



Analysis of Difficulties in Speaking Arabic Among Students of Traditional Islamic Boarding School (Salaf)

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Abstract

Practicing spoken Arabic is not an easy task. Collaboration with various parties is required, one of which is the school teacher. The primary issue with the Salaf Islamic Boarding School is that a significant number of students struggle with spoken Arabic, although they are capable of reading Arabic texts without diacritical marks. Unfortunately, research on this topic remains highly limited. To address this gap, this study employs exploratory qualitative methods to analyze the challenges faced by Salaf students in speaking Arabic. Data collection was conducted through in-depth and open interviews, involving five teachers from the Salaf Islamic Boarding School and ten students. From this study, several findings emerged, including the following difficulties experienced by students in speaking Arabic: (1) a lack of vocabulary, (2) a lack of motivation, (3) hesitancy to speak due to fear of making mistakes, and (4) feeling embarrassed when speaking Arabic. It is hoped that this research will help identify the difficulties faced by students in speaking Arabic and provide appropriate solutions to further enhance their speaking skills.

Keywords: Language difficulties, students, Islamic boarding schools

INTRODUCTION

The presence of Arabic language learning in schools does not affect students' ability to speak Arabic. Meanwhile, general Arabic language instruction aims to equip students with four competencies. However, salaf (traditional) students have not been able to achieve the goals optimally, even though in their daily learning activities, they study classical Arabic texts. The role of teachers in training students to speak Arabic within the pesantren environment is still significantly lacking due to the fact that many teachers do not use the Arabic language during instruction. However, the role of teachers is crucial. Therefore, a teacher who consistently uses Arabic language both during and outside of instruction is highly needed so that students become accustomed to hearing Arabic vocabulary.

This article aims to examine the difficulties faced by salaf santri in speaking Arabic within the context of Islamic boarding schools. The difficulties caused by various factors are the focal point of this article, which will be analyzed and presented descriptively. The skill of reading "kitab kuning" (classical Islamic texts) often becomes a major focus for students in Islamic boarding schools. Only a small number of pesantren require their students to be proficient in Arabic and tend to encourage the use of English as a means of communication. (Fitriatus Sholihah, Akla Akla, 2020)

The difficulties faced by salaf santri in Islamic boarding schools can serve as a representation of the Arabic language learning patterns within pesantren that are committed to helping students become proficient in the language. Students face two different types of challenges when learning Arabic. The first challenge is the low interest in learning among students, as their motivation to participate in Arabic language instruction is often lacking. The second challenge is

the lack of speaking skills, which hinders student engagement in Arabic language learning. The study of Arabic language in pesantren has traditionally focused on two key themes. The first study examines how students' motivation in learning affects their ability to speak Arabic (Sholihah et al., 2020) The goal of teaching Arabic language is aligned with both speaking skills that students can acquire (Sholihah et al., 2020)

Another research was conducted by Syafaah & Dewi on "Challenges of Salaf Pesantren in Arabic Language Learning in the Era of Globalization." (Syafaah, D. & Dewi, 2019) They found that because students are more focused on reading and understanding Arabic texts, they lack knowledge about how the Arabic language has evolved over time. Unlike the research in this article, which focuses on the challenges faced by santri in pesantren in learning Arabic, Syafaah & Dewi's research is more focused on the management of pesantren in terms of Arabic language learning orientation.

Several educational language goals include basic foreign language proficiency as one of their objectives. Elements that contribute to difficulties in speaking Arabic include linguistic factors, such as students struggling to comprehend it and difficulties in understanding Arabic language, as well as non-linguistic factors such as differences in educational backgrounds and students' skill levels. (Muyassaroh, 2019)

The difficulties in speaking Arabic language encompass both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Speaking a foreign language is a fundamental skill. Language environment (bi'ah), study groups, and vocabulary memorization (hafalan mufrodat) are all efforts to combat this issue. The standards of the instructors, as well as the curriculum, are variables that support speaking proficiency (Mori, Presta, 2017)

Lack of motivation, insufficient mastery of Arabic vocabulary, and completion of general education are some reasons why learning kalam (theology) in Arabic language class can be challenging. Engaging in regular practice, learning various terminologies, and starting to study Arabic conversation as part of your efforts will make Arabic language learning as simple as possible (Darajat: Jurnal PAI Volume 5 Nomor 1 Juni 2022 103, 2022)

