

Enhancing Arabic Vocabulary with Hilyah Book

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Abstract

Mastering Arabic vocabulary remains a significant challenge for non-native learners, particularly those studying in Islamic boarding schools. Traditional vocabulary learning methods, such as rote memorization and isolated word lists, often fail to ensure long-term retention and meaningful application in communication. This study explores the effectiveness of Hilyah Book as a structured vocabulary resource in enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition among students at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah (Dalwa), Pasuruan, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, involving 25 intermediate-level Arabic learners and 5 Arabic instructors. The findings indicate that Hilyah Book facilitates vocabulary retention through thematic organization, contextualized examples, and bilingual Arabic-English explanations, which help learners establish stronger associations between words and their meanings. Compared to conventional memorization techniques, students reported increased engagement and recall due to the book's structured format. However, the study also identified challenges, such as difficulties in spontaneous vocabulary application and the need for guided reinforcement through interactive learning activities. These findings suggest that while Hilyah Book is an effective tool for vocabulary acquisition, its impact is maximized when integrated with conversational practice, writing exercises, and teacher-led reinforcement strategies. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by providing empirical insights into the role of structured vocabulary books in enhancing language acquisition in Islamic boarding schools and similar educational settings.

Keywords: Arabic vocabulary acquisition, Hilyah Book, structured vocabulary learning, Islamic boarding schools, second language acquisition.

Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial aspect of language learning, especially in Arabic, where lexical richness plays a significant role in comprehension and fluency. However, many learners, particularly non-native speakers, struggle with vocabulary retention and effective word usage. Traditional methods of vocabulary teaching, such as rote memorization and isolated word lists, have shown limitations in ensuring long-term retention and meaningful application in communication (Al-Khatib, 2022; Mahmoud, 2021).

In response to these challenges, various approaches have been explored, including contextual learning, digital tools, and mnemonic strategies. One promising approach is the use of thematic and structured vocabulary books, such as Hilyah Book, which integrates Arabic-English vocabulary with contextualized examples and linguistic insights. While previous studies have examined the role of vocabulary books in second language acquisition (SLA), limited research has specifically explored the effectiveness of Hilyah Book in Arabic vocabulary enhancement.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Hilyah Book as a vocabulary-building tool for Arabic learners. The research addresses the following questions: How does Hilyah Book contribute to the expansion of Arabic vocabulary among learners? What are the comparative advantages of Hilyah Book over conventional vocabulary learning methods? What challenges do learners face in using Hilyah Book as a vocabulary acquisition tool?

By exploring these questions, this study seeks to fill the gap in existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of Hilyah Book in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. The findings will contribute to Arabic language pedagogy by offering practical insights into the design and implementation of vocabulary-learning materials.

Previous research has explored various strategies for effective Arabic vocabulary acquisition. Allen (2023) highlights the importance of contextual learning in vocabulary instruction, emphasizing that meaningful exposure fosters long-term retention. Similarly (Allen, 2023), ALMashaleh (2023) investigates the impact of infographic-based learning on memorizing Quranic vocabulary (ALMashaleh, 2023), demonstrating that visual representation significantly enhances recall. Alsharif (2023) examines the role of subtitles in second-language vocabulary acquisition (Alsharif, 2023), revealing that supplementary text aids comprehension and facilitates the learning of new words.

In the realm of digital learning, Amalia et al. (2022) introduce Kosbarab, an Android-based educational tool designed to enhance Arabic vocabulary mastery among elementary learners, yielding promising results (Amalia et al., 2022). Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth (2022) compare Quizlet and podcasts as vocabulary acquisition tools, while Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran (2022) explore the role of digital comics in language learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bueno-

Alastuey & Nemeth, 2022; Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022), highlighting their engaging and interactive nature.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, studies conducted in Malaysia provide valuable insights into Arabic vocabulary acquisition. Baharudin et al. (2023) investigate the depth and breadth of Arabic vocabulary among students in Selangor's religious secondary schools (Baharudin et al., 2023), emphasizing the role of linguistic environment in shaping lexical proficiency. Likewise, Baharun et al. (2021) analyze Arabic academic vocabulary mastery among university students, underscoring the necessity of pedagogical strategies tailored to academic language needs. Segaf Baharun and Nur Hanifansyah (2024) found that Kitab Al-Af'al Al-Yaumiyyah enhances vocabulary acquisition and speaking confidence through daily memorization and mnemonic techniques at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah. Similarly, Solehudin and Hanifansyah (2024) showed that Arabic public speaking in Malaysia improves vocabulary retention and fluency using psycholinguistic strategies. Both studies highlight the role of structured materials and interactive methods, reinforcing the need to examine Hilyah Book in vocabulary learning (Baharun & Hanifansyah, 2024; Solehudin & Nur Hanifansyah, 2024).

