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# Teachers' Experiences in Teaching Arabic in Madrasah: A Multisite Study

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**A B S T R A C T**

Based on a descriptive qualitative study, this research aims to explore teachers' experiences in teaching Arabic in three Islamic-based secondary schools (MTs and MAs) in Mataram. Arabic has an important role in Islamic education, thus understanding its teaching practices is very relevant. This study specifically addresses three main aspects of the learning process, namely planning, implementation and evaluation. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews and classroom observations of nine purposively selected teachers. The results show that teachers use various teaching methods such as two-way interaction, audiolingual, lecture, and qira'ah which are adjusted to the characteristics of students and school conditions. Teachers also actively participate in training and discuss with peers to improve professional competence. The main challenges faced include students' low basic Arabic reading skills, limited facilities, and lack of learning motivation. To overcome this, teachers apply differentiated learning strategies, vocabulary grouping and building positive emotional relationships with students. Evaluation is done formatively and summatively by utilizing technology. The results confirm that successful teaching of Arabic requires innovation, reflection and a deep understanding of students' needs.

## 1. Introduction

Arabic is the official language of more than twenty countries, and liturgical in Islam. Arabic has an important role in various aspects of life both in religious, social, cultural and educational contexts, thus raising awareness of the importance of mastering this language, including in Islamic educational institutions. In terms of education, Arabic language learning in Indonesia has a long history that began with the arrival of Islam until now. Learning methods that were originally very traditional and focused on spelling over time have evolved (Aziza & Muliansyah, 2020).Many modern Islamic schools integrate Arabic language learning into their curriculum, indicating an awareness of the importance of Arabic as an international language.

The comprehensive utilization of Arabic language requires serious efforts from the learners (Ahmid et al., 2018). In learning Arabic, it is inseparable from the role of the teacher. Teachers are the main key in shaping students into a whole person in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Abdullah et al., 2023). Thus, students can become independent learners who not only master the subject matter, but also have 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, effective communication, and collaboration, which are needed to face challenges in the digital era.

In line with the importance of the teacher's role, the complexity of Arabic language teaching causes the emergence of various problems involving various parties in education. Hizbullah & Mardiah (2015) revealed that teachers and students are the main actors in the learning process, while principals and other education personnel act as facilitators and supporters. Based on the findings of Sahari (2018), it also shows that teacher tenure is directly correlated with learning effectiveness. The more mature the experience of an educator, the more able to optimize the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, Hasan & Melyyani (2023) emphasized that qualified teachers equipped with the right curriculum, models and learning methods will always be able to provide effective teaching.

Accordingly, the success of Arabic language learning at the intermediate level depends not only on the internal factors of the teacher, but is also determined by the approach and dynamics of classroom interaction. Teaching methods, student interest, and positive interactions between teachers and students are important factors that are interrelated. As Wardani & Kandea (2023) emphasize, positive interactions are key to building sustained interest in learning. Careful lesson planning, as Andriana (2018) explains, is also very important. It not only includes the selection of appropriate materials and methods, but also pays attention to the psychological aspects of students.

Teachers, as the central figure in the learning process, must have adequate competence. Zulkifli (2017) Explanation the importance of mastering teaching materials for a teacher in order to deliver learning effectively and achieve educational goals. More specifically, Arabic language teachers ideally have competencies that include understanding the principles of Arabic language education, the ability to manage the teaching and learning process, and being a good role model for students in behavior and language. In addition, the ability to work together with professional colleagues and the wider community is also indispensable for realizing overall educational goals (Wijaya, 2017).

Arabic language teachers' main drive is the desire to introduce and spread a deep understanding of Arabic language and culture to the younger generation. Arabic, which is rich in meaning, especially in the context of religion, history and literature, is considered a valuable skill that broadens students' horizons about Islam and science. Teachers want to help students understand religious literature in depth and develop applicable and contextualized language skills. The educational background in pesantren is an important factor that encourages teachers to continue teaching in this area. According to research Jwaifell et al., (2020), teaching experience has a complex influence on the effectiveness of SNS use in improving Arabic language

acquisition. Younger teachers, who are generally more familiar with technology, tend to benefit more from the use of SNS. These findings highlight the importance of considering age and technology experience factors in designing teacher training programs.

