

Challenges in Arabic Reading Proficiency: An Evaluation of Teaching Methods and Student Motivation at MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Arabic reading ability of eighth-grade students at MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis. The instruments used include observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The evaluation was carried out through pronunciation and sentence tests, and factors that cause problems in learning Arabic were identified. The results indicate that students' hijaiyyah letter pronunciation in the vocabulary test was at a moderate level (61.90%), whereas their pronunciation in conversational sentences was significantly weaker (42.25%). Overall, their Arabic pronunciation ability was categorized as deficient, with an average score of 53.56%. The study identifies internal factors such as low student interest and motivation, while external challenges include limited learning resources and a lack of varied teaching methods. This study concludes that improving Arabic reading skills requires a holistic approach that addresses both internal and external factors. Recommendations include developing innovative teaching strategies, integrating technology in learning, and enhancing instructional materials to foster better engagement and reading proficiency.

Keywords: Arabic literacy, Hijaiyyah pronunciation, Pedagogical challenges, Mixed-methods evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language proficiency, especially reading ability, is a crucial aspect in Indonesia. This is because the holy book of Islam, the Quran, is written in Arabic. Given that the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, the ability to read Arabic is a basic need to appreciate and practice all the teachings contained in the Quran (Ritonga et al., 2023; Hidayah & Zumrotun, 2023). In addition, this ability is also considered a form of respect for the language used in the holy book, thus providing additional motivation to study it. Arabic is the liturgical language in the practice of Islamic worship (Haq, 2020; Al Shlowiy, 2022). Every Muslim is required to perform certain acts of worship, such as prayer, reading the Quran, and praying, all of which are pronounced in Arabic. Therefore, mastery of Arabic is an important prerequisite for every Muslim to carry out their religious obligations properly. Not only that, but a deep understanding of Arabic also helps Muslims

to interpret the meaning of prayers and worship that are carried out so that worship becomes more solemn (Baharun et al., 2020; Rosowsky, 2023).

In the context of education in Indonesia, madrasah-based schools have an important role in instilling Arabic reading skills in students (Atabik et al., 2024; Syafei et al., 2024). This has been stipulated based on the Regulation of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 000912 of 2013, which states that one of the objectives of teaching Arabic subjects is to equip students with essential reading and writing skills in Arabic (Yunis & Dajani, 2022; Amalia & Hidayat, 2018). The role of this madrasah is very strategic, considering that most students who attend madrasahs have a Muslim family background that prioritizes religious education as the central provision in life. One of the madrasahs that provides religious education is Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Khair Hertaco. Madrasah Tsanawiyah is at an educational level equivalent to junior high school (MTs), which integrates a general education curriculum with religious education. Thus, students not only gain general academic knowledge but are also equipped with mastery of religious sciences. However, although several subjects related to reading Arabic have been taught, there are still some students whose Arabic reading skills are relatively weak (Almsbhiheen et al., 2023; Gharaibeh et al., 2021). This condition indicates the need for more effective learning strategies to overcome the gap in reading skills among students.

Improving Arabic reading skills not only serves to fulfill spiritual needs but also has strategic value in the intellectual development of students. This skill acts as a gateway to understanding Islamic literature that is rich in knowledge, ranging from the fields of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), which governs religious and legal matters, to tafsir (Quranic exegesis), which provides deeper interpretations of Quranic verses, and even the history of Islamic civilization, which helps students grasp the development of Islamic thought and culture over time (Supena, 2024; Saefulloh, 2018). Mastering Arabic reading, therefore, enables students to engage more profoundly with religious texts and apply their teachings in daily life. In addition, good Arabic reading skills are also an important asset for students to access various modern literacy sources that use Arabic, including scientific articles, which contribute to academic research and discourse, reference books, which serve as foundational materials for various fields of study, and digital-based information sources, such as online databases and e-books, which provide up-to-date knowledge in the digital era (Maan, 2021; Yusoff et al., 2020). Given the increasing role of digital technology in education, Arabic proficiency ensures that students can navigate and utilize these resources effectively, broadening their intellectual horizons beyond religious studies.

