Unlocking The Secret to Arabic Fluency: Exploring The Critical Role of Language Environment in Maximizing Arabic-Speaking Outcomes

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Abstract
Maximizing Arabic-speaking learning outcomes for MAN 1 Sungai Penuh students has been a significant goal. However, many students struggle to become proficient in the language despite this. This study aims to understand the underlying issues better. The research utilized a case study approach, incorporating interviews, observations, and documentation as data collection methods. Data reduction, display, and conclusion were employed as data analysis techniques. The results of this study indicate that the lack of a language-rich environment has hindered students' ability to develop Arabic speaking skills. The findings highlight the critical role of an immersive language environment in facilitating Arabic language learning. In conclusion, this research underscores the need for a language-rich environment for effective Arabic language learning. By providing an environment that encourages and supports Arabic language use, students at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh may be better equipped to acquire the language skills they need to succeed.

Keywords: Arabic language learning, Language environment, Student outcomes

Abstrak
Maksimalisasi hasil pembelajaran berbahasa Arab untuk siswa di MAN 1 Sungai Penuh merupakan tujuan penting. Namun, meskipun demikian, banyak siswa yang kesulitan menjadi mahir dalam bahasa tersebut. Studi ini bertujuan untuk lebih memahami masalah yang mendasarinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus, yang mencakup wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi sebagai metode pengumpulan data. Reduksi, menampilkan, dan menyimpulkan data digunakan sebagai teknik analisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurangnya lingkungan yang kaya bahasa telah menghambat kemampuan siswa untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Arab. Temuan menyoroti peran penting lingkungan bahasa yang menyehat dan memfasilitasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Sebagai kesimpulan, penelitian ini menekankan perlunya lingkungan yang kaya bahasa untuk pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang efektif. Dengan menyediakan lingkungan yang mendorong dan mendukung penggunaan bahasa Arab, siswa di MAN 1 Sungai Penuh dapat lebih siap untuk memperoleh keterampilan bahasa yang mereka butuhkan untuk keberhasilan pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran bahasa Arab, Lingkungan bahasa, Hasil belajar siswa
Introduction

Presenting the history of the emergence of language environments to understand its urgency as the best method for teaching foreign languages is an outdated effort that does not need to be raised again. Furthermore, in terms of application, a language environment is not just about history and a pile of theories but must be truly implemented in foreign language learning at school. Kozlova (2021) calls it 'the magic method'. She then mentions that this method is easy to say but difficult to implement:

‘If you want to learn a language, you have to surround yourself with it and use it,’ I’d often say. ‘Speak, listen, respond – communicate!’

Long before, in the 19th century, many scientists interpreted Dewey's (1938) ideas about 'experience and education', and according to Ord (2012), it was necessary. This includes some linguists who say that the best place to learn a foreign language is where the foreign language originates (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005); and the next level above language environment is immersion (Stein-Smith 2016). However, Kozlova (2021) offers a similar method without going to the country where the language being studied originates. She suggests several strategies in her magic method, such as: 1) watching films and videos, 2) listening to songs, 3) commenting on online videos, 4) engaging in online discussions, 5) attending webinars and online courses in English, and 6) playing video games.

Thus, it is a great shame if certain foreign language learning, such as Arabic language in schools, does not implement 'the magic method' (Language Environment).

During the researcher's initial observations, it became apparent that X-D class students could not communicate simple Arabic, indicating a failure in their three years of learning at MTs schools. However, upon further examination of test score documents, the researcher discovered that the students had passed their exams (Document of Arabic Language Teacher at MAN 1, 2023b).

Initially, the researcher focused on the teacher's efforts to boost student scores and ensure all students passed. However, further preliminary research in the form of interviews with the teacher revealed that the student scores were consistent with the competency achievements outlined in the teaching materials (Own Document, 2023).

The researchers focus on why students cannot speak basic Arabic despite performing well in their exams. Despite showing high motivation to learn and being taught using effective teaching methods and quality materials, the students are still struggling to communicate in Arabic. Furthermore, the evaluation process appears to have been appropriately implemented.

And based on the preliminary study conducted by the researcher regarding the failure of the students, the researcher did not find any specific cause except for a brief mention of the absence of an Arabic language environment.

