

	Solo Universal Journal of Islamic Education and Multiculturalism E-ISSN: 2988-3520 Vol.3, No.3, 2025, pp. 475-488 DOI: https://doi.org/10.61455/suijem.v3i03.611	
Received June 02, 2025	Revised November 28, 2025	Accepted December 30, 2025

Students' Difficulties in Understanding Arabic in the Modern Learning Era: Evidence from Generation Z

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Abstract

Objective: This research aims to find out and analyze various difficulties experienced by students in the process of learning Arabic at school. Arabic is one of the subjects that requires the ability to understand vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework of this learning environment is that there are internal factors, including learning motivation, interests, basic abilities, and mastery of Arabic vocabulary (mufradat). Students who have low motivation tend to be less active in participating in learning, so they have difficulty understanding the material. **Literature review:** This review examines that previous studies show that Arabic language learning still faces various obstacles that affect students' understanding of the material. Previous research explained that low mastery of mufradat, lack of motivation to learn, and difficulty understanding the rules of nahwu are the main factors that hinder learning Arabic. **Method:** This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. **Results:** This study shows that students experience various difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons, both from linguistic aspects and learning factors. The most dominant difficulty is the low mastery of mufradat, so that it is difficult for students to understand the meaning of words and the content of the material studied. **Implications:** This study shows that students' difficulties are not only caused by low mastery of Arabic vocabulary and rules, but also influenced by less interesting learning methods and a lack of practice of Arabic in daily life. **Novelty:** This research is expected to make a new contribution to the development of Arabic learning strategies that are more effective, interactive, and in accordance with the needs of students so that the learning process becomes easier to understand and is able to increase students' learning motivation optimally.

Keywords: learning difficulties, arabic, student comprehension, learning motivation, generation z

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the international languages that has an important role in the world of education, especially in Islamic educational institutions. Arabic is not only used as a means of communication, but also as the language of the Qur'an, hadith, and various sources of Islamic science [1]. Therefore, learning Arabic is one of the important subjects taught in schools and madrasahs. Through learning Arabic, students are expected to be able to

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understand vocabulary and grammar, read Arabic texts, and be able to use Arabic in daily life. However, in the learning process, there are still many students who have difficulty understanding Arabic lessons, so the learning goals have not been achieved optimally.

Difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons are a problem that is often found in the learning process. Many students consider Arabic to be a difficult subject because it has different letters, vocabulary, and language structure than Indonesian. In addition, the rules of nahwu and sharaf are quite complex and make some students feel difficult in understanding the material taught by the teacher. This condition causes low interest and motivation for students to learn Arabic. As a result, students become less active in participating in learning and experience obstacles in understanding the subject matter [2].

In learning Arabic, mastery of mufradat or vocabulary is one of the important factors that affect students' ability to understand the material. Students who have low vocabulary mastery tend to have difficulty reading, translating, and understanding the content of Arabic texts. In addition, the ability to read Arabic letters fluently is also an obstacle in the learning process. Some students still have difficulty distinguishing the form of hijaiyah letters and understanding harakat, which affects their ability to read Arabic texts correctly [3]. Another factor that causes students to have difficulty in understanding Arabic lessons is the learning method used by teachers. In some learning processes, teachers still use the lecture method continuously without actively involving students. The use of monotonous methods causes students to easily feel bored and less interested in taking lessons. In addition, the lack of interesting use of learning media also makes it difficult for students to understand the material presented. In fact, the use of learning media such as pictures, videos, educational games, and conversation exercises can help improve students' understanding of Arabic lessons [4].

The learning environment is also one of the factors that affect the success of students in understanding Arabic lessons. The lack of support from the school and family environment causes students to rarely practice Arabic outside of the classroom. As a result, students' ability to understand and use Arabic becomes less developed. In addition, students' low confidence in speaking Arabic makes them afraid of making mistakes, so they are less active in the learning process [5].

Based on these problems, research is needed on students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. This research is important to find out the factors that cause students to experience difficulties in learning Arabic, both from internal and external factors. By knowing the causes of these difficulties, teachers can determine learning strategies that are more effective and in accordance with the needs of students. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be evaluation materials for schools in improving the quality of Arabic language learning [6].

