

## Arabic Language Teaching Strategies to Strengthen Islamic Literacy In Islamic Boarding Schools

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze Arabic teaching strategies in strengthening Islamic literacy at Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School. As the main language in Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical books, mastery of Arabic is the key for students to understand Islamic teachings in depth. Therefore, effective teaching methods are needed so that Islamic literacy can develop optimally. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study show that the Arabic teaching strategy at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School includes the qawā'id wa tarjamah (rule-based translation) method, muhādatsah (active conversation), tahfiz mufradat (vocabulary strengthening), and dirāsah al-kutub (study of classical books). In addition, technology-based approaches are beginning to be applied through the use of digital media in learning. The results of this study show that the strategy applied is able to improve the ability of students to understand Islamic texts in Arabic. However, there are still challenges in terms of variety of methods and more optimal use of technology.

**Keywords:** Teaching Strategy, Arabic, Islamic Literacy, Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indonesian education world is trying to improve the quality of graduates by placing literacy as the main foundation. Literacy, which is closely intertwined with education, is a process of developing knowledge and understanding through the enrichment of experiences and culture. The condition of literacy in Indonesia shows an alarming trend. The massive use of gadgets among the younger generation has contributed to a significant decrease in reading interest. The findings of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Language Development and Development Agency in 2021 indicate that Indonesia is facing a literacy emergency. Good literacy is a pillar of state progress, on the contrary, low literacy hinders the development of civilization.

Responding to this condition, literacy program innovation is needed to improve the literacy skills of the younger generation, as a foundation for a quality country. The Government of Indonesia has initiated the National Literacy Movement (GLN) since 2015. The government, through collaboration with schools, implements the School Literacy Movement (GLS) to improve literacy culture among students. Permendikbud Number 23 of 2015 stipulates GLS supporting activities, including the allocation of 15 minutes to read non-academic books before the start of the learning process. This movement is also adopted in the context of pesantren as the Islamic Boarding School Literacy Movement (GLP), which has a significant role in fostering students' interest in reading and writing skills.

Islamic boarding schools are Islamic educational institutions that have a long history in Indonesia, integrating dormitory facilities with the teaching of religious sciences. The etymology of the term "pondok" refers to the Arabic word "funduq", which means simple lodging, while "pesantren"

comes from the word "santri". The word "santri" has two interpretations, namely "satri" (literacy) from Sanskrit and "cantrik" (loyal follower of teachers) from Javanese (Maskur & Anto, 2018). Islamic boarding schools have had a crucial role in the conservation of Islamic scientific traditions since their inception.

Arabic has strategic significance in the context of Muslim life. Despite its status as a foreign language in the Indonesian context, this language is a crucial instrument to understand religious doctrine and the heritage of Islamic civilization that once reached the peak of global glory (Rozak, 2018). Therefore, learning Arabic in Islamic boarding schools does not only focus on developing linguistic skills, but also on opening students' horizons to a wide spectrum of Islamic sciences. The success of this learning process is greatly influenced by the application of methods and strategies that are in accordance with the unique characteristics of the pesantren environment.

Arabic has an essential role in Islamic scientific literacy, as it is the main language in the Qur'an, Hadith, and various classical Islamic literature. Good command of Arabic is the key for students in Islamic boarding schools to understand and internalize Islamic teachings in depth. Therefore, an effective Arabic teaching strategy is needed to strengthen Islamic literacy in the pesantren environment (M. Qumaruzzaman, 2023). Arabic is one of the Semitic languages that has a long history and continues to exist today. The main factor that maintains the existence of Arabic is its position as the language of revelation of the Qur'an (Asni Furoidah, 2020: 44). This argument is supported by the view that the preservation of Arabic for thousands of years is due to its function as the unparalleled language of the word of Allah SWT. In addition, Arabic has unique linguistic characteristics,

which include aspects of vocabulary, structure, and semantics. According to Uril Bahrudin (2016), the current age of standard Arabic (fusha) is estimated to reach 1700 years. These facts underscore the urgency for Muslims to learn Arabic properly and correctly.

Arabic not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a container of Islamic scientific heritage. The academic works of classical Muslim scholars in various disciplines, such as tafsir, hadith, jurisprudence, and Sufism, were written and disseminated in Arabic. Thus, mastery of Arabic is the key to understanding Islamic knowledge literature. Arabic teaching focuses on four language skills: listening (al-Istima'), speaking (al-kalam), reading (al-qira'ah), and writing (al-kitabah). The approaches, methods, and techniques of teaching Arabic are based on the assumption of language learning, as put forward by Edward M. Anthony. These four skills, according to Lady Farah Aziza and Ariadi Muliansyah (2020: 59), are the foundation for various methods and models of Arabic language teaching. Mastering these four skills will deepen the literacy of Islamic knowledge, both in oral and written production, and provide wide benefits to the Muslim community.

