



Teacher innovation in developing students' interest in Arabic learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze teacher innovations in fostering students' interest in the Arabic language at two Madrasah Tsanawiyah Alkhairaat schools in Palu, as well as the specific forms of innovation implemented to enhance this interest. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and subsequently analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques. Data validity was verified through source, technique, and time triangulation. The results indicate that teachers have implemented various instructional innovations that boost student motivation and interest in learning Arabic while also supporting the achievement of learning competencies established by the schools. These innovations are manifested through the enforcement of study discipline, punctuality in teaching, the systematic preparation of instructional materials, the application of diverse learning models such as Jigsaw, The Power of Two, Flash Cards, Card Sort, and the "Whispering Chain" game and the use of learning media tailored to students' characteristics and needs. These innovations have proven effective in increasing student engagement, participation, and interest in Arabic language learning. However, teachers face obstacles such as limited training in using AI-based Arabic learning media, the absence of standardized Arabic learning guidelines, a lack of facilities and infrastructure to support technology-based learning, and low learning motivation among some students. The study concludes that teacher innovation plays a significant role in enhancing students' interest in the Arabic language. Therefore, it is essential to improve teacher competence through continuous training, provide technology-based learning facilities and infrastructure, and offer adequate institutional support to deliver more effective, innovative, and learner-oriented Arabic language instruction.

Keywords: Teachers' innovation, Arabic teaching, Arabic learning, Teaching language

Introduction

Language instruction aims to enable students to use Arabic actively or passively across the four key skills: listening (istima), speaking (kalam), reading (qira'ah), and writing (kitabah) (Jabir, Nurdin, Saguni, & Mala, 2026) ^[9]. This constitutes the fundamental objective of Arabic language learning. Ultimately, the goal is for students to become accustomed to using Arabic in a manner resembling—or closely approximating that of native speakers. Regarding these language skills, teachers are expected to cultivate students' abilities in depth (Ala & Ala, 2024) ^[2]. Furthermore, students are expected to understand the characteristics of the Arabic language and its associated culture. Given these objectives, teaching Arabic is no easy task; it requires a teacher with genuine competence in the field. Consequently, all teachers and Arabic teachers in particular play a vital and dynamic role; the magnitude of their contribution to shaping high-quality, professional individuals who drive national development is immeasurable. The presence and role of teachers fundamentally determine a nation's progress.

In the context of Arabic language instruction, the aim is for students to use the language actively or passively across the four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Fauzia, Supianudin, & Zakiah, 2025) ^[5]. This constitutes the

fundamental objective of Arabic language learning. The ultimate goal is for students to become accustomed to using Arabic in a manner resembling or closely approximating that of native speakers. Regarding language proficiency specifically reading and writing teachers are expected to cultivate students' abilities deeply. Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu are educational institutions committed to developing Arabic language instruction as an integral part of Islamic studies. Consequently, innovative teaching methods are needed to boost student interest in learning Arabic and ensure learning objectives are achieved. The study of Arabic grammar as advocated at these institutions is crucial to Islamic scholarship; it serves as a primary key to understanding the Qur'an and Hadith (Onisabi & Alaso, 2020) ^[15], prevents critical errors in legal interpretation, and safeguards the correct understanding of religious teachings. Arabic grammar is important because all Islamic disciplines rely on it as an essential tool (ilm al-alat). In contrast, grammar itself (Nahwu and Sarf) does not depend on other disciplines. Arabic language instruction at the Islamic junior and senior high school levels aims to enable students to use Arabic actively across the four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This constitutes the fundamental objective of Arabic language learning (Sanusi, Sauri, & Nurbayan, 2020)

[19]. The primary goal is for students to become accustomed to using Arabic like native speakers particularly in terms of language proficiency while teachers are expected to cultivate students' abilities deeply. Furthermore, the aim is to foster a strong interest in the Arabic language among students. A prevailing public perception holds that graduates of Islamic religious schools ranging from primary and secondary levels to higher education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs possess adequate, or even advanced, knowledge of Arabic and demonstrate genuine language proficiency.