This study has several implications for Arabic language education, particularly for Generation Z learners. First, teachers should strengthen mufradat mastery through contextual vocabulary activities integrated with reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Second, nahwu and sharaf should be taught through practical examples rather than rule memorization alone. Third, teachers should reduce monotonous lecture-based instruction by using interactive methods, pictures, videos, educational games, digital resources, and conversation practice. Fourth, schools should provide supportive environments that encourage students to practice Arabic without fear of making mistakes. These findings also suggest that families and schools should provide opportunities for Arabic practice beyond classroom instruction. Thus, improving comprehension requires attention to linguistic competence, motivation, confidence, teaching methods, learning media, and the learning environment.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of Generation Z students' Arabic learning difficulties by connecting linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and environmental factors. Rather than examining vocabulary, grammar, or motivation separately, this study

demonstrates that these difficulties are interconnected. Limited mufradat can affect reading comprehension, grammatical understanding, confidence, and participation, while monotonous teaching and limited practice can further intensify these problems. The study also connects identified difficulties with practical strategies, including interactive learning, digital and visual media, collaborative activities, conversation practice, and continuous vocabulary reinforcement. This integrated perspective provides a practical foundation for developing more adaptive, engaging, and learner-centred Arabic instruction for Generation Z.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arabic has a function as a language of communication and a language used in understanding Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and hadith. Therefore, the ability to understand Arabic is important for students. However, in the learning process, there are still many students who have difficulties in understanding Arabic material, so that the learning results obtained have not been maximized [7]. In learning Arabic, learning difficulties can occur due to differences in the Arabic and Indonesian language systems. Arabic has different hijaiyah letters, grammar, and pronunciation, so it requires special abilities to understand them. According to the theory of learning difficulties, learning barriers can be influenced by internal factors and external factors of students. Internal factors include students' learning motivation, interests, basic abilities, and confidence. Meanwhile, external factors include learning methods, learning media, learning environment, and the role of teachers in the learning process [8].

Mastery of mufradat or vocabulary is one of the important factors in understanding Arabic lessons. Students who have low vocabulary mastery will have difficulty reading, translating, and understanding the content of Arabic texts. In addition, the understanding of the rules of nahwu and sharaf also greatly affects students' ability to understand Arabic sentences. Nahwu is a science that studies the structure of sentences, while sharaf discusses changes in the form of words. Difficulty understanding these two rules is often the main obstacle for students in learning Arabic [9], [10]. Several previous studies have explained that low student motivation to learn is one of the causes of difficulties in learning Arabic. Many students consider Arabic to be a difficult subject, so they are less interested in learning it. In addition, monotonous and teacher-centred learning methods cause students to be less active in the learning process [11].

The findings identify several interconnected factors that contribute to students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. Linguistic factors include limited mastery of mufradat, difficulties in understanding nahwu and sharaf, and low Arabic literacy. Students with limited vocabulary often struggle to understand texts, while difficulties with grammatical rules make it harder to compose and interpret Arabic sentences. In addition, some students have limited fluency in reading Arabic writing, which affects their ability to comprehend learning materials. Psychological factors also influence learning, particularly low motivation, limited interest, and lack of confidence. Some students perceive Arabic as difficult and become less focused or reluctant to participate. Meanwhile, external factors include monotonous lecture-based teaching, limited use of interactive learning media, insufficient opportunities to practice Arabic outside the classroom, and an unsupportive learning environment. These conditions can contribute to boredom, low participation, weak reading and speaking skills, and reduced comprehension. Therefore, understanding these interconnected factors is important for developing Arabic learning strategies that are more interactive, engaging, supportive, and responsive to students' needs. Regular practice, varied learning media, contextual instruction, and stronger motivation can help students gradually improve their Arabic comprehension and participation [11].

