Arabic language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

Changing the curriculum requires various academic communities to quickly adapt to all changes. The Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Kota Blitar was only implemented in the 2023/2024 school year. This study aims to describe the problems of teachers and students in learning Arabic using the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Kota Blitar. Researchers used case study research with data collection techniques in the form of observation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed by following the stages of Miles & Huberman, namely reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study found that the problems faced by teachers focused on the pedagogical aspects of teaching, namely (1) developing teaching modules for the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) choosing a learning model that is relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum, and (3) applying formative assessment in learning. Meanwhile, student problems are classified into internal and external problems. Internal problems faced by students in learning Arabic are (1) lack of basic Arabic language skills and (2) low motivation to learn. While external problems are (1) a less supportive environment and (2) limited learning resources.

Keywords: *Education, Merdeka Curriculum, Arabid Learning.*

Introduction

Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar is an integral part of efforts to support a deeper understanding of Islamic culture and teachings. As well as the opinion of Ibn Khaldun who considers that Arabic is the main science that must

be mastered first to understand religious knowledge.[1] Arabic is an ancient Semitic language originating from the descendants of Sam, son of Noah, once spoken in Western Asia and now preserved through few rock inscriptions.[2] In addition, Arabic language learning is expected to prepare students to become human beings who have quality and are ready to face the challenges of the times. In this context, the implementation of the merdeka curriculum as a new approach to learning is both a challenge and an opportunity to strengthen the essence of Arabic language education.

The Merdeka Curriculum was officially launched by the Minister of Education on February 11, 2022. This curriculum adopts the learning concept envisioned by Ki Hajar Dewantara. Students are given the freedom to explore their knowledge independently and creatively so that an independent character is created.[3] The Merdeka Curriculum is considered more flexible as it adapts to the characteristics and needs of students to face the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution and the 5.0 society era. Students are considered to have diverse talents and intelligence. Therefore, the emphasis in this learning system is not on the final result, but on the process of character building that can be done inside or outside the classroom. This is expected to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for students and teachers by not burdening lessons with scores or minimum completion criteria.[4]

MAN Kota Blitar began implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the 2023/2024 academic year. The application of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar can be seen from the use of the PjBL method. Uniquely, teachers associate PjBL with the students' learning environment. Through poster-making activities, students are asked to promote tourist attractions in their surroundings. This kind of activity is in line with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to develop high-quality students who are capable of becoming agents of change and contributing maximally to the progress of their surrounding environment.[5]

The differences between K13 and the Merdeka Curriculum mean that the curriculum transition process requires time to adapt. It is not uncommon for this process to encounter obstacles that can interfere with the achievement of learning objectives. Wantiana & Mellisa, in their research mentioned that teachers experience three main obstacles in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, namely (1) the lack of socialization activities related to the Merdeka curriculum

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[1] Hilman Rasyid, "Konsep Dan Urgensi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Menurut Ibnu Khaldun Dalam Kitab Muqaddimah Dan Relevansinya Di Indonesia," *ALSUNIYAT: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Arab* 1, no. 1 (2018): 57–72.

[2] Yusuf Arisandi, Abdul Fatah Mufadhil, and Nurhanifansyah Nurhanifansyah, "طريقة تدريس اللغة العربية باستخدام الكتاب 'لا تسكت'," *Kilmatuna: Journal Of Arabic Education* 5, no. 1 (April 30, 2025): 84–100.

[3] Yekti Ardianti and Nur Amalia, "Kurikulum Merdeka: Pemaknaan Merdeka Dalam Perencanaan Pembelajaran Di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan* 6, no. 3 (December 28, 2022): 399–407, doi:10.23887/jppp.v6i3.55749.

[4] Mira Marisa, "Inovasi Kurikulum 'Merdeka Belajar' Di Era Society 5.0," *Santhet (Jurnal Sejarah Pendidikan Dan Humaniora)* 5, no. 1 (2021): 66–78.

