The Implementation of the Snowball Throwing Method to Enhance Students' Motivation in Learning Arabic: A Study on Grade VII Students of MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study aims to enhance the learning motivation of Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo in Arabic language classes through the implementation of the Snowball Throwing teaching method. This method adopts a cooperative, interactive, and enjoyable approach, expected to increase student engagement in the learning process. The study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, conducted in two cycles, each comprising planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The research subjects consisted of 14 students in Grade VII. Data was collected through observation, achievement tests, and documentation. The findings revealed a significant improvement in both students' motivation and learning outcomes. In the first cycle, 50% of the students scored above the minimum mastery criterion (≥ 75), which increased to 85.7% in the second cycle. The implementation of the Snowball Throwing method successfully created a more dynamic learning environment and encouraged active student participation. Therefore, this method proved to be effective in Arabic language instruction to foster increased motivation and academic achievement.

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Introduction

Arabic language instruction in madrasahs is an essential component in shaping students' linguistic competence, particularly in understanding Islamic texts that form the foundation of religious teachings. However, in practice, Arabic instruction often faces various challenges, one of which is students' low motivation to learn. Learning motivation is a psychological factor that plays a significant role in encouraging students to actively engage in the learning process. Highly motivated students tend to be more receptive to learning materials and demonstrate better academic performance.[1]

In many educational settings, including at the MTs level, students' interest in learning Arabic remains relatively low. This condition is generally triggered by several factors, including monotonous teaching methods, the dominance of grammar-translation approaches, and the limited use of interactive media and techniques that

are relevant to students' characteristics. Teachers often rely on one-way lectures that result in passive learners and a lack of interest in the subject matter.[2] Additionally, Arabic is often perceived as a difficult language due to its phonological, morphological, and syntactic complexity. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of strategies that emphasize active student engagement, even though foreign language instruction, including Arabic, requires communicative and student-centered approaches.

In this context, teachers are expected to be creative in selecting and developing instructional methods that can enliven the classroom and stimulate student enthusiasm[3], The appropriate choice of learning models can enhance students' interest and yield significant results in their academic achievement.[4] One such innovative alternative is the cooperative learning model known as Snowball Throwing. This method enables students to exchange information and learn in a more interactive and enjoyable environment.[5], [6]

The Snowball Throwing method encourages students to be actively involved both cognitively and physically. Rather than just listening and taking notes, students are engaged in activities such as writing questions, crumpling paper, throwing it, and answering questions from their peers. This process creates a lively, engaging, and fun classroom atmosphere that ultimately fosters students' motivation to learn.[7] Furthermore, the integration of instructional media into this method is also considered effective in enhancing student interest and engagement.[9]

In the context of Arabic language learning, which is known to be complex, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary, the use of methods such as Snowball Throwing becomes highly relevant. According to Dewi and Saragih[10], Arabic language instruction requires engaging and student-oriented approaches tailored to learners' unique characteristics. Empirical evidence suggests that this strategy effectively reduces learning fatigue, enhances social interaction within the classroom, and increases students' motivation to engage in the learning process. Moreover, prior studies confirm that implementing this method leads to significant improvements in both motivation and academic achievement.[12], [13]

The situation at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo indicates an urgent need for renewal in learning strategies. Based on initial observations, many students showed a lack of enthusiasm in attending Arabic lessons. Teachers also experienced difficulties in creating a lively classroom atmosphere and encouraging active student participation. Therefore, intervention through the application of the Snowball Throwing method is considered a pedagogical solution relevant to current learning needs. [11]

Arising from this reality, this study aims to apply the Snowball Throwing method in Arabic language instruction for Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo to improve students' motivation and learning outcomes. Through a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, this research focuses not only on the final results but also on the process of enhancing the quality of classroom interaction in teaching and learning. With a participatory and reflective approach, this study is expected to provide practical contributions for teachers and serve as a reference for the development of more effective and enjoyable Arabic language learning innovations. [8]

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to explore the implementation of the Snowball Throwing method in enhancing Arabic language learning motivation among Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo, Limboto Barat District. This research is expected to contribute to the development of Arabic language teaching strategies in schools and serve as a reference for educators in selecting effective, enjoyable, and engaging instructional methods that can enhance students' involvement in the learning process.