Several studies have identified the causes of failure in learning foreign language, including: 1) Lack of familiarity with Arabic speaking, 2) Inadequate teaching methods, 3) Inadequate school support (Nurlaila, 2020), 4) Limited learning resources (Sya’diah and Hamidah, 2021), 5) Low motivation, and 6) Insufficient language environment (Nurlaela 2020).

This study is urgent because the absence of a language environment as a cause of Arabic language learning failure in Indonesia has reappeared at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh. This means that the problems in Arabic language learning, caused by the same factors as before, have not been resolved until now.

Whether learned or not, a language will fortify its existence in any country where it originates if it is continuously used. Take the United States for example; it is a country of immigrants, but relatively few Americans speak a foreign language. Only 25% of Americans feel confident conversing in another language, but this number drops to around 10% without recent immigrants and their children. The paradox of this language issue can be partly explained by the melting pot metaphor used to describe American society during most of the 19th and 20th centuries, in which assimilation and integration into the dominant English-speaking culture occurred simultaneously,
as new immigrant children attended public schools in the US (Stein-Smith, 2016). This indicates that language resilience or acquisition can occur when the language is continuously used in daily life.

To bring the focus closer to the research locus in Indonesia, successful schools have produced alumni who can actively use the Arabic language, such as Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Gontor. According to Zarkasyi et al. (2022), an active language environment is crucial to this success. Similarly, Pondok Pesantren Darul Lughah Wadda’wah Bangil, which carries an Arabic language environment scheme called Halaqoh, has had a positive impact and response from the academic community there (Farah and Mufida, 2022).

On the contrary, the failure of Arabic language learning due to the lack of control over its use in daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rahmawati and Febriani, 2021) highlights the importance of a language environment in foreign language learning. The absence of a language environment in Arabic language learning at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh leaves many questions unanswered.

Generally, this research aims to identify the factors causing the failure of Arabic language learning, particularly in speaking skills. Specifically, this research attempts to uncover the factors causing the absence of a language environment in MAN 1 Sungai Penuh. Before discovering the cause of this phenomenon, which is the absence of a language environment, the researcher also explored other reasons for the failure, such as low motivation, inappropriate methods, and inadequate teaching materials. Therefore, this study will also present the data already collected as additional data. However, in-depth research has been conducted to gather data on the absence of a language environment, including the causes and impacts of its absence.

**Method**

This study employs a qualitative method of case study type. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena and is interpretive in nature, seeking to uncover the reality behind what appears (phenomena) and enter the realm of the interpretive paradigm (Rahardjo, 2010b).

A case study is an in-depth examination of an individual, group, organization, or activity program at a specific time. The goal is to obtain a comprehensive and detailed description of the entity in question. Case studies generate data that can be analyzed to develop theories. Similar to the process of gathering qualitative research data, case study data is obtained through interviews, observations, and archives. Case studies effectively explore inner-city schools where students achieve exceptional academic results (Rahardjo 2010a).

This study aims to uncover the reasons behind the failure of X-D MAN 1 Sungai Penuh students to master the skill of Arabic speaking. The focus is on interpreting the underlying factors contributing to the difficulty in learning this skill. The research involved eight visits to Sungai Penuh MAN 1, spanning a period of two months, from October 24 to December 24.

The methods used by researchers to collect data for this study are as follows: Firstly, interviews. An interview is a communication or interaction process where researchers ask questions to collect information from research subjects or informants (Rahardjo, 2011). The sources interviewed in this study include: 1) AS (Principal of MAN 1 Sungai Penuh school), 2) J (Deputy Head of the Curriculum section for MAN 1 Sungai Penuh), 3) UR (Arabic subject teacher), 4) FN (Class X-D student with the highest score in the class), and 5) RAS (Class X-D student who sits next to FN).

Secondly, observation. Observation is an activity that uses the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste) to collect information needed to answer a research problem. The results of observations include active events, objects, conditions, atmospheres, and emotional feelings (Rahardjo, 2011). In this study, the researchers observed the skills-learning activities that took place in eight face-to-face meetings. Additionally, they observed how Arabic was spoken inside and outside the classroom.
Thirdly, documentation. Apart from interviews and observations, information can also be obtained from stored facts in letters, diaries, photo archives, meeting results, souvenirs, and activity journals. Data in documents like these can be used to obtain information about past events (Rahardjo, 2011). The documents that the researchers used for this study include the profile of MAN 1 Sungai Penuh, a list of grades for Class X-D students, the lesson plan (RPP) for tutors, and student attendance records.

