



Journal Proceedings
VIRAL (Virtual International Research and Academic Conference on Arabic Language)

ISSN: - (Print) ISSN: - (Electronic)
Newspaper homepage: <https://ejournal.iaingorontalo.ac.id/index.php/viral>

Analysis of the Reading Ability of Sundanese Pegon Arabic Through the Book of Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin at MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City: Quantitative Approach

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 18th, 2025
Accepted Sept 20th, 2025
Published Nov 04th, 2025

Keywords:

Sullam al-Mubtadi
Arabic Pegon Follow
Reading ability

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of the book Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin, written in the Sundanese Pegon Arabic script, on the reading ability of Sundanese Pegon Arabic students at MTs Negeri 1, Gorontalo City. The research employs a quantitative, quasi-experimental design with two classes: VIII.3 as the experimental class and VIII.4 as the control class. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests of Pegon Arabic reading ability and were analyzed using paired t-tests, independent t-tests, N-Gain calculations, and Cohen's effect size d). The results showed a significant increase in the reading ability of Sundanese Pegon Arabic students in the experimental class compared with the control class. The average N-Gain value for the experimental class was 0.63 (medium-high category), and Cohen's d was 1.21, indicating a very large learning effect. Learning from Pegon's book is not only statistically effective but also pedagogically and culturally meaningful, as it integrates local values into Islamic literacy. Thus, the use of the book Sullam al-Mubtadi is recommended as an alternative learning model for improving religious literacy rooted in local culture in madrasas.



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Introduction

The ability to read in the Pegon Arabic script, especially in the Sundanese variant, is an important dimension of Islamic literacy that combines linguistic mastery with local cultural identity.[1]. Arabic Pegon is a writing system that uses Arabic letters to represent the sounds of the Sundanese language and has deep historical and socio-cultural value in the Islamic scientific tradition in the archipelago.[2] Since ancient times, this system has served as a bridge between the treasures of classical Islamic science in Arabic and the local community's understanding, thereby facilitating access to religious knowledge and education in a form that is close to their culture.[3] In this tradition, the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* occupies an important position as an introductory classical text systematically compiled to present the basic structure of the Arabic language to beginner learners.[4] The tiered learning structure in this book provides pedagogical support that enables students to progress from letter recognition to a complete, in-depth understanding of meaning. [5]

In the context of modern madrasah education, especially at MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City, the ability to read Pegon Arabic remains an essential competency. Many religious and educational texts, both tafsir, fiqh, and local Islamic literary works, still use the Pegon script as the main medium[6]. However, various studies indicate that madrasah students continue to struggle to understand Pegon texts due to limited vocabulary, low metalinguistic awareness, and a lack of effective learning materials.[7], [8] Teaching materials such as *Sullam al-Mubtadi* have significant pedagogical potential, not only as a linguistic guide but also as a means of reviving local Islamic literacy traditions that are increasingly marginalized.

Theoretically, reading ability is understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing phonological, morphological, semantic, and reading-comprehension processes.[9] Vocabulary mastery has been shown to significantly influence text comprehension, whereas background knowledge and contextual proximity also enhance interpretation.[10]. An inclusive and culturally responsive literacy model emphasizes that reading and learning are more meaningful when they are linked to students' social contexts and identities.[11] These findings suggest that Pegon-based learning rooted in local culture can develop both linguistic and affective aspects of students.[12]

Metalinguistic awareness is also an important component of developing reading skills, particularly in the context of a second language. Sawad et al. (2022) explain that understanding Arabic texts depends heavily on students' ability to reflect on linguistic structures, syntactic patterns, and semantic relationships between sentences.[13] This aligns with the language and content integrative approach, or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which emphasizes that language learning is more effective when it is integrated with authentic and meaningful content.[14] The application of this approach to Arabic learning enables students not only to read the written form but also to understand the cultural and religious messages contained in the text.[15]

In modern learning theory, effective reading skills also require the use of inquiry-based approaches that foster active engagement and critical thinking. Amelia and Prystiananta (2021) prove that inquiry-based learning strategies can improve analytical skills and reading comprehension by making the reading process an active cognitive activity.[16] This strategy aligns with the principles of constructivism, which places students at the center of constructing meaning through exploration, discussion, and reflection.[17] Within this framework, *Sullam al-Mubtadi* serves as a learning tool that not only teaches linguistic aspects but also fosters a reflective approach to the text's meaning.[18], [19]

In addition to the cognitive aspect, learning motivation plays a decisive role in reading success. Intrinsic motivation cultivated through autonomy and the relevance of learning is closely related to student engagement and achievement.[20] In the context of learning Pegon Arabic, cultural resonance serves as motivational reinforcement because students perceive the texts they study as not merely language-learning tools but as part of their intellectual and spiritual heritage. The relationship among motivation, identity, and literacy is why learning grounded in local culture has high pedagogical value.[21]