[5] Eva Dwi Endah Silvia and Feri Tirtoni, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Berbasis Pendidikan Karakter Peduli Lingkungan Di Sekolah Adiwiyata," *Visipena* 13, no. 2 (2023): 130–44.

from the government, (2) the lack of teacher experience in using curriculum learning tools, and (3) the limited availability of learning resources related to the Merdeka curriculum.[6]

Qomaruddin in his research shows that teachers face three main problems, namely: (1) difficulties in developing lesson plans that are in line with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) limitations in determining relevant learning techniques and methods, and (3) obstacles in developing formative assessments. Qomaruddin emphasizes that these problems can be overcome gradually through collective strategies, such as the formation of teacher consultation teams, as well as through training programs designed to improve teachers' competence and readiness in managing learning.[7]

Curriculum changes also affect students' learning styles. In learning, students in the 2013 Curriculum (K13) generally experience a structured and consistent process following a scientific approach, with the same material for all students in accordance with Basic Competencies (KD) that are dense and focused on mastering certain types of texts. Standardized rubric-based assessments and written tests make evaluation clear, but learning is often monotonous for students who understand quickly and puts pressure on students who need more time. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum provides a more varied, collaborative, and contextual learning experience through the selection of essential competency-based materials and real projects such as poster making, videos, or literacy campaigns. In addition, assessment emphasizes process, portfolio, and creative results so that students feel their contributions are more valued, although some who are not accustomed to independent learning tend to be confused by the flexible flow. However, this flexibility encourages higher motivation and engagement, especially when the topic is of interest.[8]

Sobhi & Preece in their research on foreign language learning problems found that the problems faced by students in language learning are (1) lack of linguistic knowledge, (2) lack of motivation and confidence, and (3) excessive use of Arabic. The study also recommended several techniques to improve the quality of learning while helping students overcome limitations in speaking skills, one of which is through the application of a communicative approach in English classes. These findings emphasize that teachers play an important role as learning facilitators, requiring them to have the skills to apply differentiated learning that can meet the diverse needs of students.[9]

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[6] Ira Wantiana and Mellisa Mellisa, "Kendala Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Basicedu* 7, no. 3 (July 7, 2023): 1461–65, doi:10.31004/basicedu.v7i3.5149.

[7] Farid Qomaruddin, "Problematika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Di MA Nasyi'in Sidoarjo," *JALIE; Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (2022): 251–68.

[8] Aditya Apriawan Saputra and Agung Stiawan, "Kajian Review Kurikulum K13 Dan Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Implikasinya Terhadap Pembelajaran Di Masa Mendatang," *SOSEARCH: Social Science Educational Research* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–17.

[9] Bandar Mohammad Saeed Al-Sobhi and Abdul Shakour Preece, "Teaching English Speaking Skills to the Arab Students in the Saudi School in Kuala Lumpur: Problems and Solutions," *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2018): 1–11, doi:https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.6n.1p.1.

This study aims to describe in depth the problems faced by teachers and students in learning Arabic using the Merdeka Curriculum at MAN Kota Blitar. The focus of the study is not only on identifying obstacles, but also on exploring the underlying causes, both from the perspective of teachers and students, so as to obtain a more comprehensive description of the dynamics of Arabic language learning in the era of curriculum transition. A thorough understanding of these problems is very important to ensure the optimal achievement of educational goals. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions, namely recommendations for applicable solutions for teachers, schools, and policy makers in designing more adaptive, effective, innovative, and contextual learning strategies, especially for Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar.

Research Method

Case studies are an approach used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the problems faced by teachers in Arabic language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Case studies, as part of qualitative research, aim to analyze real phenomena in a community without controlling the social symptoms being studied. Nasution[10] emphasized that case studies allow researchers to see symptoms as they are so that the reality in the field can be described in its entirety. In this context, the research was conducted at MAN Kota Blitar with two 10th-grade Arabic teachers and 367 10th-grade students in phase E as the research subjects. The selection of these subjects aimed to provide a concrete representation of the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of Arabic language learning.

Research data was collected through several techniques, namely observation of teaching and learning activities, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, questionnaires filled out by 200 randomly selected students, and review of learning documents such as teaching modules and curriculum tools. Data analysis was conducted using the stages proposed by Miles & Huberman, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.[11] In line with this, Adlini et al. stated that Miles & Huberman's qualitative data analysis is effective for finding patterns, relationships, and meanings from complex field data.[12]

Results and Discussions

Teacher Problems in Learning Arabic Based on an Merdeka Curriculum

According to Government Regulation PP RI No. 74 of 2008, professional teachers must have four competencies in order to conduct effective learning. These competencies include pedagogical competence, professional competence, social

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[10] Abdul Fattah Nasution, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif," 2023.

[11] Matthew B Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (California: Sage Publications, 1994).