Method

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach using the cyclical model of Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four key stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out collaboratively between the researcher, the Arabic language teacher, and the headmaster of MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo, Limboto Barat District, Gorontalo Regency, in December of the 2016/2017 academic year. The subjects of this study were all 14 seventh-grade students, comprising seven male and seven female students.

The primary objective of this study was to enhance students' motivation in learning Arabic through the application of the Snowball Throwing method. This method is part of a cooperative learning strategy that has proven effective in promoting active student participation through interactive activities, such as exchanging and answering questions in a game-based format.[14] The integration of physical and cognitive engagement within this method is believed to foster a joyful learning environment and stimulate students' motivation. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Kurniawan and Handriawan, have also demonstrated the effectiveness of this method in improving academic achievement and learning interest in various subjects, including Arabic.[15], [16]

Data collection was carried out through observation, testing, and documentation techniques. Observations were used to record student and teacher behavior during the learning process. Tests were employed

to measure motivation and learning outcomes before and after the intervention. Documentation included score data, records of learning activities, and observation sheets for both students and teachers. Data validity was tested through methodological and source triangulation, as well as peer review to ensure data reliability.[17]

The action steps began with the formation of small study groups, distribution of learning material to group leaders, students creating questions in the form of paper balls, and the activity of throwing and answering questions among peers. This activity was designed to generate dynamic interactions and foster emotional engagement among students during the learning process. [18] he success of the intervention was measured based on improvements in test scores and student participation in learning activities. The criterion for learning mastery was set at a minimum score of 75, with a target of 70% of students achieving this score for the intervention to be deemed successful.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Evaluation of the process and results of the intervention was carried out at the end of each cycle, and decisions to continue or discontinue the intervention were based on the outcomes of the reflection. This study is expected not only to increase student motivation in learning but also to make a tangible contribution to the implementation of active learning methods in the context of Arabic language instruction in madrasah.

Results and Discussions

This study was conducted to improve motivation and learning outcomes in Arabic through the application of the Snowball Throwing method among Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo. The results indicated that this method successfully created an active and collaborative learning environment, positively impacting both students' motivation and academic achievement. Data were collected through observations and formative tests carried out over two cycles of classroom action research.

In Cycle I, of the 14 students, only 7 (50%) met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of ≥75. This result revealed that half of the students had not yet reached the expected learning targets. Following evaluation and a revision of the learning strategy, improvements were implemented in Cycle II, resulting in significant progress. A total of 12 students (85.7%) met or exceeded the KKM, with only two students remaining below the threshold.

These findings demonstrate that the Snowball Throwing approach significantly enhanced learning outcomes. A visual comparison of student performance across the cycles is presented in the chart below:
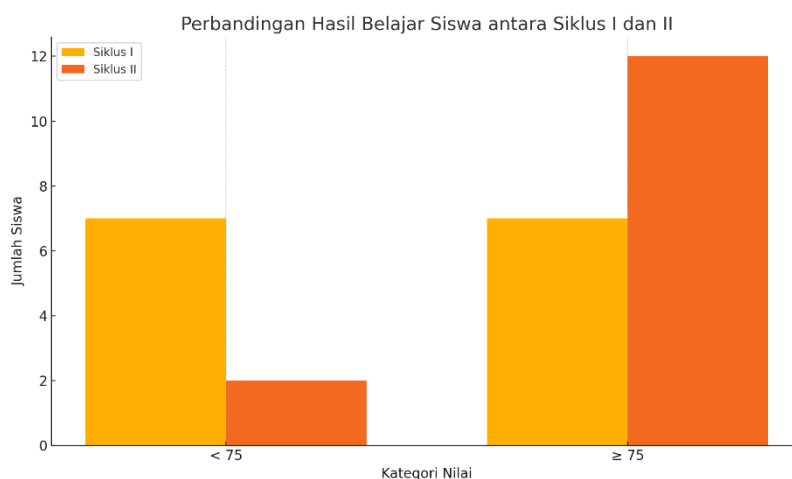
Diagram 1. *Comparison of Student Learning Outcomes between Cycle I and Cycle II*

