



Activities to Enhance Pupils' Reading Skills (*Maharatul Qiraah*) in Arabic Language Learning

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Abstrak

Keterampilan membaca teks berbahasa Arab masih menjadi kendala bagi siswa di madrasah, sehingga dibutuhkan upaya membantu peningkatan keterampilan terhadap siswa. Penelitian ini dilakukan bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan upaya meningkatkan keterampilan membaca siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Latar penelitian ini bertempat di MAN Sibolga. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi deskriptif analitis. Pengumpulan data menggunakan metode observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data hingga menarik suatu kesimpulan. Keabsahan data penelitian akan diuji menggunakan teknik triangulasi data dan ketekunan pengamatan. Hasil penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa upaya pihak madrasah dalam meningkatkan keterampilan membaca siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab meliputi; (1) menugaskan siswa untuk menghafal 10 kosakata setiap pertemuan; (2) melatih siswa membaca di kelas saling berhadapan 1 siswa dengan 1 siswa lainnya; dan (3) menguji siswa membaca langsung setiap *mid semester*. Melalui upaya tersebut, iklim belajar yang diciptakan oleh guru dapat membantu siswa secara berangsur dalam peningkatan keterampilan membaca teks berbahasa Arab.

Kata Kunci: Keterampilan Membaca, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab.

Abstract

Students at madrasas still face difficulties reading Arabic texts, so efforts are required to help pupils develop their abilities. The purpose of this study was to describe initiatives made to help students' reading abilities as they studied Arabic. This study's context can be found at MAN Sibolga. This study combined an analytical descriptive study method with a qualitative approach. Participant observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies are used for data collecting. Data analysis presents facts to reach a conclusion while utilizing data reduction strategies. Observation persistence and data triangulation procedures will be used to assess the validity of the research data. The findings of this study showed that the madrasah's efforts to improve students' reading abilities in learning Arabic included: (1) giving students ten vocabulary lists to memorize at each session; (2) teaching students to read aloud in pairs; and (3) testing students' direct reading every half-semester. By making these efforts, teachers can gradually aid students in developing their reading comprehension of Arabic texts.

Keywords: Reading Skills, Learning Arabic.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning is the core of the educational process. The interaction of students and teachers in the learning process is an important aspect in determining the personality and breadth of students' knowledge. Because, in practice the teacher will try to train students' skills, teach knowledge, as well as educate students' personalities. On this basis, the optimization of the learning process determines the success of achieving educational goals (Adam, 2015).

Learning offers a process of change for each individual, both in terms of increasing knowledge, quality of personality and also life skills. As a system, learning requires various supporting devices to achieve the results that have been set from the start. This is intended to expedite the achievement of optimal results effectively and efficiently. Thus, the learning process will synergize with various supporting components and media devices that support the fulfillment of achieving an optimal result (Nurrita, 2018).

In practice, the teacher as a central figure in learning becomes a leader who directs students to achieve optimal development according to their age phase. The teacher provides material using learning aids or media to make it easier to convey the teaching material. In the learning process, student success is found from their ability to read, because most of the knowledge is presented in the form of written language so that students are required to carry out reading activities. However, learning in schools generally uses textbooks and student worksheets more often (Hamzah, *et.al.*, 2022).

Learning Arabic is one of the teaching materials that is considered difficult by students. This is based on the difference between the Arabic script and the Indonesian alphabet, so that students who are not proficient at reading the Qur'an find learning Arabic difficult. For this reason, it is necessary to provide assistance from the teacher in improving students' reading skills. Thus, urgent reading skills are taught to students, especially those who are already at the senior high school level (Rahman, 2017).

Based on a preliminary study in class X MAN Sibolga, there were 4 out of 34 students who had difficulty reading Arabic writing. According to the student's statement, this was because they were also not proficient at reading the Qur'an, making it difficult to read Arabic script. Along with this, the madrasa has programmed tahfiz for students so they are skilled at reading the Koran. The hope is that students can also be encouraged to be skilled at reading in learning Arabic.

In fact, research relevant to the topic of reading skills in learning Arabic has been researched from various scientific perspectives. Among them discusses the aspect of using digital media in training students' reading skills (Muhammad, *et.al.*, 2017), phonological errors in reading Arabic texts (Lathifah, *et.al.*, 2017), problem-based learning in improving students' Arabic language skills (Indraswari, 2014), intrinsic motivation in encouraging students' Arabic reading skills (Susanti, *et.al.*, 2018), the effectiveness of the reading guide method on students' reading skills (Fransiska & Elmubarok, 2015), the effectiveness of using games in training students' Arabic reading skills (Latuconsina, 2018), test students' skills in reading Arabic in front of the class (Hidayah, 2020), use of the lectora Inspire application to improve students' Arabic reading skills (Wijoyo, 2016), a comprehensive approach to learning Arabic (Aziza & Muliensyah, 2020), and students' skills in reading Arabic texts in madrasas (Febrianingsih, 2021).