[12] Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Jurnal Edumaspul* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80.

competence, and personal competence. The problems faced by Arabic teachers at MAN Kota Blitar in implementing the independent curriculum focus on the pedagogical aspect. Pedagogical competence is the ability of teachers to (1) understand the characteristics and potential of students and (2) design, implement, and evaluate learning as a basis for managing the learning process. Teachers must possess this competence to avoid malpractice in educating children, whether technical, conceptual, or personal errors. This aspect is also needed by teachers to systematically understand current phenomena emerging in the world of education. This includes the phenomena emerging during the transition to the Merdeka curriculum.[13] Based on the data obtained, the problems faced by teachers in Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar focus on the following three things:

a. **Developing an Merdeka Curriculum Teaching Module**

   In the context of Arabic language learning, the most prominent obstacle appears to be in the learning design stage. Based on observations, teachers at MAN Kota Blitar do not yet have Arabic teaching modules that are specifically designed according to the needs and characteristics of students at the school. The modules currently in use are still the result of a workshop organized by the Blitar Arabic teachers' forum, so they tend to be general in nature and do not fully accommodate the local context or the specific needs of students. In fact, the development of teaching modules should consider various important aspects, such as the socio-cultural background of students, their readiness and learning achievements, technological developments, and the surrounding learning environment. Ramadhan emphasized that effective teaching modules are contextual, adaptive, and relevant to the needs of students, so that they are not only technical guidelines for learning but also serve as a means of strengthening students' motivation and language skills.[14]

   Preparatory efforts had been made by schools before the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including through socialization activities and workshops. It was noted that schools had held three workshops focusing on curriculum introduction and teaching tool development. These activities also involved collaboration with the Blitar City and Regency MGMP (teachers' forum) as a means of improving teacher competence. According to Wantiana & Mellisa, experience in this type of training is essential for teachers to update their competence, improve their professionalism, and accelerate their adaptation to the new curriculum policy.[15]

   The training attended by teachers resulted in teaching materials that were then further developed for use in the classroom. Research by Nurhayati, Emilzoli, & Fu'adiah even showed that similar training was proven to improve teachers' skills in developing teaching modules and P5 modules, from an initial achievement of 32.25% to 91.15%.[16] In the first semester, MAN Kota Blitar also successfully implemented P5 with the theme "Student Council Chair

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[13] Diana Widhi Rachmawati et al., *Teori & Konsep Pedagogik* (Penerbit Insania, 2021).

[14] Iwan Ramadhan, "Dinamika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Pada Aspek Perangkat Dan Proses Pembelajaran," *Academy of Education Journal* 14, no. 2 (2023): 622–34.

[15] Wantiana and Mellisa, "Kendala Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka."

[16] Pipih Nurhayati, Mario Emilzoli, and Dzikra Fu'adiah, "Peningkatan Keterampilan Penyusunan Modul Ajar Dan Modul Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *JMM (Jurnal Masyarakat Mandiri)* 6, no. 5 (2022).

Elections." However, the implementation did not involve Arabic language learning, so its contribution to the development of teaching modules for this subject was still limited.

Although conceptually teachers understand the framework for developing teaching modules, the interview results show that there are difficulties in designing tools that are truly contextual, applicable, and in line with learning outcomes, learning objectives, and learning objective flow. The limited literature and references based on the Merdeka Curriculum for Arabic further exacerbates these challenges. The workshops attended by teachers are still general in scope and not specific to Arabic, so teachers learn mostly through self-study. The findings of Wantiana & Mellisa, which state that the availability of learning resources and teaching modules for the Merdeka Curriculum is still limited, reinforce the fact that Arabic teachers face a double challenge: adapting to new policies while searching for relevant references.[17]

This condition shows that the development of teaching modules is not merely a technical issue, but is also closely related to the pedagogical capacity of teachers. Teachers are required to have a deep understanding of student characteristics, creativity in relating Arabic language material to the current context, and institutional support in the form of subject-based special training. Without such support, teaching modules have the potential to become merely administrative documents rather than real tools that support meaningful learning. This is reinforced by Masturoh & Mahmudi, who emphasize that the development of teaching modules must be carried out systematically, based on clear learning objectives, and directed at the continuous development of students' skills.[18]

b. **Selecting a Learning Model That is Relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum**

Based on the results of observations, the implementation of Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar is still limited to lecture and discovery learning methods. Teachers have difficulty assimilating Arabic language material into various learning models that are relevant to the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum. This is in line with the findings of Qomaruddin, who explains that during the transition period, teachers still need time and guidance to adjust to changes in curriculum characteristics.[19] Furthermore, Wantiana and Mellisa emphasize that the government has an important role in accelerating the adaptation process of teachers through various socialization activities, training, and workshops that are more focused on real problems in the field.[20]

Curriculum changes in Indonesia are actually a response to the needs of society and the times. Since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has undergone eleven curriculum changes, culminating in the implementation of

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[17] Wantiana and Mellisa, "Kendala Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka."

