



Arabic Learning Challenges

Student Experiences in Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract. Arabic as a means of communication and the language of Islam, it is also an international language. Arabic has not yet become an official language for the Indonesian people, but it is one of the mandatory lessons for Islamic educational institutions. In line with that, this study aims to map students' experiences in learning Arabic. This study uses a qualitative method with the object of research being students of the Arabic language and literature study program. Students were interviewed privately and openly through a google form regarding their experiences in the process of learning Arabic. The findings of this study show that there are three kinds of challenges faced by students, namely challenges that come from internal language, challenges from students' internal self, and challenges from external. This study concludes that learning any language can't be separated from challenges, but the challenges of each individual experience differences and vary. In line with that there needs to be a solution from oneself (students) in facing these challenges.

Keywords: Learning Arabic · Higher Education · students' experiences

1 Introduction

The era of globalization and technology makes educational institutions face various challenges and demands [1], where education has an important role in increasing competitiveness and has world-class quality [2]. Apart from being an international language, Arabic is also the language of religion, and is a mandatory material to be taught in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia from elementary school to university level. Studying Arabic as a foreign language for non-Arabic students has its own challenges, both internal and external challenges. The internal challenge is in the form of the characteristics of the Arabic language itself which is different from other languages. Meanwhile, external factors are in the form of an unsupportive language environment.

So far, research related to the challenges of learning a foreign language has two tendencies. First, there are big challenges in learning foreign languages [3–5]. Among the challenges are the differences in the form and use of Arabic compared to other languages [3]. This challenge has led to errors in using foreign languages, namely interlanguage, intralanguage, and sentence context errors [3]. In addition, challenges have spurred innovation and suggestions to open up new opportunities in learning and mastering

foreign languages [6]. Second, the challenges and opportunities of teachers in teaching foreign languages [7–9]. There is a difference between the language skills needed in the job market and the language acquired in educational institutions [8]. As a foreign language teacher, you must be good at utilizing the potential of the market industry [10]. Where language is always dynamic and developing according to the development of the world market, so is Arabic, which is getting more and more new vocabularies.

Existing studies show that the challenge of mastering a foreign language emphasizes the internal and external aspects of a language. This study aims to listen to the experiences of students in the process of learning Arabic. In line with that, this study seeks to map the experiences of students in facing challenges in learning Arabic.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Challenge of Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language

Arabic is one of the world's languages which socially, society and science continues to grow rapidly [11]. For Indonesian people, Arabic is a very important foreign language to learn. Because, Arabic is one of the many other foreign languages used for worship in Islam such as prayer, prayer and other worship [12]. For non-Arabic speakers, especially the Indonesian people, there are challenges in learning Arabic as a foreign language. Between Indonesian as a mother tongue and Arabic as a foreign language, there are linguistic differences that cause difficulties for non-Arabic speakers [13]. In addition, the challenge of learning Arabic is the lack of motivation and interest of non-Arabic speakers in learning Arabic as a foreign language [14].

Broadly speaking, the challenges of studying Arabic in Indonesia are divided into two, namely: linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. Linguistic differences that cause difficulties in learning Arabic is the interference between Arabic and Indonesian [15]. Factors that cause interference between Arabic and Indonesian include: lack of knowledge of Arabic vocabulary, dominance of Indonesian, and the habit of speaking Indonesian which is inherent as a mother tongue when studying Arabic as a foreign language [16]. Meanwhile, non-linguistic problems, apart from the lack of interest and motivation of non-Arabic speakers, include difficulties in learning Arabic due to the specific nature of the language itself in foreign languages which cannot be separated from several linguistic components of the language itself [17].

The emergence of the phenomenon of al-fusha and amiyah, which is a mixture of fusha and ammiyah varieties, is a serious challenge for the world of learning Arabic because there is the elimination of some grammar in learning Arabic as a foreign language [18]. Among the Arab community, the use of Arabic fusha has decreased in frequency and portion, because it has been largely replaced by Ammiyah Arabic or local dialects, in which this local dialect is very diverse [15]. Whereas in Indonesia it only focuses on the use of Fusha Arabic, while qawaid learning is generally less effective and the rules of standard language are not paid attention to [19]. So that the Fusha ammiyah phenomenon appears which of course becomes a challenge for non-Arabic speakers in learning it.

