Analysis of Arabic Language Learning Difficulties Among Students in the Qawaid Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah Materials

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Abstract

Mastery of qawaid al-lughah al-arabiyyah material is fundamental for students in the Arabic language education study program as it lays the groundwork for mastering the four essential language skills: istima’, kalam, qira’ah, and kitabah. Despite its significance, students encounter difficulties in comprehending this material. This qualitative descriptive study conducted at IAIN Bone involves eight students and two lecturers from the Arabic education study program, employing in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation for data collection. The thematic analysis reveals three main findings: 1) Learning difficulties are categorized into nahwu and sharaf, encompassing challenges in grasping new terms, creating examples, applying rules, analyzing sentence elements, and understanding wazan and shigat. 2) Factors contributing to these difficulties include inadequate face-to-face learning schedules, infrequent lesson repetition, limited self-practice, excessive reliance on online learning, a less supportive environment, and insufficient learning facilities. 3) To overcome these challenges, students take individual initiatives, including self-motivation, completing learning activities, forming communication and study groups, actively participating in the learning process, and enrolling in training/courses. Addressing these challenges can enhance Arabic language education, enabling students to achieve proficiency in qawaid al-lughah al-arabiyyah and the four language skills.

Keywords: Arabic learning, Learning difficulties, Nahwu, Sharaf, Qawaid al-lughah al-arabiyyah

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Arabic language is taught as a subject in the teaching and learning activities, starting from elementary school (SD/MI) to higher education level (Umroh, 2018). At the university level, the Arabic Language Education department focuses on preparing future educators or Arabic language teachers. As graduates, prospective teacher candidates are equipped with various pedagogical knowledge, which includes education and teaching principles. Students are educated to master various aspects required in teaching, such as teaching methods and techniques, curriculum design, student psychology, and various aspects related to the teaching process. Therefore, Arabic language learning provided is not only seen as a personal language skill that students must possess, but also as the main subject that will be taught by future Arabic language teachers. In other words, prospective Arabic language teachers should not only be proficient in Arabic, but also be able to effectively and systematically teach the Arabic language in the classroom (Setiyawan, 2018). Prospective Arabic language teachers are required to have pedagogical competence as well as mastery of Arabic language materials, including vocabulary and Arabic grammar (Maswani & Susiawati, 2017).

The aspect of Arabic language competence is oriented towards improving language skills, which is referred to as maharah al-lughah al-arabiyah (Hermawan & Alwasilah, 2011). qawaid al-lughah al-arabiyah, or the principles of the Arabic language, encompass various fields of knowledge that are studied to ensure correctness in pronunciation and writing. These fields include qawaid nahwu (grammar), rasm (orthography), ma’ani (semantic), bayan (rhetoric), badi (stylistics), arud (prosody), qawafi (lexicography), qaradal-shir (poetry analysis), insya (composition), kitabah (writing), tarikh al-adab (literary history), and matan al-lughah (language texts). They consist of 13 fields of knowledge, with sharaf (morphology) and nahwu (grammar) being the most important (Al-Ghulayaini, 1991). In mastering these skills, one cannot separate them from the rules of the Arabic language, so language skills and rules must be learned together. This means that the application of language skills must follow the rules contained in the field of qawaid (Jamil & Sardiyanah, 2020). Some courses that include language skills and Arabic language rules are nahwu (grammar), sharaf (morphology), and balaghah (rhetoric).

However, on the other hand, the ability of Arabic language teacher candidates in the field of qawaid is not yet satisfactory. Based on field observations at the Arabic Language Study Program of IAIN Bone, the learning outcomes of students in the subject of qawaid are still relatively low compared to other courses. Some students are still unable to demonstrate a deep understanding of Arabic grammar even after studying for a considerable amount of time. Similar issues have also been highlighted in previous studies, which show that a significant number of students still face difficulties in learning Arabic grammar (Ekawati, 2019; Rafsanjani et al., 2022; Suib, 2022; Yunisa, 2022).

