Arabic Language Learning Strategy: A Study of Learning in Madrasah Based on Boarding Schools

Rahmaini
1 Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia; rahmaini@uinsu.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
- Madrasah Policies;
- Arabic Learning;
- Learning Strategies

ABSTRACT

Arabic has become one of the "mandatory" everyday languages in Islamic boarding schools (as well as English). Of course, students (santri) who study at madrasas based on Islamic boarding schools receive additional teaching materials related to strengthening Arabic language skills. This study seeks to describe Arabic learning strategies in Islamic boarding schools based on Islamic boarding schools. The background of this research is at MTsS Raudhatussalihiin Kutacane, Southeast Aceh. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study method. Researchers carry out research actions in the field (field research) in an effort to obtain data through observation, interviews, and document studies. The results of this study found that the Arabic language learning strategy as a form of strengthening students' Arabic skills was characterized by 3 (three) aspects, namely the strategy of strengthening vocabulary memorization and singing popular songs (translated from Indonesian to Arabic), as well as a combination of learning in madrasas and internal boarding schools. This is based on the madrasa's efforts to effectively issue internal madrasa policies by characterizing Islamic educational institutions under the auspices of Islamic boarding schools. Through this research, it is hoped that it can become a new scientific treasure in improving students' Arabic skills in madrasas.

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-SA license.

Corresponding Author:
Rahmaini
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia; rahmaini@uinsu.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Language skills are basic potentials that students must develop starting at the basic education level (Aziza & Muliansyah, 2020: 56-71). This is based on the rapid development of the times, so the exchange of information becomes a very important requirement for students to obtain (Hendra, 2018: 103-120). In this context, language has an important role as a "tool" of communication between individuals of different nations (countries) (Lubis et al., 2022: 1006-1015; Kuraedah, 2015: 82-98).
The role of language has become very urgent in the digital era (Novita & Munawir, 2022; Iswanto, 2017: 139-152). The exchange of information and culture is getting faster, and for that language skills are needed (Azis, 2019: 308-318), especially international language. The international languages in question are English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese (Mandarin) in accordance with the six official languages of the United Nations (UN) (Nisa, 2018: 225-248).

Language skills consist of listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Hendri, 2017: 196-210). In the learning process, language skills become the main target for students at the basic education level (Baroroh & Rahmawati, 2020: 179-196). In fact, in Indonesia applying 3 languages as the main language in the learning process and listed in the national education curriculum, namely Indonesian (as the official language of the Indonesian nation), Arabic-English (the official international language) (Yahya et al., 2020: 57-70; Hamid, 2008). Even so, some educational institutions also add Mandarin (Chinese) and regional languages as subjects (Komang, 2020). This shows the urgency of language for children.

Learning activities related to language have their own uniqueness when practised on students (Iskandar & Rahman, 2022: 30-39; Hidayat, 2012). In this context, it takes creativity and innovation from educators to foster students’ interest in mastering languages (especially foreign languages). According to Saragih et al. (2022), this uniqueness includes the pronunciation of foreign languages that are different from the “spoken Indonesian people”, as well as proficiency in combining foreign language sentence structures.

In connection with the above uniqueness, Arabic as one of the official international languages has the “most complex” sentence structure than any other foreign language (Nalole, 2018: 129-145). In addition, Arabic is also close to the majority of Indonesian people, namely Muslims. This is because the holy book and guidelines for the life of Muslims are in the form of the Qur’an in Arabic (Rahmanudin & Syah, 2022: 76-83; Fahrurrozi, 2014). For this reason, Arabic is constantly being explored and studied by the Muslim community in Indonesia.

Arabic has also become a “mandatory” language set by most Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia (Rozak, 2018: 167-180). For example, the Raudhatussalihin Islamic boarding school, Kutacane, Southeast Aceh, "requires" the students to get used to using Arabic (and English) in their daily activities. In addition, learning the yellow book (turats) also examines the "science of tools" in understanding the rules of the Arabic language (Arif, 2019: 44-56).