Islamic boarding schools play an important role in shaping the character of students through the cultivation of attitudes, behaviors, and noble morals. In addition, Islamic boarding schools are also recognized as very effective institutions in developing foreign language skills, especially Arabic and English. Islamic boarding schools have unique characteristics in their education system, namely students live with ustadz, which creates a distinctive identity of the Islamic boarding school. The integration of general science and religion provides the potential for excellence for pesantren education. An intensive 24-hour surveillance system is effective in

minimizing negative influences from the outside environment. In the pesantren environment, students receive education about a communal lifestyle, independence, discipline, simplicity, and most importantly, the development of noble morals (Hafiz Azhari, 2021)

Islamic boarding schools have a distinctive approach to teaching Arabic, different from formal educational institutions. In developing the competence of students, pesantren combines traditional (salafiyah) and modern (khalafiyah) methods. Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools, as stated by Huda (2023), is focused on understanding the yellow book, which requires a strong foundation in Arabic grammar (nahwu and sharaf) to interpret Islamic texts. Some Islamic boarding schools adopt the methods of qawā'id wa tarjamah (grammar and translation), muhādatsah (oral communication), and dirāsah al-kutub (study of classical books). Research by Rahman & Fadillah (2022) shows that a strong Arabic language environment (bi'ah lughawiyah) in pesantren is a major factor in the success of Arabic language learning.

Competent mastery of Arabic has positive implications for improving students' Islamic literacy, as they gain direct access to primary Islamic sources without reliance on translation. Based on the findings of Yusuf (2023), students who have good Arabic language skills tend to show higher analytical abilities in understanding Islamic texts, so that they are able to develop comprehensive Islamic thought. Furthermore, research conducted by Hasanah (2021) indicates that learning that is oriented towards understanding textual meaning is more effective than the grammatical memorization approach in building strong Islamic literacy.

Efforts to optimize Arabic language teaching in Islamic boarding schools, various strategies have been developed. Research conducted by

Akbar (2023) suggests several approaches that have proven effective, including: the application of the Communicative Method (CLT) that encourages the active participation of students in Arabic conversations, a contextual-based approach that integrates relevant Islamic texts into the learning process, and the use of digital technology to enrich the learning experience through applications, interactive videos, and online platforms. Furthermore, research by Syaifuddin (2024) shows that the implementation of blended learning strategies (a combination of face-to-face and online learning) significantly improves students' Arabic language competence.

The Blended Learning strategy in learning Arabic in Islamic boarding schools provides many benefits in improving students' language skills, especially in text comprehension, conversation, and Islamic literacy. With a combination of traditional teaching and digital technology, students can learn more flexibly, independently, and effectively. However, its implementation needs to be supported by adequate infrastructure and training for teaching staff.

Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School as one of the Islamic educational institutions has a great responsibility in forming students who not only have Arabic language skills, but also have a strong understanding of Islamic values. To achieve this goal, Islamic boarding schools implement various Arabic learning strategies, such as *qawā'id wa tarjamah* (rule-based translation), *muhādatsah* (active conversation), *tahfiz mufradat* (vocabulary strengthening), and *dirāsah al-kutub* (study of classical books).

In addition, technological developments have also encouraged innovation in Arabic language teaching through the use of digital media and online learning platforms. However, in its implementation, there are

challenges that need to be overcome, such as the limitation of competent teaching staff, the lack of a variety of interesting learning methods, and the diverse motivation of students in learning Arabic. Therefore, this study aims to identify the Arabic teaching strategies applied at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School, analyze its effectiveness in improving Islamic literacy, and explore the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. With this research, it is hoped that a more optimal strategy can be found to improve the quality of Arabic language learning in the pesantren environment.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe and analyze Arabic language teaching strategies in strengthening Islamic literacy in Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomena that occur in the learning process, including the methods used, the challenges faced, and their impact on students' Islamic literacy (Moleong, L. J., 2017) This type of research is a case study, where the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School is used as the main location for the research. The case study allowed researchers to obtain more in-depth data on how Arabic teaching strategies are implemented and how these strategies affect students' language skills and their understanding of Islamic literacy.

This research was carried out at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School, a large Islamic boarding school in East Java that has a fairly developed Arabic language learning system. This pesantren was chosen because it has a variety of teaching methods, including the use of the yellow book, *bi'ah lughawiyah* (Arabic-speaking environment), and the use of

technology in learning. The research subjects consist of various parties involved in the Arabic language learning process, namely:

1. Arabic Teacher/Teacher: To understand the teaching methods and strategies used in improving students' Arabic language skills.
2. Students: To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies implemented in improving their Islamic literacy and Arabic language skills.
3. Islamic Boarding School Leaders: To obtain information about policies and curricula applied in Arabic language learning.

