

Effectiveness of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* Method in Enhancing Yellow Book Reading Competence at Madrasah Diniyah in Papua

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method in enhancing students' proficiency in reading classical Islamic texts (*Yellow Book*) at Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz in Sorong, Southwest Papua—a region where Muslims comprise only 38% of the population, as reported by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The research aims to address the educational challenges faced by Islamic institutions in minority-Muslim contexts. A quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach was employed. Forty students were selected and divided equally into experimental and control groups (20 students each). The experimental group received instruction using the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method, while the control group followed conventional teaching methods. A pre-test and post-test were administered, and the results were analyzed using a paired t-test to assess the method's impact. Findings indicated a statistically significant improvement in the reading proficiency of the experimental group. The t-test yielded a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), confirming the effectiveness of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method. Improvements were noted in reading accuracy, recognition of grammatical structures, and interpretation of classical texts. The results highlight the pedagogical benefits of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method in Muslim-minority regions. It serves as a practical and effective approach for strengthening students' abilities to comprehend traditional Islamic literature. The *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method significantly enhances students' Yellow Book reading skills and offers a valuable instructional model for religious education in minority-Muslim settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the education system is categorized into three primary forms: formal, informal, and non-formal education. Among the institutions that predate this modern classification is the *pesantren*, a traditional Islamic educational institution that plays a foundational role in the development of Islamic learning across the archipelago. As defined by Bawani, *pesantren* refers to an institution where a *kiai*

(Islamic scholar) teaches students Islamic religious knowledge through classical Arabic texts, often employing non-classical, oral, and interpretive methods (M. A. Hakim & Novianty, 2020). Despite the evolving landscape of educational frameworks in Indonesia, *pesantren* continue to emphasize a strong moral and ethical orientation, with the curriculum under the full discretion and autonomy of the *kiai* (Izmi, 2023).

One of the institutions that has evolved from the *pesantren* tradition is *Madrasah Diniyah*, which focuses specifically on structured religious instruction. As defined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Madrasah Diniyah* is a non-formal, out-of-school educational institution that follows a classical system divided into three hierarchical levels: *Ula* (elementary), *Wustho* (intermediate), and *Ulya* (advanced) (Rosidin et al., 2022). Unlike *pesantren*, which typically offer residential facilities, *Madrasah Diniyah* operates without dormitories and focuses solely on religious instruction in subjects such as the Qur'an, *hadith*, Arabic grammar, and *aqidah* (Islamic creed) (Halwing, 2021).

A distinctive and defining feature of *Madrasah Diniyah* is its use of the *kitab kuning*, or yellow book, as the primary reference material. These classical Islamic texts, written in Arabic and traditionally printed without *harakat* (vowel markings) or punctuation, cover a wide array of Islamic sciences including jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology, and linguistics (Mustakim, 2021; Izmi, 2023). While these books serve as invaluable resources for transmitting traditional Islamic scholarship, their unique format poses significant pedagogical challenges. The absence of diacritical marks requires a high level of linguistic proficiency, making comprehension particularly difficult for learners (Musaddad, 2021).

The primary obstacle encountered by both students and instructors in *Madrasah Diniyah* is the complexity of interpreting these unvowelled Arabic texts. Many students struggle with basic reading comprehension, often leading to misinterpretation of key religious concepts (Martono, 2023). This issue is rooted in the structure of the *kitab kuning*, which demands not only fluency in Arabic but also mastery of Arabic grammatical sciences, specifically *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharf* (morphology) (M. A. Hakim & Novianty, 2020). The intricacies of these grammar systems are often daunting for students, particularly those in regions with limited access to qualified Arabic instructors and limited linguistic immersion (Ulfiyati et al., 2024).