Learning Arabic as a foreign language certainly has its own obstacles in its implementation (Muradi, 2014). For this reason, creative and innovative strategies are needed from educators, in order to foster student learning motivation (Daulay et al., 2022: 51-64). It is also based on the role of Arabic for students’ understanding of the Qur’an and hadith (hujjah Islami) (Husna, 2021: 51-58). Thus, students will learn Arabic with full awareness of the urgency of the language, not because they are forced to follow the subject matter at school/madrasah.

Usually, madrasas, under the auspices of Islamic boarding schools, have their own policies for students (santri) to be skilled in Arabic (Maskur & Anto, 2018: 63-68). Hasyim (2015: 31-42) states that language is a means of communication and interesting interaction for students in Islamic boarding schools. Even Makruf (2016: 265-280) mentions that learning languages in Islamic boarding schools is easier than having to take language lessons, because the environment is very supportive of the Arabic-speaking climate.

Indeed, academic studies on Arabic learning strategies in Islamic educational institutions have been widely studied before. Among them are discussing the aspect of language proficiency (Raudatussolihiyah, 2022: 53-60; Khansa, 2016; Khalilullah, 2011a: 219-235; Khalilullah, 2011b: 152-167), discovery learning (Mahyudin, 2014), increase in vocabulary or mafrudat (Astuti, 2016; Ismail, et.al., 2016: 113), students’ mastery of Arabic (Teh, et al., 2009: 41-56), Arabic learning for early childhood (Ramadhan, 2017: 180-189), writing skills (Iskandar, 2017: 55-68; Rahmawati & Shofiyani, 2020: 298), and media games in learning Arabic (Nuha, 2018: 256-277).

The scientific article (relevant research) above informs that the study of Arabic learning strategies is discussed around the themes of Arabic language proficiency strategies, discovery strategies,
memorization strategies and methods, and game strategies in Arabic learning. For this reason, the gap analysis of this study with previous research is on aspects of Arabic language learning strategies through rote memorization, singing and the internal policies of madrasas based on Islamic boarding schools (Raudhatussshalihin, Kutacane Aceh Tenggara).

The literature review above shows that the study of Arabic learning strategies has been widely studied from various perspectives. Similarly, special research related to how Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools is based has not been specifically studied. For this reason, researchers found a gap analysis of research studies, namely the study of Arabic learning strategies in Islamic boarding school based institutions, summarized in the title, "Arabic Learning Strategy at MTsS Raudhatusshalihin". Through this research, it is hoped that it can become a new scientific treasure in improving students' Arabic language skills in madrasas.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study method (Assingkily, 2021). The background of this research is at MTsS Raudhatusshalihin, Jl. Kutacane-Medan, KM. 12, Darussalam Village, Kutacane, Southeast Aceh. The data collection process was carried out systematically, starting from observation, interviews, to reviewing madrasa documents (archives) for seventh-grade students of MTs. Then, the researcher analyzed the data using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Next, test the validity of the data using data triangulation techniques.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Memorize Arabic Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the basis of learning Arabic (or foreign languages in general). This is based on individual needs to understand the meaning of the word for word in Arabic terms (Taufik, 2020: 57-72). In addition, the individual's ability to memorize many Arabic vocabularies makes it easier for basic dialogue between beginners (Riana et al., 2022; Abdurochman, 2017: 63-83).

The ability of students to memorize Arabic vocabulary is the initial determinant of students' proficiency in speaking (Nafi & Teh, 2017: 1-8). In line with this, Fajirah (2015: 107-126) explains that the more individuals memorize vocabulary, the easier it is to communicate using Arabic. Furthermore, Setyawan (2020: 55-82) explained that mentality (courage) also helps students in harmonizing vocabulary memorization and communication skills.