Therefore, a planned and sustainable evaluation approach is needed to ensure that students are not only able to read but also comprehend and apply these skills in various life contexts. This evaluation should include regular assessments of students' reading abilities, an analysis of teaching methods to identify areas for improvement, and the implementation of innovative strategies that enhance engagement and comprehension. By adopting a structured evaluation framework, educators can ensure that Arabic reading instruction remains effective, relevant, and aligned with students' academic and spiritual needs. Students often face various obstacles in the learning process, both from internal and external factors (Hendriyanto et al., 2024; Yusoff dkk., 2020). Several previous studies that are referenced in this study can be seen in the following study. In internal factors, for example, the lack of students mastering Arabic vocabulary, the inability to pronounce the *hijaiyyah* letters, which sound almost the same, and the difficulty of reading Arabic texts due to significant differences between Arabic and Latin letters (Rifain et al., 2024) (Rahman & Baharudin, 2023). In external factors, teachers tend to be less interested in delivering learning materials, and the learning methods used are monotonous. In addition, the low interest of students in learning Arabic is one of the significant external obstacles (Almelhes, 2024; Rusli et al., 2024). This condition is further exacerbated if the surrounding environment does not support students to develop Arabic language skills optimally (Shaalán, 2023; Rahman & Baharudin, 2023).

While these studies provide valuable insights into Arabic language learning difficulties, they primarily focus on identifying general challenges without conducting a structured evaluation of students' Arabic reading proficiency. Most prior research lacks empirical data on students' reading abilities and does not quantify their skill levels, leaving a gap in understanding the specific weaknesses in Arabic literacy. Furthermore, few studies offer concrete, data-driven interventions tailored to improve Arabic reading instruction in madrasah settings. Unlike previous research, this study systematically evaluates students' pronunciation and reading skills, providing quantitative assessments and targeted instructional recommendations. This research not only diagnoses the problem but also proposes actionable solutions to enhance Arabic literacy education. By identifying the root causes of students' reading difficulties, this study aims to offer concrete strategies for improving Arabic literacy instruction. The findings serve as a valuable reference for teachers and educational institutions in designing more engaging and effective pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, this research emphasizes a solution-oriented framework that goes beyond merely describing challenges by proposing practical interventions, such as the development of diverse teaching strategies, the integration of digital learning tools, and the optimization of learning

environments. This comprehensive evaluation contributes to the broader discourse on Arabic language education, providing actionable recommendations that support both students' language development and educators' instructional practices.

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative descriptive research. The quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, such as mean, percentage, and frequency distribution, to identify trends and patterns in students' Arabic reading proficiency (Yunis & Dajani, 2022b). Meanwhile, the qualitative data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis will be examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring issues and insights related to the effectiveness of Arabic reading instruction. (Sugiyono, 2014; Miles et al., 2014). Researchers use qualitative description to try to find and describe facts about the problems of learning to read Arabic for class VIII students of MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco (Mahsun, 2017). The sample used in this study was the total sample, which included all class VIII students of MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco, totalling 12 people. The instruments used in this study were observation, questionnaires, and interviews (Yusanto, 2020). The type of questionnaire used was a closed questionnaire totalling 20 numbers, and the type of interview used was a guided interview consisting of 9 questions. The data obtained were analyzed as follows:

- a. Observation data is used to provide a comprehensive and comprehensive picture of the students studied, thus allowing a deeper and more complete understanding of the conditions of the students.
- b. Interview data using analysis is done by describing students' answers to obtain general conclusions related to the problems faced by students in learning.
- c. Test data is analyzed using percentage techniques by applying the following formula:

Test data analysis involves applying a percentage formula that is calculated by calculating the average score divided by the maximum score, then the result is multiplied by 100%. The formula is summarized as follows:

$$\% = \frac{x}{N} \times 100\%$$

% = Persentase

x = Average score

N = Maximum score

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Before applying the percentage formula, the initial step is to calculate the average score using the following formula (Panggayudi et al., 2017):

$$x = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

x = Average score
 $\sum X$ = Jumlah score
 n = Number of samples

The scores obtained will be converted with the following criteria (Nurgiyantoro, 2010):

Tabel 1. Assessment of Ability Percentage

No.	Interval Percentage Ability	Description
1.	86-100	Very good
2.	76-85	Good
3.	56-75	Enough
4.	10-55	Less

- d. The available questionnaire data is then analyzed by calculating the number or frequency of each item presented in the questionnaire and then calculating the percentage of respondents' answers in the form of a single table through the frequency and percentage distribution using the following formula (Sudjana, 2005).