Nevertheless, to achieve this goal, emotional support from teachers must be combined with conducive physical conditions of the school, which also affect students' motivation to learn. In their research, Azzahra & Chourouk (2022) ound that the school environment directly affects students' desire to learn Arabic, with a positive correlation between environmental conditions and motivation levels. A study showed a significant positive relationship between a conducive school environment and students' ability to focus on learning tasks (Aktavia & Nirwana, 2019). Whereas students who study in a noisy environment and do not have sufficient facilities tend to have lower learning motivation, as evidenced by their perceptions of their learning environment (Idola & Sano, 2016).

Research aims to explore the in-depth experiences of Arabic language teachers at the secondary level and contribute to the development of better teaching practices overall, focusing on some key aspects. As such, the study is expected to provide relevant recommendations for policy makers and educational practitioners in an effort to improve the quality of Arabic language learning.

## 2. Methodology

Descriptive qualitative design method was conducted in three secondary schools of MTs and MAs (Yayasan Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jannah NW Ampenan, MTs Badrussalam NW Sekarbela, MA Riyadlusshibyan Lendang Re) in Mataram, with the aim of exploring teachers' experiences in teaching Arabic. The researcher selected nine Arabic language teachers who teach at the school as participants. The data collection methods used include in-depth interviews to get clearer information from the subjects as well as direct observation in the classroom which allows researchers to directly observe the dynamics of learning and social interaction in the classroom. Objects in this study were nine Arabic language teachers who were determined using purposive sampling. The data analysis technique in this study refers to Figure 1:

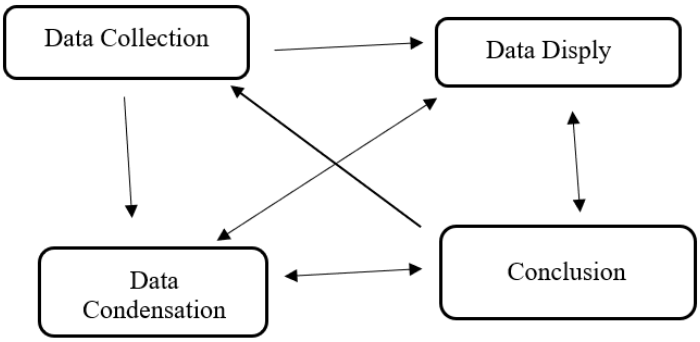


Figure 1. Research Procedure

The data analysis technique above includes several stages, namely: (1) Data collection, which begins with a literature study to verify and confirm the problems to be studied. After that, researchers conducted interviews and observations to collect data. This process also includes efforts to build relationships with subjects and informants. (2) Data reduction, which is the process of selecting, filtering, and arranging the data obtained into a more concise form and ready for analysis. Interview results are converted into verbatim transcripts, while observation data are presented in observation tables. (3) Data presentation, data that has been compiled in the form of a script is then processed into a more structured and systematic format. At this stage, the data is grouped into clear themes and subcategories, and coded for each subject statement. (4) Drawing conclusions or verification, is the last stage in data analysis according to the Miles and Huberman model. The conclusions drawn will answer the research questions and include explanations of all themes and sub categories found, accompanied by quotes from the interview results verbatim (Kase et al., 2023).

This instruments aimed to explore teachers' experiences in teaching Arabic in secondary schools including important indicators with three main discussions, namely: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The instrument consists of fourteen main questions. First, in the aspect of teaching experience, the research will examine the length of time teachers have been teaching and the motivations that led them to choose this field. Next, on the aspect of teaching methods, the instrument will examine the most frequently applied methods and how teachers adapt them to meet students' needs. In terms of learning materials, the focus will be on the materials taught and the criteria used to select materials that are appropriate for students' abilities.

Related to the challenges in teaching, this research will identify the main challenges faced by teachers and how they address these problems. Additionally, in the aspect of evaluation and assessment, this instrument will highlight the methods used to evaluate students as well as ways to provide useful feedback. Regarding student engagement, it will explore how teachers encourage student participation in the classroom and the steps taken if participation is low. In the context of professional development, this instrument will inquire about teachers' involvement in training or workshops and the lessons learned from those experiences. Finally, expectations and future plans will be discussed. Through this approach, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insights into Arabic language teaching practices in secondary schools (Novelita & Devian, 2023).

## 3. Result and Discussion

Experience is the accumulation of events over time (Main et al., 2018). The more experiences we have, the richer our knowledge and understanding of the world. Meanwhile, the teaching process can be likened to a series of activities specifically designed to assist students in understanding a subject matter. In other words, teaching is an effort to create conditions that allow students to learn more easily and

effectively (Wuisang et al., 2022). There are several things that must be considered to explore the teacher experience more deeply, including:

- **Planning**

Planning is an important first step in achieving a goal. Simply put, planning is the process of compiling structured and systematic steps to realize what we want to achieve. By planning, we proactively prepare all the resources and efforts needed so that the goals that have been set can be carried out effectively and efficiently.