The techniques used to analyze the data are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). Data reduction is an analysis method that involves sharpening, classifying, directing, discarding unnecessary data, and organizing data to conclude. Data presentation is the activity of compiling a set of information to draw conclusions and take action. Furthermore, researchers continuously attempt to conclude while in the field. From the beginning of data collection, the researcher begins to make sense of things, noting regular patterns (in theory notes), explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions (August, 2003).

Result and Discussion

Briefly About Student Motivation of MAN 1 Sungai Penuh in Learning Arabic-speaking Skills

The observations conducted by the researchers indicate that the students are highly motivated to participate in learning Arabic-speaking skills. The students eagerly follow along with a loud voice when the teacher recites sentences. The researchers noticed that the teacher corrected the students' incorrect pronunciation several times and provided encouragement, which helped the students feel comfortable correcting their mistakes. Moreover, the teacher asked the students to converse in pairs in front of the class, which the students enthusiastically performed (Own Document, 2023).

In addition to observing the learning activities in the classroom, the researchers also examined student motivation through their attendance records. The attendance of students taking Arabic lessons was found to be high, with an average attendance percentage of 98%. The absence of some students was due to factors beyond their control, such as illness, and not because of laziness or reluctance to attend an Arabic class taught by UR (Document of Arabic Language Teacher at MAN 1, 2023a).

Figure 1. Attendance of class X-D students

[Pie chart showing attendance distribution]
Furthermore, in the joint interviews with UR, it was revealed that UR rewards students who achieve the best results to maintain their enthusiasm and motivation in learning Arabic. Rewards have been shown to increase human motivation when learning a new language (Ripollés et al., 2014) and can also help overcome obstacles to change (Tohidi and Jabbari 2012).

Based on the data presented, it can be inferred that the students in the Arabic-speaking class have a strong inclination towards learning, and the teacher plays a crucial role in providing stimulus or motivation to the students. This approach of providing stimulus and eliciting a response from students, known as the stimulus-response method, has been observed repeatedly in this research.

The research conducted by M. Khakim Maulana (2019) aimed to explore the utilization of the suggestology method as a way to revitalize students' enthusiasm for learning Arabic in the millennial era. The study used a descriptive qualitative research method and focused on students of MTs YMI Wonopringgo in Pekalongan Regency. The research findings suggest that one way teachers can revive students' motivation to learn Arabic is by utilizing the suggestology method. Based on the stimulus-response theory in psychology, this approach centers on influencing students through stimuli provided in response to their actions.

In their research on "Efforts to Increase Student Motivation to Improve Arabic-speaking," Mabruroh & Alam (2019) found that using Arabic speaking learning methods can improve student motivation.

Based on the data and discussion presented, it can be inferred that motivation is not why students at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh cannot fulfill their Arabic speaking learning.

**Briefly About Learning Methods of Arabic-speaking Skills at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh**

According to the joint interview (UR), the conversation method (al-hiwar) is the primary method used to teach students to speak Arabic. The process of teaching and learning speaking skills includes several activities. Firstly, the teacher asks the students to listen carefully to the conversation in the textbook read by the teacher to familiarize themselves with the pronunciation of dialogues listed in the textbooks. Secondly, the teacher asks students to imitate the dialogue they have read to familiarize them with textbook conversation patterns. Thirdly, the teacher interprets the conversation in the textbook, starting with interpreting word for word, then interpreting sentence for sentence. Fourthly, the teacher asks students to practice the conversation with their friends in pairs on their respective benches to help them remember the conversation patterns and understand their meaning. Fifthly, the teacher asks students to memorize the conversations so they can develop conversations with different themes but use the same pattern as the conversations in textbooks. Finally, the teacher asks students to practice the conversations they have memorized in front of the class in pairs without bringing textbooks, which is intended to evaluate their achievement in understanding the conversations that have been studied (Own Document, 2023).

The data presented above indicates that the teaching technique used by the teacher for word skills is effective. The conversation technique (al-hiwar) has been observed in several studies as an appropriate method for teaching Arabic-speaking skills. This technique involves a series of activities such as having students listen to dialogues in the textbook, imitating the dialogue, interpreting it word for word and sentence by sentence, practicing with a friend, memorizing the conversations, and practicing in pairs without textbooks. The teacher uses these steps to help students become familiar with conversation patterns, understand their meaning, and develop their own conversations using the same pattern.

