

# Arabic Learning Challenges from the Perspective of Students in A Case Study Pilot School SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah, Sekampung, East Lampung

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## ABSTRACT

Arabic is a compulsory subject at SMP Plus Ainul Falah Islamic Boarding School, Sumbergede, Sekampung, East Lampung, emphasizing foreign language skills as a key focus. However, teaching and learning Arabic face numerous challenges. Educators encounter obstacles due to limited experience, resource constraints, and high academic expectations. Students, often learning Arabic for the first time and coming from diverse backgrounds, face difficulties with grammar, language anxiety, and motivation. This qualitative descriptive research, conducted through a case study approach, explores these challenges to present an objective picture of the situation. Data were gathered from students at the boarding school. Findings highlight that grammatical differences pose significant learning hurdles, while language anxiety makes students hesitant to participate due to fear of mistakes or peer judgment. Additionally, low student motivation hampers learning progress. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing Arabic learning outcomes at the school.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic has an important role in Indonesia and has a great impact on the social structure of people's lives. Arabic is the language of the holy book of Muslims around the world, so Islam and Arabic have a very close relationship. Indonesia, which is currently the country with the largest number of Muslims in the world,[1] has made Arabic subjects a mandatory curriculum in various educational institutions, especially Islamic educational institutions, such as private educational institutions and Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions. Learning and teaching Arabic are two obligations that cannot be separated from a Muslim. Thu'aimah explained the will of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which was narrated by the companion of Umar bin Khatab ra. that is:

تعلموا العربية فإنها من دينكم

“learn Arabic, because it is part of your religion.”

From the hadith, it can be concluded that Arabic is absolutely necessary for Muslims to learn in order to be used to study and explore Islamic religious knowledge.[2]

Considering the importance of Arabic, SMP Plus Ainul Falah Islamic Boarding School also makes it one of the compulsory subjects at the school. SMP Plus Ainul Falah Islamic Boarding School is located in Sumbergede village, Sekampung district, East Lampung district. Learning at SMP Plus Ainul Falah Islamic Boarding School has just started in the new school year 2024/2025, precisely on July 9, 2024.[3] This school is a pilot school that tries a new curriculum that has not been implemented in other public schools.[4] This school is a plus school based on Islamic boarding schools, so it focuses on improving student skills in various aspects of education, both academic and non-academic,[5] as well as combining the Islamic religious education curriculum with general education.[6]

Foreign language skills are one of the non-academic skills that are the main focus in learning at SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah, so that students are expected to master Arabic both to explore religious knowledge and to become a communication tool. However, learning Arabic at SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah which is a pilot school is not easy. Many challenges are encountered in various aspects. As a new school that still has many limitations, both in terms of facilities, curriculum guidelines, teaching staff, to set targets that are too high in learning at the school is an aspirational overload.[7]

Lack of experience, and limitations in various aspects, as well as a fairly high learning achievement target are the challenges for educators in teaching Arabic. Learners are expected to be able to speak Arabic fluently, even expected to be able to make dramas and be able to debate in Arabic within a year. Meanwhile, for learners who have different backgrounds, and even the first time learning Arabic as a whole, certainly find many challenges and difficulties in learning it.[8] Therefore, in this study, researchers will examine in depth the challenges of learning Arabic felt by students, with various limitations that exist in the pilot school.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. The qualitative descriptive format carried out in this research is in the form of a case study. Case study research is qualitative research that seeks to find meaning, investigate processes, and gain a deep understanding and understanding of individuals, groups, and situations.[9] The purpose of this descriptive qualitative case study research is to solve or answer the problem at hand in order to contain an objective picture of a situation.

## 3. RESULT

### 3.1. Grammatical Differences

Based on the interview, students have difficulty understanding Arabic language material, this phenomenon is usually caused by several things. Based on the interviews that

have been conducted, the difficulties of these students are caused by the differences in phonology, grammar and writing systems with the first language or mother tongue. Students also cannot see the relevance or benefits in learning Arabic so that they lack enthusiasm and focus in learning. Students also have difficulty memorizing Arabic. Students who have difficulty memorizing Arabic are generally caused by several factors.

Based on interviews with the students, the factors that cause memorization difficulties in these students are limited memory capacity, and significant differences in language structure with the mother tongue, as well as less varied learning methods. To address this, a more interactive approach, scheduled repetition, and social support from teachers and friends are needed.