[18] Fitri Masturoh and Ihwan Mahmudi, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab," *Kalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 4, no. 2 (July 25, 2023): 207–32, doi:10.52593/klm.04.2.07.

[19] Qomaruddin, "Problematika Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Di MA Nasyi'in Sidoarjo."

[20] Wantiana and Mellisa, "Kendala Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka."

the Merdeka Curriculum.[21] Each curriculum has different objectives and characteristics, which are then implemented in learning through the selection of specific learning methods and models. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, the selection of learning models must be in line with the principles of flexibility, independent learning, and strengthening the character of Pancasila Student Profiles.

One model that is relevant to the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum is Project Based Learning (PjBL). According to Masturoh and Mahmudi, PjBL is an effective model for fostering collaborative skills, independence, and the character of Pancasila Student Profile through real projects carried out by students. With PjBL, students not only focus on theoretical understanding but also develop competencies through contextual practical experiences. This concept is in line with the spirit of "independent learning" which is oriented towards meaningful, enjoyable, and learner-centered learning.[22]

In addition to PjBL, Blended Learning is also an ideal learning model for integrating technological developments with learning activities. According to Yamin and Syahrir, Blended Learning combines online and offline learning, providing flexibility in the learning process while improving students' digital literacy. This model is in line with the demands of the 4.0 industrial revolution, which emphasizes mastery of three new literacies, namely human literacy, data literacy, and technological literacy. By integrating digital technology into Arabic language learning, students not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also become accustomed to the crucial 21st-century skills needed in the global era.[23]

Thus, teachers' difficulties in determining relevant learning models can be solved by selecting strategies that are in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The use of PjBL and Blended Learning are alternatives that can support students to learn more actively, creatively, and contextually. However, the success of its implementation still requires continuous support in the form of special training, subject-based mentoring, and collaboration between teachers so that this learning model can be effectively implemented at MAN Kota Blitar.

c. **Implementing Formative Assessment in Learning Evaluation**

Based on observations, teachers still focus on summative assessment as the main form of learning evaluation. This assessment is carried out through assignments in the form of exercises and tests at the end of each learning theme, as well as a joint exam at the end of the semester that aims to measure more comprehensively the students' ability to master the material for a full semester. As a result, learning outcomes tend to emphasize only academic aspects, while skills and attitudes, which are also important in Arabic language learning, are not fully accommodated in an optimal manner.

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[21] Yose Indarta et al., "Relevansi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dengan Model Pembelajaran Abad 21 Dalam Perkembangan Era Society 5.0," *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (2022): 3011–24.

[22] Masturoh and Mahmudi, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab."

[23] Muhammad Yamin and Syahrir Syahrir, "Pembangunan Pendidikan Merdeka Belajar (Telaah Metode Pembelajaran)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education* 6, no. 1 (2020): 126–36.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, learning does not only emphasize the final learning outcomes of students, but also pays close attention to the process that students go through in achieving these competencies. Therefore, formative evaluation is emphasized because it serves to provide quick feedback to teachers and students. In general, evaluation can be grouped into two types, namely formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is carried out during the learning process with the aim of improving or changing the learning strategies that are being implemented, while summative evaluation is used to see the overall results of a program carried out at the end of learning.[24]

Formative evaluation plays an important role in identifying learning deficiencies through the collection of information in the characteristics of students, design, implementation, and learning support facilities. This information can be collected through instruments such as questionnaires, interview guidelines, observation sheets, and simple diagnostic tests given in the middle of the learning process. In this way, teachers can identify students' mastery of the material early on so that they can immediately make decisions to improve strategies or provide special treatment.[25] Unfortunately, teachers still face obstacles because they are not accustomed to developing applicable formative assessment instruments, let alone integrating them into ongoing learning activities.