2.2 Development of Arabic in Indonesia

The development and growth of learning Arabic in Indonesia is very fast considering the number of foreigners (Arabic speakers) who come to Indonesia, the number of Indonesian scholars studying in the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East, the large number of old Indonesian migrant workers in Arab countries and then coming back to Indonesia. Indonesia [20]. This is a major current in the development of the influence of Arabic in Indonesia, besides that Arabic is still a sacred image for some Indonesian people because Arabic is part of the doctrines of the Islamic religion [21]. Asy'ari added that Arabic has the privilege of being the language of the holy book of Islam, by understanding Arabic one can understand the contents of the holy book which is a guide for Muslims [15].

At present, Arabic has become a language of interest and familiarity among academics, and civil society in various parts of Asia [15]. The data shows that the Arabic language has reached the Korean, Japanese and surrounding areas [22]. What a breath of fresh air for the syiar Arabic language itself. The stigma that is formed that Arabic is a difficult and complicated language will slowly erode and appear on the surface of the earth that Arabic is very beautiful and becomes an addiction to learn and explore [23].

There are at least three reorientations towards learning Arabic, namely Arabic as a science, Arabic as a tool, and Arabic as a sense of Islamic [24]. Arabic as a science is a science that always continues to develop its studies and research. Arabic needs to be researched, for example by writing articles, literacy research, field research or research and development, experimenting with new methods and other scientific research [25]. As a tool, Arabic is a tool for communication and has a special purpose, which has special needs for students according to their individual needs such as understanding the interpretation of the Qur'an, Arabic conversation, for the world of work, tourism, bilateral relations between two countries, transfer language, understand books, train of trainers, guide Hajj and Umrah and so on [26]. While the sense of Islamic, Arabic is part of Islamic rituals, the Islamic spirit is thickly felt by using Arabic itself, believing Arabic is the language of the inhabitants of heaven so that users feel their "spirit" is alive and proud to use it [21]. So that we can animate Arabic itself because it has become a part of his life, that is the meaning that Arabic is the sense of Islam.

These three reorientation trilogies are expected to be able to awaken and restore the essence of learning Arabic itself so as not to be carried away by technological developments where learners are more inclined to think and focus on the technology rather than on the use of technology to learn Arabic.

3 Method

This research is descriptive qualitative based on the perception of students as non-Arabic. This research was conducted at an Islamic University in the city of Malang, Indonesia. This Islamic College was chosen for two reasons. First, it is a university that prioritizes Arabic as a language that must be mastered by students, in addition to English. First-year students are quarantined for one year in the Islamic college's dormitory to be trained in Arabic and English. In addition, they also receive intensive Arabic language material for 5 h every day, from 14:00 to 20:00, from Monday to Friday. Second, students who are

studying at the university come from Indonesia itself and other non-Arabic countries, until Arabic is a foreign language, and all teaching systems used use AFL.

The participants used in this study were limited to groups of students, in Islamic State universities who had taken specialization or study programs in Arabic language and literature. These participants were taken from semesters 3 and 5. They were 25 students. They were selected and involved as participants in this study. They were interviewed in depth about their experiences during the process of mastering Arabic in the Bahasa dan Sastra Arab (BSA) study program which focused on the challenges they faced while learning Arabic. Student choice attention to gender balance.

In the process of collecting data, observations and interview guidelines were used as the basis for formulating questions. The questions are open-ended covering four planes, namely, the semester when filling out the google form, gender, place of residence, what challenges did you face while learning Arabic.

The data that has been collected is then analyzed according to the stages of qualitative analysis, namely data reduction, data display, data restatement, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by mapping the data from interviews thematically according to the research focus. Display data, carried out with four display models. First, by displaying excerpts from interviews with students in the table.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Challenges Faced By Students in Learning Arabic

Arabic as a foreign language for the people of Indonesia, in teaching it cannot be separated from challenges. Students who have made their choice in the Arabic language study program are asked to share their experiences while studying Arabic in college. Challenges faced by students include internal language challenges, challenges that are from individual students, and challenges that come from outside of students. Their experiences can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the challenges faced by students while learning Arabic can be mapped into three categories. First, the internal language challenge. Arabic is still considered a complicated language with its rules, such as nahwu and sharaf. Where students feel this is a challenge to be mastered by them. Because Arabic without using the language rules will cause misunderstanding [27]. Apart from that, from the aspect of Arabic writing, for some of them this is considered a challenge, as well as other Arabic skills, such as kalam, istima', qiroah, and kitabah. This is in line with Saud's findings which said that PGMI students experienced challenges from aspects of new vocabulary and nahwu rules [28]. In contrast to Hidayah, which states that the differences in the characteristics of Arabic and Indonesian, make students tend to do interlanguage, intralanguage [3]. Research Abdurrahman also shows that the characteristics of language are first in line as a challenge to learn Arabic, he states that Arabic is like mathematics which has many formulas [29].