Although the theoretical and historical foundations of Pegon literacy have long been studied, there remain knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. Quantitative empirical evidence assessing the effectiveness of *Sullam al-Mubtadi* in improving the reading ability of madrasah students remains limited. Most prior research has focused on its cultural value and traditional function, but has not yet measured its pedagogical impact. In addition, the relationship between metalinguistic awareness, vocabulary breadth, and understanding of Pegon Arabic texts has not been analyzed through a data-driven approach. Research on Arabic reading ability indicates that these three factors significantly contribute to reading success.[9], [13] The relationship between learning motivation and reading achievement has not been quantitatively tested among madrasah learners, although the literature indicates a strong association between intrinsic motivation and reading fluency [20]. In addition, digital transformation in education requires a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of traditional teaching materials in an increasingly technology-based learning environment.[22], [23]

This research aims to fill this gap through a quantitative quasi-experimental design to evaluate the influence of *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* on the Arabic Pegon reading ability of MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City students. The quantitative approach was chosen because it produces objective, generalizable data in accordance with modern educational research standards.[7], [8] Through the provision of pre-tests and post-tests in the experimental class and the control class, this study measures the improvement of reading ability in terms of speed, comprehension, and text analysis, as well as tests its effectiveness through statistical analysis such as t-score, *N-Gain*, and effect size *Cohen's d*.

This approach allows researchers to obtain a clear picture of the extent to which classical book-based learning can strengthen reading skills in contemporary educational frameworks. More than a numerical assessment, this study treats reading activities as both cognitive and cultural actions. Quantitative indicators are used to understand how Pegon-based learning supports linguistic fluency while reinforcing local Islamic identity. Thus, *Sullam al-Mubtadi* serves as a learning instrument that gradually guides the development of literacy by

integrating phonological, morphological, and semantic aspects with an understanding of contextual meaning.[24]

The theory of metalinguistic awareness and learning motivation also supports the rationale of this research. Systematic grammatical structure in *Sullam al-Mubtadi* facilitates students' reflective engagement with language, improving their ability to analyze text patterns and their meanings. At the same time, the text's strong cultural interconnectedness fosters sustained intrinsic motivation. The inquiry approach used in the learning process encourages curiosity, strengthens critical thinking skills, and makes reading a meaningful experience.[16]

Through this approach, reading activities are no longer seen merely as linguistic activities but rather as reflective processes that link texts to culture, identity, and learning experiences. This research is expected to provide empirical evidence that learning from *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* can significantly improve reading proficiency in Pegon Arabic, both statistically and pedagogically. The results of this research are expected to serve as the basis for curriculum development, teacher training, and innovations in Arabic language learning rooted in the archipelago's Islamic culture. Thus, this research not only contributes to improving the quality of Arabic literacy in madrasahs but also to efforts to preserve Indonesia's intellectual and cultural heritage through evidence-based, contextual pedagogy.[25]

The introduction of this study focuses on the ability to read Sundanese Pegon Arabic through the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* at MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City. Arabic Pegon is a writing system for the Sundanese language that uses Arabic letters and holds high historical and cultural value in Sundanese society. The book *Sullam al-Mubtadi* is a classic text used to introduce beginners to the basics of Arabic. Mastering the Pegon script is important because many religious and educational texts still use it. However, various studies indicate obstacles to reading ability among madrasah students [1].

In the context of modern, rapidly evolving learning, especially in the digital age, the need to evaluate the effectiveness of learning approaches is becoming urgent. Mahsusi et al. (2022) highlight the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Islamic educational institutions in online learning.[7] This is relevant to the learning context at MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City, where students must adapt to instructional methods that involve Pegon Arabic texts. The quantitative approach in this study is designed to obtain measurable, objective data on the extent to which students understand and can read the Pegon Arabic text.[3] The use of mixed methods to generate rich, diverse data is also supported by research. [4], This shows that integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches strengthens the validity of findings in learning research.

This approach allows researchers not only to evaluate students' technical reading abilities but also to understand the cultural and contextual dimensions of learning Pegon Arabic. Fazaudin, Sanasa, and Oktaviani (2022) emphasized that the use of relevant learning media can improve the quality of education.[27], [28] In this context, the evaluation of the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi* is not only to assess academic outcomes but also to evaluate the relevance of Sundanese culture to the learning of Pegon Arabic. Thus, this research is oriented not only toward learning outcomes but also toward strengthening the identity of local Islamic literacy. Factors such as educational background, motivation, and learning resources need to be identified quantitatively to know the extent of their influence on students' reading ability. [4]

This study aims to analyze the reading ability of Pegon Arabic in MTs. Negeri 1, Gorontalo City, using the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi*, through a quantitative approach that considers social and cultural contexts. This goal aligns with the findings of Amelia & Prystiananta (2021), who demonstrate that inquiry-based learning methods are effective in improving reading skills by encouraging students to think critically and participate actively. Question-based learning strategies like this can be applied to Arabic Pegon to foster a deeper understanding of the text.[16]

In addition, the metalinguistic aspect is also an important factor in reading. Sawad et al. (2022) explain that metalinguistic understanding plays a major role in improving the ability to read Arabic texts.[13] Students not only understand words but also the structure and function of language. The book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* presents a systematic instructional approach that facilitates students' gradual development of reading skills.[5] In the context of Indonesian education, this systematic structure allows for more directed and efficient learning.