To address this issue, strategic solutions are required. First, schools can establish teacher learning communities that serve as forums for teachers to share best practices in designing formative assessment instruments. The study by Surya Hermawan et al. showed that teachers' understanding of assessment improved significantly after joining the Learning Community program.[26] Second, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affair or the Department of Education, should organize continuous socialization and workshops to help teachers become more familiar with the new assessment paradigm in the Merdeka Curriculum. Workshop materials should not only be theoretical but also include hands-on practices such as examples of portfolio assessment rubrics, project-based assessments, student reflection journals, and oral tests designed to evaluate communication skills.

Student Problems in Arabic Language Learning Based on an Merdeka Curriculum

In this study, student problems are grouped into internal and external problems. The internal factors can be physical and psychological. Physical factors are related to body organs that affect physical health. Psychological factors are related to mental, attitude, or behavior such as motivation, talent, interest, intelligence, readiness, and maturity. Meanwhile, external factors are the environment that

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[24] Fitri Mawaddah Bako et al., "Pengawasan Dan Evaluasi Program Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren," *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2018): 61–69.

[25] Ina Magdalena et al., "Menganalisis Pelaksanaan Evaluasi Formatif Siswa Di MI Nurul Huda Kota Tangerang," *NUSANTARA* 2, no. 3 (2020): 487–95.

[26] I Made Surya Hermawan et al., "Learning Community: Alternatif Solusi Peningkatan Pemahaman Guru Terhadap Asesmen Pembelajaran Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Santiaji Pendidikan (JSP)* 13, no. 2 (2023): 156–63.

includes family, school, and society.[27] Based on the questionnaire results, the internal problems faced by students in participating in Arabic learning are the lack of basic Arabic language skills and low motivation to learn. While external problems are limited learning resources and a less supportive environment.

Internal problems

a. **Basic Arabic language skills**

The Arabic language material provided at islamic high school is no longer learning Arabic from scratch. Based on the survey, 54% of students felt that they did not have enough capital to take part in Arabic learning. Although almost all students (95.5%) have studied Arabic, students' Arabic education backgrounds vary. Students who graduated from madrasah schools can be said to have enough capital to continue their education at MAN. Islamic high school are integrated schools from elementary school to senior high school levels using a curriculum that refers to religious education imposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[28] Whereas students who study Arabic only at boarding schools, diniyah institutions, or other informal educational institutions, they can have higher or lower standards.

According to Vygotsky, students need more competent learning partners to reach higher cognitive stages.[29] Teachers can use cooperative learning models to overcome the comprehension gap in Arabic language learning. This learning model groups students with diverse ability levels to improve their understanding of the material and solve problems collectively.[30] Cooperative learning is also very much in line with the gotong royong dimension in the Pancasila learner profile. Students are required to be able to collaborate, have a caring attitude, be responsible, and be reliable in dealing with problems.[31]

The current merdeka curriculum implements differentiated learning that highly values individual differences and emphasizes learning design that suits student needs in terms of content, process, and learning style.[32] In Arabic language learning, teachers have implemented differentiated learning well. Based on the survey, students are greatly helped by teachers to follow the learning well. Through evaluation activities, teachers categorize students into complete and incomplete groups. Furthermore, the teacher approaches students who are not yet complete individually to be given action in the form of additional exercises and explanations related to the material according to

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[27] Slameto, *Belajar Dan Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhinya*, 5th ed. (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2010).

[28] Ahmad Arifai, "Pengembangan Kurikulum Pesantren, Madrasah Dan Sekolah," *Raudhah Proud To Be Professionals: Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah* 3, no. 2 (2018): 13–20.

[29] Yayu Tresna Suci, "Menelaah Teori Vygotsky Dan Interdepedensi Sosial Sebagai Landasan Teori Dalam Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Kooperatif Di Sekolah Dasar," *Naturalistic: Jurnal Kajian Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 3, no. 1 (2018): 231–39.

[30] Syahraini Tambak, "Metode Cooperative Learning Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 14, no. 1 (2017): 1–17.

[31] Dini Irawati et al., "Profil Pelajar Pancasila Sebagai Upaya Mewujudkan Karakter Bangsa," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1224–38.

