

Challenges in Arabic Language Learning at the Madrasah Aliyah Level

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ABSTRACT

Students' understanding of Islamic knowledge and developing their linguistic competence. However, in practice, Arabic language learning still faces various problems that affect the effectiveness of achieving learning objectives. This study aimed to examine the problems of Arabic language. Education at the Madrasah Aliyah level, identify the factors influencing these problems, and describe the efforts made to overcome them. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving Arabic language teachers and Madrasah Aliyah students. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicated that the problems of Arabic language education at Madrasah Aliyah encompassed both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Linguistic problems included difficulties in vocabulary mastery, understanding grammatical rules (nahwu and sharaf), and speaking skills. Meanwhile, non-linguistic problems involved low student learning motivation, limited learning media, differences in students' educational backgrounds, and instructional strategies that had not been optimally implemented. Teachers' efforts to address these problems included providing additional exercises, repeating materials, and applying more varied teaching methods. This study concludes that the problems of Arabic language education at the Madrasah Aliyah level are multidimensional and require comprehensive and contextual learning approaches to improve the quality of Arabic language instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is a compulsory subject in Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic senior high schools) that plays a strategic role in supporting students' understanding of Islamic teachings, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as serving as a means of developing linguistic competence. Arabic language

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learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level is directed toward mastery of the four language skills: listening (*istima'*), speaking (*kalam*), reading (*qira'ah*), and writing (*kitabah*), which should be developed in a balanced manner so that students are able to use Arabic functionally and communicatively (Supriadi et al., 2020).

However, the reality of classroom practice indicates that Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level still faces various challenges. One of the main problems lies in linguistic aspects, such as limited vocabulary mastery (*mufradat*), difficulties in understanding grammatical structures (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), and weak pronunciation skills. These linguistic difficulties hinder students' ability to comprehend texts and actively communicate in Arabic (Supriadi et al., 2020; Yunisa, 2022).

In addition to linguistic aspects, the problems of Arabic language learning are also influenced by non-linguistic factors. Several studies show that students' motivation toward learning Arabic tends to be low due to the perception that Arabic is a difficult subject and less relevant to daily life. This low motivation affects students' participation in the learning process (Kholiq & Khabibullah, 2021; Syarifah & Sumar, 2019).

Another issue relates to the teaching methods used by teachers. Arabic instruction in Madrasah Aliyah is still dominated by conventional methods that focus on memorizing grammatical rules and translation, thus providing limited opportunities for students to develop communicative language skills. This condition results in monotonous learning experiences that are less engaging for students (Nazhifah & Syafe'i, 2025).

Furthermore, limited learning facilities and instructional media also contribute to the suboptimal quality of Arabic instruction. The lack of technology-based learning media and contextual learning resources causes instruction to be less effective and less aligned with the characteristics of learners in the digital era (Marwa et al., 2021).

Problems in Arabic language education are also evident in specific language skills, particularly speaking (*maharah kalam*). Many students experience difficulty expressing ideas orally despite having studied language structures theoretically. This indicates a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use (Abdullah et al., 2019–2023).

Moreover, differences in students' initial abilities and social environments that do not support Arabic language practice outside the classroom also influence the success of Arabic learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level (Hizbullah & Mardiah, 2015). Curriculum factors also present challenges, particularly in the implementation of new curricula that are not yet fully understood by Arabic teachers (Yunita et al., 2024).

Based on these issues, it can be concluded that the problems of Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level are multidimensional, encompassing linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and environmental aspects. Therefore, research on the problems of Arabic education at this level is essential to obtain a comprehensive understanding and to serve as a foundation for formulating more effective and contextual learning strategies (Supriadi et al., 2020; Nazhifah & Syafe'i, 2025).

Although several studies have examined the problems of Arabic learning in Islamic educational institutions, such as linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties faced by students (Supriadi, Akla, & Sutarjo, 2020) and challenges in learning grammatical structures such as *nahwu* at Madrasah

Aliyah (Fajar & Priyanto, 2024), most of these studies remain limited to identifying problems at specific levels and have not integrated multiple dimensions of the problems holistically. For example, studies on *nahwu* learning difficulties often focus on a single linguistic aspect without considering its relationship with student motivation or the broader instructional context (Fajar & Priyanto, 2024).

Additionally, although there are studies highlighting problems in *maharah* learning at Madrasah Aliyah from the perspective of students' language skills (Langputeh et al., 2023), previous research has not sufficiently linked Arabic learning problems with institutional contexts, variations in students' backgrounds, and the integration of pedagogical strategies that could serve as effective solutions in instructional practice at Madrasah Aliyah. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap through a more comprehensive and contextual examination of Arabic learning problems at the Madrasah Aliyah level.

Considering the identified issues, theoretical positioning, and research gaps, this study focuses on examining the problems of Arabic language education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Specifically, this research aims to analyze: (1) the problems encountered in Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level, (2) the factors influencing the emergence of these problems, and (3) the efforts or strategies that can be implemented to overcome the problems in Arabic education at Madrasah Aliyah.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching scholarly discourse on the problems of Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for teachers and educational institutions in formulating more effective and contextual Arabic learning strategies.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach was chosen because the research aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the problems of Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level based on actual conditions and contexts occurring in the field.