The varying levels of vocabulary and grammar difficulties also cause students to feel that Arabic lessons are sometimes easy and sometimes difficult. When students face easier material, they feel confident, but when the material becomes difficult, they may feel frustrated. This demonstrates the need for a flexible teaching approach to adapt to students' needs and abilities, as well as provide additional support when facing challenges.

Students also feel challenged when writing Arabic, which shows that they are aware of the complexity and uniqueness of the language. These challenges can come from several aspects, based on interviews with the students. The challenges also come from grammatical structures, writing systems, and vocabulary that are different from their native language. This feeling of being challenged can be a positive motivation, encouraging students to try harder in mastering writing skills. With the right approach, such as regular practice and constructive feedback, this challenge can be an opportunity for growth and improvement in writing skills in Arabic.

### **3.2. Language Anxiety**

Students feel worried when asked to come forward. This feeling of worry when coming forward is usually caused by several things. Based on interviews with these students, this worry is caused by a lack of self-confidence. They worry about making mistakes or being embarrassed in front of others. This factor often affects their ability to perform effectively and can hinder active participation in class. Support from the teacher and continuous practice can help reduce these worries.

### **3.3. Motivation and Psychological Factors**

Students who do not have motivation in Arabic are usually motivated by several things. Based on the results of the interview, students who were not motivated because according to him Arabic is a difficult subject to learn. This difficulty is caused by his knowledge at the previous school level, which came from a public elementary school where Arabic lessons are not a compulsory subject at the school, so students still feel unfamiliar in learning Arabic. This is one of the external factors that cause students to be unmotivated. However, motivation can basically be aroused, therefore it is necessary to deepen the investigation of the student.

Lack of motivation can also cause students to be less interested when learning, their attention quickly decreases so that students are very easily sleepy when the learning process takes place. Unmotivated students also don't have proud moments when learning Arabic, students feel less motivated and lack confidence. A lack of recognized achievement or positive experiences can also hinder their engagement in learning. To increase motivation, it is important to create opportunities for students to feel accomplished, such as through recognition of small progress, project-based learning, or supportive competition.

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, even though students are not motivated to learn Arabic, students feel happy and happy when learning Arabic even though they are not intrinsically motivated, showing that their learning experience still provides satisfaction and joy. Based on the interviews that have been conducted, this happiness comes from social interaction with classmates, and a pleasant classroom atmosphere. While internal motivation may be low, external factors such as support from teachers and fun activities can create a positive learning environment. This can be the basis for building stronger motivation in the future, so students begin to see the value and benefits in learning Arabic.

For students who are motivated to learn Arabic because they feel happy doing so, it shows that they have a high interest and involvement in the learning process. This sense of happiness can come from various factors, based on the interviews that have been conducted, this can be caused by positive social interactions with friends and teachers. This happiness-driven motivation can improve students' memory, communication skills, and confidence, so that they are more active in learning and master Arabic faster.

Students who are motivated to learn Arabic because they often learn through games or play show that its fun and interactive learning methods can increase their interest and engagement. This approach makes learning feel more interesting and not boring, so that students can more easily understand new concepts and vocabulary. Educational games can also help improve critical thinking and collaboration skills, as well as create a positive competitive atmosphere. This way, students feel more engaged and motivated to continue learning Arabic.

Motivated students also feel proud when they can answer questions showing that they have high confidence and a sense of accomplishment. This moment not only increases their motivation to learn, but also strengthens their understanding of the material. This feeling of pride arises from the effort made to understand concepts and apply knowledge, which can strengthen student involvement in the learning process. Recognition of this achievement is important to encourage students to continue learning and strive to be better in the future.

Although the student has difficulties, and various kinds of challenges in learning Arabic, the environment around the student such as teachers and friends gives full support to the student in learning Arabic. The condition of the same students as Arabic learners makes them have the same obstacles and problems in learning Arabic so that they have a feeling to support and encourage each other. This support helps to create a positive learning environment, increase student engagement, and make it easier for them to overcome challenges. With the guidance of teachers and the encouragement of friends, students are more eager to continue learning and feel more appreciated in the process of learning Arabic.