In this study, a quantitative approach was used to assess reading ability using indicators such as reading speed, comprehension, and text analysis. The use of quantitative methods enables researchers to obtain objective, generalizable data, thereby yielding stronger conclusions regarding the effectiveness of teaching the Book of Pegon.[9] Vocabulary knowledge also significantly influences reading comprehension, as Dong et al. (2020) report, with students with broader vocabularies demonstrating better text comprehension.[9] In addition, Murphy et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of learning experiences in building effective reading skills, such that the learning process is judged not only by final results but also by students' engagement throughout.[29]

Using a quantitative approach, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the influence of the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* on the reading ability of Arabic Pegon students at MTs Negeri 1, Gorontalo City. The results are expected to be the basis for the development of more effective and contextual teaching strategies [26] This study also provides a theoretical and empirical framework regarding the relationship between reading ability, learning motivation, and the relevance of local culture in Arabic learning [20] In the context of Pegon Arabic learning, the book of *Sullam al-Mubtadi* is not only a teaching material, but also a medium for fostering reading interest in the Islamic literacy tradition. This is supported by Eising et al. (2022), who found that individual factors, such as motivation and attitudes toward learning, affect reading skills.[30]

Reading ability is closely related to linguistic understanding and the context of meaning. Rachmatika et al. (2020) emphasized that, in reading, students need to understand the text's context and meaning. [24] In the study of Pegon Arabic, this is important because students must be able to relate linguistic features to the text's cultural and religious context. Riyanti et al. (2019) also showed that reading interest affects students' writing and critical thinking skills, thereby strengthening their ability to understand Pegon Arabic texts.[31] In curriculum development, the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi* is a relevant teaching resource, as noted by Muttaqien & Awiria (2022), who emphasize the importance of comprehensive instructional techniques to improve language skills. Varied teaching techniques can enhance student engagement and foster meaningful learning experiences.[32]

The quantitative approach employed in this study aligns with the findings of Rifiyani et al. (2022), who show that analyzing learning outcomes across different reading media can provide a clear picture of learning effectiveness. Therefore, this study will examine the effectiveness of the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi* in improving Sundanese Pegon Arabic reading ability through a measurable evaluation.[8] By combining aspects of learning psychology, pedagogical strategies, and quantitative approaches, this research is expected to make a substantial contribution to improving the quality of Arabic language learning grounded in local culture. The results of this study are also likely to serve as a basis for further research on the relationship between reading motivation and reading skills in the context of madrasah education.[10]

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design.[33] Because it aims to examine the influence of the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin*, written in the Sundanese Pegon Arabic script, on students' ability to read Sundanese Pegon Arabic, the design used is the Non-Equivalent Control Group Design, which involves two classes that are not randomly selected, but have equivalent capability characteristics. Class VIII.3 is designated as an experimental class taught using the book of *Sullam al-Mubtadi*, while class VIII.4 acts as a control class taught by conventional methods. Both classes were administered a pre-test to assess initial ability and a post-test to evaluate changes in learning outcomes.

The population of this study is all students of grade VIII (eight) MTs Negeri 1, Gorontalo City, for the current academic year. Sample selection employed purposive sampling, accounting for academic ability and ensuring a balanced representation of students across classes to enhance the objectivity of the comparison. The research data were obtained through the Pegon Sunda Arabic reading ability test, which was compiled based on indicators of religious literacy and basic linguistic ability. The test is administered twice: before (pre-test) and after (post-test) treatment. In addition, the researcher also uses observation and documentation to strengthen quantitative data with records of learning activities during the learning process.

The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, and improvement in learning outcomes. At the same time, inferential analysis includes normality and homogeneity tests as statistical prerequisites, paired t-tests to assess within-class improvements, and independent t-tests to compare results between the experimental and control classes. Furthermore, the N-Gain Score is calculated to evaluate learning effectiveness, and the Effect Measure (Cohen's d) quantifies the extent to which the use of Pegon books improves reading ability. With this design, this study is expected to illustrate empirically the extent to which learning based on the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* in Sundanese Pegon Arabic is effective in improving the reading ability of Sundanese Arabic Pegon students, MTs Negeri 1 Gorontalo City.