The research conducted by Syamaun (2015) was titled "Arabic-speaking Learning to Improve the Speaking Skills of Students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training." The study employed a descriptive qualitative method, with the research object being the students of the PBA Department of the Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.
According to the results of the research conducted by Syamaun (2015), students in the Arabic Language Education program at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh were provided with the necessary basic speaking skills for improving their proficiency in speech. The research identified several techniques that could be employed in this exercise, such as conversation (al-hiwar), pattern practice (tathbiq al-namudzaj), and oral composition (al-tarkib al-siyafawi). These techniques were used to help students practice applying dialogue patterns, using appropriate vocabulary, adhering to rules of speech, and displaying appropriate facial expressions.

Furthermore, Fitriyah (2017) revealed in their research titled 'Effectiveness of the Hiwar Method in Learning Speaking Skills in Arabic Language Subjects at Sultan Agung 1 Islamic High School Semarang' that students' mastery of learning Arabic-speaking skills improves when teachers apply the hiwar method in teaching.

Based on the data and discussion presented, it can be inferred that the teaching method used by the teacher is not the cause of the students' inability to apply and improve their Arabic-speaking skills. The data suggests that the teacher has made significant efforts to help students overcome their language difficulties. Therefore, it can be concluded that other factors may contribute to the students' inability to master Arabic-speaking skills, such as lack of motivation or inadequate language exposure outside the classroom. Further research may be necessary to identify and address these factors.

**Briefly About Teaching Materials for Arabic-speaking Skills at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh**

Based on the researcher's observations and documentation, it can be seen that MAN 1 Sungai Penuh utilizes Arabic books for MA and their equivalent, which are provided by the Ministry of Religion, as teaching materials for Arabic-speaking. These books consist of three chapters, each containing a section dedicated to conversation/hiwār, which is used as a resource for learning Arabic-speaking. Additionally, the books are accompanied by a CD as supplementary material for the teacher's Arabic-speaking lessons. The CD allows students to listen to the correct pronunciation and intonation of the hiwar directly.

Based on the interview with UR, it was revealed that the students of MAN 1 Sungai Penuh have participated in online learning using the Alef platform. This platform is designed to enhance the students' Arabic-speaking (communicative) skills. The Alef application offers various hiwār exercises that are practiced by native speakers from Abu Dhabi, UAE, making it a valuable resource for learning Arabic speaking for the students of MAN 1 Sungai Penuh (Own Document, 2023).

Based on the information presented, it can be concluded that the teaching materials utilized by MAN 1 are suitable as they include hiwār sections as a learning resource for improving Arabic speaking skills.

Researcher Maria (2017) conducted a study titled "Tathwiru Maaddati Ta'limi Maharati Al-Kalami 'Ala Asasi Al-Zuka-at Al-Muta'addidati 'ala dlai Gardner Bisyu'batis Al-Lughah Almukatsafati Ma'had Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo" using research and development methods with students in the Language Intensive Programs of SMPNJ (LIPS) Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo as the research object. The study developed Arabic-speaking teaching materials based on the Borg and Gall model, consisting of 10 stages. The researcher tested the product on two experts who scored 92.9% and 92.04%, respectively, indicating that the teaching materials were of high quality. The study also included pre-test and post-test analysis using the T-sig trial, which revealed a significant improvement in the experimental and control classes. The results indicate that the research hypothesis was adequately supported.

Wachdah (2020) conducted a study titled 'Evaluation of Class X-D Arabic Textbook in Madrasah Aliyah: Scientific Approach to the 2013 Curriculum.' The study evaluated the teaching material, and the results indicated that the presentation of the material was systematic, coherent, consistent, and balanced between chapters.
The above research aligns with the researchers' understanding of the MAN 1 Sungai Penuh textbooks. The book taught by the teacher to teach Arabic-speaking meets the requirements of good textbook standards.

**A Deeping: Language Environment at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh**

**The Fact that Language Environment is Important at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh**

The research conducted by Aflisla & Harahap (2019) titled "Existence of Bi'ah Lughawiyah as Arabic Language Media in Improving the Muhadatsah Ability of IAIN Arabic Language Education Study Program Students Curup" aligns with the importance of creating an Arabic-speaking environment for students to improve their Arabic-speaking skills. The study found that the majority of PBA students perceive the Bi'ah Lughawiyah as an important medium to enhance their ability to communicate in Arabic. This highlights the significance of providing an environment that encourages the use of Arabic language in daily communication, particularly within the context of learning.