Table 1. Factors of Students' Difficulty in Understanding Arabic Lessons

Difficulty factor	Explanation	Impact on students
Lack of Mastery of Mufradat	Students have difficulty memorizing and understanding Arabic vocabulary	Difficulty understanding text and subject matter
Difficulty Understanding Nahwu and Sharaf	Arabic grammar is considered complicated and different from Indonesian	Students have difficulty composing and understanding sentences
Low Motivation to Learn	Students consider Arabic to be a difficult subject	Lack of activity and lack of focus while studying
Monotonous Learning Methods	Teachers use lecture methods too often	Students get bored easily during learning
Lack of Learning Media	Minimal use of images, videos, or interactive media	Students' understanding of the material becomes low
Lack of Arabic Language Training	Students rarely practice Arabic outside of the classroom	Poorly developed reading and speaking skills
Less Supportive Learning Environment	No habituation of using Arabic	Students lack confidence in using Arabic
Low Arabic Literacy	Some students are not fluent in reading Arabic writing	Difficulty understanding the content of Arabic readings

Based on the table above, students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons are influenced by internal and external factors. Therefore, more interesting learning methods and the support of a good learning environment are needed so that students' ability to understand Arabic can increase [\[12\]](#).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain a deep understanding of the factors that cause students to experience difficulties in the Arabic language learning process [\[13\]](#). Using a descriptive method, this study seeks to describe the real conditions that occur during the learning process. The subjects in this study are Arabic students and teachers in schools. Students were chosen as the main subjects because they experienced firsthand the Arabic language learning process and the various difficulties that arise during learning [\[14\]](#). Meanwhile, Arabic teachers were chosen to obtain information about learning methods, classroom conditions, and teachers' views on students' learning difficulties. The research was conducted in a school environment that implemented learning Arabic as one of the subjects [\[15\]](#), [\[16\]](#).

Research Approach

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. This approach is used because research focuses on experiences, barriers, and factors that affect students' learning processes. Through a

qualitative approach, researchers can obtain more detailed data through observation, interviews, and documentation during the learning process [17], [18].

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design to describe in depth the difficulties of students in understanding Arabic lessons. This design was chosen because the research focuses on the learning process, students' experiences, and factors that affect their understanding of Arabic material [19]. Research data is collected through observation, interviews, and documentation so that researchers obtain complete and clear information. With this design, the research is expected to be able to provide a real picture of students' learning barriers and solutions that can be applied in Arabic language learning [20], [21].

Research Participants

Participants in this study consisted of Arabic students and teachers in the school where the research was conducted. Students were chosen as the main participants because they experienced firsthand the Arabic language learning process as well as various difficulties in understanding the subject [22], [23]. Arabic teachers are also involved in research to provide information about learning methods, classroom conditions, and obstacles that students often experience during learning. The selection of participants was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting participants who are considered capable of providing information in accordance with the research objectives. By involving students and teachers, this research is expected to obtain more complete and in-depth data on Arabic language learning problems [24], [25].

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to see the process of learning Arabic in the classroom [26]. Interviews were conducted with students and teachers to find out the difficulties experienced during learning. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of learning notes, assignment results, and photos of learning activities so that the research data is more complete and clear [27], [28].

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in this study include observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation. Observation guidelines are used to directly observe the Arabic learning process in the classroom, such as teachers' learning methods, student activity, and difficulties that arise during learning [29]. The interview guidelines are used to obtain in-depth information from students and teachers regarding the factors that cause difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. In addition, documentation is used as a supporting instrument in the form of learning notes, student assignment results, grade lists, and photos of learning activities. The use of these instruments aims to make the data obtained more complete, accurate, and in accordance with the research objectives regarding students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons [30].



Figure 1. Interaction of Teachers and Students in Arabic Language Learning

Figure 1 illustrates an interactive Arabic language learning activity involving teachers and students in a collaborative classroom setting. Teachers provide direct guidance, explanations, and learning materials, while students actively participate through discussion and practice. This interaction promotes communication, strengthens students' Arabic language skills, encourages active learning, and creates a supportive educational environment that facilitates meaningful learning experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner to deeply understand students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons. Data were obtained through data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation [31]. Observations were made to see firsthand the Arabic learning process in the classroom, such as the learning methods used by teachers, the level of student activity, and obstacles that arise during learning. Interviews were conducted with Arabic students and teachers to obtain information about the factors that cause learning difficulties and the efforts made to overcome these problems [32]. Documentation is used as supporting data in the form of learning notes, student assignment results, grade lists, and photos of learning activities. The research instruments used included observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation. Observation guidelines are used to record learning activities, while interview guidelines are used to obtain more in-depth information from study participants [33], [34].