Despite being sleepy, there are attempts to curb sleepiness, Students try to think actively to prevent drowsiness by focusing on stimulating mental tasks or activities. By maximizing concentration, the brain stays active, thus reducing the desire to fall asleep. Even though students feel anxious when asked to move forward and worried about mistakes, they still want to try to do it, even though sometimes the material they learn is difficult, such as memorizing and writing Arabic writing, but still try to try it.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The difference in grammar between the first language (Indonesian) and the second language (Arabic) causes students to experience some difficulties during the Arabic learning process. Based on the conclusions obtained from the results of interviews by students of SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah, among the difficulties experienced are difficulties in understanding Arabic language material. According to Edy Sulaiman in his research entitled "Grounding Arabic from an Early Age (Analysis of Difficulties and Challenges in Learning Arabic for Beginners)" Arabic has sounds (phonemes) that may be different from the sounds

of the language in the mother tongue. Phonological differences such as 'ain ghoin and so on, the Arabic alphabet which is different from the Latin alphabet, and the complex grammatical structure of Arabic with the rules of word changes that depend on the context and position in the sentence, can make it difficult for students to learn Arabic.[10]

Based on research conducted by Zakiatunnisa, et al. entitled "Arabic Language Learning Problematics and Solutions for Non-Arabs" the difference in Arabic grammar with the mother tongue / first language causes students to experience difficulties in language, such as grammar problems. Indonesian students will have difficulty in pronouncing some Arabic phonemes such as the pronunciation of the qaf sound which becomes kaf (al-qolbu becomes al-kalbu), which will make it difficult for students to learn maharah qira'ah. Students also experience problems in terms of vocabulary (mufrodat). Arabic has a lot of vocabulary whose formation patterns are very diverse and flexible, so students can also experience difficulties in translating sentences.[11]

This is in line with research conducted by Rizki Hayatun Nisa, et al with the title "Problematics of Arabic Language Learning for Class VII Students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ma'had Al-Zaytun", they said that Arabic vocabulary learning is very complex such as isim / nouns which are divided between mu'annts and mudzakar, fi'il / verbs are divided based on the time of their occurrence, and letter sentences are divided into mabani and ma'ani, so it requires perseverance and persistence in understanding these concepts, but in reality students still often forget the vocabulary so that it is difficult to understand the material explained by the teacher.[12]

Melinda Yunisa in her research entitled "Problematics of Arabic Language Learning in the Aspects of Nahwu and Sharaf Science for Class X Students of Madrasah Aliyah Jambi Laboratory" states that students can also experience difficulties in placing Arabic vocabulary that they already have or difficulty forming simple everyday sentences, due to the rules and qoidah of Arabic which are different from Indonesian, namely qoidah nahwu and shorof. The difference in sentence structure between the first language (Indonesian) and the second language (Arabic), also affects the meaning of the sentence, so that students have difficulty understanding the material in the sentence.[13]

The difference in grammar between the first language (Indonesian) and a foreign language (Arabic) also causes students difficulty in memorizing Arabic vocabulary. Based on research conducted by Safira Aura Rachmawati, et al. With the title "Analysis of Difficulties in Mastery of Arabic Vocabulary in Students" it is stated that the low ability of students in maharah qi'a'ah or reading Arabic text is the cause of difficulties in memorizing mufrodat. This can also be caused by the lack of Arabic language habituation, so students rarely hear Arabic vocabulary. Based on this research, it is also said that memorization difficulties can be influenced by student interest and also teacher methods.[14]

To overcome these difficulties, several efforts can be made such as providing remedials for students, providing motivation, and making teaching methods more interesting for teachers, as well as habituation to reading Arabic texts and translating them in groups, and venturing to ask about unknown vocabulary for students. According to Radiatul Jannah, et al. In his research entitled "Implementation of the Drill Method in Overcoming Difficulties in Memorizing Arabic Vocabulary at Madrasah Tsanawiyah" the steps that need to be taken to overcome the difficulty of memorizing students are being able to create comfortable learning space conditions so as not to make students become bored quickly, knowing the situation and condition of students, providing easy vocabulary such as those related to daily life, body organs and others, providing media as interesting as possible so that it can help students easily memorize, for example such as image media, practicing vocabulary



repeatedly, rewriting vocabulary to be memorized, giving pause time while memorizing, giving appreciation to students who are fast in memorizing.[15]