The data in this study was collected using the following techniques:

1. Observation

The researcher made direct observations on the Arabic learning process in the classroom, the interaction between teachers and students, and the use of the Arabic language environment in Islamic boarding schools (*bi'ah lughawiyah*). This observation was carried out to see how the teaching strategy was applied in real conditions and how the students responded to the methods used.

2. Interview

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to teachers, students, and *pesantren* leaders. This interview aims to get more in-depth information about their experiences, challenges, and expectations related to learning Arabic and its relationship to Islamic literacy.

3. Documentation

The researcher collected data from documents related to learning policies, curriculum, and teaching materials used in Islamic boarding schools. This documentation includes textbooks, learning notes, syllabus, and student learning guidelines.



#### 4. Literature Studies

In addition to primary data, this study also refers to various literature related to Arabic teaching strategies and Islamic literacy. The sources used include academic books, research journals, and relevant results of previous studies.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to analyze Arabic teaching strategies in strengthening Islamic literacy in Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School. Arabic has an important role in Islamic education because it is the main language in understanding the yellow book, the Qur'an, and other Islamic literature. Thus, the right teaching strategy can increase students' understanding of Islamic teachings and improve their ability to speak Arabic.

Based on observations and interviews with teachers and students at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School, it was found that there are several main strategies in teaching Arabic:

1. Bi'ah Lughawiyah Approach (Arabic-speaking environment) activities carried out by the pesantren in accustoming their students to using Arabic, namely Islamic boarding schools apply an Arabic-speaking environment in daily life. Students are required to use Arabic in communication in the classroom and in the dormitory. There are activities such as Arabic conversations, speeches in Arabic, and discussions of the yellow book in Arabic.
2. The Muhadatsah (Conversation) method is an approach to learning Arabic that is specifically designed to train and improve students' speaking skills through direct and interactive practice, where the teacher acts as a facilitator who provides relevant and interesting conversation

topics, then encourages students to engage in active dialogue using Arabic, so that this activity not only helps students in developing their speaking skills spontaneously and fluently, but also significantly broadening their vocabulary, improving their understanding of Arabic sentence structures, and building their confidence in communicating effectively in a variety of conversational situations.

3. The Qira'ah (Reading and Understanding Arabic Texts) method is an approach to learning Arabic designed to train students in reading deep and complex Islamic texts, such as the interpretation of the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and fiqh books, with the main aim of strengthening their understanding of authentic Islamic sources and improving their ability to read and interpret the yellow book. which is a heritage of classical Islamic literature written in Arabic, so that students are not only able to read the text fluently, but also understand the meaning contained in it, identify the historical and cultural context, and analyze the arguments and postulates presented, which will ultimately enrich their Islamic knowledge comprehensively.
4. The use of the Yellow Book as a learning resource is at the core of Arabic and Islamic language education in Islamic boarding schools, where classical books written in Arabic are the main materials studied in depth, helping students to understand Arabic in a rich and complex Islamic context, and allowing them to directly access authentic Islamic sources. In this learning process, teachers use the sorogan method, which is an individual learning method in which students read and understand the book in front of the teacher, and the bandongan method, which is a collective learning method in which the teacher reads and explains the book to a group of students, so that the students not only master Arabic

grammar, but also understand the meaning and context of the Islamic texts studied. and be able to apply this knowledge in daily life.

5. The use of technology in learning in pesantren is an innovative step that aims to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process, where pesantren begins to integrate various technological tools and applications, such as interactive Arabic learning applications, digital media containing relevant learning materials, and online platforms that provide access to interesting and informative learning videos. so that students not only have access to wider and more diverse learning resources, but can also learn in a more interactive and interesting way, which will ultimately increase their motivation in learning Arabic and Islamic sciences, as well as provide a variety of learning methods that are more in accordance with the needs and learning styles of each student.
6. The Tarjamah (Translation) method is an Arabic learning approach that aims to train students in translating Arabic texts into Indonesian, with the main focus on understanding the meaning contained in the text in depth and accurately. Through this method, students not only learn to identify vocabulary and sentence structure in Arabic, but also understand the cultural and historical context behind the text, so that they can produce translations that are not only linguistically correct, but also contextually relevant. This method has proven to be effective in improving students' understanding of the complex structure of the Arabic language, enriching their vocabulary, and deepening their understanding of the meaning of the Islamic texts they are learning.