Various variables, such as lack of vocabulary knowledge, lack of habit of speaking Arabic, difficulties in interpretation, lack of proficiency in Nahwu (Arabic syntax) and Sharaf (Arabic morphology), and environmental conditions, contribute to the difficulties in managing Arabic language proficiency (Angga, cucu suryana, ima nurwahidah, 2022) In this context, there are many factors contributing to the difficulties in speaking Arabic. On the other hand, each school has its own unique program. These issues highlight the need for research on the analysis of difficulties in speaking Arabic within salaf Islamic boarding schools. By exploring the factors that cause difficulties in speaking Arabic in various schools, a comprehensive understanding of the learning implementation that can encourage students to speak Arabic, as well as the obstacles they face, can be obtained. Until now, there has been limited research on this issue. Therefore, this research aims to bridge the gap in references and methods for teachers in instructing and training students to speak Arabic in salaf Islamic boarding schools.

The acquisition of a second language, such as Arabic, involves adaptation on the part of both students and teachers. Speaking a foreign language is a fundamental skill. To connect the two and enable the achievement of learning goals, appropriate intermediary learning resources are needed that align with the learning scenario and context.

This research aims to explore the factors that contribute to the limited proficiency of salaf Islamic boarding school students in speaking Arabic. The findings of this study can serve as a reference for addressing the difficulties in speaking Arabic faced by students in salaf Islamic boarding schools. For teachers, this research can contribute to the development of teaching methods and emphasize the importance of using the language consistently with the students. In conclusion, this research is expected to assist teachers in overcoming the difficulties in Arabic language proficiency among students in salaf Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, it can serve as a guideline for policy-making decisions regarding teaching spoken Arabic to students in salaf Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

The general question that guides this research is the difficulties experienced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and the factors causing these difficulties. This study aims to explore the factors that contribute to salaf students' lack of proficiency in speaking Arabic. Through this research, the researcher conducted interviews to identify the difficulties faced by salaf students in speaking Arabic. By doing so, an overview of the difficulties in speaking Arabic among salaf students and their underlying causes can be obtained, serving as a reference for teachers.

The role of the researcher in this study is that of an investigator who aims to gather various information to be used as scientific research material in the field of education. This is because the researcher is an academic and a researcher from the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga who has been actively involved in Arabic language education in Indonesia for several years. We are confident that this research is necessary and beneficial for both teachers and readers as an effort to address the difficulties in language proficiency among students in salaf Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, the findings of

this research should be considered as a limited but valuable reference material.

This study is an exploratory qualitative research that aims to explore the difficulties faced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and the factors causing these difficulties. This study aims to obtain an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to the difficulties in speaking Arabic in salaf Islamic boarding schools. In data collection, the researcher conducted semi-structured individual interviews with each participant.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling method. The researcher chose participants based on specific objectives and criteria. This method was used because it has certain characteristics that enable the researcher to explore and gather information relevant to the research questions from each participant. This method allowed for the selection of participants who met the research needs. The criteria used to recruit participants in this study were individuals who were teachers in Islamic boarding schools and had a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience, as well as students who had completed 5 years of education or were in their second year of Islamic Senior High School (MA). Teachers who have been teaching students for 5 years or more are considered to have extensive experience compared to those with less teaching experience. After selecting and determining the participants, a consent letter was created to obtain their willingness to participate, ensuring confidentiality and obtaining their consent to share personal information.

This research involved 15 participants consisting of both teachers and students from Nurul Islam Islamic boarding school in Jember regency, East Java, Indonesia. All participants were female, ranging in age from 17 to 50 years old. Five participants were teachers, while the remaining ten were salaf students at the Islamic boarding school. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher requested the consent of each selected teacher to participate by filling out a provided statement and signing it, ensuring mutual agreement between both parties. During the interview process, the researcher first introduced themselves to the participants, explained the title and objectives of the research, and asked the

participants to answer the questions honestly based on their teaching and child empowerment experiences. The researcher prepared answer sheets to record the responses to each question in the interview, ensuring that each participant's answers were properly recorded and documented.