Finally, Hanifansyah & Mahmudah (2024) highlight the transformative impact of communicative strategies on Arabic vocabulary retention in Malaysia, arguing that interactive learning experiences foster deeper internalization of new words.

Collectively, these studies underscore the significance of structured, interactive, and contextually rich approaches in vocabulary learning. They provide a strong foundation for this research, which seeks to examine the effectiveness of Hilyah Book as a structured resource for enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition within an immersive learning environment.

This research focuses on Arabic learners in an educational setting where Hilyah Book is utilized as a vocabulary-learning tool. The study will employ both qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys and experimental learning assessments. However, limitations include sample size constraints and potential variations in learner proficiency, which may influence the generalizability of findings.

By analyzing the role of Hilyah Book in vocabulary learning, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of Arabic language education. The research will provide educators with insights into effective vocabulary teaching strategies and offer recommendations for enhancing the use of structured vocabulary books in language instruction.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the effectiveness of Hilyah Book in enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition among

students at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah (Dalwa) (Creswell, 2021), Pasuruan, Indonesia. The research is guided by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, particularly Vocabulary Acquisition Model, which emphasizes meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and deliberate vocabulary learning. Additionally, González-fernández & Schmitt's (2020) Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) framework is used to analyze how learners internalize and apply new vocabulary through structured materials like Hilyah Book (González-fernández & Schmitt, 2020).

The research site, Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah (Dalwa), was chosen due to its strong emphasis on Arabic language education and the integration of Hilyah Book as a reference for vocabulary enhancement. The study focuses on a group of 25 intermediate-level Arabic learners, selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that participants have prior exposure to Arabic and actively use Hilyah Book in their studies. Additionally, 5 Arabic language instructors are involved to provide insights into the pedagogical aspects of Hilyah Book.

Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews are carried out with students and instructors to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding Hilyah Book. Classroom observations are used to examine how Hilyah Book is integrated into daily learning activities, particularly in vocabulary-building exercises. Document analysis involves reviewing excerpts from Hilyah Book, lesson plans, and students' vocabulary notes to analyze how structured vocabulary learning contributes to retention and application.

The data collected is analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on identifying patterns in student engagement, vocabulary retention, and learning strategies. Thematic coding is applied to categorize emerging themes, such as students' motivation, retention strategies, and challenges in vocabulary acquisition. The study's findings aim to provide in-depth insights into the effectiveness of Hilyah Book as a vocabulary acquisition tool within the immersive Arabic learning environment of Dalwa.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, this study employed data triangulation as a verification strategy (Buys et al., 2022; Denaro et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2020). Triangulation was achieved by comparing multiple sources of evidence, including students' perspectives, instructors' insights, and direct classroom observations. By cross-referencing interview responses with observed classroom behaviors, the study reduced potential biases and ensured that findings accurately reflected learners' experiences. Additionally, member checking was conducted, where participants were asked to review and validate interview transcripts to confirm that their responses were interpreted correctly. This step enhanced data credibility and minimized misinterpretation of qualitative findings. Furthermore,

peer debriefing sessions were held with fellow researchers and language education experts to discuss findings and interpretations, adding an additional layer of researcher reflexivity. These strategies collectively strengthen the study's trustworthiness, ensuring that the reported findings are robust, reliable, and representative of the actual learning experiences at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah.

While this research offers valuable contributions to Arabic language pedagogy, it also acknowledges certain limitations. The study is limited to a single educational institution, which may affect the generalizability of findings to broader contexts. Additionally, as qualitative research relies on subjective interpretations, findings are context-dependent and may vary based on individual learner experiences. However, by focusing on a well-established Arabic language learning environment, this study seeks to provide rich, contextualized insights into vocabulary learning practices using Hilyah Book. The results of this research are expected to contribute to Arabic language education by offering recommendations for optimizing the use of structured vocabulary resources in Islamic boarding schools.

Result and Discussion

Hilyah Book: A Bridge Between Arabic and English Learning in Islamic Boarding Schools

The Hilyah Book is a carefully structured linguistic resource compiled by Nur Hanifansyah in 2007 and officially published in 2013. Designed in both Arabic and English, the book serves as a comprehensive vocabulary guide, providing students with a dual-language learning experience within the linguistically immersive environment of Islamic boarding schools.