The research subjects were selected purposively and consisted of Arabic language teachers and Madrasah Aliyah students who were directly involved in the Arabic learning process. The selection of subjects was based on their involvement and experience in Arabic instruction so that the data obtained would be relevant to the research objectives.

The research instruments included semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore information regarding the problems of Arabic learning from the perspectives of teachers and students. Observations were carried out to examine the classroom learning process, while documentation was used to complement the data in the form of syllabi, lesson plans, and teaching materials.

The data collection procedures were conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation studies. The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation techniques.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented based on data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation related to Arabic language education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The presentation of the results is organized according to the research questions and objectives.

1. Problems in Arabic Language Education at Madrasah Aliyah

Based on interviews with teachers and students, several major problems were identified in Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. These problems include students' difficulties in mastering Arabic vocabulary, understanding grammatical structures (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), and developing speaking skills. Most students reported experiencing difficulties in understanding the material presented, particularly Arabic texts without vowel markings (*harakat*).

Classroom observations revealed that some students were less active during Arabic learning activities. Opportunities for asking questions and practicing speaking were limited, while the learning process was predominantly focused on teacher explanations.

2. Factors Influencing the Problems of Arabic Language Education

Interview data indicated that the problems in Arabic education were influenced by several factors, including students' low learning motivation, limited instructional time for Arabic subjects, and differences in students' initial abilities. In addition, teachers reported that limited instructional media and supporting facilities also posed challenges in the learning process.

Documentation data, including syllabi and lesson plans, showed that Arabic learning materials had been designed in accordance with the curriculum. However, classroom implementation was not fully supported by the use of varied instructional media.

3. Efforts to Overcome the Problems of Arabic Learning

Based on interview findings, Arabic teachers had undertaken several efforts to address learning problems. These efforts included the use of discussion methods, additional exercises, and repetition of material in specific basic competencies. Teachers also assigned vocabulary memorization tasks as reinforcement.

Observations indicated that these efforts had been implemented in the learning process, although not consistently in every meeting. Learning documentation showed adjustments in methods and materials according to classroom conditions.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

Findings Aspect	Main Results
Main Problems	Difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills
Contributing Factors	Low motivation, limited time, and limited instructional media
Efforts Implemented	Discussions, additional exercises, and material repetition

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the problems of Arabic language education at the Madrasah Aliyah level remain complex and encompass various aspects of learning. Students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery, grammatical understanding (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), and speaking skills suggest that Arabic learning has not fully achieved the objective of comprehensive language skill mastery. These

findings confirm that students' linguistic competence remains a primary challenge in Arabic learning, particularly in text comprehension and the active application of language in communicative contexts.

Beyond linguistic aspects, the results also demonstrate the influence of non-linguistic factors on Arabic learning problems. Students' low learning motivation, limited instructional time, and minimal use of varied learning media contribute to learning difficulties. This condition aligns with previous research indicating that the success of Arabic learning is not solely determined by students' linguistic abilities but also by instructional strategies and supportive learning environments (Supriadi et al., 2020; Kholiq & Fitriani, 2025).

The findings also reveal that teacher-centered instructional methods contribute to low student engagement in Arabic learning. Limited opportunities for language practice, particularly speaking activities, result in students being less accustomed to using Arabic communicatively. This finding supports the results of Albakri et al. (2024), which state that Arabic instruction with limited variation and minimal practice negatively affects students' language skill mastery.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the view that problems in Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon. Approaches focusing solely on linguistic aspects are insufficient to explain the complexity of the issues. Therefore, this research emphasizes the importance of an integrative approach that connects linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual factors in Arabic education studies.

Practically, the findings provide implications for teachers and educational institutions to design Arabic learning that is more communicative, contextual, and oriented toward active student engagement. The use of varied instructional media and the implementation of methods that encourage language practice are expected to reduce learning problems in Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. However, this study has limitations related to the scope of subjects and research locations, meaning the findings cannot yet be widely generalized and still open opportunities for further research with broader coverage.

Based on the discussion, a partial conclusion can be drawn that the problems of Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level result from the interaction between students' limited linguistic abilities, low learning motivation, and suboptimal instructional strategies. Therefore, improving the quality of Arabic learning requires comprehensive and sustainable efforts from all parties involved in madrasah education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Arabic language education at the Madrasah Aliyah level still faces various linguistic and non-linguistic problems. The main problems identified include students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery, grammatical understanding (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), and speaking skills. In addition, non-linguistic factors such as low learning motivation, limited instructional media, differences in students' initial abilities, and suboptimal instructional strategies also influence the effectiveness of Arabic learning. These findings directly address the research questions and align with the study objectives focused on identifying problems and their influencing factors.

Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the understanding that problems in Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level represent a multidimensional phenomenon that

cannot be explained from a single perspective. Practically, the findings provide implications for teachers and madrasah administrators to develop Arabic learning that is more communicative, contextual, and oriented toward active student engagement, as well as to encourage the use of more varied instructional media.

This study recommends that future research be conducted with broader subject coverage and research locations and examine more deeply the effectiveness of specific learning strategies or instructional models in addressing Arabic education problems at the Madrasah Aliyah level. In addition, the use of a mixed-methods approach may also be considered to obtain more comprehensive insights.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of sustained attention to the quality of Arabic education at the Madrasah Aliyah level. By comprehensively understanding the problems, efforts to improve Arabic learning can be more accurately targeted and contribute meaningfully to the development of Arabic education within the madrasah environment.

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