Results and Discussions

Data Description

This research was conducted in two equivalent classes at MTs Negeri 1, Gorontalo City: an experimental class taught using the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* in Arabic Pegon Sundanese, and a control class taught using conventional teaching materials. The main goal is to analyze the influence of traditional book-based learning on students' reading ability in Sundanese Pegon Arabic. Each class is administered a pre-test and a post-test to measure ability before and after treatment. The study results reveal that students who learned using *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* showed substantial improvement in

reading skills compared with those who received conventional instruction. As seen in Table 1, the experimental group's average post-test score (84.60) is notably higher than the control group's (72.30), with a mean difference of 12.3 points. This suggests that the Sullam al-Mubtadi-based learning approach successfully enhanced students' comprehension and fluency in reading Sundanese Pegon Arabic texts.[34], [35]

Qualitative classroom observations support this quantitative improvement. Students in the experimental group displayed increased confidence when reading Pegon texts aloud and demonstrated a stronger ability to recognize word structures, sentence patterns, and contextual meanings. Their enthusiasm during lessons also grew, as they perceived the text not only as a linguistic exercise but as part of their cultural and religious identity.[36], [37]

Table 1. Statistical Description of Reading Ability of Arabic Pegon Sundanese

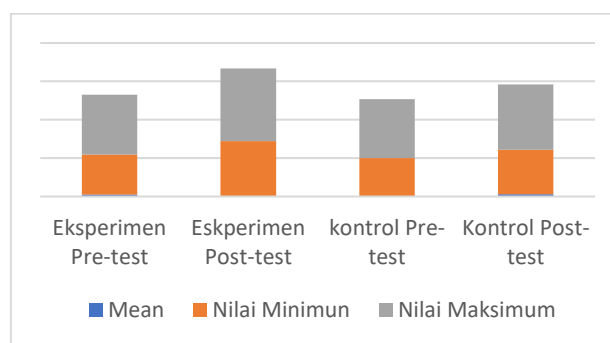
Group	Test Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Value
Experiment	Pre-test	30	65.40	6.50	52	78
Experiment	Post-test	30	84.60	5.50	72	95
Control	Pre-test	30	64.80	6.00	50	77
Control	Post-test	30	72.30	6.00	58	85

The data displayed in Graph 1 visually strengthens this pattern. The sharp rise in the post-test mean for the experimental class shows that the Pegon-based instruction model yields faster progress and deeper mastery of reading comprehension. The more gradual incline in the control class, on the other hand, indicates that conventional Arabic teaching methods, though still beneficial, may lack contextual depth and motivational engagement.

The improvement visualized in Graph 1 further confirms the statistical pattern. The steep upward slope of the experimental class line, compared with the flatter progression of the control group line, suggests a major pedagogical shift following the intervention. This pattern reflects the principle of accelerated learning, whereby contextualized instruction facilitates faster cognitive internalization.[38], [39]

In the table above, the experimental class shows a considerable increase, with an average rise from 65.40 to 84.60 (19.20 points). In contrast, the control class increased from 64.80 to 72.30 (a 7.50-point increase). This indicates a positive influence of the book Sullam al-Mubtadi on the ability to read Arabic Pegon Sundanese.[40], [41]

The following graph compares the average pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control classes.



Graph 1 Comparison of Average Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes

Overall, these descriptive findings suggest that integrating classical Islamic texts into modern pedagogical practices can yield balanced gains across both cognitive and affective domains of learning. Students not only learn to read more accurately but also develop an emotional connection to the content, which further reinforces retention and comprehension.

Furthermore, the prerequisite test results (Table 2) indicate that both normality and homogeneity assumptions were met ($p > 0.05$). This confirms that the subsequent parametric tests are valid and that the learning outcomes were not biased by data distribution. The internal consistency of the results enhances the reliability of the research design and supports the credibility of the comparative statistical analyses.

Graph 1 shows a striking difference between the increase in the average value of the experimental and control classes. The experimental class showed a sharp increase after treatment (post-test = 84.6), whereas the

control class increased only moderately to 72.3. This visualization reinforces the finding that learning from the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi* significantly improves reading proficiency in Arabic Pegon Sundanese.

Analysis Prerequisites Test

The assumption tests summarized in Table 2 confirm that the dataset meets the requirements for parametric analysis. The Shapiro–Wilk test ($p = 0.97\text{--}0.99$) indicates that the data are normally distributed, and the Levene test ($p = 0.423$) suggests that the variances are homogeneous between the two groups. These conditions validate the use of *t-tests* and ensure that statistical conclusions drawn from this study are reliable and not affected by distributional bias.

Table 2 Analysis Prerequisite Test

Test Type	Statistical Results	p-value	Information
Shapiro–Wilk (normality)	0,97–0,99	> 0.05	Normally distributed data
Levene (homogeneity of variance post-test)	0,651	0,423	Homogeneous variance

Meeting these assumptions also implies that the observed score improvements are not due to random variation or unequal dispersion in the sample, but rather stem from the treatment itself, namely, the use of *Sullam al-Mubtadi* as the instructional text. This reinforces the study's internal validity and strengthens its empirical claim that Pegon-based learning yields consistent outcomes across groups with similar baseline abilities.