According to the description above, it is clear that MAN Sibolga has never conducted any research on the subject of student Arabic reading abilities. Based on this, the primary factor in the quest for research novelty is the research background. The originality mentioned in this study is related to the fact that MAN Sibolga has never conducted an extensive study on the subject of students' Arabic reading abilities, as well as the teacher's initiatives to support student reading proficiency. The study's main objective is to describe the teacher's efforts to help class X students at MAN Sibolga improve their Arabic reading skills. This description covers the teacher's efforts during the classroom learning process and support from the madrasa leadership.

METHOD

This research uses an approach with an analytical descriptive study method. The background of this research is located at MAN Sibolga, which is located at Jl. Sudirman No. 114, Aek Parombunan, South Sibolga, Sibolga City, North Sumatra. The study was carried out between December 2022 and February 2023. (3 months). Participant observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies are used for data collecting. The director of the madrasa, a teacher of Arabic, and four X MAN Sibolga students served as the study's informants. Data analysis presents facts to reach a conclusion while utilizing data reduction strategies. The validity of the research data will be tested using data triangulation techniques and observation persistence (Assingkily, 2021).

The researchers' efforts to examine Arabic language instruction in class X MAN Sibolga were the beginning of this study's stages. The researchers also looked at the teacher's initiatives to help students become better readers of Arabic literature, such as vocabulary memorization, reading, peer correction, and oral exams that required students to read Arabic texts aloud in class. In addition, the diagram below clearly illustrates how the research framework flows;

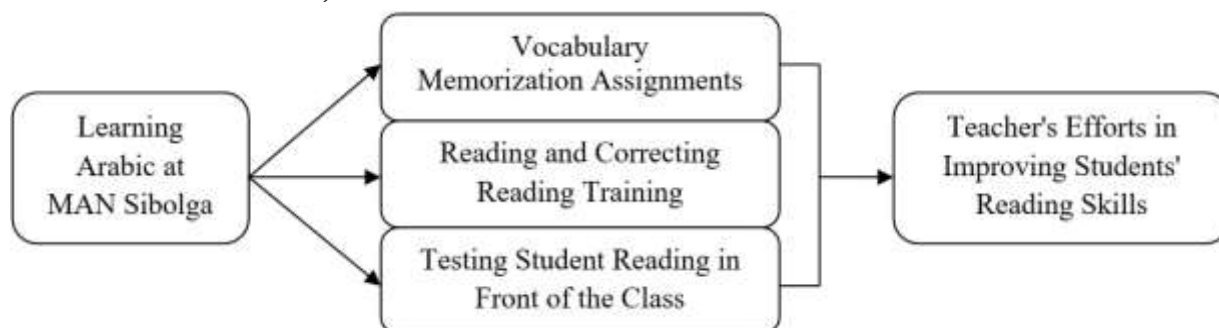


Figure 1. Research Flow Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students are given a vocabulary memorization assignment

Students' ability to learn foreign languages (Arabic, English, Mandarin) is strongly influenced by the level of knowledge of the meaning of each word. In this context, vocabulary has an important role to increase the quantity of memorization of each student. With the aim, that students are familiar with foreign reading texts, and have at least a small part of the entire text read. Through this, students will enjoy learning given their understanding of the meaning of reading.

According to Firdaus & Hafidah (2020), a large vocabulary is a reflection of students' enjoyment of foreign learning materials. This is driven by the manifestation of students' curiosity in exploring foreign learning. Furthermore, Nugrawiyati (2015) added that to learn a foreign language students do not have to be taught to understand all the structure of the language or grammar, earlier than that students must be given teaching that helps increase vocabulary memorization. Thus, students have the courage and intrinsic motivation to learn foreign language rules.

In the context of Arabic, it has its own problems to be taught to students. Besides being based on writing letters that are different from Indonesian or English, Arabic pronunciation is much more complex, so it requires seriousness for students who want to explore it. In fact, it is not uncommon for students to complain about the difference in readings, as explained by the following student FN:

"...You're right sis, in Arabic it's really difficult, it's easy, sis. The proof, many friends who can read the Koran fluently. The Koran is in Arabic, so you already have the capital to be able to also read Arabic texts. But, we are learning Arabic, it's not as easy as Indonesian sis, different letters have different readings, different lines have different meanings. That's why, now we focus on memorizing the easy things first, sis" (Results of interviews with students of class X MAN Sibolga)

In line with the interview excerpt above, the Arabic teacher for class X MAN Sibolga said:

"...Yes, Dik, indeed we here understand the situation of students who have graduated from junior high school, not all of them are from Madrasah Tsanawiyah or Islamic Boarding Schools. Therefore, we do not focus our students on learning rules in Arabic science. We prefer to ask students to memorize vocabulary at least 10 times per meeting. The goal is for students to know the meaning of what they are saying first, so that when there is an assignment or something else in Arabic, they try to understand the reading, instead of getting dizzy first looking at the Arabic text" (The results of the interview with Mr. Tiopan Hasibuan, S.Pd.I.)