Based on the observations of researchers at MTsS Raudhatusshalihin, it appears that there are 2 students who are very fluent in dialogue using Arabic in conversation activities (muhaddatsah), namely Hendri and Irfan. Furthermore, information about the two students was also explained by the head of MTs:“...That's right, Ma'am, our 2 junior high school students, Irfan and Hendri, are indeed famous for achieving both at the cottage and at school. Alhamdulillah, if they are able to communicate in Arabic they are fluent, even though they are not like the original Arabs.” (Results of interview with FW, S.Pd., April 7, 2022)

In line with the interview quote above, Ustaz Mr said:“... in muhaddatsah activities we bring together students according to their abilities, ma'am, the goal is to make communication smoother and not seem awkward when different. We identify the size of the alignment of students' abilities from the amount of vocabulary memorized by students or students” (Results of an interview with a teacher at MTsS Raudhatusshalihin, April 22, 2022).

The interview excerpt above informs that Arabic learning activities carried out in madrasas make the number of vocabulary a "measure or indicator" of students' abilities. In contrast to the concept...
above, Tolinggi (2020: 64-95) explains that the vocabulary in learning Arabic is not automatically obtained by students from memorization activities, but can also be obtained by students from the sorogan learning process in the process of learning the turats book. In fact, Zuhdy (2017) adds that memorizing vocabulary is a "classic or old way" of learning Arabic.

Likewise, Fauziddin & Fikriya (2020: 46-54) explained that vocabulary is very helpful for students or novice students in learning Arabic. Thus, it is understood that memorizing vocabulary is one of the strategies that has been used since ancient times in the process of beginners learning Arabic. This is also the basis for implementing vocabulary memorization activities by the madrasah at MTsS Raudhatussalihin to students.

3.2 Singing Popular Songs Translated into Arabic

Popular songs become one dimension of learning that is close to students of basic education age (SD/MI or SMP/MTs). This is the reason some teachers teach teaching materials to students through singing together (Ridwan & Awaluddin, 2019: 56-67). In fact, there are also efforts to change the lyrics of popular songs to be translated into foreign languages (Arabic or English) (Jamil & Agung, 2022: 38-51; Nikmah, 2017: 173-187).

Learning activities while singing are basically intended to stimulate early-age students (Learning Groups or TK/RA) so that they are easy to memorize and enjoy the learning process (Hidayah, 2022: 246-253; Badriyah, 2014). Today, this activity is adopted as a learning strategy at a higher level (starting from SD/MI to higher education) (Fitriyah, 2019; Mubarak et.al., 2020: 15-31; Imrang, et.al., 2020: 66-82). This shows that singing activities are an appropriate effort in applying the memorization learning process to students, especially those related to foreign languages.

Learning Arabic is perceived by some students as a boring subject and seems confusing (Agustina & Katoningsih, 2020). This is based on learning activities that use conventional methods in the form of memorization and conversation (muhaddatsah) between students (Furoidah & Amalia, 2021: 19-24). In response to this, Khoiruddin (2017: 12-18) explained that learning strategies while singing can be used as the right alternative in the process of learning Arabic, which is fun and enjoyable.

Furthermore, Nursari (2021: 579-584) added that singing popular songs translated into Arabic or the lyrics changed in Arabic cover versions could foster students’ interest in learning Arabic (Mahmudah, 2019: 141-151). This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Ustazah Jm, S.Pd., as follows:

"...That’s right, Ma’am, here we often create Arabic learning activities while singing. As for what makes the students interested because they already know the music by heart, but the lyrics are in Arabic, so it’s something new and fun for children their age" (Interview with the teacher at MTsS Raudhatussalihin, April 29, 2022).

In line with the interview quote above, Ustazah Winda said:

"...usually the songs we choose to change are songs that are trending among students. So that students’ interest can be directed to positive things, especially learning Arabic. In addition, we also often change folk songs that are familiar to students into Arabic, such as the song ampar-ampar banana to memorize the names of animals and the song here i s happy there happy, as we got from the following link: https://https://youtu.be/ksvedYjE6g8, https://youtu.be/tdONnFmRCSc, and also other songs" (Interview with teacher at MTsS Raudhatussalihin, 27 April 2022).