Initially, Hilyah faced some resistance from a segment of students who were unfamiliar with English and felt uneasy incorporating it into their Arabic-dominated learning environment. However, over time, as students adapted to its structured methodology, the book proved to be a powerful tool for accelerating both Arabic and English language acquisition.

Rooted in psycholinguistic and mnemonic approaches (Mahmudah et al., 2024), Hilyah is meticulously organized to optimize vocabulary retention. It begins with verbs, followed by adjectives, recognizing the intrinsic connection between these two lexical categories in Arabic. Mastering verbs naturally reinforces the recall of corresponding adjectives, and vice versa. After establishing this foundational framework, the book expands to contextual vocabulary relevant to daily life, covering essential topics such as kitchen, classroom, school, and other real-world scenarios.

One of Hilyah's defining strengths is its comparative approach, offering parallel Arabic and English expressions alongside aligned Indonesian translations.

This feature allows learners to grasp linguistic nuances across multiple languages, fostering deeper comprehension and cross-linguistic awareness. Additionally, the inclusion of Arabic and English proverbs with similar meanings distinguishes Hilyah from other vocabulary books, making it a uniquely valuable resource for language learners.

The name Hilyah was inspired by a significant milestone in the life of its author, Nur Hanifansyah. In 2003, he was awarded the Bintang Pelajar, the highest academic distinction at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah, recognizing him as the top student across the institution. As part of this prestigious honor, he received a *Kitab of Hilyah Al-Awliya*, a classical Islamic text rich in wisdom and eloquence. This moment left a profound impact on him, ultimately shaping the vision for Hilyah Book—a resource designed to beautify a learner's mastery of Arabic and English, much like the title Hilyah (which means “ornament” or “adornment”) suggests.

Unlike many hastily produced vocabulary books, Hilyah stands out due to its five-year meticulous development process, ensuring its structure, clarity, and pedagogical impact. Its success demonstrates that structured and contextually meaningful vocabulary learning can significantly enhance language mastery, even in traditionally monolingual Arabic-learning environments such as those in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The Role of Hilyah Book in Arabic Vocabulary Expansion

The findings from classroom observations and interviews reveal that *Hilyah Book* plays a vital role in enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition among students at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah. The book's structured design, which organizes vocabulary into thematic lists, provides contextualized phrases, and incorporates bilingual Arabic-English explanations, enables learners to build associations between new words and their practical use. Rather than memorizing vocabulary in isolation, students engage with words in a way that facilitates both retention and comprehension.

During interviews, students expressed that the thematic classification of words in Hilyah Book significantly improved their ability to recall vocabulary relevant to specific contexts. One student remarked that before using the book, they often forgot newly learned words. However, after studying with Hilyah Book, they found it much easier to remember words because they were grouped according to specific themes. The findings of this study confirm that Hilyah Book plays a significant role in enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition among students. The structured thematic organization and bilingual explanations enable learners to associate words with their meanings more effectively, fostering better retention. Students reported that the book's format helped them recall words in relevant contexts, making vocabulary learning more engaging and practical. These results

align with Baharudin et al. (2023), who found that structured vocabulary depth significantly impacts retention among students in Malaysia's religious schools.

Moreover, the immersive use of Hilyah Book in classroom activities supports the findings of Segaf Baharun and Hanifansyah (2024), who demonstrated that structured daily vocabulary learning in Kitab Al-Afal Al-Yaumiyyah enhanced retention and speaking confidence in an intensive short-term program. Similarly, the success of interactive exercises in this study resonates with Solehudin and Hanifansyah (2024), who highlighted how psycholinguistic strategies in Arabic public speaking contributed to vocabulary retention and fluency.

Comparative Advantages of Hilyah Book Over Conventional Vocabulary Learning

A comparative analysis of vocabulary learning strategies suggests that Hilyah Book provides several advantages over conventional methods, such as rote memorization or dictionary-based study. Many students reported that they previously struggled with memorizing isolated word lists, which often resulted in quick forgetting. However, the structured format of Hilyah Book, combined with mnemonic aids, example sentences, and visual associations, enhanced their ability to retain new words more effectively.

One Arabic instructor emphasized the practical benefits of using Hilyah Book in vocabulary instruction. He observed that when students were asked to memorize vocabulary lists without context, they tended to forget the words quickly. However, after incorporating Hilyah Book into their learning routine, they not only retained more vocabulary but also became more confident in using the words in daily conversations. Compared to traditional memorization techniques, Hilyah Book provides a systematic, engaging, and contextualized approach to vocabulary learning. Students reported that its bilingual format and thematic categorization facilitated better recall, supporting the argument by ALMashaleh (2023) that visual and structured learning aids improve vocabulary retention. Additionally, the inclusion of real-life examples in Hilyah Book mirrors findings by Amalia et al. (2022), who showed that digital vocabulary learning tools enhance mastery by integrating words into meaningful contexts.