Observing the interview excerpts above, it is understood that learning Arabic for class X students of MAN Sibolga does not emphasize students' understanding of the entire grammatical structure of Arabic. Rather, students are first asked to memorize Arabic vocabulary, making it easier for students to have intrinsic motivation in learning a foreign language. In line with this, Albantani (2018) explains that learning foreign languages requires internal enthusiasm from students, because it will be seen as difficult if it is not based on enthusiasm for learning and following up on students' curiosity.

Furthermore, when asked for information about the answers of class X students to the teacher's efforts to give vocabulary memorization assignments, the student with the initials BS explained:

"...Thank God sis, while we were studying it was certainly not to chat in Arabic with friends like Islamic boarding school students. However, we gradually understood what was in the book. The condition, said Pak Tiopan, is that you memorize the vocabulary first, so that you understand the meaning of what you read or say when studying" (Results of interviews with students of class X MAN Sibolga).

The interview excerpt above informs the importance of vocabulary for students in learning foreign languages. As stated by Hijriyah (2018), that the more students memorize vocabulary, the higher the student's interest in learning foreign languages. In fact, this internal drive makes students proficient in reading foreign language texts. Thus, the efforts of Arabic teachers at MAN Sibolga are seen as positive in improving students' reading skills.

Training in Inter-Student Reading and Correcting

The next stage of efforts to memorize Arabic vocabulary is to train students to be skilled at reading. This is because Arabic is not the everyday language or the mother tongue of students in madrasahs. Thus, special training is needed which requires students to read and correct their peers' reading independently. This is in line with the narrative of the class X Arabic teacher at MAN Sibolga as follows:

"...to actualize students' memorization, so we ask students to face each other in front of the deck class. So student A and student B take turns reading and correcting 1 page of the textbook. Apart from testing the skill level of students, we also try to do this so that students are encouraged to learn, it's understandable that if you're already in high school or a teenager, it's a bit prestige if your friend can do it, he can't" (The results of the interview with Mr. Tiopan Hasibuan, S.Pd.I.)

The interview excerpt above informs that reading training and correcting reading among students is the second step of effort provided by the teacher for students. Supporting this, Muslimah (2021) emphasized that the teacher's efforts to facilitate the student learning process will obtain more optimal results than simply transferring insights to students. In more detail, Zakiah (2021) explains that students who are asked to study with peers independently will trigger students' internal enthusiasm in each learning process.

Furthermore, this is in line with the excerpt from the interview with the Madrasah Principal, as follows:

"...That's right, in madrasahs we believe that every child has their own talents and interests. Thus, teachers are given the freedom to be creative and innovative in teaching, bearing in mind that nowadays it is not the teacher who is active in class, but students who must be proactive. For this reason, I, as the leader,

fully support the teacher's efforts to provide independent learning facilities to students, moreover students are asked to study and correct each other with peers, of course this is beneficial for increasing student learning motivation” (The results of the interview with Ms. Nurul Oktaviana Mekawati, S.Pd., M.Pd.).

In connection with the interview above, Muradi (2014) explained that the role of the teacher in the classroom should be minimized, by making more use of the role of learning media and the use of various learning resources. The goal is not to reduce teacher performance, but rather to direct students to the modern learning era where students actively find out according to the instructions given by the teacher. Supriadi, *et.al.* (2020) added that increasing student activity in finding out the meaning of learning, encourages increased achievement and students' personal learning experiences.

Based on the description above, it is understood that the teacher's efforts in training students to read and correcting each other's reading are seen as positive in improving students' Arabic reading skills. This is further strengthened by the notion that learning motivation obtained by students from experiences with peers will encourage students to be active and enthusiastic about participating in learning. Thus, gradually the ability to read Arabic becomes a pleasant habit for students at MAN Sibolga.

Direct Examination of Pupils' Reading in Front of the Class

The reading skills acquired by students in the process of learning Arabic become the main capital for students to understand and be proficient in Arabic. In this context, the teacher has an important role in providing students with opportunities to learn Arabic. This is because learning Arabic has been taught since the elementary age at the SD/MI level, but it seems as if learning Arabic is still considered difficult by some students.