[32] Ajeng Gelora Mastuti, Abdillah Abdillah, and Maya Rumodar, "Peningkatan Kualitas Pembelajaran Guru Melalui Workshop Dan Pendampingan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi," *JMM (Jurnal Masyarakat Mandiri)* 6, no. 5 (2022).

student needs. Meanwhile, students who have completed are given additional enrichment related to the material.

b. Low Motivation to Learn

As many as 66% of students stated that the reason they study Arabic is to fulfill school obligations. This means that not a few students have a low interest in Arabic. This will certainly greatly affect students' learning motivation. Learning motivation is the desire or drive to carry out learning activities contained in students as an effort to achieve learning goals. Student learning outcomes are strongly influenced by learning motivation.[33] Therefore, student learning outcomes can be improved by increasing student learning motivation. Although learning outcomes are not the only measure of learning success, learning outcomes can be a measure of the extent to which learning has succeeded in improving students' cognitive aspects.[34]

Based on the survey, there are 58.5% of students who feel more motivated to learn Arabic after participating in Arabic language learning. Students enjoy learning because teachers are patient in helping overcome learning difficulties and do not give too much burden to students. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to be creative through writing and dialogue activities. However, students who have low motivation in learning are also quite a lot. Students feel bored because learning is not varied and interactive.

Learning motivation can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a stimulus from within students that encourages students to carry out learning activities. Students who have this motivation will tend to show better activeness in learning because the satisfaction is being able to solve problems and do tasks well in learning. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation is the encouragement to perform learning actions that are influenced by external factors from individuals such as invitation, coercion, praise, attention, challenges, and gifts from teachers. If students have a low interest in learning, then the teacher must play a role in fostering extrinsic motivation so that students want to learn.[35]

Teachers play an important role in increasing student learning motivation. in this case, Arianti mentions 6 teacher roles as follows:

1. Creating a conducive classroom atmosphere

   Teachers can start by building positive relationships with students, getting to know students, understanding their uniqueness, and treating students fairly. Furthermore, to create a comfortable atmosphere, teachers can make an agreement on class rules that must be consistently enforced.

2. Making learning student-centered

   In the merdeka curriculum, students must be actively involved. Teachers can provide activities that trigger students to be active, such as giving projects, group discussions, and questions and answers.

3. Using varied learning methods

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[33] Rike Andriani and Rasto Rasto, "Motivasi Belajar Sebagai Determinan Hasil Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Pendidikan Manajemen Perkantoran* 4, no. 1 (2019): 80–86.

[34] Agustin Sukses Dakhi, "Peningkatan Hasil Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Education and Development* 8, no. 2 (2020): 468.

[35] Harbeng Masni, "Strategi Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Mahasiswa," *Jurnal Ilmiah Dikdaya* 5, no. 1 (2017): 34–45.

Variations in learning are needed to prevent student boredom in learning. Varied learning can be done by using various learning media, such as word cards, power points, e-learning and utilization of language applications.

4. Increase enthusiasm and enthusiasm in teaching

Teachers can add games and chants in the middle of the lesson. The commonly known term for this activity is ice breaking which can be used to restore students' focus due to boredom.

5. Creating activities that involve students in the classroom

Learning activities need to involve students and their friends in the classroom. Cooperative learning can be one of the models used. Students will work together and share their knowledge to complete tasks from the teacher.

6. Rewarding students

Giving awards can lead to healthy competition between students to be the best. awards are given to students on the basis of appreciation for achievements and efforts in learning. Awards can be in the form of praise, goods, and grades.[36]

External problems

a. Unsupportive Learning Environment

The learning environment can be defined as the conditions and facilities used in learning. A conducive environment is essential for realizing meaningful learning as promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.[37] In addition, the learning environment, both physical and social, has a major influence on the achievement of learning objectives.[38] In fact, research by Alawiyah, Ghozali, and Suwarsito confirms the significant influence of the learning environment on learning outcomes.[39] Therefore, schools need to be committed to providing an environment that is not only physically comfortable, such as clean, well-organized classrooms equipped with supporting facilities, but also socially conducive through harmonious interactions between teachers and student.

Based on observations and interviews with teachers, the physical learning environment at MAN Kota Blitar is adequate. Classroom facilities are relatively complete, as each room is equipped with a whiteboard, LCD projector, fan, and adequate lighting. The school also has a computer lab and library to support learning. However, some classrooms still need facility improvements to optimally support student learning comfort. In phase E, there are 11 classrooms with a total of 367 students grouped according to their

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[36] Arianti Arianti, "Peranan Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa," *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan* 12, no. 2 (2019): 117–34.

[37] Parlin Tambunan, M Fikry Ardhiansyah, and Muhammad Galviando Kurniawan, "Pengaruh Suasana Lingkungan Belajar Terhadap Konsentrasi Belajar Siswa Dalam Mata Pelajaran Produktif," *Jurnal Pensil: Pendidikan Teknik Sipil* 9, no. 3 (2020): 175–82.