To provide further clarity, the following table displays the distribution of students by score category:

Score Category	Number of Students Cycle 1	Number of Students Cycle II
< 75	7	2
< 75	7	12

This improvement was evident not only in academic scores but also in student participation and active interaction during lessons. Classroom observations indicated a more dynamic atmosphere and increased student enthusiasm. Activities such as writing questions on paper balls, tossing them to peers, and responding on the

spot encouraged student engagement. This is in line with research by Islam and Putra, which states that the Snowball Throwing method is effective in fostering motivation through physical and cognitive involvement.[19]

In Arabic language instruction, this method offers advantages beyond rote memorization or rule acquisition, emphasizing communication and cooperation.[20] Students take on active roles as learners and peer instructors, transforming the learning process into a bidirectional experience. Hapid emphasizes that social interaction-based instructional models strengthen language skills and build student confidence. He also highlights that interactive teaching methods significantly enhance student learning interest.[21]

However, the implementation of this method presents challenges. Teachers must carefully design activities to ensure effective learning outcomes.[22] Muttaqin's research indicates that a well-structured instructional design greatly supports students in systematically grasping Arabic grammar. Additionally, effective time management is essential to ensure that the tossing and answering activities do not disrupt the overall learning schedule.[23]

This study also supports previous findings, such as Kusumawati's, which noted significant improvements in student outcomes through cooperative learning methods.[24] Likewise, Mardani's research confirmed that team-based learning boosts students' intrinsic motivation. In this context, the Snowball Throwing method demonstrates its potential to create an enjoyable, meaningful, and academically impactful learning environment.[25]

During implementation, the teacher fostered a healthy competitive atmosphere, motivating students to support one another and perform at their best. This aligns with Nadofah's findings that team collaboration in learning encourages intrinsic motivation. [26]

Furthermore, the snowball-throwing activity simultaneously activated students' motor and cognitive functions. Besides enhancing concept comprehension, the method nurtured student responsibility in the learning process.[27] Observations showed that students were enthusiastic and motivated while participating in the lessons using this method. This indicates that active learning approaches like Snowball Throwing can shift students' focus away from the monotony of traditional lecture-based methods. Previously passive students began to exhibit increased confidence, willingly asking and answering questions—a vital indicator of improved Arabic language skills.[28]

Linguistically, there was an increase in vocabulary and sentence structure skills, as evidenced by formative evaluation sheets in Cycle II. Teachers also noted improvements in student discipline and emotional engagement during lessons, indicating a strong link between interactive approaches and students' academic well-being.[30] Overall, these findings are consistent with existing literature showing that cooperative learning methods effectively enhance motivation and academic performance across subjects.[31]

The Snowball Throwing method plays a significant role in facilitating active student participation, especially in foreign language learning such as Arabic, which is often viewed as complex and challenging. In language learning, intrinsic motivation and social interaction are essential for students to internalize vocabulary and language structures effectively. When students formulate questions and toss question balls to each other, they engage cognitively, emotionally, and socially, strengthening their connection to the subject matter.

Physical activities such as writing, rolling, and tossing paper balls in this method possess considerable pedagogical value. These activities stimulate student motor skills and foster enjoyable emotional engagement, thus reducing learning fatigue. Observations revealed that previously unmotivated students began to show heightened enthusiasm during these sessions. This demonstrates that the game's elements in the method offer students a positive and meaningful learning experience.