However, the actual situation differs significantly from this perception. Preliminary observations suggest several contributing factors, including: an insufficient number of Arabic language instruction hours aligned with the specific vision and mission of private *madrasas* (reflecting their institutional autonomy); a lack of rigorous enforcement requiring all Arabic teachers to communicate in Arabic both inside and outside the classroom while on school premises; an absence of active Arabic practice between teachers and students, particularly within language-focused tracks; and a lack of Arabic language training centers outside of Java, specifically in Palu, Central Sulawesi. A critical issue observed in the community is the shortage of religious functionaries such as muezzins, khatibs, and mosque imams who have Arabic proficiency comparable to that of native speakers. This situation stems from a lack of interest in studying religious texts in Arabic, educational backgrounds outside the *madrasa* system, and alums's limited Arabic proficiency. Consequently, there is an urgent need for innovation in Arabic language instruction, beginning with teachers' motivation to put the language into practice.

The active role of the Arabic language teacher is fundamental to shaping students' understanding of the language. Beyond using effective teaching methods delivered in an interactive, enjoyable, challenging, and inspiring manner this role ensures that students are not merely passive listeners to the material presented; rather, they are given the freedom to express their thoughts, making the Arabic learning experience more tangible and meaningful. Students must become accustomed to using Arabic across the four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Consequently, teachers are expected to cultivate their students' abilities deeply. Teachers must have adequate pedagogical skills and appropriate instructional strategies, as well as the capacity to address the challenges students face during their education.

Furthermore, Azhar Arsyad noted that during a 2000 gathering of Arabic teachers from Eastern Indonesia, it was acknowledged that teachers generally focused on meeting nationally mandated curriculum targets. As a result, the transition between topics became highly mechanical and neglected actual student mastery; this caused Arabic learning to be perceived as a dreaded burden, leading to a defensive attitude among students. This admission highlights a lack of creativity in teachers' approach to instruction and a failure to maintain enthusiasm throughout the educational process. Inappropriate methods lead to inefficient use of time. A variety

of methods can be employed within a single subject, and such variety helps stimulate student motivation (Sabbah, 2015) [18]. When selecting and applying a method, one must consider its effectiveness and its relevance to the material being taught. The underlying objective is to foster student awareness of the importance of social life; this self-awareness requires support from both teachers and the learning environment, particularly in the social context of a religious community. Social interaction learning models note that "social interaction learning models significantly influence concepts of community and individual personality development within social interactions. If a community is religious in nature, this influences the desire to use a second language specifically Arabic, in an Islamic context. These models illustrate that the essence of human nature lies in forging social connections and creating a better society." Consequently, a fundamental challenge arises from the students' backgrounds; generally, they do not come from Ibtidaiyah or *Tsanawiyah* (junior secondary) levels, which provide foundational knowledge of Arabic. Even when students come from other Islamic school levels, they often lack prior knowledge of Arabic. A case in point involves Islamic schools that have been established for a long time and have produced hundreds of graduates.

Based on the researcher's observations, students are not required to communicate in Arabic when interacting with their teachers; this likely affects their interest and aptitude for Arabic as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, Arabic proficiency is not treated as a primary competency standard. It is certainly regrettable if *madrasa* graduates lack Arabic language skills. Given this situation, the researcher has chosen the title "Teacher Innovation in Developing Student Interest in Arabic at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu and Madrasah Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu" for this dissertation research.

Literature review

The concept of teachers' innovation

Innovation is defined as an idea, a practical application, a method, a procedure, or an artificial object that is perceived as new by an individual or a group of people (Dai, Ke, Dai, & Pachman, 2023) [3]. Consequently, educational innovation is essential. Innovation is a specific type of change: deliberate, novel, and purposeful, aimed at achieving system objectives (Nudin, Amin, & Sofyan, 2024) [10]. This novelty may stem from an invention or discovery used to reach a specific goal and is perceived as new by an individual or community; thus, the change is planned and intentional. Innovation can be understood as something new within a specific social context, employed to address or resolve a problem. In terms of form, this "novelty" might manifest as an idea, a concept, a physical object, or an action.

Regarding its meaning, the novelty may be entirely new previously non-existent which is termed an "invention," or it may not be entirely new having existed previously in a different social context which is termed a "discovery" (Aisya, Nurdin, & Pabontong, 2022) [1]. An example of the invention process is implementing a teaching method or approach that is entirely new and has never been used before, aimed at enhancing