The factors contributing to the difficulties of students in learning Arabic language, among others, are non-linguistic factors such as lack of motivation and environmental factors, family (Farid et al., 2022), and differences in students’ educational backgrounds (Nurhuda, 2022). According to Yunisa (2022) in their study, students who have limited prior experience with the Arabic language tend to face difficulties in learning qawaid. Other contributing factors include a lack of vocabulary mastery (Pamessangi, 2019; Suib, 2022), insufficient practice in speaking Arabic, and challenges in translation (Suib, 2022).

The causes of learning difficulties in students are strongly influenced by the students’ low intellectual capacity or intelligence during the learning process, lack of awareness, and
low attitude of students during the learning process, and impaired visual senses that cause learning difficulties (Fatah et al., 2021). Several ways can be implemented to overcome learning difficulties, starting with diagnosing the type of difficulty. Before determining alternative solutions to students’ learning difficulties, teachers are advised to first identify factors that indicate the possibility of learning difficulties experienced by the students. This effort is called diagnosis, which aims to determine the type of “ailment,” namely the type of learning difficulty the student is facing (Hallen, 2002).

Language errors and language teaching are two inseparable aspects, including in the learning of Arabic language. These errors can be minimized or even eliminated if the patterns of mistakes made by language learners are identified (Umroh, 2018). Therefore, it is important to conduct a study to identify and analyze the learning difficulties of students in learning Arabic language, especially in qawaid (Arabic grammar). Considering that these students are future teachers who will directly teach Arabic language to students in schools. Additionally, qawaid learning is one of the most essential parts of Arabic language teaching methodology (Setyawan, 2015) and plays a crucial role for every Arabic language learner (Nasiruddin, 2019).

Several previous studies have examined the learning difficulties of students in learning the Arabic language, including studies on the analysis of learning difficulties faced by students majoring in Arabic Language Education (Pamessangi, 2019; Rafsanjani et al., 2022; Sastrawan, 2019; Umroh, 2018). Besides students, some previous studies also analyzed the learning difficulties of school students in learning the Arabic language (Farid et al., 2022; Fuadi, 2019; Yunisa, 2022). All of these studies focused on the learning difficulties of students, both students and students majoring in Arabic, in learning the Arabic language in general. However, studies specifically focusing on the diagnostic of learning difficulties in Arabic language qawaid are still very limited.

To fill this gap, this research aims to provide an overview of the difficulties experienced by Arabic language education students in the subject of qawaid al-lughah al-arabiyyah. Besides identifying the difficulties faced by students in this subject, this research also aims to investigate the factors causing learning difficulties in qawaid Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah and the individual efforts made by students to overcome these learning difficulties.

**METHOD**

**Research Design**

This research is of the qualitative descriptive type, which aims to generate and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups (Sukmadinata, 2019). This qualitative research aims to provide a systematic, careful, and natural overview of the learning difficulties faced by Arabic language education students in the subject of Qawaid and their individual efforts to overcome these difficulties. The research was conducted at IAIN Bone from June to October 2022.

**Instrument and Data Collection Technique**

Data were collected using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The interview process was conducted face-to-face using semi-structured technique with the help of interview guidelines. Interviews were conducted with eight students from the Arabic Language Education (PBA) program at IAIN Bone, South Sulawesi, who were in the 6th and 8th semesters, as well as two lecturers who teach qawaid-based courses. Observations were carried out using observation guidelines, which involved observing the teaching process of
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have the competence to write sentences that exemplify the rules being studied. Additionally, students should be able to read sentences without diacritics that exemplify the theme being studied. If students do not possess sufficient vocabulary, it can certainly hinder their achievement in reading and writing competencies.

The interview results indicate that one of the difficulties faced by students in learning nahwu is the lack of Arabic vocabulary, which hinders their ability to produce examples in both written and diacritic forms. The researcher's observation during nahwu and sharaf classes revealed that students encountered challenges in creating examples of words and sentences based on the explained rules. Most of them were unable to provide examples due to insufficient vocabulary. This finding aligns with previous studies, which also highlighted the students' limited ability to generate diverse examples of words or sentences (Sulaikho et al., 2023).