A defining characteristic of effective 21st-century learning is the transformation of students from passive recipients to active participants. This method allows students to act as facilitators and sources of knowledge for their peers. By creating and answering peer questions, students engage in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Such activities develop critical and reflective thinking skills, which are core competencies in modern education.

Madrasah, as Islamic educational institutions, often face challenges in implementing pedagogical approaches that cater to diverse student needs. This study indicates that Snowball Throwing, as a cooperative learning method, is highly suitable for madrasahs, as it aligns with values of collaboration and collective responsibility. Moreover, it strengthens peer relationships, fostering a positive learning environment.

Observations and field notes revealed notable behavioral changes among students between Cycle I and Cycle II. Students demonstrated increased active participation, such as more frequently raising hands to answer, exchanging ideas, and expressing positive attitudes toward Arabic lessons. These outcomes highlight the success of the Snowball Throwing method in promoting comprehensive student engagement, cognitively and emotionally thereby making learning more vibrant and meaningful.

Social interaction throughout the learning process played a vital role in enhancing students' academic performance. In this study, the increased number of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) indicates that social and emotional engagement positively impacted academic outcomes. Peer-to-peer questioning and answering strengthened content understanding, increased participation, and deepened students' involvement in learning.

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In the context of Arabic instruction, this method is particularly relevant as it facilitates vocabulary (mufradat), grammar (nahwu), and text comprehension (qira'ah). For example, when students formulate questions, they often use imperative verbs (fi'il amr) or interrogative structures (ism istifhām), which are core components of Arabic learning. Indirectly, Snowball Throwing trains sentence formation and contextual word choice.

Data show that in Cycle I, 50% of students reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), increasing to 85.7% in Cycle II. This improvement indicates that the Snowball Throwing method had a tangible positive effect on learning outcomes. This success stems not merely from repeated content delivery but from a pedagogical shift that encouraged active student involvement. Greater participation helped reinforce concept comprehension and elevated overall academic performance.

Despite its effectiveness, applying this method comes with challenges, such as time management, activity planning, and classroom supervision. Teachers must maintain effective classroom management to ensure the activity remains educational rather than merely playful. Thus, professional development in implementing active learning strategies is crucial for Arabic language educators.

When applied consistently, this method can foster a culture of collaborative learning among students. Furthermore, it can be adapted to other thematic or integrative learning contexts. In the long term, students who are accustomed to active, reflective, and collaborative learning will be better prepared to meet academic and social challenges. This aligns with 21st-century competency frameworks emphasizing communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

In conclusion, the effective application of the Snowball Throwing method significantly enhances motivation and learning outcomes in Arabic among Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo. This success underscores the importance of utilizing innovative teaching strategies that prioritize interaction, participation, and emotional engagement in the learning process.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and in-depth discussion of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Snowball Throwing method significantly enhances both learning motivation and Arabic language learning outcomes among Grade VII students at MTs Al-Khairat Kiyai Modjo. This method creates a dynamic, interactive, and enjoyable learning environment that actively engages students both cognitively and emotionally. The activity of asking and answering questions using paper balls not only reinforces content comprehension but also builds self-confidence, social skills, and a sense of responsibility in the learning process.

The increase in the percentage of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) from 50% in Cycle I to 85.7% in Cycle II serves as empirical evidence of the method's effectiveness. Furthermore, observations indicated a rise in student participation, enthusiasm, and social interaction during the learning sessions. This suggests that cooperative learning approaches that incorporate physical and collaborative activities are particularly relevant in Arabic language education, which is often perceived as challenging and monotonous by some students.

Therefore, Snowball Throwing should not be viewed merely as a technical instructional strategy but as a pedagogical approach capable of cultivating active, collaborative, and meaningful learning behaviors. It is recommended that educators, particularly Arabic language teachers, adopt and adapt this method across diverse instructional contexts to foster participatory classroom environments that support comprehensive student success.

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