The interview excerpt above informs that teachers and students participate in learning activities while singing in Arabic at the Raudhatussalihin Islamic Boarding School. In this regard, Sari (2019: 187) explained that singing activities could stimulate children to enjoy a material or learning activity. Saputra & Syauqi (2020: 213-234) added that singing cannot be used as the main activity in the learning process, but as a strategy for growing student interest in learning.
Based on the description above, it is understood that singing while learning is an alternative active and fun learning strategy for students. Then, singing activities also prevent students from feeling bored and bored in the process of memorizing vocabulary (Al-Falah et al., 2021: 59-73). On this basis, students (or santri) at MTsS Raudhatussalahi are taught Arabic by using the strategy of translating popular songs into Arabic.

3.3 Combination of Arabic Learning Curriculum

Learning Arabic as a "mandatory" material is taught simultaneously between activities in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools (Rahmawati & Ainun, 2021: 200-203). Usually, Arabic language material becomes routine material that is accepted and practised by students in Islamic boarding schools (Amrulloh, 2017: 234-248). In fact, students will be punished if they do not use Arabic while in the pesantren environment.

According to Habibi (2019: 151-167), the use of Arabic is not just an obligation for students, but also an effort to foster students' interest in mastering Arabic. This is because the turats book which contains Islamic material, was written by previous scholars and scientists in Arabic. Supporting this, Windariyah (2018: 309-324) explains that the essence of using Arabic is not just a differentiator between students in non-pesantren schools/madrasas and those in Islamic boarding schools. More than that, it is a provision for students to prepare to study abroad.

In connection with the above opinion, Amirudin (2021) explains that students' proficiency in Arabic has a special attraction for students to be "dare" to continue their studies abroad (Egypt, Morocco, Medina or other Arabian Peninsula). In line with this, Firwanda, S.Pd. said:

"...Our students here, ma'am, are very enthusiastic about studying abroad, so many of them try to study Arabic seriously. So, we internally at the MTsS Raudhatussalahi level strive to provide children with the right curriculum for their needs, of course a combination or combination of the national curriculum, madrasa curriculum, and madrasah internal policies" (Interview with the Head of MTsS Raudhatussalahi, April 7, 2022).

In connection with the interview excerpt above, Rohman et al. (2022: 1006-1015) explain that the enthusiasm of the Indonesian people to study abroad is increasing. This can be seen from the number of student registrants abroad in the Arabian Peninsula (Islamic boarding school alumni), which every year increases to 50-100 registrants. On this basis, Hidayah (2016: 63-81) informed that in addition to Arabic language skills, students who wish to continue abroad are also expected to have at least 5 juz of Al-Qur'an memorized as a registration requirement.

Furthermore, learning Arabic can be carried out properly if a positive (climate) environment is created (Nurjaman, 2022: 205-211; Thoha, 2012). The application of a combination of madrasa learning curriculum and language strengthening in Islamic boarding schools (Nurhuda, 2022: 23-29; Qudsi, 2016), is a unique combination and helps accelerate students' language skills at MTsS Raudhatussalahi. In fact, according to the statement of the ustaz (an educator at the Islamic boarding school), students who violate the language rules will be announced every afternoon and given a graded punishment (according to the case, light, moderate or severe). Thus, it is understood that the combination of the Arabic language learning curriculum is a strategy that helps accelerate students' language skills at MTsS Raudhatussalahi.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the description of the results and discussion of the research above, it is concluded that the Arabic language learning strategy as a form of strengthening students' Arabic skills at MTsS Raudhatussalahi is characterized by 3 (three) aspects, namely the strategy of strengthening vocabulary memorization and singing popular songs (Indonesian to Arabic translation), as well as a combination of learning in madrasas and internal boarding schools. This is based on the madrasa's efforts to effectively issue internal madrasa policies by characterizing Islamic educational institutions under the auspices of Islamic boarding schools. Through this research, it is hoped that it can become a new scientific treasure in improving students' Arabic skills in madrasas. Then, the recommendations
of researchers on similar themes should be investigated using research and development methods to produce products in the form of effective learning media for students learning Arabic.

REFERENCES


Rahmaini/ Arabic Language Learning Strategy: A Study of Learning in Madrasah Based on Boarding Boards