Afterward, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. The researcher had prepared a list or guide for the predetermined questions. The duration of each interview ranged from 10 to 20 minutes for each participant. In a single day, the researcher only interviewed one participant. The interviews were conducted after the learning activities had ended to avoid disrupting the teachers' teaching process. Some key questions in the interviews with the participants included: How is the implementation of foreign language instruction in the salaf Islamic boarding school? What are the difficulties experienced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and what are the contributing factors?

Qualitative analysis was employed in this research. Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations about interesting phenomena. The data analysis process in this research follows the data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The steps of data analysis conducted by the researcher include data reduction from the interviews conducted with 15 participants, selecting the most relevant data related to the research questions. Within the data reduction process, there are five research problem areas that are focused on.

To understand the difficulties experienced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and the contributing factors, the researcher sought to obtain data that truly aligned with the research objectives. To ensure data accuracy, the researcher conducted multiple confirmations with the participants, especially for unclear or unrelated answers that did not address the research questions or issues. Secondly, the researcher presented the data according to the groups of responses from the participants on pre-coded sheets of paper. The presentation of data aimed to facilitate the researcher in

describing the answers from each participant. Thirdly, the researcher drew conclusions from the participants' answers that had been presented on the sheets of paper. In drawing these conclusions, the researcher exercised great caution to avoid making any errors in the process of concluding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main question in this research is about the difficulties experienced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and the contributing factors. In this regard, the teachers presented the factors that contribute to the difficulties faced by salaf students in speaking Arabic and their underlying causes. To obtain answers to these questions, the researcher conducted interviews with all the selected teachers as participants. From the interviews, several findings emerged, including the difficulties faced by the students in speaking Arabic, such as (1) lack of vocabulary, (2) lack of motivation, (3) fear of making mistakes, and (4) shyness in speaking Arabic.

Theme 1: Lack of Arabic Vocabulary

To communicate effectively while learning a foreign language, it is crucial to acquire and master vocabulary. The likelihood of linguistic proficiency increases with the size of one's vocabulary. The development of one's vocabulary is essential in learning a new language. In reality, many challenges arise during the learning process, including students' mastery of vocabulary (Maulani, 2014)

One's ability to engage in conversation and write in Arabic can be supported by having a sufficient Arabic vocabulary. The development of one's language proficiency in a particular language and the process of language learning both emphasize the importance of vocabulary mastery. The quantity and quality of one's vocabulary determine the quality of their language skills; the more diverse our vocabulary, the more likely we are to become proficient speakers.

According to the explanation provided above, in addition to having a stronger interest in the language, students who learn a language with integrative motivation are more likely to master language skills and be able to engage in conversation in that language compared to students who learn a language with instrumental motivation. They are also more likely to effectively communicate in the newly learned language.

The participants explained the lack of Arabic vocabulary instruction for students. Based on the interview results with the participants, they explained that in this Salafi boarding school, the emphasis is more on reading Turoos books while paying attention to the grammatical structure of the language. Furthermore, the teachers do not possess a command of Arabic vocabulary because they are educated in Salafi boarding schools where Arabic language usage is not actively practiced.

Theme 2: Lack of Motivation

Azhar Arsyad cites Burt, Dulay, and Krashen (1982) who stated that students' motivation to learn a language stems from their needs and desires to do so. The ability to successfully learn a language is considered to be dependent on motivation. It is a component that provides students with the energy and momentum to make learning more engaging and impactful. Individuals with high motivation have a significantly higher likelihood of success, whereas conversely, students with low motivation have a smaller chance of academic achievement. Considering this, students' enthusiasm for learning a language is highly important as a motivational factor and a component in their performance (Mainizar, 2011)

From the interview results with the participants, they explained that there is a lack of motivation among students in speaking Arabic. They further clarified that in this Salafi boarding school, it is not a boarding school that extensively uses Arabic language throughout, so only specific dormitories use foreign languages.

Factor of difficulty in speaking Arabic. The majority of participants expressed that the reason for the difficulty in speaking Arabic among students is the lack of requirement to speak in a foreign language, and it depends more on the students' interest. Within the boarding school, there are several different dormitories categorized as language dormitories, science dormitories, Qur'an recitation dormitories, and others.