[38] Amilatus Sholihah and Riza Yonisa Kurniawan, "Analisis Pengaruh Motivasi Belajar Dan Lingkungan Belajar Terhadap Hasil Belajar," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi (JUPE)* 4, no. 3 (2016).

[39] Sufi Alawiyah, Syukri Ghozali, and Suwarsito Suwarsito, "Pengaruh Lingkungan Dan Motivasi Belajar Terhadap Prestasi Belajar," *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran* 2, no. 2 (2019): 134–38.

chosen skills. The number of students per class varies between 21 and 36, and this condition poses its own challenges because the more students there are, the more diverse the characteristics and learning needs that teachers must accommodate.

The diversity of students' backgrounds is also an important factor that affects the dynamics of learning. From a social perspective, teachers face challenges in forming positive learning habits amid the increasingly discussed phenomenon of moral decadence among teenagers, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered the phenomenon of learning loss. As emphasized by Listari, morality is closely related to learning habits, so that bad habits formed in the family or neighborhood have the potential to be carried into the classroom.[40] MAN Kota Blitar students come from various types of schools and different social environments. The interview results show that some students still carry learning habits that are not supportive from their previous environments, such as a lack of discipline in doing assignments or a lack of motivation to practice Arabic outside of class. In this context, teachers have an important role in guiding, controlling, and directing students so that they can build a more disciplined and positive learning character.

Specifically in Arabic language learning, the language environment *(bi'ah lughawiyah)* at MAN Kota Blitar is still not optimal. Observations show that learning activities are still centered in the classroom, with theory dominating over practice. Teachers also still use Indonesian extensively in delivering material, so students have very limited opportunities to practice Arabic directly. Second language acquisition is more effective when accompanied by informal communication with native speakers, not just through theoretical study.[41]

In addition to regular class hours, the school actually provides a forum for students who are interested in developing their Arabic language skills through the Arabic Club extracurricular activity. However, out of a total of 367 students in phase E, only 15 students actively participate in this activity. This shows that the Arabic language reinforcement program has not yet become a shared culture in the school. The school also does not yet have a mandatory additional program to support the improvement of students' language skills. In fact, the implementation of additional programs such as morning conversation has proven to be effective, as implemented at MA Unggulan K.H. Abd Wahab Hasbullah. Research by Shobirin, Arrosyid, and Khotimah proves that the morning conversations program has a significant impact on improving speaking skills while fostering students' interest and enthusiasm in learning Arabic.[42]

To overcome the problems in the learning environment at MAN Kota Blitar, strategies that emphasize facility improvements, the creation of the language environment, and the strengthening of students' learning habits are needed.

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[40] Lasmida Listari, "Dekadensi Moral Remaja (Upaya Pembinaan Moral Oleh Keluarga Dan Sekolah)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi Dan Humaniora* 12, no. 1 (2021): 7–12.

[41] Neli Putri, "Bi'ah 'Arabiyah," *Al-Ta'lim Journal* 20, no. 2 (2013): 407–13.

[42] Mochammad Syafiuddin Shobirin, Mokhammad Iqbal Arrosyid, and Husnul Khotimah, "Inisiatif Pendidikan Unggul: Program Muhadatsah Bahasa Arab Di MA Unggulan KH ABD Wahab Hasbulloh," *ISLAMIKA* 6, no. 2 (2024): 576–86.

Improving inadequate facilities can increase learning comfort, while consistent discipline and motivation help shape students' positive character. On the other hand, the development of practice-based programs such as morning conversation, intensive classes, or the integration of Arabic into daily activities needs to be strengthened so that students have more space to practice outside of class hours. Collaboration between teachers, students, and the school is also important to create a conducive learning ecosystem so that the school environment truly becomes the main supporter of improving students' Arabic language skills.

b. Limited Learning Resources

Learning resources are anything that can be used to support the learning process of students. In general, learning resources serve to improve the efficiency and quality of learning, facilitate independent learning, provide a scientific basis, help students understand abstract material, and broaden the scope of learning experiences. In this context, teachers play a major role in selecting, developing, and maximizing available learning resources. The selection of appropriate learning resources must consider learning objectives, student conditions, the learning environment, and the real needs of students.[43] Thus, learning resources are not merely complementary, but important instruments that determine the success of Arabic language learning.