learning effectiveness and efficiency; for instance, leveraging advancements in science and technology to design instruction delivered via mobile phones a practice that did not previously exist. Conversely, the discovery process is exemplified by an Arabic language teacher seeking new ideas to shape student behavior amidst changing times. Thus, innovation can occur through either the invention process or the discovery process. Wina Sanjaya defines instructional innovation as specific ideas, concepts, or actions within the realms of curriculum and instruction that are considered new and are intended to solve educational problems. In education, innovation typically arises from concerns held by certain parties about how education is conducted such as teachers' concerns about perceived lack of success in the teaching-learning process, administrators' concerns about performance, or broader concerns about performance, outcomes, and even the education system itself. Based on the perspectives mentioned above, educational innovation is something new within a specific social context, used to address or resolve a particular problem. In terms of form, this "something new" may take the form of an idea, a concept, a physical object, or an action. More explicitly, innovation does not necessarily require absolute novelty. A change can be regarded as an innovation if it is new to the individual, group, or institution introducing it. For instance, teamwork or participatory management introduced within an educational institution is considered an innovation if it is new to that specific institution, regardless of whether such teamwork methods have previously been implemented elsewhere. Innovation encompasses any effort introduced by an individual, group, or school that yields superior products, processes, or procedures, or establishes new and better ways of performing tasks. When implementing creativity in schools, innovations can range from minor adjustments to major overhauls of the school system. Innovation need not equate to the development of a complex system like the "Quantum Learning" module; some innovations can be introduced quickly (such as adopting a new classroom management model by rearranging student and teacher seating), while others may require a significant amount of time to implement, as seen in the adoption of "Community-Based Education." Thus, teacher innovation refers to an Arabic language educator's ability to express and actualize their intellectual potential by creating something new and unique or combining existing elements into something more engaging.

Curriculum innovation

Curriculum innovation entails changes to the design of lesson plans and instructional materials (Davis & Krajcik, 2005; Handelzalts, 2019) ^[4, 6]. It involves updating or refining the curriculum to ensure it remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with the times. Such innovation may include introducing new content, adopting more interactive learning approaches, or integrating new concepts that address student needs and contemporary demands. Innovation in teaching methods involves changes to instructional strategies and approaches. This can include interactive teaching techniques, project-based learning, or more contextual teaching methods.

Shulman highlights the importance of developing teachers' instructional skills and adapting teaching methods to meet students' learning needs effectively. Educational Technology. Educational technology is considered innovative when it improves learning outcomes. Mishra & Koehler introduced the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework, which emphasizes integrating knowledge of technology, pedagogy, and content. Innovation in educational technology involves developing and implementing digital tools, applications, or online learning platforms to enhance interactivity, accessibility, and overall learning effectiveness. Special programs such as specialized classes are considered innovations designed to address specific educational needs. Rogers argues that innovation can include introducing programs tailored to students with distinct characteristics, such as exceptional aptitude, special needs, or specific interests. These programs create learning environments better suited to individual needs and can improve learning outcomes. The primary objective of these various educational innovations is to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the education system, better meet students' learning needs, and prepare them for future challenges. Innovations in curriculum, teaching methods, educational technology, and special programs can work together to create a dynamic learning environment that responds to educational advancements and societal needs.

The objective of innovation

Developing special class programs reflects a commitment to improving the quality and relevance of education (Hartley, 2005; He & Tian, 2020) ^[7, 8]. Specific objectives associated with special class program innovations as outlined by Tomlinson include enhancing student academic achievement. A primary goal is to boost academic performance. Through curriculum adjustments, teaching methods, and individualized learning approaches, the program aims to provide the support students need to reach their full potential within the learning environment. Addressing learning difficulties. These programs often aim to tackle learning challenges faced by some students. The objective is to use more precise, in-depth strategies to help students overcome learning obstacles and engage more effectively with the curriculum. They provide tailored learning experiences. Special class programs are designed to offer learning experiences that align with individual student needs. This may involve differentiated teaching methods, adapted learning materials, or additional resources. The goal is to create a learning environment that embraces diversity and meets each student's unique needs, encouraging Student Participation and Engagement. Special class program innovations also aim to foster student participation and engagement in the learning process (Yamani & Nurdin, 2023) ^[21]. By tailoring educational approaches to students' interests and needs, the program seeks to stimulate motivation and a desire to learn. Achieving these objectives allows special class program innovations to make a tangible contribution to improving the overall quality of education. By prioritizing each student's needs and development, the program creates an inclusive and responsive learning environment that positively impacts both academic

and personal growth characteristics of effective innovation. The characteristics of effective innovation play a crucial role in achieving positive outcomes within the educational context.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, theory serves only as a guide for data gathering and analysis (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016) [11, 14]. The data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022) [16, 17]. The research was conducted at an Islamic Junior High School in Alkhairaat, Palu City, Indonesia. The researcher chose the schools based on the assumption that they implement teaching innovation policy in daily language teaching and learning. The results of this study can later serve as a reference and guideline for integrating local language into Islamic religion teaching and for making schools a model for other educational institutions. Data were collected through direct observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis. The interviews involved the school principal, five teachers, and ten students. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were reviewed with participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014) [12, 13]. The data analysis used a deductive approach, interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from interviews and field notes. Data analysis used thematic analysis following Strauss and Corbin (1998) [20]. The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is the set of themes identified from the data.