In response to these challenges, various instructional methods have been developed to facilitate student understanding. Among them, the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method has gained widespread recognition, especially within *pesantren* and *Madrasah Diniyah*, for its ability to simplify the learning of classical texts. This method introduces Arabic grammar concepts through concise formulas and structured learning frameworks, making the material more accessible to learners at different levels of proficiency (Restu & Wahyuni, 2019; Nizar & Wasito, 2021).

Although the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method has demonstrated considerable success in regions such as Java, its implementation is influenced by several contextual factors. These include teacher competence, classroom environment, student aptitude, and broader socio-cultural support (Chomaidah & Prasetya, 2024). Java's relatively developed educational infrastructure and Muslim-majority demographic create an ideal setting for the method's application. However, this raises questions about the method's adaptability and effectiveness in other, less-resourced regions—particularly in areas like Papua, where the religious, cultural, and educational context differs significantly (Wahidah & Ramadhan, 2023).

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method in *Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz*, located in Sorong, Southwest Papua. As a designated 3T region (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged), Sorong faces significant barriers to educational development, including limited access to qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and geographical isolation. Furthermore, with Muslims comprising only 38% of the population in a predominantly Christian area (53%) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2023), Islamic education institutions such as *Madrasah Diniyah* play a critical role in preserving religious knowledge and identity in minority contexts.

Given these regional disparities, the study aims to explore how the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method influences students' ability to read and comprehend *kitab kuning* texts in an environment marked by limited resources and socio-cultural constraints. Special attention is given to factors such as student

learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and institutional support within this unique demographic setting. The research addresses a crucial gap by testing the method's adaptability outside of Java and assessing its potential as a national standard for teaching classical Islamic texts.

Through this study, we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of effective pedagogical strategies for Islamic education in diverse regions of Indonesia. The findings will not only assess the instructional viability of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method in Papua but also provide insights into how religious education can be strengthened in Muslim-minority and under-resourced areas. Ultimately, the research aims to inform policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers on how to improve classical Islamic instruction across varying socio-cultural landscapes in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study employed an experimental research method. Experimental research aims to investigate causal relationships between variables that are deliberately manipulated by the researcher (Syarifuddin & Syuhud, 2023). The procedure involves administering interventions to an experimental group, observing the outcomes, and comparing them to those of a control group to assess the effect of the intervention.

A quasi-experimental design was adopted for this research, which involves the use of both a control group and an experimental group to explore causal relationships. This study utilized a quantitative approach to analyze data collected through experimental procedures. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with participants selected based on their enrollment in Madrasah Diniyah institutions in Papua.

It is important to acknowledge that while the study offers meaningful insights into the effectiveness of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method, the results may be most applicable to similar Madrasah Diniyah environments in Papua. Ethical protocols were rigorously followed; informed consent was obtained from all participants and their guardians, and participant anonymity was protected through coded identifiers. All research materials were securely stored with restricted access limited to the research team.

The study design incorporated a pre-test and post-test control group structure. A pre-test was administered to both groups before applying the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method. After the experimental group underwent the treatment, a post-test was conducted for comparison. The aim was to assess the effect of variable X (*al-Miftah lil Ulum* method) on variable Y (the students' competence in reading the Yellow Book).

A t-test was applied to measure the significance of the differences between the pre- and post-test scores and to determine the impact of the method. This methodological approach and analytical technique were chosen to examine both the presence and the extent of any improvements resulting from the intervention.

Table 1. Experimental Design Pre-Test and Post-Test Design

Class	Pre Test	Dependent Variable	Post Test
Experiment	Y1	X	X2
Control	Y1	-	X2

Description:

X = There is treatment (Treatment) or the application of the al Miftah Lil Ulum method

- = No treatment (Treatment)

Y1 = Pre Test

X2 = Post Test

The Al-Miftah class is a foundational program designed for new students of Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz. It serves as a preparatory course aimed at equipping students with the basic skills needed to read and comprehend classical Islamic texts, commonly referred to as Yellow Books, which are central to the madrasa's curriculum.