Based on the results of observations and questionnaires distributed to students at MAN Kota Blitar, it was found that the use of Arabic learning resources is still very limited. Teachers tend to rely solely on student worksheets (LKS) as the only main learning resource. As a result, 58% of students stated that the available learning resources were insufficient to help them learn independently without teacher assistance. This condition causes difficulties for students when they have to repeat or deepen the material outside of class hours. In fact, the Merdeka Curriculum requires students to have independent learning in accordance with the characteristics of the Pancasila Student Profile, so that the limitations of learning resources directly become an obstacle in achieving learning objectives.[44]

In addition, monotonous learning resources also have an impact on student learning motivation. Most students admitted that they were not interested in revisiting Arabic material outside of class because it was only available in the form of workbooks with simple and limited presentation. In fact, research shows that varied and interesting learning resources can increase student engagement and foster intrinsic motivation to learn.[45] In other words, the limitation of learning resources is not only a matter of access, but also the quality and appeal of the content offered.

From the perspective of the Merdeka Curriculum, the use of technology is an important aspect for expanding access to learning resources. MAN Kota Blitar actually already has supporting facilities such as computer laboratories, LCD

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[43] Supriadi Supriadi, "Pemanfaatan Sumber Belajar Dalam Proses Pembelajaran," *Lantanida Journal* 3, no. 2 (2017): 127–39.

[44] Irawati et al., "Profil Pelajar Pancasila Sebagai Upaya Mewujudkan Karakter Bangsa."

[45] Fedik Novibriawan, "Literature Review: E-Learning Sebagai Sumber Dan Media Belajar Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar," *Journal of Science and Education Research* 2, no. 2 (2023): 31–37.

projectors in every classroom, and a policy that allows students to use gadgets in learning. However, the facts on the ground show that this potential has not been fully utilized by Arabic teachers. Novibriawan emphasizes that technology can provide a variety of learning resources, ranging from computers for completing assignments and listening to audio lessons, LCD projectors for displaying visual materials, internet networks for accessing e-learning content, to interactive language learning applications that allow students to practice with native speakers.[46] Unfortunately, these opportunities have not been fully integrated into daily learning.

The limited use of learning resources indicates an urgent need for teachers to improve their digital literacy and creativity in integrating media and technology into learning. Teachers must not only master the material, but also be able to utilize Learning Management System (LMS)-based e-learning platforms, educational YouTube channels for listening skills, and interactive Arabic language learning applications such as Duolingo to practice speaking skills. The use of digital media has great potential to increase student motivation and help realize effective and efficient learning in the 5.0 era.[47] Thus, the solution to this problem is not only to increase the quantity of learning resources but also to ensure their relevance, quality, and variety through technology, contextual content, and intensive training for teachers. This approach is expected to encourage student independence, increase motivation, and align with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, creativity, and learner-centered learning.

Conclusion

MAN Kota Blitar began implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in the 2023/2024 academic year. Despite various preparations through training and workshops, teachers still face obstacles, especially in pedagogical aspects. These obstacles include (1) developing teaching modules that are relevant to students' needs, (2) determining learning models that are in line with the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, and (3) implementing formative assessments, which teachers are not yet accustomed to doing. On the other hand, student problems are divided into internal factors, namely (1) limited basic Arabic language skills and (2) low motivation to learn, as well as external factors, namely (1) an unsupportive learning environment and (2) limited learning resources. These conditions indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language learning at MAN Kota Blitar still requires continuous assistance in order to run optimally.

The findings of this study indicate that the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language learning depends not only on teacher readiness but also on the creation of a conducive learning ecosystem, ranging from the availability of learning resources and social support to continuous motivational strategies. Therefore, schools and policy makers are expected to strengthen teacher professional development programs, provide a real

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Kinan Kinanti Intan Dyana, Joko Suprapmanto, and Kohar Pradesa, "Dampak Sumber Belajar Digital Pada Minat Dan Motivasi Belajar Siswa Di Era 5.0," *Jurnal BELAINDIKA (Pembelajaran Dan Inovasi Pendidikan)* 6, no. 2 (2024): 129–36.

language environment in schools, and utilize technology-based learning resources. Further research is expected to further examine the effectiveness of various innovative learning models, such as Project Based Learning or Blended Learning, as well as conduct a long-term study on how the Merdeka Curriculum impacts the development of students' Arabic language skills. Further research is expected to provide a more comprehensive contribution to developing adaptive, innovative Arabic language learning strategies that are in line with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum**.**

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