Being a successful Arabic teacher requires more than just a mastery of the language. In lesson planning, teachers must have a deep understanding of various teaching methods and strategies and the ability to design lesson plans that suit the needs of students. Learning methods serve as a general framework that directs the teaching process, while learning strategies are specific actions used to achieve predetermined learning objectives (Syahril et al., 2023). The use of appropriate learning methods is the key to making the learning process more interesting.

Nowadays, teachers are required to continuously develop their skills and knowledge to remain relevant in the world of education. As explained by G1, one way to achieve this is by regularly reading books and articles about pedagogy, learning methods and the development of Arabic language learning. In addition, teachers also need to discuss with colleagues to exchange experiences and provide input on effective teaching methods. G1 tries to find new innovations to make learning materials more interesting and relevant to students.

Correspondingly, G2 and G3 often organize and attend online and offline training or seminars organized by MoRA or MoEC specifically designed for teacher training to improve teachers' professionalism. These seminars help teachers understand the latest teaching approaches and how to deal with challenges in the school environment. These trainings open up insights into innovations in education that inspire teachers to design methods to be used in the future, especially in Arabic language learning.

Amid increasingly fierce competition in the world of education, the role of teachers is becoming increasingly important. Teachers are not only the conveyors of science and technology, but also responsible for shaping the character of students to be able to face future challenges. Teachers are required to develop the potential of students as a whole, both in terms of intellectual, social, emotional, and skills. This task is becoming increasingly complex because teachers not only need to prepare the younger generation to enter the digital era, but also must continue to develop themselves to remain relevant as an educator (Dasuki, 2015).

- **Implementation**

Interviews with teachers at the madrasah show that the strategy used is to take a variety of flexible and diverse approaches according to the styles and abilities of students at the madrasah, and then involve students directly in every lesson. In their

research, Baroroh & Rahmawati (2020) explained that in teaching Arabic, various methods can be used to develop receptive skills, such as listening and reading. Two-way interaction methods, lectures, audiolingual, qiro'ah, and taqrir are some examples. So the selection of the right method depends on the learning objectives, the characteristics of the learners, and the material being taught. Table 1 discusses the methods used by teachers in teaching Arabic in a madrasah:

Table 1. Learning Methods

| **The methods used in Arabic language learning in madrasahs:** | |
|---|---|
| Two-way interaction | Students are active in the learning process such as: questions and answers, discussions, and other activities that encourage direct involvement. |
| Lecture | Teacher presents the material and students listen |
| Audiolingual | Prioritize listening and speaking skills before reading and writing exercises to develop skills in Arabic. |
| *Qiro'ah* | Students are focused on reading skills in Arabic language learning. |
| *Taqrir* | Emphasizes repetition of material or memorization over and over again to improve understanding. |

Despite this, challenges in the learning process remain an obstacle or problem in learning. In Arabic lessons, there are many challenges faced by both teachers and students, as revealed by G7 in the interview process with the researcher, that the most important challenge faced by teachers in madrasah is that there are still many students who "*Iqra*" and even "can't recite the qur'an", thus hampering their learning activities.

Similarly, G8 and G9 also revealed that another challenge faced in learning Arabic is the diversity of students' characters and abilities, considering that students' backgrounds are different, this requires special attention. In addition, the lack of facilities and infrastructure is a pressing problem. Students' Arabic learning experience is often constrained by various factors including a lack of motivation and interest which can reduce their perseverance in learning. Limited vocabulary and an environment that does not support language practice make it difficult for students to master comprehensive language skills. Furthermore, difficulties in understanding and applying the rules of nahwu and sharaf can hinder the understanding of Arabic sentence structure as a whole (Ulfah, 2023).

Some of these challenges were solved by teachers trying to adapt to students by maximizing existing approaches and methods. Then categorize vocabulary so that it is easily understood by students, then involve students directly in every learning process. Finally, understanding more about differentiated learning. These solutions not only improve students' understanding, but also build positive relationships between teachers and students.