For the purpose of this study, the entire student population of Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz in Sorong Regency was considered, totaling 164 students. This population included 70 students in Grade 1, 50 in Grade 2, and 44 in Grade 3.

In research methodology, a sample is a subset of the population selected for data collection and analysis, effectively acting as a miniature representation of the larger group. If data are collected from all members of the population, the process is referred to as a census. However, when only a portion of the population is studied, it constitutes a sampling method. To ensure the accuracy and generalizability of the findings, the selected sample must adequately represent the characteristics of the total population.

According to Suharsimi Arikunto's sampling guidelines, when the population exceeds 100 individuals, researchers may select 10–15%, 20–25%, or more, depending on the research objectives. Conversely, if the population is fewer than 100, the entire group is typically used as the sample. Based on this guidance, the researcher selected a sample of 40 students for this study, consisting of 20 Grade 1 students, 10 Grade 2 students, and 10 Grade 3 students.

The random sampling technique was employed, providing every student in Grades 1, 2, and 3 an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. This method ensures objectivity and minimizes selection bias. The details of the population and sample distribution are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Population and Sample

No.	Class	Population	Sample
1.	Madin1	70	20
2.	Madin2	50	10
3.	Madin3	44	10

For the selection of students in the experimental and control groups, the researcher employed a purposive sampling technique. This method involves deliberately selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. In this case, the primary criterion was students (*santri*) with low proficiency in reading the Yellow Book, as the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method in improving this particular skill.

Out of the total sample of 40 students, those who met this criterion were then divided into two groups: the experimental group, which received the treatment, and the control group, which did not. The composition of these two groups will be presented in Table 3, detailing the distribution of students in each group based on the established sampling criteria.

Table 3. Experimental and Control Classes

No.	Class	Amount
1.	Experiment	20 students
2.	Control	20 students

The stages in this study, carried out by researchers, are as follows:

2.1 Pre-Experiment Stage

Before implementing the treatment, both the experimental and control groups were administered a pre-test to assess their baseline competence in reading the Yellow Book. The purpose of this initial assessment was to determine whether the two groups were comparable in their performance prior to the intervention. Ensuring that both groups started from a relatively similar level was essential for

maintaining the validity of the experimental results. If the pre-test results indicated no significant difference between the two groups, the study proceeded to the next phase, which involved administering the treatment exclusively to the experimental group. This approach helps isolate the effect of the intervention by minimizing external variables and ensuring that any observed improvements in the experimental group could be more confidently attributed to the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method. The pre-test thus served as a critical control mechanism for establishing a reliable point of comparison for the post-test outcomes.

2.2 Treatment Stage (Experiment)

During this stage, the researcher administered the planned intervention by applying the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method to the experimental group. The implementation followed a structured plan developed prior to the study to ensure consistency and accuracy. Meanwhile, the control group did not receive any form of treatment and continued with their regular learning activities. This distinction between the two groups allowed the researcher to isolate the effects of the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method and objectively assess its impact on the experimental group's ability to read the Yellow Book.

2.3 Post-Experiment Stage

In this phase, the researcher administered a final test to both the experimental and control groups. The purpose of this post-test was to evaluate the extent to which the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method influenced the reading competence of students in the experimental group. The post-test results were then compared with the pre-test scores to assess any measurable improvement or difference between the two groups. This comparison allowed the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and to identify whether the observed changes in the experimental group could be attributed to the treatment.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Pre-Test Data-Test Assessment

The pre-test for both the control and experimental classes was conducted on Monday, February 5, 2024. This stage aimed to assess the initial reading competence of *santri* at Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz, Sorong Regency, specifically their ability to read classical Islamic texts (*Yellow Book*), prior to the application of any treatment. The results from this assessment serve as a baseline for evaluating the impact of the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method. The pre-test data collected at this stage are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Pre Test Data of Control Class and Experiment Class Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz Sorong Regency