Students also have difficulty in writing Arabic writing. Because the grammar of Arabic and Indonesian is different, the writing of Arabic letters also has a different systematic with Indonesian. The different shapes of letters when they are at the beginning, middle, and end cause students' difficulties in connecting letters. Hanif Irfan in his research entitled "Analysis of the Factors of Difficulty in Writing Arabic Alphabets (Case Study of Class VIII Students of Miftahul Iman Bandung Junior High School)" states that one of the factors of difficulty in writing Arabic alphabets is the difference in the shape of Arabic letters in a word when it stands alone, middle and end. Therefore, students should practice writing Arabic alphabets more often so that later they can get used to and be proficient in writing Arabic alphabets. He also stated that the difficulty of writing Arabic is due to the lack of Arabic learning experience, low talent, interest, and motivation of students, low self-confidence, and less than optimal learning success.[16]

Apart from the differences in grammar that exist in Arabic and Indonesian, some of the problems experienced by students also come from anxiety or anxiety in language. Based on the conclusions obtained from interviews with students of SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah, students who experience language anxiety, feel worried and anxious when asked to come forward for fear of making mistakes and being embarrassed by classmates. M.Sudarta stated in his research entitled "Teacher Efforts in Overcoming Speaking Anxiety of Fifth Grade Students of Mi Ar-Raudhah Samarinda" that students who experience Anxiety or anxiety have similar factors such as, starting from fear, lack of confidence due to lazy learning, and the emergence of a sense of pessimism to do something and even tend to be silent.[17]

As stated by Muhammad Naili, et al. In his research entitled "Arabic Speaking Anxiety in Students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program", that the types of anxiety that are often experienced in speaking Arabic are two, namely fear of communication (fear of communications) and fear of negative evaluation (fear of negative evaluation). significant anxiety when having to speak in Arabic may be related to concerns about their ability to express themselves fluently, use the right vocabulary, and understand well the language they are learning. Feelings of fear of making mistakes or appearing incompetent in communicating in Arabic, and worry about negative judgment from others, such as criticism and ridicule, can lead to greater insecurity and anxiety in Arabic speaking situations.[18]

Motivation also plays an important role in the learning process. Both motivation that comes from oneself, and motivation obtained from the surrounding environment. Based on the conclusions obtained from interviews with students of SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah, it is known that some students are not intrinsically motivated, but get motivation from the surrounding environment (extrinsic), so there is an effort to survive and continue learning through these challenges. Some students are not intrinsically motivated because they think Arabic is difficult, so they are not interested/motivated to learn Arabic. Some students who lack interest in learning Arabic, their concentration level easily decreases and as a result students become more easily sleepy. In addition, often sleeping late at night also causes students to be very sleepy when the Arabic language learning process.

However, according to Sulkifli in his research entitled "Analysis of Arabic Language Learning Difficulties of Class XI IKA Students at MAS DDI Pattojo, Soppeng Regency" said that the level of student concentration can be influenced by the presentation of Arabic language subject matter. Monotonous presentation of material can make students sleepy, so students have difficulty understanding the material presented by the teacher, because concentration is the main capital of students in receiving material and the main indicator in

the success of the education process. The way that can be used to improve student concentration is by developing critical thinking skills in learning.[19]

However, some students of SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah are also motivated because they feel exciting when learning Arabic because the teacher uses games when presenting the material. According to Almira Ulimaz, et al. In his research entitled "Increasing Motivation and Learning Achievement with the Application of Game-Based Learning" said that game-based learning is an effective strategy to stimulate student learning motivation. . Students can choose the level of difficulty, explore their areas of interest, and develop skills progressively, so games not only stimulate learning motivation, but also facilitate the development of critical skills, problem solving, and creativity. Students also feel happy and proud if they can answer the questions or games correctly.[20]

## 5. CONCLUSION

The challenges experienced by students of SMP Plus Pesantren Ainul Falah include differences in grammar, which cause students to experience various difficulties in learning Arabic, such as difficulty understanding the material, difficulty memorizing, and difficulty writing Arabic writing. Language anxiety challenges also cause students to be afraid to come forward for fear of making mistakes and negative judgment from friends. In addition, the difficulty of learning Arabic experienced by students causes students to be uninterested/motivated to learn Arabic which results in low student attention focus and makes students easily sleepy. Students are easily sleepy also due to the habit of students often sleeping late at night, as well as the delivery of teachers who tend to be monotonous causing students to be bored and easily sleepy.

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