**Incapability to apply the rules**

The researcher's observation shows that during the process of learning Nahwu, the class starts with an explanation of a specific theme using lecture methods. Afterward, students are given the opportunity to ask questions about any unclear points. Once the questions are adequately addressed, students are assigned tasks to create examples of words or sentences based on the material covered that day. The practice also includes identifying examples within sentences or texts. However, some students face difficulties in applying the rules correctly while performing these tasks.

From the observation results, it can be seen that some students are able to complete the given tasks, but the majority of them are still unable to do so effectively. Most of the students appear to have not yet mastered the application of nahwu rules based on what has been learned. One form of practice for applying nahwu rules is to provide diacritical marks (harakat) to the provided text. In this exercise, it is evident that some students are placing diacritical marks not based on the rules but rather on their intuition. The text used in the exercise is quoted from the book *Al-Kutub Al-Arabiyah Li Al-Nasyi'in* with the theme of Abu Bakar As-Shiddiq. An excerpt from the reading is as follows:

فلمّا علم أبو بكر اسرع إلى النبي فخلصه من أيديهم، فانهالت قريش على أبي بكر ضربا حتى قطعت صفيرة من شعره .

وكانت الصفات الفاضلة التي جمعت بينهما هي أن كلا منهما كان بعيدا عن اللهو واللعب، لا يخالط أهل المجنون والفسق ولم يشرب الخمر أبدا.

In giving harakat to the text, for example, on the word علم some give harakat as عِلْمَ based on the fi'il pattern, while others give harakat as عَلِمَ based on frequent exposure to the word being read that way.

**Unable to analyze sentence elements**

One of the methods used in learning Nahwu is the I'roby method, which involves analyzing the function of each word in a sentence, such as determining the subject and object in

لا يخالط أهل المجنون والفسق ولم يشرب الخمر أبدا.
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predicate in وکانت الصفات الفاضلة التي جمعت بينهما and so on. This is one of the difficulties encountered by students due to a lack of understanding about this matter.

**Unfamiliar with wazan**

Sharaf is a branch of knowledge that must be known first by religious students, especially those studying in madrasahs or Islamic boarding schools, because sharaf is the foundation of all knowledge. It is because sharaf gives birth to the form of every sentence, and sentences indicate various knowledge. By studying sharaf, the goal is to understand and examine the meanings of the Quran and Hadith.

The results of interviews with students indicate that one of the difficulties they face in learning sharaf is the ability to identify the patterns of words known as wazan which involves adapting the patterns of words encountered during the reading process. For example, students may not be able to independently translate a word following the pattern الفاضلة in a sentence that should be translated using the فعل.

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There is a tendency among students to search for exact translations that match the word forms in the reading and not translate following the rules of the pattern wazan. Similarly, when reading the word يُقُالِعُ, some students do not read it following the pattern wazan, which should be يُقَاعِعُ. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Imron (2021), which showed that one of the common morphological (sharaf) errors made by students is the incorrect selection of wazan.

**Inability to understanding the formation of “shigat” (vowel patterns)**

Vocabulary in Arabic is generally formed from other words, with some derived from the form of mashdar (gerund) and others from fi’il madhi (past verb). The formation of words follows specific patterns based on their shigat (vowel patterns).

The diversity of shigat (vowel patterns) and terminology within the scope of learning sharaf is considered a form of difficulty in mastering the subject for some students. However, the form of a word (shigat) can help the reader understand the meaning of the text, such as the word المظهر which is the mashdar form (shigat mashdar) of the word ظهر. If the reader understands that the word is a mashdar form and understands the meaning of that mashdar, then it will be easy to understand its translation.

Some difficulties in learning described above represent forms of under achiever (having above-average intellectual potential but achieving low academic performance) and slow learner (being slow in the learning process and requiring more time compared to others with similar intellectual potential). A person is suspected to experience learning
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difficulties if they show certain failures in achieving their learning goals. Learning failure refers to a condition where, within a specific time frame, the individual fails to reach the minimum level of success or mastery in a particular subject, as determined beforehand.