No	Control Class		Eksperiment Class	
	Pre Test	Category	Pre Test	Category
1	48	Less	64	Enough
2	52	Less	72	Enough
3	40	Less	84	Good
4	56	Less	68	Enough
5	52	Less	56	Less
6	48	Less	60	Enough
7	56	Less	52	Less
8	40	Less	64	Enough
9	56	Less	72	Enough

10	52	Less	68	Enough
11	44	Less	52	Less
12	48	Less	60	Enough
13	52	Less	56	Less
14	44	Less	64	Enough
15	56	Less	50	Enough
16	52	Less	56	Less
17	48	Less	56	Less
18	56	Less	68	Enough
19	52	Less	64	Enough
20	44	Less	52	Less

In the control class, the scores ranged from a low of 40 to a high of 56. In contrast, the experimental class recorded a minimum score of 52 and a maximum score of 84. All students in the control class (100%) fell into the "Low" performance category.

In the experimental class, the score distribution was more varied:

- 7 students (35%) were categorized as Low,
- 12 students (60%) as Moderate, and
- 1 student (5%) achieved a High score.

These results indicate that, even prior to treatment, students in the experimental class demonstrated a broader range of reading competence compared to the control class. For a more detailed breakdown of the data, processed using SPSS 16, refer to Table 5 below.

Table 5. Pre-Test Data of Control Class and Experiment Class Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz Sorong Regency with SPSS 16

Class	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Control	2	16	40	56	49.80	5.268	27.747
Eksperiment	2	32	52	84	62.40	8.146	66.358
Valid N (listwise) 2							

For more details, the researchers have described in Graph 1 the following pre-test data statistics.

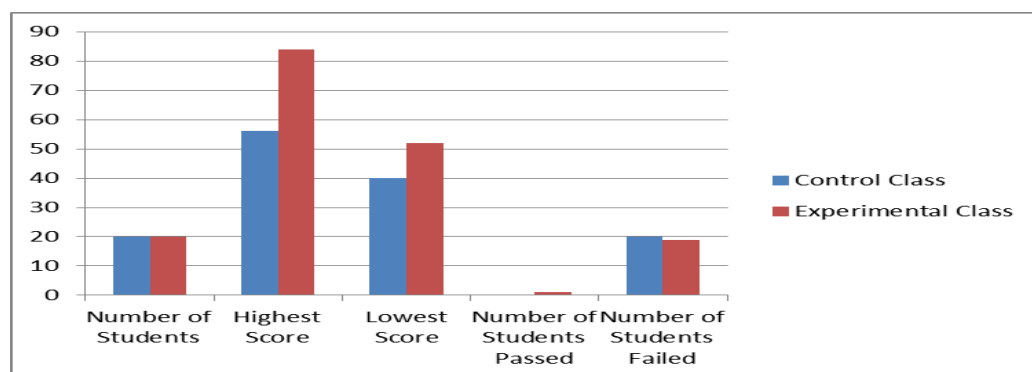


Figure 1. Pre-Test Statistics

Based on the pre-test data presented above, it can be concluded that the overall ability of students at Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz, Sorong Regency, to read the *Yellow Book* is still relatively low. Among the 20 students in the control class, none achieved a score categorized as "Good." Similarly, in the experimental class, only 1 out of 20 students reached the "Good" category.

These findings indicate that the majority of students in both groups started with limited reading proficiency. The comparative observation between the control and experimental classes at the pre-test stage is illustrated in Graph 2 below.