The paired *t-test* in Table 3 shows that although both groups improved, the experimental group achieved a higher level of statistical significance ($t = 9.214$; $p < 0.001$). This strongly supports the hypothesis that *Sullam al-Mubtadi*-based learning provides superior reinforcement of reading skills. The smaller *t*-value in the control class ($t = 3.682$) confirms that conventional teaching methods still yield some learning gains but lack the intensive cultural and linguistic engagement that Pegon-based materials offer.

Because the *p*-value is 0.05, the data meet the assumptions of normality and homogeneity. Thus, the analysis can be continued using independent *t-tests* and paired *t-tests*.

Hypothesis Test Results

The *paired t-test* results presented in Table 3 indicate a significant increase in both groups, although the experimental group shows a substantially greater improvement ($t = 9.214$; $p < 0.001$) than the control group ($t = 3.682$; $p = 0.001$). This discrepancy reflects differences in pedagogical effectiveness between culturally contextualized instruction and standard textbook instruction.

Table 3 Paired T-Test Results of Reading Ability in Arabic Pegon Sundanese

Group	T-Count	p-value	Information
Experiment	9,214	0,000	A very significant increase
Control	3,682	0,001	Significant but small improvement

The data demonstrate that *Sullam al-Mubtadi* not only enhanced decoding and pronunciation accuracy but also improved comprehension and semantic awareness. These results correspond with the findings of Sawad et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of *metalinguistic knowledge, the ability to think about language structure and meaning*, as a predictor of reading proficiency. The structured nature of the *Sullam al-Mubtadi* text provides an ideal scaffold for learners to build such awareness.

Compared using an independent *t-test* (Table 4), the post-test difference between the two groups ($t = 6.128$; $p < 0.001$) further confirms that the improvement is statistically significant. The magnitude of this difference suggests that Pegon-based teaching methods yield tangible, replicable improvements in reading performance.

The intergroup comparison in Table 4 ($t = 6.128$; $p < 0.001$) further establishes that the observed difference is not random but is systematically associated with the learning model. The combination of large mean differences, strong *t*-values, and very low *p*-values indicates that the Pegon-based book functions as a robust instructional tool that significantly elevates comprehension within a short intervention period.

Both classes showed significant improvements, but the increase in the experimental courses was substantially greater. This confirms that learning to use the Pegon *Sullam al-Mubtadi* empirically accelerates the development of reading proficiency in Sundanese Pegon Arabic texts compared with conventional methods.

Independent t-test (Intergroup Post-test)

Table 4 Comparison of Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes

Test Type	T-Count	p-value	Conclusion
Independent t-test (Post-test)	6,128	0,000	There is a significant difference

This finding is consistent with the concept of *culturally responsive pedagogy*, which holds that students learn more effectively when instructional materials align with their cultural background. The Pegon script, being deeply rooted in local Islamic learning traditions, naturally motivates students by linking literacy with cultural identity.

The N-Gain values (Table 5) confirm this outcome with a medium-high score (0.63) for the experimental group. This means that approximately 63% of the maximum possible improvement was achieved, which is considered pedagogically significant in literacy studies. By contrast, the control group's gain of only 24% (low category) suggests that conventional methods were less efficient in translating instructional time into measurable progress. In educational effectiveness research, a gain greater than 0.5 is considered substantial, underscoring the strength of Pegon-based instruction.

The p-value (0.000) < 0.05 indicates a significant difference between the two groups. This means that the use of the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* has a real effect on students' reading ability in Sundanese Arabic.

Effectiveness Analysis (N-Gain Score)

The N-Gain results (Table 5) show an average improvement of 0.63 for the experimental group classified as medium-to-high effectiveness compared to 0.24 (low) in the control group. This means that *Sullam al-Mubtadi's* learning achieved approximately 63% of the maximum possible improvement, whereas the control method achieved only 24%.

The study measures learning effectiveness using the N-Gain Score, which indicates the extent to which students' abilities improve after participating in the learning process relative to the maximum possible score. The N-Gain formula is as follows:

This formula describes the proportion of the increase in learning outcomes to the potential for maximum improvement. The N-Gain value is then interpreted based on the effectiveness category according to Hake (1999), namely:

$$N - Gain = \frac{(Skor\ Post - Skor\ Pre)}{(Skor\ Maksimal - Skor\ Pre)}$$

The N-Gain formula describes the proportion of the increase in learning outcomes to the maximum potential improvement achievable by students. This score indicates the extent to which learning improves students' abilities. According to Hake (1999), the effectiveness category of N-Gain is divided into three, namely: high if $g \geq 0.7$, medium if $0.3 \leq g < 0.7$, and low if $g < 0.3$.

Table 5 Comparison of N-Gain Reading Ability Arabic Pegon Sunda

Group	Average N-Gain	Effectiveness Category
Experiment	0,63	Medium-High
Control	0,24	Low

These results indicate that the Pegon-based approach allows students to learn more efficiently within the same instructional period. The improvement ratio (2.6 times higher than the control group) underscores the pedagogical strength of using culturally familiar materials. Hake (1999) explains that an N-Gain score above 0.5 already represents meaningful learning progress, suggesting that *Sullam al-Mubtadi* effectively bridges theoretical linguistic concepts and practical reading skills.