$$\% = F/N \times 100\%$$

P= Percentage

F= Frequency of data

N= Number of samples processed

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reading Test Result Data for Class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco Students

The results of the Arabic text reading ability test in the form of vocabulary and conversation based on the pronunciation of hijaiyyah letters and errors in reading obtained the following data:

Tabel 2. Arabic Text Proficiency Test Results

No.	Type of Score Test	Score
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1.	Vocabulary Pronunciation	208
2.	Sentence Pronunciation	152
Total		360

Based on the data in the table, the total score obtained by students in the vocabulary pronunciation test was 208. In contrast, from the sound test on the pronunciation of conversational sentences, the total score obtained by students was 152 scores. In contrast, the total number of sound tests on the pronunciation of vocabulary and conversational sentences was obtained. Total 360 scores.

Student Ability Data on Vocabulary Pronunciation Sound Test

One of the weaknesses often found in students in learning to read Arabic is the low ability to pronounce hijaiyyah letters. This is revealed through the results of the vocabulary pronunciation test conducted on class VIII students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Khair Hertaco. The average value and percentage of student achievement in the test were calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 x &= \frac{\sum x}{n} \\
 &= \frac{208}{12} \\
 &= 17,33
 \end{aligned}$$

Score 17.33 From the maximum score of 28, it was then converted into a value in the range of 0-100 using the following percentage formula.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \% &= \frac{x}{N} \times 100\% \\
 &= \frac{17,33}{28} \times 100\% \\
 &= 61,90
 \end{aligned}$$

The results of this calculation indicate that the level of students' hijaiyyah letter pronunciation ability in the vocabulary pronunciation test is 61.90%, which is included in the Sufficient category. These findings provide an initial overview of students' ability to master essential aspects of Arabic, especially the pronunciation of hijaiyyah letters and vocabulary. Weaknesses in pronunciation indicate the need for improved learning strategies, both in more interesting teaching methods and in providing materials that better support students' abilities. This evaluation is also critical to

provide concrete input for teachers in designing more effective learning approaches so that they can help students achieve better Arabic reading skills.

Student Ability Data on Conversational Sentence Pronunciation Sound Test

Data analysis obtained from the results of the vocabulary pronunciation test showed that grade VIII students at MTs Miftahul Khair Hertaco had an average pronunciation score of 12.67 out of a maximum score of 28. This average was obtained using the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}x &= \frac{\sum x}{n} \\&= \frac{152}{12} \\&= 12,67\end{aligned}$$

The average score was then converted into a percentage to provide a clearer picture of the student's ability level. The percentage was calculated using the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\% &= \frac{x}{N} \times 100\% \\&= \frac{12,67}{28} \times 100\% \\&= 45,25\end{aligned}$$

The results of this calculation indicate that the level of students' hijaiyyah letter pronunciation ability is at 45.25%, which is included in the poor category. This finding suggests that students still face difficulties in pronouncing hijaiyyah letters correctly and precisely according to Arabic pronunciation rules.

Student Ability Data on Overall Test

Based on the results of the evaluation data analysis, the average percentage value of students' ability to pronounce the hijaiyyah letters in class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hertaco showed less than satisfactory results. The calculation of the average percentage value was carried out using the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}x &= \frac{\sum x}{n} \\&= \frac{360}{12} \\&= 30\end{aligned}$$

A score of 30 out of a maximum score of 56 is then converted to a value of 0-100 using the percentage formula as below:

$$\begin{aligned}\% &= \frac{x}{N} \times 100\% \\ &= \frac{30}{56} \times 100\% \\ &= 53,56\end{aligned}$$

With a percentage of 53.56%, the overall ability of students to pronounce hijaiyyah letters falls into the Less category, indicating that most students struggle with accurate pronunciation. This aligns with Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which emphasizes that students' ability to process and produce phonetic distinctions depends on their cognitive stage and prior linguistic exposure (Budwig & Alexander, 2020). Furthermore, this finding supports Skinner's Behaviorist Theory, which suggests that repeated exposure and reinforcement are essential in mastering phonetic skills (Tincani et al., 2020). Additionally, the low pronunciation proficiency can be linked to self-determination theory, as low intrinsic motivation and external support hinder students' engagement in improving their Arabic phonetic skills (Jennings et al., 2022). The absence of engaging learning methods and structured reinforcement could lead to passive learning behaviors, reducing students' willingness to practice pronunciation actively. Thus, improving Arabic reading instruction requires pedagogical strategies that integrate cognitive engagement, behaviorist reinforcement, and motivational scaffolding to enhance students' pronunciation skills effectively.