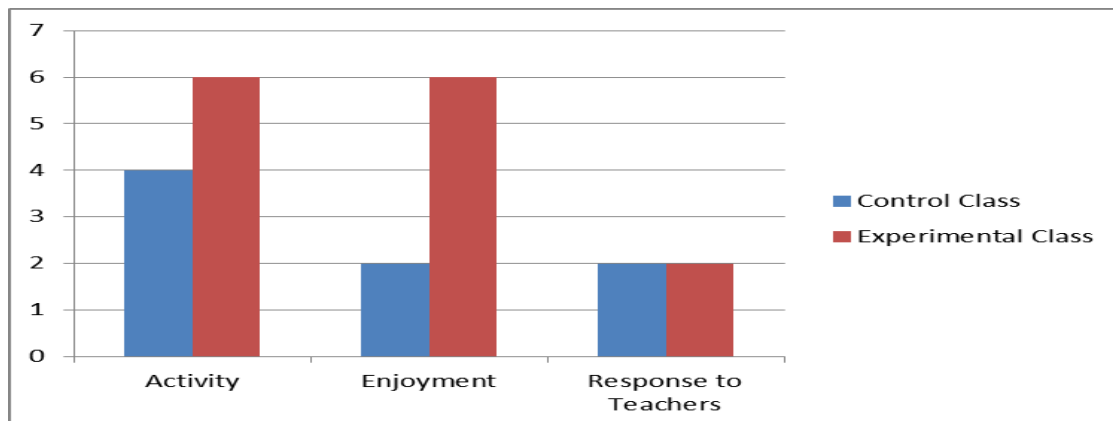


Figure 2. Pre-Test Observation Result

Based on observational data, only 4 students in the control class and 6 students in the experimental class were identified as actively participating in the lesson. Regarding student enjoyment, just 2 santri in the control class appeared to enjoy the learning process, while 6 santri in the experimental class demonstrated noticeable enthusiasm.

In terms of student response to the teachers (asatidz), both classes showed low engagement, with only 2 students in each group responding to the teachers' guidance or prompts. These findings reflect a generally low level of student activity, enjoyment of the lesson, and responsiveness to teachers.

Given that the sample size in each class was 20 students, the percentage breakdown is as follows:

- Active students: 20% in the control class and 30% in the experimental class.
- Students enjoying the lesson: 10% in the control class and 30% in the experimental class.
- Responsive students: 20% in both the control and experimental classes.

These results indicate that, at the pre-treatment stage, student engagement was limited in both groups, though slightly higher in the experimental class.

Table 6. Kolmogorov Smirnov Z Normality Test Results

		Control Class	Experimental Class
N		20	20
Normal Perimeters ²	Mean	49.8	62.4
	Std. Deviation	5.268	8.146
Most Extreme Difference	Absolute	0.212	0.134
	Positive	0.12	0.134
	Negative	-0.212	-0.101
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.948	0.599
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.33	0.865

3.2 Discussion

The results of the normality test indicate that the data from both the control and experimental classes are normally distributed, with significance values of 0.330 and 0.865 respectively—both exceeding the 0.05 threshold. This statistical outcome provides a strong foundation for the reliability and validity of subsequent data analysis.

In educational practice, the selection of teaching methods plays a crucial role in achieving learning objectives. According to Yuningsih et al. (2023), methods serve as tools to implement carefully designed lesson plans into effective classroom activities. Puput Lestari (2022) emphasizes that method selection must be based on a solid conceptual framework and consider the method's advantages, limitations, and steps of implementation. The responsibility for choosing the most appropriate method lies with the *asatidz* (teachers), who must match the instructional technique with the learning material (Utami et al., 2022). This selection process requires continuous evaluation to assess its effectiveness and impact on student learning (Z. Hakim, 2021). As highlighted by Kyai Zarkasyi, the founder of Pondok Modern Gontor, learning methods must undergo constant review and refinement to remain effective and responsive to students' developmental needs (Alfiyyah et al., 2023). Accurate assessment of student learning outcomes is essential in this context, as it provides feedback on both student progress and the effectiveness of instructional strategies. As Halwing (2021) and Hamalik (in Hudawi et al., 2021) note, learning outcomes manifest in measurable changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The analysis of student performance in the control and experimental classes demonstrates a stark contrast in post-test results. In the control group, which did not receive the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method, 13 of the 20 students (65%) remained in the "Low" performance category, while only 7 students (35%) moved to the "Moderate" category. This marks a slight improvement from the pre-test results, in which all students were categorized as "Low." However, the experimental group, which received the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* intervention, showed significant progress. Post-test data reveal that 18 out of 20 students (90%) achieved "Excellent" scores, while the remaining 2 students (10%) scored in the "Good" category. This indicates that every student in the experimental class reached a level of mastery.