Within the context of building positive relationships, teachers try to enter the students' world instead of forcing students to understand the teacher's world. Teachers should create opportunities for students to explore their own world. This is in accordance with what was expressed by G1 in the interview with the researcher who emphasized the importance of understanding students' psychology and

creating comfort, both in terms of interest in teaching and in the subject matter. G2 added that this comfort can be achieved by getting close to students and creating an atmosphere that makes them feel comfortable, in a way that they like. Meanwhile, G3 explained that positive relationships can be built by approaching students in a way that suits their learning style, and trying to familiarize themselves with them through their preferred interaction patterns. This helps to create a relaxed yet productive learning atmosphere which in turn makes students easier to direct and feel comfortable to participate.

Harmonizing to the above opinion Wang (2024) provides his view that how to build positive relationships teachers should actively interact with students, recognize their needs personally, provide various options, provide consistent encouragement and encourage open communication. These steps will facilitate collaboration, improve the quality of learning and create a supportive and interactive classroom atmosphere.

- **Evaluation**

Evaluation is an assessment process carried out to determine the level of achievement of student learning objectives. In the assessment and evaluation of students, G3 emphasizes the importance of paying attention to various aspects other than tests and exams. In addition, students' participation in class discussions, their ability to answer questions, and skills in completing daily assignments are also the main focus. To deepen their understanding, G3 often provides simpler exercises with the aim of solidifying the concepts taught. With this approach, G3 can observe students' gradual progress and identify the difficulties they face, so that the teacher can adjust teaching methods to support their progress.

Simultaneously, G5 and G6 explained in interviews conducted with the researcher that formative and summative assessments are considered to be the most effective types of assessments as well as being an appropriate way to portray students' understanding more accurately. With formative assessments such as short quizzes, group exercises and interactive discussions, teachers can get an immediate picture of the extent of students' understanding without giving them the pressure of a big test. This approach is complemented by project-based assessments or practicum assignments. Meanwhile, summative assessments are assessments conducted at the end of learning such as midterm and final exams. This further strengthens teachers' efforts to help students connect theory with real practice, while increasing their interest in learning Arabic in more depth.

In addition, formative assessment that utilizes technology can improve the learning process. By providing continuous feedback and opportunities for students to make improvements. It encourages active student engagement and promotes deeper understanding. It also supports more efficient assessment in an environment that prioritizes trust between students and teachers (Onasanya & Ajamu, 2024).

Teachers expect that education, especially in Arabic language learning, can continue to develop by utilizing technology and innovation in teaching methods.

They hope for improved facilities in schools, such as audiovisual aids that can make language learning more interactive and interesting for students. In addition, teachers also want a curriculum that is increasingly relevant and able to accommodate the development of active communication skills in Arabic, so that students not only understand the theory, but can also use it in everyday life. For new teachers who want to start a career in this field, it is recommended to keep learning and be open to different methods and approaches.

Teaching is an ever-changing process, with students having different characteristics and needs. Therefore, patience in dealing with challenges in the classroom is essential, as well as not hesitating to try new approaches if the methods used previously are not effective. In addition, it is important to build close relationships with students and create a comfortable learning atmosphere so that students can more easily understand the material being taught. Teachers are also expected to continue developing themselves through training and seminars, as well as taking inspiration from other teachers, in order to be able to develop and adapt in their profession.

## 4. Conclusion

The present study focuses on the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of teaching Arabic in madrasah. The findings show that Arabic teachers apply varied and reflective approaches in responding to various learning challenges. In designing lessons, they not only rely on pedagogical theories but also actively participate in training, read references, and discuss with fellow educators to enrich teaching strategies. During the learning process, various methods are applied such as two-way interaction, audiolingual, qiroah and lectures, as well as the use of technology that is adapted to the diversity of students' backgrounds and abilities.

Teachers face a number of obstacles in terms of implementation, such as low basic Arabic reading skills (Iqra), limited supporting facilities, and lack of learning motivation from students. However, they respond adaptively through the application of differentiated learning, vocabulary grouping, and building emotional closeness with students to create a comfortable learning environment. In terms of evaluation, a combination of formative and summative assessment is applied to gain a full picture of student achievement, with technology as a tool in the assessment process.

The result shows that the teaching experience of Arabic language teachers is dynamic and continues to evolve along with the changing needs of education in the digital era. For further research, it is recommended to examine more specifically the impact of technology integration and differentiation approaches in improving student learning outcomes. Overall, this study confirms that success in teaching depends not only on academic knowledge, but also on teachers' commitment to continuous learning, innovation, and deep understanding of students.

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