Lack of motivation in learning Arabic is a barrier to the learning process (Sumekar et al., 2024).

In addition to motivation, the learning environment also influences students' Arabic learning. Good teachers, adequate facilities and infrastructure, and a conducive environment will make Arabic learning more effective (Sumekar et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that students' problems in learning Arabic are caused by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistically, students experience difficulties in understanding the science of nahwu and sharf, which are the foundation of Arabic grammar. Furthermore, language limitations also pose a barrier that impacts reading, writing, and speaking skills. From a non-linguistic perspective, problems arise from learning methods that tend to be theoretical, a lack of facilitators and practical opportunities, and a lack of supportive learning environments. Internal motivation is also a significant factor, with highly motivated students being more able to seek alternative learning options, such as through online classes or other media.

These findings align with previous research that confirms that grammatical complexity, limited language skills, low motivation, and a lack of methods and facilities are dominant factors in Arabic learning problems. Therefore, efforts to improve Arabic learning need to be carried out through more applicable development methods, improving language resources and environments, and strengthening students' internal motivation.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This research provides a further contribution to the study of student challenges in learning Arabic, incorporating a more in-depth approach to both linguistic and non-linguistic issues. This study broadens the scope of analysis by exploring the relationship between learning motivation, the social environment,

and the effectiveness of learning strategies in the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia.

The findings of this study indicate that the problems experienced by students are multidimensional. They encompass not only linguistic difficulties, including difficulties in understanding grammar, grammar, and vocabulary, but also non-linguistic challenges, including a lack of motivation and a supportive environment for learning Arabic. Using a qualitative approach with interactive analysis, this study demonstrates that student difficulties stem not only from complex linguistic aspects but also from psychological and pedagogical factors that interact throughout the learning process. Further research is expected to provide solutions to the challenges experienced by students in learning Arabic, thereby increasing the effectiveness of Arabic learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to all parties involved in the creation of this article. Special thanks are extended to the students of the Arabic Language Education study program at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang who were willing to serve as informants and share their experiences openly during the interview sessions.

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