Results and Discussion

Forms of teacher innovation in developing students' interest in the Arabic language

Research conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu and Madrasah Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu reveals that Arabic language teachers employ various innovative instructional strategies, such as the audio-lingual method, game-based learning, group discussions, Arabic chat applications, online quizzes, and digital media like instructional videos. These strategies are varied across lessons to prevent student boredom and enhance engagement in the learning process. Interview findings further indicate that instructional innovation lies not only in using technology but also in the teacher's ability to integrate methods, media, and activities that align with students' characteristics. From an educational perspective, this approach is effective because a variety of teaching methods can meet students' diverse learning needs. According to constructivist learning theory, students grasp material more easily when they are actively involved in the learning process rather than passively receiving information from the teacher.

Several teachers have noted that integrating technology into education, employing interactive approaches, and utilizing varied teaching methods can make Arabic language learning more efficient, enjoyable, and aligned with students' needs.

Digital media and interactive approaches have proven effective in boosting student participation during the learning process. Employing a variety of methods and media types positively impacts students' enthusiasm for learning; students appear more eager to attend lessons, more active in discussions, more confident in asking questions, and more focused on the material presented by the teacher. This indicates that varying teaching strategies can alleviate student boredom during the learning process. Some students grasp material more easily through visual media such as images and videos, while others prefer learning activities that involve hands-on practice and social interaction. Consequently, applying diverse teaching methods and media offers students greater opportunities to understand the material in ways that suit their individual learning needs. The study's findings indicate that creative teaching strategies play a crucial role in enhancing student motivation in Arabic language classes at both *madrastas*. Implementing diverse learning approaches, utilizing digital media, and creating an interactive learning environment have proven effective in fostering active student participation. Evidence of this is seen in students' increased confidence in asking questions and expressing opinions, greater focus on the material being taught, and heightened enthusiasm for Arabic language learning activities. Furthermore, providing rewards and opportunities for active participation also helps boost learning motivation; conceptually, behaviors that receive positive feedback tend to be repeated.

When students receive praise, rewards, or recognition for their efforts, they feel valued and are motivated to engage more deeply in subsequent learning activities. These research findings align strongly with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through active participation in the learning process. The creative and innovative approaches employed by teachers such as group discussions, educational games, speaking exercises, and digital media provide opportunities for students to participate directly in their learning. Such active engagement ensures that students do not merely receive information passively but also construct their own understanding of the Arabic language material. Students reported that integrating technology, interactive approaches, and diverse teaching methods enhanced both their mastery of Arabic and their participation in the learning process. The study indicates that digital media creates a more engaging learning experience, thereby boosting student motivation. These findings align with the current study, which shows that instructional videos, PowerPoint, Quizizz, and Kahoot contribute to increased student learning motivation.

A communicative approach to Arabic language learning that fosters active student participation can enhance language skills while boosting learning motivation. The research explains that students grasp material more easily when directly involved in learning activities, rather than merely receiving one-way explanations from the teacher. These consistent findings show that active student engagement is crucial to successful Arabic learning. Furthermore, the humanistic approach to Arabic language instruction suggests that student-centered methods can increase learning motivation by giving students greater

scope to explore their capabilities. The study reveals that an interactive, communicative, and enjoyable learning environment can enhance both student self-confidence and engagement in the Arabic learning process. These findings are grounded not only in constructivism and learning motivation theories. However, they are also reinforced by previous research indicating a positive correlation between teaching innovation, technology utilization, active student participation, and increased learning motivation. This demonstrates that the research results rest on a solid theoretical and empirical foundation and are relevant to current developments in Arabic language education. Additionally, the study's findings align with learning motivation theories, which suggest that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence motivation.

In this study, the teacher's innovative approach serves as an external factor that can foster students' internal motivation. When students encounter learning experiences that are engaging, enjoyable, and aligned with their needs, an intrinsic drive to participate more actively in the learning process emerges. This leads to increased student attention, engagement, and enthusiasm during Arabic language instruction. Overall, the study's findings address the research objectives and support the initially proposed hypothesis. This research aimed to explore the innovative strategies employed by teachers in Arabic language instruction and their impact on student learning motivation at the two *madrasahs*.