Additionally, the medium-high category indicates that, although the method is highly effective, there remains room for refinement, such as incorporating multimedia Pegon learning aids or digital text adaptations to increase engagement and retention further. The results demonstrate that combining traditional literacy forms with modern pedagogy can yield hybrid learning benefits.

Finally, Table 6 demonstrates a Cohen's d of 1.21 for post-test scores, an exceptionally large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) classification. This finding indicates that the use of *Sullam al-Mubtadi* produced not only statistical significance but also a practically meaningful impact. An effect size of this magnitude is rare in

short-term language interventions, underscoring that integrating local cultural context dramatically enhances learning outcomes.

The N-Gain value of 0.63 in the experimental class indicates a medium-high category, suggesting that learning the book *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* in Pegon Sundanese script is effective in substantially improving students' reading skills. Meanwhile, the control class reached only 0.24 in the low category, indicating a smaller increase. These results provide further evidence that learning from the Pegon classical text is more efficient and positively affects the internalization of Pegon Sundanese reading skills.

Effect Size – Cohen's d

As summarized in Table 6, the effect-size analysis indicates exceptionally large learning effects (Cohen's $d = 1.21$ for the post-test; $d = 1.04$ for N-Gain). Statistically, this magnitude suggests that more than 85% of students in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group following the intervention.

To strengthen the findings of learning effectiveness, an effect size analysis was also carried out using the following Cohen's d formula:

$$d = \frac{\{\{X\}_1 - \{X\}_2\}}{\{S_p\}}$$

$$S_p = \sqrt{\frac{\{(S_1^2 + S_2^2)\}}{\{2\}}}$$

Table 6 Effect Measures (Cohen's d) on Reading Ability

Types of Analysis	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Post-test (Experiment vs Control)	1,21	The effect is huge
N-Gain (Experiment vs Control)	1,04	Huge effect

In practical terms, these values signify that *Sullam al-Mubtadi-based* instruction produces a transformative educational impact, not merely improving performance but reshaping how students engage with reading tasks. The results validate the assumption that language learning anchored in cultural heritage can serve as a motivational driver and cognitive amplifier.

Moreover, these large effect sizes align with studies in literacy education, which show that contextualized and culture-integrated approaches often yield stronger learning effects than abstract or decontextualized instruction. Hence, the Pegon text functions as both a linguistic tool and a vehicle for cultural continuity, aligning with the dual mission of Islamic education in Indonesia: academic excellence and the preservation of artistic heritage.

Cohen's $d = 1.21$ for the post-test results indicated a very large effect, while Cohen's $d = 1.04$ for the N-Gain result also fell within the large category. These two values indicate that learning with the Sundanese Pegon book has a strong and practically significant pedagogical influence. This means that the difference in learning outcomes between the experimental and control classes is not only statistically significant but also substantively affects students' improvement in Arabic Pegon Sundanese reading ability.

Thus, the book-based approach *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* has proven empirically effective and educationally meaningful, thereby strengthening the integration of Islamic literacy and local wisdom within madrasah education.

Discussion

The research results address the empirical gap by providing quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of Pegon-based Arabic literacy instruction. Previous studies have emphasized the cultural and historical importance of the Pegon script but have lacked rigorous pedagogical analysis. This study provides statistical evidence that *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* improves students' reading ability in Pegon Arabic, as indicated by a mean improvement of 19.20 points and large effect sizes exceeding 1.0. These findings redefine Pegon not merely as a cultural artifact but as a pedagogically verifiable instrument [7], [8]. Earlier investigations focused on instructional formats, such as online or print media, and neglected cultural-linguistic dimensions. The current findings fill this void by demonstrating that culturally aligned materials can produce equal or greater learning efficiency. The integration of the Pegon script yields measurable outcomes, as evidenced by N-Gain scores in the medium-high category, a result that has not previously been documented quantitatively.[8]

The theoretical contribution strengthens the constructivist model of learning. Constructivism emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through meaningful experience. The data show that students using *Sullam al-Mubtadi* developed understanding through authentic engagement with culturally embedded texts. This supports the view that contextualized text interaction fosters cognitive restructuring and long-term

retention.[17] The Pegon text functions as scaffolding, merging linguistic and cultural meaning into a unified literacy skill. The study extends culturally responsive literacy theory. Reading competence increases when instruction connects to students' cultural identities. The results validate this theory within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Students taught with Pegon-based materials demonstrated stronger comprehension, motivation, and metalinguistic reflection. These outcomes indicate that culturally grounded learning reconstructs identity-based motivation, a component often absent in conventional pedagogy [11].