The following are the main strategies in Arabic teaching applied at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School:

Table 1: The Main Strategies in Arabic Teaching

No.	Teaching Strategies			Description
1	Bi'ah	Lughawiyah	(Arabic-speaking environment)	Creating an environment that supports the use of Arabic in daily communication
2	Muhadatsah (talk)			Train students' speaking skills through dialogue and conversation in Arabic
3	Qira'ah	(Reading and Understanding Arabic Texts)	and	Train students to read and understand the yellow book and other Islamic literature.
4	The Use of the Yellow Book			Making the yellow book the main material in learning Arabic.
5	Technology Utilization			Using digital media and learning applications to support the learning process.
6	Translation			Train students in translating Arabic texts into Indonesian to understand their meaning.

The implementation of innovative and comprehensive Arabic learning strategies in Islamic boarding schools, such as the Muhadatsah (Conversation) method, Qira'ah (Reading and Understanding Arabic Texts), Tarjamah (Translation), the use of the Yellow Book as the main learning resource, and the use of digital technology, has had a significant positive impact on the development of students in various aspects. First, these strategies effectively improve students' understanding of the Yellow Book and other Islamic texts. With the Qira'ah and Tarjamah methods, students are not only able to read Arabic texts fluently, but also understand the meanings contained in them in depth, identify historical and cultural contexts, and analyze the arguments and postulates presented. This allows them to directly

access authentic Islamic sources without relying on translation, making their understanding of Islamic teachings more comprehensive and accurate.

Second, the application of the Muhadatsah method and the use of digital technology have significantly improved the Arabic language skills of students. Through the practice of direct and interactive conversations, students become more confident in speaking Arabic spontaneously and fluently. They also broaden their vocabulary, improve their understanding of Arabic sentence structure, and build their confidence in communicating effectively in a variety of conversational situations. In addition, the use of Arabic language learning applications, interactive videos, and online platforms has enriched the learning experience of students, making learning Arabic more interesting and interactive.

Third, with the improvement of students' Arabic language skills, their understanding of the Qur'an and hadith has become deeper. They are able to read and understand Arabic texts directly, so that they can interpret the teachings of Islam more accurately and comprehensively. This allows them to develop critical and analytical Islamic thought, as well as apply Islamic teachings in their daily lives better.

Fourth, the use of interactive methods and the use of digital technology has significantly increased students' interest in learning Arabic. Learning Arabic, which was previously considered difficult and boring, has now become more interesting and fun. Students become more motivated to learn Arabic because they can learn in a more interactive way and in accordance with their learning style. This has a positive impact on improving students' learning achievement and their participation in Arabic learning activities at Islamic boarding schools.

Overall, the implementation of innovative and comprehensive Arabic language learning strategies in Islamic boarding schools has had a significant positive impact on the development of students in various aspects. Students not only master Arabic well, but also understand Islamic teachings deeply and comprehensively. This equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to become a generation of young Muslims who are intelligent, virtuous, and contribute positively to society.

Based on the results of in-depth research, it was revealed that the implementation of innovative and targeted Arabic teaching strategies at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School, especially through the *bi'ah lughawiyah* method that creates a conducive Arabic language environment and the use of the Yellow Book as the main learning resource, has had a significant positive impact on improving the Arabic language skills and Islamic literacy of students. This is evident from the ability of students to understand complex Islamic texts and communicate in Arabic effectively.

However, to achieve more optimal learning effectiveness, several challenges need to be overcome through a series of planned recommendations. First, intensive training is needed for teacher to improve their competence in adopting Arabic teaching methods that are more innovative and relevant to the times, as well as utilizing technology as an interactive and interesting learning medium. Second, the motivation of students needs to be increased through giving awards to those who actively use Arabic in their daily lives and organizing challenging competitions, such as speeches, debates, and writing scientific papers in Arabic. Thus, it is hoped that students will not only master Arabic linguistically, but also have a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and be able to apply them in daily life.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research firmly shows that the Arabic teaching strategy applied at the Sunan Drajat Lamongan Islamic Boarding School has made a significant contribution in improving the Islamic literacy of students. The use of environment-based methods (bi'ah lughawiyah), conversation (muhadatsah), the use of the Yellow Book, and the integration of digital technology have been proven to be effective in supporting the Arabic language learning process. However, this study also identifies several obstacles that need to be overcome to optimize teaching effectiveness. The limitation of competent teaching staff, the low interest of students in using Arabic in their daily lives, and limited access to digital resources are the main challenges that need to be overcome immediately.

Therefore, this study recommends several strategic steps to improve the quality of Arabic language teaching in Islamic boarding schools. First, intensive training is needed for ustaz to improve their competence in adopting innovative teaching methods that are relevant to the times. Second, the motivation of students needs to be increased through the awarding of awards and the organization of challenging competitions. Third, Islamic boarding schools need to increase access to digital resources to enrich the learning experience of students. By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that pesantren can create a more conducive and effective Arabic learning environment, so that students can master Arabic well and have a deep understanding of Islamic teachings..

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