Challenges to teachers' innovation in developing students' interest in the Arabic language

In general, issues related to Arabic language instruction can be categorized into two major groups: linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors. Linguistic factors encompass several aspects, such as: (a) inherent differences in language characteristics, including fundamental distinctions in grammatical systems; (b) specific differences between Arabic and Indonesian; and (c) even more specific disparities regarding sound systems and writing systems. Then there are non-linguistic factors. Fiddaroini concurs that these factors revolve around issues such as student aptitude and psychological traits, socio-cultural differences between native Arabic speakers and Indonesian learners, and practical considerations regarding physical facilities, infrastructure, and the scheduling of Arabic lessons. Broadly speaking, non-linguistic issues are often perceived as more complex within many educational institutions. This situation disrupts the learning process and ultimately affects students' ability to meet learning objectives. Addressing the challenges of Arabic language instruction can be achieved through collaboration with external parties; specifically, higher education institutions or universities could partner with Islamic schools to resolve these instructional issues.

Based on this background, this study aims to provide an overview of the issues surrounding Arabic language instruction in *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic Senior High Schools) in Palu, specifically focusing on non-linguistic challenges. The study is expected to offer comprehensive information regarding the landscape of problems in Arabic instruction at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Jakarta, serving as evaluative input for school

leadership and management regarding their commitment to supporting high-quality Arabic language instruction. Arabic language instruction is inherently complex at any educational level, and this complexity gives rise to various issues. Fundamentally, these problems stem from the parties involved in the instructional process such as the school head, teachers, students, and supporting educational staff as well as the relationships among them. In general, theories regarding Arabic language instruction challenges are diverse, reflecting the various types of problems found within the learning environment. Linguistic issues at this level include phonetic challenges specifically Arabic letter sounds and their correct pronunciation as well as vocabulary issues involving Arabic words related to learning topics whose meanings must be understood in Indonesian. Finally, syntactic issues concern constructing grammatically correct Arabic sentences appropriate to the discourse context. Meanwhile, non-linguistic issues encompass the following aspects:

- Issues regarding student motivation and interest in learning Arabic. Motivation is a crucial factor directly linked to learning behavior and outcomes. Student motivation can stem from within resulting from positive past learning experiences or from external sources such as parents, family, the school environment, the community, and so forth. This motivation must be continuously nurtured and sustained so that students develop an affinity for the Arabic language and, consequently, achieve successful learning outcomes.
- Issues regarding individual differences among students in a single class. Students' Arabic language proficiency within a class naturally varies; this is partly because some students may have studied Arabic during their previous schooling, while others are encountering the language for the first time in their current school. Furthermore, even among students who begin learning at the same time and in the same class, proficiency levels differ based on individual achievement. Students' learning orientations also vary, shaped by their personal perspectives or individual life goals.
- Issues regarding learning support facilities and infrastructure. These issues can arise in *madrasah* (Islamic schools) even when they have adequate teaching facilities and infrastructure. In schools equipped with good facilities, problems may occur if they are not utilized optimally, meaning students fail to benefit from the available resources. Conversely, schools lacking adequate teaching facilities often rely on conventional approaches and methods, utilizing only whatever basic aids are available. Consequently, the teaching environment often lacks the capacity to strongly motivate students unless the teacher is skilled enough to overcome these challenges.

Conclusion

Teacher innovations aimed at fostering students' interest in the Arabic language at Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu are realized through various efforts focused on boosting learning motivation, discipline, and

student engagement in the learning process. Teachers consistently encourage students to cultivate a strong interest in Arabic studies and to meet the competency standards established by the *madrasah*. Implemented innovations include enforcing classroom discipline, maintaining punctuality in teaching, and using well-planned instructional materials that align with applicable norms and regulations. Furthermore, some teachers have utilized information technology-based media to support the learning process. However, the use of technology-based instructional innovations still needs to be enhanced to boost students' interest in Arabic more effectively and to support the use of Arabic as the medium of instruction for Islamic studies. Research findings from Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Aliyah Alkhairaat Pusat Palu indicate that Arabic teachers employ various innovative instructional strategies; specifically, five learning models were identified. Teachers have integrated IT-based media into their instruction, allowing them to incorporate these tools into their lesson planning. The five Arabic language learning models are: (1) the Jigsaw cooperative learning model, (2) the "Power of Two" learning model, (3) the flashcard learning model, (4) the card sort learning model, and (5) the "chained whisper" (telephone game) learning model.

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