The quantitative data further confirms the effectiveness of the method. The experimental group's average score rose from 62 in the pre-test to 92 in the post-test, demonstrating a notable 30-point increase. This improvement reflects the method's impact on several key competencies: the ability to read and fluently interpret the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* text, the skill to determine sentence structure and positioning, and the capacity to comprehend meaning and context. The method's structured and student-friendly design contributes significantly to this success. It incorporates simplified grammatical explanations, beginner-level instruction in the Indonesian language, clear exercise models, and engaging instructional techniques such as the use of age-appropriate songs. Moreover, the role of the *asatidz* in facilitating interactive and enthusiastic learning sessions further enhances the learning experience.

The statistical analysis using the Paired Sample T-test reveals a significant difference in student performance before and after treatment. The test produced a t-value of -14.662, which is lower than the t-table value of -2.145, with a p-value of 0.000—well below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms the presence of a statistically significant improvement in students' reading ability following the implementation of the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method.

This instructional method also aligns with behaviorist learning theory, particularly Edward L. Thorndike's stimulus-response model. In this framework, learning is viewed as the result of a specific response to a given stimulus. The *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method delivers clear and consistent stimuli through its repetitive drills, interactive songs, and systematic activities, which in turn elicit positive responses in the form of improved reading ability and comprehension. Comparative findings from previous research by Rosidin et al. (2022) further support the method's superiority in delivering practical and engaging Islamic education, especially in terms of accelerating mastery of complex

content. This is reinforced by Bariyah Oktariska's stimulus-response theory (Ismail & Alexandro, 2020), which underscores the importance of using well-structured stimuli to foster student understanding and skill development.

The significant improvement in the experimental group's performance—from a pre-test average of 62 to a post-test average of 92—demonstrates the comprehensive effectiveness of the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method. The progress spans all targeted competencies and provides compelling evidence of the method's instructional value. This research contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse on effective pedagogical strategies in Islamic classical text education. It suggests that the *al-Miftah Lil Ulum* method offers a promising, structured, and engaging approach to improving students' ability to read and comprehend *Yellow Books*, particularly within the context of Madrasah Diniyah education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the *al-Miftah lil Ulum* method significantly improved students' ability to read and comprehend *kitab kuning* (yellow books) at Madrasah Diniyah Roudlotul Khuffadz in Sorong Regency. Quantitative results confirmed the method's effectiveness, with a t-test significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Key improvements were observed across three core competencies: reading fluency, where students advanced from basic recognition to smooth text reading; grammatical analysis, with 90% accurately identifying *i'rab* positions; and comprehension, as reflected by an average score increase from 62 to 92. Pronunciation accuracy reached the "Excellent" category in 90% of students, and grammatical accuracy rose from 35% to 85%, demonstrating notable gains in syntactic understanding and interpretation. However, the research had limitations, including a small sample size of 40 students from a single institution and a short duration of one semester, which may restrict the generalizability and long-term applicability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused primarily on quantitative metrics, overlooking qualitative insights such as learner engagement and classroom dynamics. Future research should address these gaps by conducting longitudinal studies, expanding the sample across multiple institutions, and incorporating qualitative evaluations of both teacher and student experiences. Investigations into differentiated instructional strategies based on student proficiency and learning styles are also recommended. For practical implementation, educators should tailor the method to students' individual learning needs and regularly assess progress in reading fluency, grammar, and comprehension. These findings offer valuable contributions to Islamic classical text pedagogy, affirming the method's potential while underscoring the importance of continued research and refinement.

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