Second, the challenges that are from individual students. This challenge is a formidable challenge for students, where they must strive to fight and defeat their laziness. Most students feel that they are not confident in speaking, coupled with other

Table 1. Challenges faced by students in learning Arabic

Respondent	Student experience	Code
R 13	The difficulty of memorizing mufrodad, listening to the conversation of people who are experts is sometimes too fast	Vocabulary
R5, 21, 14	How to speak Arabic _ (in the aspect of communication), sometimes there are a lot of hiccups.	Btranslate
R 6	I still lack the ability to translate Arabic into Indonesian and read bald Arabic script (which is not spelled)	Translate Read text
R 1, 15, 7	Keistiqomah in Arabic practice, the temptation of friends	Practice
R11, 9	Difficult understand the rules of nahwu and sorof	language rules
R16, 3	When seeing friends who speak Arabic fluently, and it makes me feel inferior or the language is now better known as insecure	inferior
R 10	It is difficult to understand the meaning of the Arabic language itself.	Meaning
R 20, 8	Rival friends who are better than me	Competition
R 22	Facing yourself to fight laziness	Lazy
R 19	Listening to Arabic lafadz amiyah	Hear
R 23	In confident to act/speak it's probably because I think it's quite heavy for beginners	Confident
R25	Until now, I still can't speak Arabic (because my verbal skills are low, I don't have a lot of vocabulary, and I'm too fixated on grammar which makes me afraid to speak), I also have a struggle with istima' because I'm not used to listening to native speakers speak..	Language proficiency
R 18	Knowing the meaning of new vocabulary in special or written texts	Listen and write
R 17, 24	Sometimes the environment does not support us to improve the language	Environment
	because all this time studying at home has become more difficult to understand because there is no direct interaction with the lecturer	
R2, 12, 4	Arabic references are still rare.	Reference

friends who speak Arabic fluently. As shown by Yamashita that individual student anxiety and boredom is a challenge that makes students not eager to learn [30]. He added that anxiety in speaking using the language learned occupies the highest position from the perspective of students [30]. In addition, they are less consistent in practicing Arabic in daily communication, both oral and written communication [31].

Third, the challenges that come from outside the students themselves. Namely challenges related to the environment in which students live and study. Students feel less practice because they do not have friends to communicate with in Arabic, when they study at home online. In addition, the family environment is less supportive to develop Arabic. as shown that the most important challenge is the development of teacher professionalism. Where language teachers must be flexible in line with language developments that continue to develop [32]. Luu added that the use of technology is also a challenge in learning foreign languages [33].

The findings of this study can provide an illustration that the input of students in the Arabic language study program is heterogeneous [34]. Where some students graduate from salaf and modern pesantren, some others graduate from Madrasah Aliyah or even from high school. Until their language skills are far apart, so is their mastery of the rules of Arabic [29]. It is a challenge for educators to keep updating their materials, to apply innovative English as a foreign language teaching strategy related to sustainable development in Foreign language learning classes [35].

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that learning any foreign language has encountered challenges, including learning Arabic for Indonesian students. Arabic as Foreign other than English. This study shows that there are three forms of challenges faced by students, namely the first is an internal language challenge, where the characteristics of the Arabic language have complex formulas in every sentence that is composed. Second, the challenge comes from individual students. And third, the challenges from the environment around students where they learn Arabic.

This research is limited to the focus of the study, namely the challenges of students learning Arabic, so that the information obtained is incomplete and still partial. In line with that, this study suggests a follow-up study that compares the two languages (Arabic and English), namely how the challenges faced by students studying Arabic and English. Thus, data and student experiences from two different language study programs will get more varied student perceptions.

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