Arabic language in Indonesia has faced a significant crisis long before it received much attention recently. This gap was found despite Arabic being the closest language to the people, as analyzed through the connection of Arabic variables with Indonesia's majority religion (Islam) (Sauri 2020). However, in reality, Fogg (2015) revealed that Indonesia was more inclined to push the language toward European normativity, significantly reducing the influence of Arabic. For example, the use of the Roman alphabet made people illiterate in Arabic for decades from 1940-1950. It can be ascertained that the decline of Arabic in developing language in Indonesia will burden language practitioners in developing the environment.

**Why is language environment absent in MAN 1 Sungai Penuh?**

It appears that the observations made by the researchers at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh, Jambi indicate that there is a lack of an Arabic language environment. Furthermore, the motivation of both teachers and students seems to be more inclined towards English rather than Arabic as a foreign language within their environment.

Furthermore, the results of joint interviews (FN) revealed that when asked to speak in simple Arabic such as 'كيف حالك؟', his friend (RAS) would still answer in Bahasa Indonesia, even though he knew the meaning of the question and how to answer it correctly.

This suggests that there is a lack of Arabic-speaking practice and exposure among students at MAN 1 Sungai Penuh, which may hinder their ability to communicate effectively in Arabic. It also highlights the need for creating a more conducive Arabic language learning environment and promoting the use of Arabic to communicate among students and teachers.

Furthermore, the results of the interviews with RAS revealed that he feels embarrassed to use communicative Arabic in the school environment. In addition, UR stated that other students sometimes engage in "oral bullying" against students who attempt to use Arabic to build a language environment. They would say, "Look, they're trying to be like Arabs." UR interprets this statement as having a negative connotation, suggesting that some students do not consider the habituation of building an Arabic language environment inappropriate.

The environment in language learning is crucial for some experts, such as Bandura. He revealed that learning is not motivated by desire but arises in an environment that influences student behavior (Bandura, 1971). Furthermore, the language environment is also the most significant factor in inputting language learning in children (Frye, 2022). It is absolute for educators to build a language environment in schools. The importance of language environment in learning a second language is so critical that it requires the involvement of parents in creating this environment at home (Li, 2007). Furthermore, it would be impossible if at-home parents had to create a second language environment for their children to learn while not at school, hoping that learning would be successful.
Speaking is a spontaneous free conversation between certain parties regarding specific topics (Supriyanto, 2020), meaning it takes practice and a language environment.

The first language skill is speaking, not writing. When learning a foreign language, it is essential to prioritize listening and speaking skills before focusing on reading and writing. To avoid the influence of the mother tongue, it is crucial to familiarize oneself with the correct pronunciation of hijāyāh letters.

Language is a system of habits, and foreign language learning focuses on developing motor and reflex habits, rather than on constructing sentences. This is achieved through imitation and memorization. Learning to use a language involves using it in context, and providing vocabulary (mufāradāt) is essential. The focus is on learning to speak actively, not on learning all the differences in accent (lahjah) between different Arabic regions in detail. As the structure and semantics of the mother tongue are different from those of a foreign language, learning a foreign language requires tardīd, or letter-by-letter repetition of utterances, to avoid being influenced by the mother tongue and to speak automatically and reflexively, as if it were their native language. The success of learning Arabic speaking should not be judged solely by students' grades, but rather by their ability to use the language reflexively and habitually.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study challenges traditional assumptions about the purpose of learning Arabic speaking for non-Arabic speakers. While Thuaimah (1998) posits that the goal is to convey thoughts and emotions effectively in Arabic, our findings suggest that the primary objective is to habituate non-native Arabic learners to use the language in their daily lives. This perspective highlights the importance of familiarizing oneself with Arabic before conveying thoughts and emotions. Moreover, our study emphasizes the crucial role of a language environment in learning a second language. A good curriculum is essential but not enough if not supported by a language-rich environment. Therefore, educators should focus on the curriculum and creating an immersive language environment for learners. Ultimately, the success of Arabic-speaking learning should be measured by grades and learners' ability to communicate effectively in the language and feel comfortable using it in various settings. This novel perspective on the purpose of learning Arabic speaking has significant implications for Arabic language education and provides new directions for future research.[]

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