Student Questionnaire Result Data for Grade VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

The questionnaire in this study consisted of 20 questions given to 12 students in class VIII. To provide a more detailed explanation this can be explained in detail in the following discussion:

- In questionnaire (1), there were seven students (58.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that Arabic was a complex subject.
- In questionnaire (2), there were eight students (66.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that Arabic was not necessary to learn.
- In questionnaire (3), there were nine students (75%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that it was challenging to pronounce the sounds of the hijaiyyah letters.
- In questionnaire (4), there were seven students (58.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that they had never practised reading Arabic texts.
- In questionnaire (5), there were eight students (66.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who mainly stated that they were not interested in Arabic lessons.

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- f. In questionnaire (6), nine students (75%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco stated that they agreed that Arabic lessons were not engaging.
- g. In questionnaire (7), there were eight students (66.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that they agreed that learning Arabic was functional.
- h. In questionnaire (8), six students (50%) of class VIII MTs, Miftahul Khair Hartaco, stated that they lacked curiosity in learning Arabic.
- i. In questionnaire (9), 6 students (50%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco. The majority stated that the teacher occasionally motivated Arabic language learning.
- j. In questionnaire (10), there were seven students (58.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco. The majority agreed that the teacher was not engaging in presenting the material, especially in learning reading skills.
- k. In questionnaire (11), there were seven students (58.33%) of class VIII MTs, Miftahul Khair Hartaco, who stated that there was sufficient time allocated for Arabic language learning.
- l. In questionnaire (12), there were seven students (58.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco. The majority indicated that the teacher often provided exercises in pronouncing Arabic texts.
- m. In the questionnaire (13), there were 11 students (91.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that they had never used Arabic in their daily lives.
- n. In the questionnaire (14), there were 10 students (83.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that teachers rarely apply various learning methods during the teaching and learning process.
- o. In the questionnaire (15), 10 students (83.33%) of class VIII MTs, Miftahul Khair Hartaco, stated that the school rarely held Arabic language activities.
- p. In the questionnaire (16), six students (50%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco stated that they had enough additional vocabulary after learning Arabic.
- q. In the questionnaire (17), 10 students (83.33%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco stated that they had difficulty reading Arabic writing due to the difference in sound patterns between Indonesian and Arabic.
- r. In the questionnaire (18) there were 8 students (66.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who mainly stated that the difference between Arabic and Latin writing sometimes became an obstacle in their ability to read Arabic.

- s. In the questionnaire (19), there were five students (41.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that they sometimes paid attention to grammar when reading Arabic texts.
- t. In the questionnaire (20), there were eight students (66.67%) of class VIII MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco who stated that they never
- u. Repeating the Arabic language learning material that the teacher has taught.

Interview Data of Arabic Language Teachers of Grade VIII Students of MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

In interviews with subject teachers, it was revealed that the main challenge in learning the ability to read Arabic texts among students is related to their lack of motivation and desire to learn the language. According to Self-Determination Theory Deci & Ryan, 1985, student motivation in learning is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Razem & Pandor, 2023). The lack of motivation in Arabic learning may stem from the absence of personal interest (intrinsic motivation) or limited external encouragement, such as inadequate teaching methods or resources (extrinsic motivation). Without sufficient motivation, students tend to struggle with engagement and retention of Arabic reading skills. In addition, there is a lack of basic knowledge of students about Arabic, including the introduction of hijaiyyah letters, difficulty in reading Arabic script, which causes them to rely on Latin transliteration, and limitations in their mastery of Arabic vocabulary. This aligns with Krashen's research, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when students receive comprehensible input slightly above their current level of proficiency ($i+1$). The lack of foundational knowledge in Arabic limits their ability to process and understand Arabic texts, leading to difficulties in fluency and further discouraging them from learning the language (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). The lack of foundational knowledge in Arabic limits their ability to process and understand Arabic texts, leading to difficulties in fluency and further discouraging them from learning the language. As a result, students have difficulty reading Arabic texts fluently, which contributes to their lack of interest in learning Arabic.