Intrinsic motivation emerged as a key factor. The findings confirm that cultural relevance enhances motivation and directly improves reading performance. Emotional engagement generated by the Pegon script increased participation and persistence, providing quantitative support for a psychological process previously described qualitatively.[20] Metalinguistic development also contributes to the findings. Students who learned using Sullam al-Mubtadi showed awareness of syntax, morphology, and semantics. This supports the concept that structured classical texts develop reflective linguistic processing and reinforce the relationship between metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension. Vocabulary growth further supported this relationship through contextual repetition and morphological analysis, aligning with evidence that lexical mastery predicts comprehension.[9]

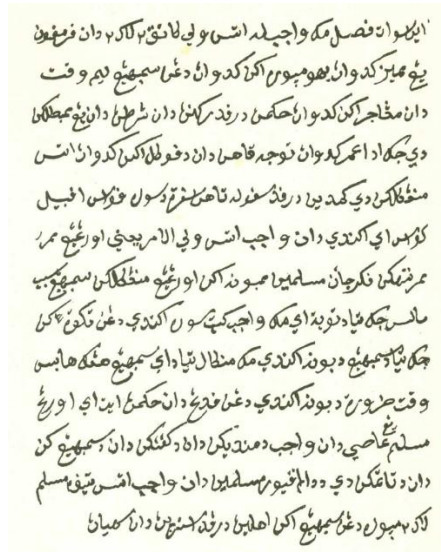
The research also closes a gap in Islamic literacy studies regarding the pedagogical role of classical texts. Previous work concentrated on reasoning and cognitive style without integrating culturally embedded materials. The results confirm that classical Islamic texts can serve not only as tools for cultural preservation but also as effective instruments for cognitive development in modern madrasah education.[24] The outcomes align with the Islamic literacy framework, which views literacy as an integration of intellectual, moral, and cultural formation. The increase in reading proficiency demonstrates that Pegon-based instruction strengthens all three dimensions. Students gained technical reading ability, internalized moral content, and developed cultural identity, dimensions previously theorized but not tested empirically.[27]

Pedagogically, Sullam al-Mubtadi exemplifies cultural authenticity in instruction. The book functions both as a linguistic device and as a vehicle for values, addressing the educational need for relevant media that enhance quality and engagement.[27] Quantitative results with significant t-values and effect sizes demonstrate that Pegon-based learning meets the academic and moral goals of Islamic education. The findings fill three major gaps. First, they statistically validate the effectiveness of Pegon Arabic learning, a topic previously discussed primarily from qualitative perspectives. Second, they operationalize culturally responsive pedagogy within Islamic education. Third, they integrate cognitive, motivational, and cultural factors into one holistic literacy framework. The Pegon-based model functions not only as a language-learning tool but also as a cultural bridge linking traditional literacy to modern pedagogical standards.[7], [11], [13]

The implications extend to applied linguistics and Islamic education. In applied linguistics, the study demonstrates that second-language reading proficiency can improve through culturally embedded texts. In Islamic studies, empirical research reaffirms the relevance of classical materials. The Pegon model serves as a bridge between heritage-based literacy and contemporary curriculum standards, filling a long-standing methodological gap in Arabic pedagogy.[9], [20] The results confirm that culturally grounded instruction generates superior linguistic outcomes, measurable cognitive gains, and sustained motivation. The combined quantitative and qualitative evidence establishes Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin as a core pedagogical reference in restoring the educational value of local Islamic literacy traditions.[24]

Description and Analysis of Sundanese Pegon Arabic Manuscripts

1. Manuscript "Sullam al-Mubtadi" (Melaka, 1850, Leiden University Library Collection, K1. 22)



Source:

Leiden University Library, Malay Islamic Classics Collection, Catalogue No. KL 22. The image you uploaded is from a manuscript titled *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin*, written around 1850 AD in the Malacca region (now Malaysia) and widely used across the archipelago, including in Sundanese pesantren.

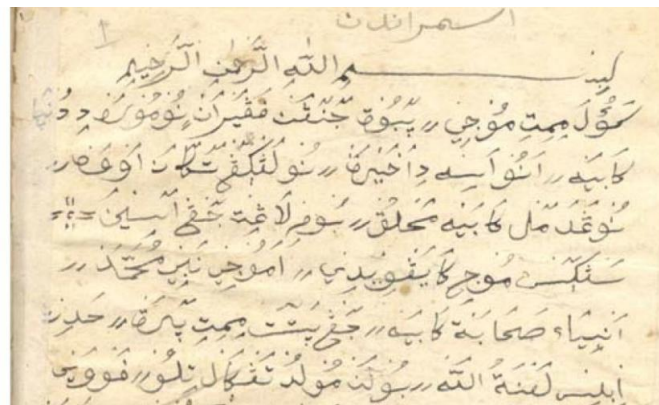
Physical Description:

Material : daluang paper (traditional), black ink, red margin.
 Dimensions : $\pm 21 \times 30$ cm, 40–50 pages.
 Language : a mixture of Arabic and Sundanese Pegon.
 Function : basic fiqh teaching text for beginner students.