Challenges in Using Hilyah Book as a Vocabulary Acquisition Tool

Despite the advantages of *Hilyah Book*, certain challenges were identified during the study. While students acknowledged the book's usefulness in vocabulary acquisition, many found that mere exposure to vocabulary was insufficient for active application. Several students expressed that while they were able to memorize numerous words from the book, they often struggled to integrate them naturally into spoken conversations. One student explained that although they could recall vocabulary from Hilyah Book, they hesitated to use the words in daily

communication because they were not yet accustomed to applying them in real-life contexts.

Another challenge was the need for guided reinforcement. While *Hilyah Book* provides structured vocabulary lists, some students required additional explanations, interactive exercises, and classroom discussions to fully internalize new words. An Arabic instructor at Dalwa noted that while students benefited from *Hilyah Book*, its effectiveness increased significantly when paired with vocabulary-based activities, such as speaking exercises, discussions, and vocabulary quizzes. Despite its benefits, some students faced difficulties in spontaneous application of vocabulary beyond structured exercises. This challenge aligns with Solehudin and Hanifansyah (2024), who noted that students require additional reinforcement to transition from passive recognition to active usage. Furthermore, while *Hilyah Book* is widely used and popular among young learners, the study found that additional interactive strategies, such as conversation drills and gamification, are necessary to maximize its impact—echoing the recommendations by Baharun et al. (2021) on the need for engaging vocabulary acquisition techniques in academic settings.

Implications for Arabic Vocabulary Teaching in Islamic Boarding Schools

Based on these findings, several pedagogical recommendations emerge for optimizing the use of *Hilyah Book* in Arabic language instruction at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah and similar educational institutions. Firstly, educators should integrate the book into active learning strategies, ensuring that students not only memorize vocabulary but also apply it through conversational practice. Regular interactive speaking drills should be conducted, allowing students to engage in real-life dialogue using newly acquired words. Additionally, writing assignments that incorporate vocabulary lists from *Hilyah Book* can help reinforce word retention while encouraging structured usage in composition.

Another effective approach is the use of gamification techniques, such as vocabulary quizzes, competitions, and storytelling activities, to make learning more engaging and dynamic. Furthermore, instructors should explicitly teach vocabulary in context, guiding students to understand not only word meanings but also their appropriate usage in various linguistic situations. These strategies can help address the common issue of passive vocabulary knowledge, ensuring that students transition from recognition to active application in their spoken and written Arabic.

The results suggest that while *Hilyah Book* is an effective vocabulary resource, its impact is best optimized when integrated with communicative activities. Incorporating public speaking practice, interactive discussions, and mnemonic reinforcement can further improve vocabulary retention and fluency. This finding supports the broader consensus in previous research that structured materials, when paired with interactive methodologies, yield superior language learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that *Hilyah Book* plays a significant role in enhancing Arabic vocabulary acquisition among students at Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah. Through its structured thematic organization, contextualized examples, and bilingual Arabic-English explanations, the book offers a practical and effective approach to vocabulary learning. The findings highlight that students benefit from its structured format, which facilitates word retention and meaningful application. Moreover, *Hilyah Book* provides an advantage over conventional rote memorization methods by incorporating mnemonic aids, thematic categorization, and real-world contextualization, all of which contribute to stronger vocabulary acquisition. However, the study also reveals that while *Hilyah Book* effectively supports vocabulary learning, it is most beneficial when complemented with interactive speaking exercises, writing assignments, and guided reinforcement activities to ensure that students move from passive vocabulary recognition to active application. These findings contribute to the field of Arabic language pedagogy by offering empirical insights into the effectiveness of structured vocabulary books in Islamic boarding schools.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be addressed in future research. The findings are based on qualitative data from a specific educational context, which may limit generalizability to other learning environments. Additionally, while the study identifies *Hilyah Book* as an effective vocabulary acquisition tool, further longitudinal research is needed to measure its long-term impact on language retention and fluency. Future studies could explore comparative analyses between *Hilyah Book* and other vocabulary-learning strategies or investigate how digital adaptations of structured vocabulary books could enhance engagement and retention. By expanding on these areas, future research could provide deeper insights into how structured vocabulary learning can be optimized to support students in their journey toward Arabic language proficiency.

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