Factors Causing Learning Difficulties in Qawaid Al-Lugah Al-Arabiyah-based Courses

**Insufficient Study Time**

The subject of *Nahwu* is studied in the Arabic Language Education Program for 4 semesters, from *Nahwu* 1 to *Nahwu* 4, and *Sharaf* is studied for 3 semesters, from *Sharaf* 1 to *Sharaf* 3. Each subject is worth 2 credit hours per semester. Thus, both subjects are taught for approximately 14 to 16 sessions per semester. Each session is conducted for 1 hour, which is around 90 minutes. Within this 90-minute timeframe, three learning activities need to be accommodated, including the opening, core activities, and evaluation. Some students feel that this time is not sufficient to provide an adequate or in-depth understanding of the material being studied.

**Insufficient review and lack of self-practice**

In the overall summary, classroom learning only contributes to 40% of the knowledge that students need to acquire, while the rest relies on students' opportunities to develop themselves outside the classroom, such as through group work or self-directed learning. However, in reality, most students consider classroom learning as their sole source of education without engaging in further self-development outside the classroom.

The lack of willingness to review lessons and infrequent self-practice indicates a low interest among students in developing their knowledge. Interest in learning plays a significant role as a motivating force that drives students to study diligently. Students who have a genuine interest in a subject will feel compelled to continue learning with dedication, unlike those who merely accept the lessons passively. The latter group may be willing to learn but lacks the continuous drive since they lack the intrinsic motivation (Astuti, 2017). Therefore, to achieve good learning outcomes, individuals must have a genuine interest in the subject, as it will drive them to study consistently.

**Learning dominantly conducted online**

Circular letter from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture number 4 of 2020 regarding the implementation of Education in the Coronavirus Disease Emergency Period suggested the adoption of remote learning from home. As a result, learning was conducted online. This situation has been perceived by some students as one of the contributing factors to various difficulties encountered in learning Arabic grammar.

The shift from face-to-face to online learning has transformed the learning environment from physical interaction to non-face-to-face interactions. Some students feel a lack of emotional connection with their teachers during the learning process. Moreover, the change in format has automatically altered the teaching methods that were traditionally used. Based on the above interview results, it indicates an impact on the students' psychology during the learning process. Students participate in online learning with a different approach compared to being physically present in a classroom with their teachers. In the traditional classroom setting, students tend to be more attentive, receive immediate feedback on the material, and most importantly, receive comprehensive support for their questions and exercises.
The environment is not supportive

One of the contributing factors to the learning difficulties experienced by students is the environment, including the learning environment, the community environment, and the family environment. The family plays a crucial role in the academic achievement of students, especially in applied and continuous learning materials.

Lack of facilities and learning media

Learning media can be understood as anything that can convey information from the source to the recipient. This is the condition felt by students that causes learning difficulties due to the scarcity of available media. To study the rules of Arabic language, various learning media are needed to maximize the learning outcomes. Ahmadi & Supriyono (2008) stated that one of the causes of learning difficulties is the lack of learning tools. Incomplete learning tools lead to poor presentation of lessons, especially in practical subjects, where the lack of laboratory equipment can lead to many learning difficulties.

In general, the factors influencing learning and academic performance can be classified into two categories: internal and external factors. Similarly, the findings of this research indicate that the factors causing learning difficulties in Arabic Language among students in the subject of qawaid al-lugah al-arabiyah can be classified into internal and external factors. Internally, the learning difficulties of students in learning qawaid al-lugah al-arabiyah are caused by a lack of interest in learning, which implies a lack of desire to review the lessons and rarely engage in self-practice. On the other hand, the external factors in this research include an unsupportive environment, such as a lack of parental support, unsupportive online learning conditions, and inadequate facilities and learning media.

These findings are consistent with previous studies, which found that the main internal factors causing learning difficulties among students are a lack of interest and low motivation to learn (Mansyur, 2022; Sumiarni, 2016), while external factors can stem from a lack of supportive Arabic language environment, both from family and social environments, as well as from teachers/lecturers (Mansyur, 2022; Sabilah et al., 2023).