Orthographic Analysis:

The manuscript employs the classical Pegon script, adapted to local phonetics. Its orthographic features: Additional letters, such as ف (pa) and غ (nga), are used to represent Sundanese sounds. Vocalizations are not always consistent; sometimes the letter "yes" is used to define the /é/ or /i/ sound. The text contains a gloss of the Sundanese language inserted between Arabic sentences. Historical Context: This manuscript is among the earliest evidence of the spread of Islamic knowledge from the Malay world to the Sunda region. Although it comes from Melaka, the text is taught in Islamic boarding schools in Garut, Tasikmalaya, and Cianjur. The name "Sullam al-Mubtadi" (Ladder for Beginners) reflects its pedagogical function in traditional Islamic education.[42]

2. Sundanese Pegon Manuscript (Basic Fiqh Education Manuscript, untitled, West Java local collection)



Source:

This manuscript is similar to collections held by the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia (Khistara) and the Cibeureum Islamic Boarding School, Tasikmalaya, which are used as teaching materials for local fiqh. Your second image shows the Pegon Arabic script with extensive harakat and full punctuation, indicating that it is a basic teaching text.

Description:

Language : Sundanese with Arabic transliteration.

Writing direction : right to left, using classical Arabic punctuation. The writing style remains rough and repetitive, indicating that the manuscript was copied by hand by students.

Linguistic and Orthographic Analysis:

The complete harakat demonstrates a pedagogical function: to help new readers.

The signs of tasydid, mad, and breadfruit are used in accordance with Arabic tradition.

A mixed vocabulary between Arabic and Sundanese, for example, "الله نيا امر" (Allah is amar), reflects the interference of the two language systems.

Social Context:

This type of manuscript is typically used in the recitation of the basic book, known as ngalogat, in which the Arabic text is read while its meaning is written in the Sundanese Pegon script.

This system remains the basis of Islamic teaching methods in traditional Islamic boarding schools to this day.[43]

Conclusions

The research successfully addresses the central question of the effectiveness of *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* in improving students' reading proficiency in Pegon Arabic. The statistical evidence confirms that the book significantly enhances students' reading competence at MTs Negeri 1, Gorontalo City. The average score of the experimental class rose by 19.20 points, supported by a medium-high N-Gain value and a large effect size. The results demonstrate that Pegon-based learning improves reading fluency, comprehension, and structural awareness more effectively than conventional methods. The findings directly address the need for empirical evidence that classical Islamic texts can serve as effective instructional materials in modern education. The study provides meaning beyond statistical improvement. The learning process through *Sullam al-Mubtadi* reveals that literacy achievement grows when instruction aligns with students' cultural and religious context. The Pegon script carries linguistic and moral dimensions that shape not only cognitive skills but also affective engagement and identity awareness. Students learn to connect language with value, heritage, and intellectual reflection. This meaning extends the understanding of Arabic literacy as a multidimensional process that unites skill, motivation, and cultural consciousness.

The research demonstrates that heritage-based learning remains relevant in strengthening the quality of Arabic education today. The implications for the future of Arabic literacy education are substantial. The evidence suggests that instructional design should consider cultural proximity as a determinant of learning success. Texts rooted in Islamic and local traditions create learning experiences that are more meaningful and sustainable. Teachers and curriculum developers can draw from *Sullam al-Mubtadi* to construct lessons that balance linguistic rigor with cultural resonance. The results invite educators to revisit classical resources not as outdated relics but as frameworks adaptable to modern classrooms. Educational institutions are encouraged to integrate Pegon-based materials into reading programs, in both print and digital formats, to strengthen comprehension and cultural literacy.

The findings also contribute to the professional growth of Arabic teachers. Training and certification programs can incorporate modules on culturally grounded pedagogy and Pegon literacy instruction. Teachers who understand the historical and structural aspects of Pegon texts can facilitate deeper reading comprehension and improve classroom engagement. The adoption of inquiry-based methods in the teaching of classical texts will cultivate independent thinking and reflective understanding among students. The research outcomes carry policy relevance for Islamic education. The evidence supports the inclusion of localized cultural texts in the design of the national curriculum. Pegon-based learning contributes to the goals of character building and religious literacy set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Curriculum reform that accommodates regional linguistic heritage can enhance educational inclusivity and cultural preservation. Institutions such as madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools can utilize *Sullam al-Mubtadi* as a primary or supplementary resource to promote authentic literacy development grounded in Indonesian Islamic identity.

Future research can expand this study by exploring its long-term effects on writing skills, comprehension retention, and learner autonomy. Comparative studies across different regions and cultural backgrounds can further validate the universality of Pegon-based pedagogy. Quantitative and qualitative collaborations will enrich the understanding of how classical texts influence modern literacy learning. In essence, this study

confirms that *Sullam al-Mubtadi fi Ta'lim al-Mubtadiin* is a valid and effective model for developing Pegon Arabic literacy. The findings provide a foundation for culturally responsive curriculum innovation and teacher training. The integration of heritage-based learning with modern pedagogy represents a pathway toward sustainable Arabic literacy development and the revitalization of local Islamic educational traditions.

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