In terms of learning media, teachers only rely on handbooks from the Ministry of Religion and make additional books for students due to the limited learning resources available at school. The learning method adopted is the qiro'ah method, where the teacher reads Arabic texts or vocabulary, and students repeat it together. This approach is in line with the audiolingual method described by Skinner (1957), which emphasizes repetition and reinforcement to develop automaticity in language learning (Dixon et al., 2023; Scheffler & Butzkamm, 2019). However, while repetition helps pronunciation and memorization, it may not be sufficient for long-term comprehension and

retention, which is in line with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction and contextualized practice.

The educational process is often constrained by the limited time available. In the context of learning Arabic, the time allocated at school, which is two hours per week, is considered insufficient to cover all the material. Swain's explanation argues that learners need many opportunities to produce language output (speaking, writing) to master a language thoroughly. Limited instructional time prevents students from actively engaging with Arabic texts, thus hindering their progress in reading fluency (Nassif, 2019; Maan, 2021). In response to this problem, teachers initiated the formation of additional classes held every Saturday, known as self-development classes. In these classes, students are grouped based on their ability level, which is determined through an assessment of their basic knowledge of Arabic, including mastery of the hijaiyyah letters and the ability to read the Qur'an. This differentiated instruction approach aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, 1978), which suggests that students learn best when instruction is tailored to their current ability level and is supported through scaffolding. By grouping students according to proficiency levels, teachers can provide targeted instruction that facilitates gradual improvement in Arabic reading skills (Margolis, 2020).

The general obstacle faced by teachers is the lack of supporting learning facilities in schools. The number of textbooks used by students is minimal, so teachers need to find a solution to increase the number of books to be used. The library that stores books supporting Arabic language mastery, which should be one of the essential places for students to use, is also non-existent, so students have great difficulty finding references to deepen their Arabic language learning. According to Richard Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2001), effective learning occurs when students have access to diverse educational materials that integrate both verbal and visual information. Without adequate learning resources, students face greater challenges in reinforcing their Arabic reading skills outside of classroom instruction (Mayer, 2024).

Discussion of the Factors Causing the Occurrence of Reading Ability Problems in Grade VIII Students of MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

From the data analysis that has been done in this study, it was found that the problems faced by students in learning Arabic can be described as follows: internal factors. According to an interview with an Arabic teacher of class VIII MTs, Miftahul Khair Hartaco, one of the internal factors that contribute to the difficulty of learning Arabic among students is the lack of interest and motivation; it was revealed that student's motivation and interest in learning Arabic are still very

low. This has an impact on the fact that seven students (58.33%) do not read books or repeat materials at home, according to data from the analysis of questionnaire number 20. In addition, differences in students' educational backgrounds are also identified as one of the factors causing this problem, where not all students have a background from Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah (MI), with some of them coming from elementary schools (SD) or public schools where Most students have little or no previous Arabic learning experience.

External factors include classroom management skills by teachers play an essential role in motivating students to learn Arabic. From the analysis of questionnaire number 15, it was found that 83.33% of 10 students stated that their teachers only occasionally applied various learning methods. This resulted in a lack of student interest in learning Arabic due to the lack of consistency in using interesting methods. In addition, the use of monotonous learning media, such as only relying on Arabic language textbooks, also contributed to student boredom. This emphasizes the need for variation in the use of media to increase student enthusiasm in the Arabic language learning process, as stated in an interview with a grade VIII Arabic language teacher (Ratnaningsih et al., 2024; Di et al., 2020). Inadequate facilities and resources are often inhibiting factors in the Arabic language learning process (Almelhes, 2024; Alhamami & Almosa, 2023). The library, as one of the essential facilities in schools, plays a crucial role in facilitating students' reading interests (Loh et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024). According to an interview with a teacher, it was revealed that the school lacked the provision of relevant library facilities and books to support student learning. This condition has an impact on decreasing student interest in learning Arabic, as evidenced by data from questionnaire number 6, where 75% of nine students stated their lack of interest in learning the language. The lack of school initiative in organizing Arabic-related activities, such as Quran Reading and Writing competitions, vocabulary memorization, and Arabic language camps, also contributes to problems in learning the language. Such activities can trigger students' interest in Arabic. Based on data from questionnaire number 15, as many as 83.33% or 10 students indicated that schools only occasionally hold activities related to Arabic.