Individual Efforts to Overcome Learning Difficulties in the Subject of Qawaid Al-Lugah Al-Arabiyah

Motivating oneself

Overcoming learning difficulties can begin by motivating oneself to keep learning, exploring potential, and developing competencies. Similarly, this can be done in overcoming learning difficulties in subjects based on rules, such as nahwu and sharaf.

Completing learning facilities

The success of achieving academic achievements for students is influenced by factors that affect their learning achievements in the classroom. This means that in order to achieve academic success, both internal and external support is needed, including the availability of supportive learning facilities in the classroom. Intelligence and intellect must be supported by various other factors to achieve maximum results, and learning facilities should also be present in the learning process. This is one of the efforts made by students of the Arabic Language Education program to overcome their learning difficulties.
Building communication and creating study groups

The inability of an individual to understand the material being studied or that has been studied independently sometimes requires different learning methods, such as studying in groups. Through two-way communication among all group members, they can help each other to better understand the subject matter.

Attending training/courses

The interview results show that some students who have difficulties in the *Qawaid* -based subject have taken steps to overcome them by attending Arabic language courses focusing on grammar aspects. Moreover, looking at the documents of the PBA Program at IAIN Bone, there have been activities aimed at improving student competence, such as the Intensive Arabic Language Guidance for PBA Students held in 2021. Additionally, the PBA Student Association at IAIN Bone has been actively organizing similar activities, such as Arabic language camps conducted annually.

Consistency in reviewing the learned material

Some characteristics of learning difficulties found in students tend to be attributed to internal factors. The causes of these difficulties predominantly come from within themselves. Some students believe that other external factors may have contributed positively and provided significant support. One of the contributing factors is the lack of study time, particularly the lack of awareness to review the material learned outside the classroom. As a result, study time is often limited to the time spent in class. Consequently, the potential that students possess may not be fully tapped, resulting in lower learning outcomes compared to their actual abilities.

Therefore, the primary strategy that students can employ to overcome learning difficulties in *qawaid*-based subjects is to enhance their self-directed learning skills. Consistency in reviewing the learned material, forming study groups, or taking the initiative to attend courses independently are some of the efforts that can be made. These efforts align with the findings of previous studies (Yunisa, 2022), which suggest that minimizing learning difficulties in *nahwu* and *sharaf* involves practicing independently to memorize Arabic vocabulary and apply it, as well as joining study groups.

Promoting self-directed learning is also supported by previous research indicating that it has the potential to overcome learning problems in Arabic language education in madrasahs, stimulate students’ learning motivation in Arabic language, and foster their creativity (Kafi & Husna, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Some difficulties encountered by students of the Arabic education study program in learning *qawaid al-lugah al-arabiyah*, specifically in the subjects of *nahwu*, are as follows: difficulty in understanding new terms, inability to create example words or sentences, inability to apply the rules, difficulty in distinguishing similar terms, inability to analyze sentence elements, and inability to write in Arabic. On the other hand, in the subject of *sharaf*, the difficulties include not being familiar with *wazan* (patterns) and not understanding the formation of *shigat* (types).

The factors causing learning difficulties for students in *qawaid*-based subjects can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include a lack of interest in learning, resulting in a reduced desire to review lessons and less frequent independent
practice. On the other hand, external factors encompass unsupportive environments, such as a lack of parental support, challenges in online learning conditions, and inadequate facilities and learning media.

Some individual efforts that students can make to overcome learning difficulties in qawaid al-lugah al-arabiyah include self-motivation, equipping themselves with learning resources, building communication and study groups, maintaining focus during learning, being active in the learning process, participating in training or courses, and consistently reviewing the learned material. It is worth noting that this research does not explore the effectiveness of these individual strategies in minimizing learning difficulties in qawaid-based subjects. Therefore, further studies can delve into these strategies and their effectiveness in addressing the challenges to learn qawaid al-lugah al-arabiyah.

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