Theme 3: Fear of Speaking Arabic

Language system, social context, interpersonal communication, language instruction, tests, and speaking competence are some of the causes of foreign language (Arabic) anxiety. This anxiety can be caused by previous exposure to a foreign language in language classes or due to concerns about competency and knowledge gaps. In other words, language anxiety can hinder learning, and a lack of proficiency can result in feelings of fear, anxiety, and loss of focus. People are afraid of making mistakes

(mispronouncing sentences) and being mocked by the audience (listeners) when speaking a second language, such as Arabic, because they do not fully understand it. "Anxiety appears strange, foolish, and incompetent to the audience," said someone. Feelings of uncertainty, fear, worry, and low self-esteem will develop as a result. People claim that learning a second language (such as Arabic) or foreign languages in general is difficult, embarrassing, and even amusing. (Budiman, 2015)

Anxiety and motivational factors are linked to speaking Arabic as a foreign language. This is because a motivated individual will possess fundamental values, aspirations, and confidence in their ability to communicate in Arabic. Motivation, as defined by psychologists and cited by Mc Donald (1959), is the shifting of an individual's energy indicated by the emergence of "feelings" and, initially, by the response to a goal. According to Gardner (2005), motivation in foreign language learning is

The model suggests that ability and motivation are the two main individual difference variables involved in language learning, as seen in the figure. According to the theory, pupils with higher levels of aptitude—including IQ and language aptitude—tend to learn languages more quickly than those with lower levels of aptitude. Similar to this, students who are more motivated will perform better than those who are less motivated because they will put forth more effort, be more attentive, persistent, enjoy the experience more, want to learn the material more, be goal-directed, show optimal levels of arousal, have expectations, and feel more confident in their abilities.

From the interview results with the participants, they explained that many of the students are afraid to speak Arabic due to the fear of making mistakes in pronunciation. This fear stems from the influence of Salafi students who prioritize studying the rules of Arabic grammar over practical usage of the language.

Foreign language anxiety: Many students refrain from speaking Arabic because they prefer to remain silent and lack interest in doing so. The academic achievement of students will decline if they continue to experience anxiety when speaking a foreign language.

Personal reasons are the first thing that makes learning a new language stressful. This individual factor is closely related to low self-esteem of students, comparing their skills with other students in the class, high expectations, and irrational assumptions about learning a foreign language.

Theme 4: Embarrassment in Speaking Arabic

In reality, speaking is an interesting hobby. However, it can be the opposite if students start feeling embarrassed, lose motivation, or lack the vocabulary and sentence structures needed for learning.

The ability to speak is essentially the ability to mimic the flow of sounds from the articulatory system with the aim of communicating one's intentions, desires, and wishes to others. In this situation, the ability to produce various articulatory sounds, stresses, tones, pauses, and speech melodies is made possible by the totality of one's speech apparatus. The ability to speak honestly, accurately, and responsibly is also manifested by addressing psychological issues such as embarrassment, low self-esteem, tension, speech impediments, and others, thus providing the confidence to do so.

From the interview results with the participants, they explained that many of the students feel embarrassed to speak Arabic because the boarding school environment does not require them to use Arabic language, leading to a sense of shame when speaking in Arabic. However, speaking in Arabic should be practiced frequently in order for students to become proficient in the language.

The teachers in the Salafi boarding school do not speak in Arabic but use the local language instead. Therefore, the teachers serve as examples to their students. If the teachers use Arabic and are frequently heard by the students, the students will naturally feel more motivated and discard any sense of shame in speaking Arabic.

CONCLUSION

Salafi students face difficulties in speaking Arabic due to various contributing factors, one of which is their limited vocabulary, which poses a barrier in their ability to speak Arabic. In addition, the lack of motivation among students in speaking Arabic is due to the unsupportive Arabic language environment for conversational practice. Moreover, there is fear and embarrassment in speaking Arabic. This is because students are afraid of making mistakes in Arabic pronunciation and the fact that not all students speak Arabic in their surroundings.

The issues that hinder them must be addressed in order to produce excellent communicative

students. One of the obstacles that prevent students from learning how to communicate effectively is language anxiety. To reduce the reasons why students struggle to speak in the language they are learning, teachers and students must collaborate. The findings of this research can be utilized by instructors, learners, and anyone involved in foreign language instruction, particularly Arabic language, as a source of information and evaluation tool.

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