To address these challenges, a multi-faceted approach should be implemented to enhance students' motivation, improve teaching strategies, and optimize learning resources. First, student engagement can be strengthened through interactive and gamified learning methods, such as digital flashcards, storytelling, and role-playing activities, which align with constructivist learning theory (Vetoshkina, 2020). Teachers should also incorporate Total Physical Response (TPR) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to make lessons more dynamic and participatory.

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Second, teacher training programs should be introduced to improve pedagogical approaches, focusing on effective classroom management, differentiated instruction, and the integration of multimedia resources. Third, schools must enhance library facilities by providing graded Arabic reading materials, audiobooks, and interactive applications to support independent learning. Additionally, extracurricular programs such as Arabic language clubs, Quran reading competitions, and cultural immersion activities should be regularly organized to cultivate students' interest and exposure to Arabic beyond the classroom. By implementing these concrete strategies, Arabic learning at MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco can become more engaging, structured, and conducive to skill development, ultimately improving students' reading proficiency and overall language acquisition.

Factors Causing Problems for Teachers in Improving Reading Skills of Grade VIII Students at MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

In the teaching and learning process, teachers have an essential role because teachers act as facilitators in delivering learning materials (Rahmi et al., 2019). According to the results of the questionnaire data, nine students (75%) stated that the teacher's way of providing the material, especially in reading skills, was considered less interesting. This is supported by the results of interviews with Arabic language teachers, which showed that the lack of interest was caused by the use of learning media that was limited to textbooks. Another problem is the allocation of time for learning Arabic, which is 2 hours per week, which is not enough to deliver one material. The provision of material in the form of theory is inadequate, especially in the provision of material in the form of practice. This is one of the reasons why students have minimal knowledge of Arabic (Ismail et al., 2022; Almelhes, 2024). Based on the results of interviews conducted with teachers, it was stated that the availability of Arabic language books is still very lacking; this is an obstacle for teachers because, at school, there are not enough books to support teaching materials.

Problems in Reading Arabic Experienced by Grade VIII Students of MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco

The results of reading tests conducted on students showed that they often had difficulty reading Arabic texts, which was caused by several factors. One of the factors is the significant difference between Arabic and Indonesian, especially in terms of pronouncing several Arabic letters, such as ط, ظ, ع, ح, خ, ض, ص, which are not typical for Latin speakers (Mashaqba et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2023). In addition, there are still students who have not been able to memorize Arabic letters well, which is reflected in the questionnaire data showing their difficulty in reading Arabic texts and their tendency only to read the Latin transliteration. Additional influencing factors are the

similarity of sounds between several *hijaiyyah* letters (Brosh, 2019). Where letters such as غ، خ، ك have similar sounds, as do the uvular letters ق، ح، ع، and the mukfahammah letters ط، ض، ظ. According to data from the questionnaire, students often have difficulty distinguishing *hijaiyyah* letters that have almost similar sounds. This difficulty is also confirmed by the results of the reading test that has been conducted on students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study evaluates the Arabic reading proficiency of grade VIII students at MTs Miftahul Khair Hartaco, focusing on their ability to pronounce hijaiyyah letters and read Arabic sentences. The findings indicate that while students demonstrate moderate proficiency in vocabulary pronunciation (61.90%), their ability to pronounce hijaiyyah letters in conversational sentences is significantly weaker (42.25%), with an overall pronunciation ability classified as deficient (53.56%). Internal challenges such as low motivation, lack of prior exposure to Arabic, and minimal home practice were identified as major barriers to proficiency. Meanwhile, external factors—including monotonous teaching methods, insufficient learning resources, and limited school initiatives to promote Arabic literacy—further hinder students' progress. These findings underscore the urgent need for pedagogical improvements and resource optimization to enhance Arabic reading instruction.

This study makes a significant contribution by providing a structured evaluation framework that quantifies students' Arabic reading proficiency, an aspect often overlooked in previous research. The study's mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable aspects of reading proficiency and the qualitative insights into learning challenges. To further advance this field, future research should focus on developing and implementing innovative teaching strategies, such as interactive learning models, digital learning applications, and phonetic reinforcement exercises. Additionally, exploring the impact of socio-cultural influences on student motivation and investigating longitudinal effects of different instructional interventions can provide deeper insights into effective Arabic literacy development. By addressing these areas, future research can build on the current study's findings to create more inclusive, engaging, and effective Arabic reading programs in madrasah settings.

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