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“...Arabic language teaching materials are definitely from year to year only adapted to the needs of deck students. The challenge is how we as teachers present the material according to the situation and condition of the class. This is also supported by the madrasah environment, whether it is conducive to learning or whether there are certain obstacles. In response to this, I, as an Arabic teacher, try to test my students' reading skills every midterm. The goal is to be able to monitor the development of the abilities of each student in the class” (The results of the interview with Mr. Tiopan Hasibuan, S.Pd.I.)

The interview excerpt above informs that the follow-up effort of the Arabic teacher at MAN Sibolga in improving students' Arabic reading skills is by testing students to read Arabic texts in front of the class every midterm exam. Related to this, Tungkagi, *et.al.* (2022) expressed the opinion that exams are needed to evaluate students' abilities on a regular basis. Furthermore, the Madrasah Head conveyed his opinion, according to the following interview excerpt:

“...In meetings with the teacher council, we always provide opportunities for teachers to express opinions or present the results of learning program achievements in class. One of the things that is interesting is Mr. Tiopan Hasibuan, he makes exams for students every mid semester, even though usually in madrasahs there are only semester exams or grades. We really support this program, so that students' learning skills can be monitored regularly” (The results of the interview with Ms. Nurul Oktaviana Mekawati, S.Pd., M.Pd.).

Observing the interview excerpts above, it is understood that the madrasa leadership supports the exam program every midterm to monitor students' abilities. According to Islam (2015), it is true that midterm exams are still not familiar among students, in contrast to the world of higher education where midterm exams and final semester exams are common. Furthermore, the Arabic teacher's creative program is a positive breakthrough in facilitating student learning development.

Referring to the results of the research above, Alang (2015) explained that exams are not an absolute benchmark for achieving student learning outcomes. For this reason, results-based assessments and student learning processes are needed. Furthermore, Phafiandita, *et.al.* (2022) added that the alignment of student learning processes and outcomes forms a strong synergy in the minds of students that an effective process will reap positive results, and vice versa good results are obtained from an effective learning process.

Supporting the previous opinion, Magdalena, *et.al.* (2020) explained how important it is to assess students' learning processes on a regular basis. Sari, *et.al.* (2021) added that this was intended to monitor every progress students had, so that quality improvement could be planned in the middle of the next semester. Thus, students will experience a gradual increase from the gradual process that the teacher practices when teaching. In particular, this material relates to a foreign language (Arabic) which is not the child's everyday language at home or in the community.

The ability to read Arabic is an important concern for students in the madrasa environment (Sam, 2016). This is in line with various Islamic literatures that use Arabic, even all scientific perspectives from Islam are also based on sources from the Koran and hadith. Where is the Islamic hujjah (Al-Qur'an and Hadith) written in Arabic (Febrianingsih, 2021). This shows the importance of students to be skilled at reading Arabic texts.

Likewise, Khotiah (2020) argues that Arabic language skills for students at the upper secondary education level must be in the sufficient or good category. This is because students are taught to learn Arabic from the elementary school level or madrasah ibtidaiah and also the madrasah tsanawiyah or junior high school level. Tajuddin (2017) emphasized that students in today's digital era should not be forced to become proficient in Arabic, at least being able to recognize letters and read fluently. Thus, students do not feel compelled to learn Arabic, which incidentally is close to the daily life of Muslim students, namely reading the Koran and the hadith of the Prophet.

Another view from Wahdah (2018) needs to be discussed, namely the assumption that madrasa students as a generation of Muslim youth should be "obliged" to be able to read Arabic texts proficiently. This is seen not as a necessity, but as an obligation attached to individuals to analyze Islamic literature from original texts. Amrulloh & Hasanah (2019) supports this opinion, by stating that madrasah students must be innovative with respect to the development and progress of the times, but cannot be far from what is characteristic of them, namely Arabic texts.

It is obvious from the summary above that having students to read aloud during an oral exam has considerably improved their reading skills. The ability and bravery of pupils to read Arabic texts in front of their peers and teachers must be taught, and this is a fundamental component of that education. For class X pupils at MAN Sibolga, this project is a suitable replacement for improving their Arabic reading skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the madrasah's efforts to improve students' reading skills in learning Arabic include; (1) assigning students to memorize 10 vocabularies at each meeting; (2) training students to read in class facing each other 1 student with 1 other student; and (3) testing students' direct reading every mid semester.

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- 909 *Activities to Enhance Pupils' Reading Skills (Maharatul Qiraah) in Arabic Language Learning - Amalia Muhazlin Sitorus, Akmal Walad Ahkas*
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- 911 *Activities to Enhance Pupils' Reading Skills (Maharatul Qiraah) in Arabic Language Learning* - Amalia Muhazlin Sitorus, Akmal Walad Ahkas
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