The data that has been obtained is then analyzed through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. With this analysis technique, the research is expected to be able to provide a clear picture of students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons [35].

Data Validity

The data validation in this study uses the triangulation technique, which involves comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. This technique aims to ensure that the data obtained is valid, accurate, and in accordance with real conditions regarding students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons [36], [37].

Table 2. Validation of Research Data

Data Validation Techniques	Purpose	Data Source
Observations	Observe live Language learning process Arabic and the difficulties of students in Classes	Students and teachers
Interview	Obtain in-depth information about Factors causing difficulties Learn	Arabic students and teachers
Documentation	Amplify data research through notes, tasks, and photos Learning Activities	School documents
Data Triangulation	Compare the results of observations, interviews, and documentation so that the data. More valid	All data sources

Data Recheck	Ensuring compatibility of data with real conditions in the field	Researchers and research participants
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Data validation is carried out to ensure that research data regarding students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons are accurate, valid, and trustworthy so that the research results are in accordance with the actual conditions in the field [38].



Figure 2. Percentage of Arabic Comprehension Level of Generation Z Students

Figure 2 presents the Arabic comprehension levels among Generation Z students. The results indicate that 30% of students are categorized as “cukup,” followed by 27% in the “kurang” category. Meanwhile, 20% demonstrate good comprehension, 13% are categorized as very poor, and only 10% achieve very good comprehension, indicating varied levels of Arabic language understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that students experienced some difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons [39], [40]. The most common difficulties found are low mastery of mufradat, difficulty in understanding nahwu rules, and lack of ability to read Arabic texts fluently. Many students find Arabic difficult to understand because it has a different language structure from Indonesian. In addition, low motivation to learn and lack of confidence make students less active during the learning process [41].

From the results of observations and interviews, monotonous learning methods are also one of the factors causing student learning difficulties. Teachers still use the lecture method more often, so that students easily feel bored. The lack of use of interactive learning media also affects students' understanding of Arabic materials [42]. Based on these results, a more interesting and interactive learning method is needed so that students can more easily understand Arabic lessons and have higher learning motivation. Based on the results of the interviews, low motivation to learn is one of the main factors causing students' difficulties in understanding Arabic lessons [43].

Many students consider Arabic to be a difficult and boring subject. Lack of interest in learning causes students to be less focused during learning. In addition, some students feel less confident when asked to read or speak in Arabic because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers. From the results of the study, it is also known that teachers often use the lecture method without actively involving students in learning. This condition makes it easy for students to feel bored and less interested in Arabic lessons [44].

The lack of use of learning media such as pictures, videos, educational games, and conversation exercises also affects students' level of understanding of the subject matter. Based on these results and discussions, it can be concluded that students' difficulties in

understanding Arabic lessons are influenced by internal and external factors [45]. Therefore, more interactive learning methods, the use of interesting learning media, and increased student learning motivation are needed so that the Arabic learning process can run more effectively and be easier for students to understand.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that Arabic learning difficulties are interconnected rather than occurring independently. Limited vocabulary can make students struggle with reading, while difficulties in grammar may reduce their confidence in constructing sentences. These challenges become more serious when activities provide limited opportunities for practice and communication. Therefore, teachers need to create a learning environment that encourages students to participate without fear of making mistakes. Regular vocabulary reinforcement, contextual grammar exercises, short conversations, and collaborative activities can provide meaningful practice. Digital resources may also support Generation Z students by presenting Arabic materials in varied and engaging formats. Such approaches can gradually strengthen comprehension, motivation, confidence, and participation in Arabic learning effectively.

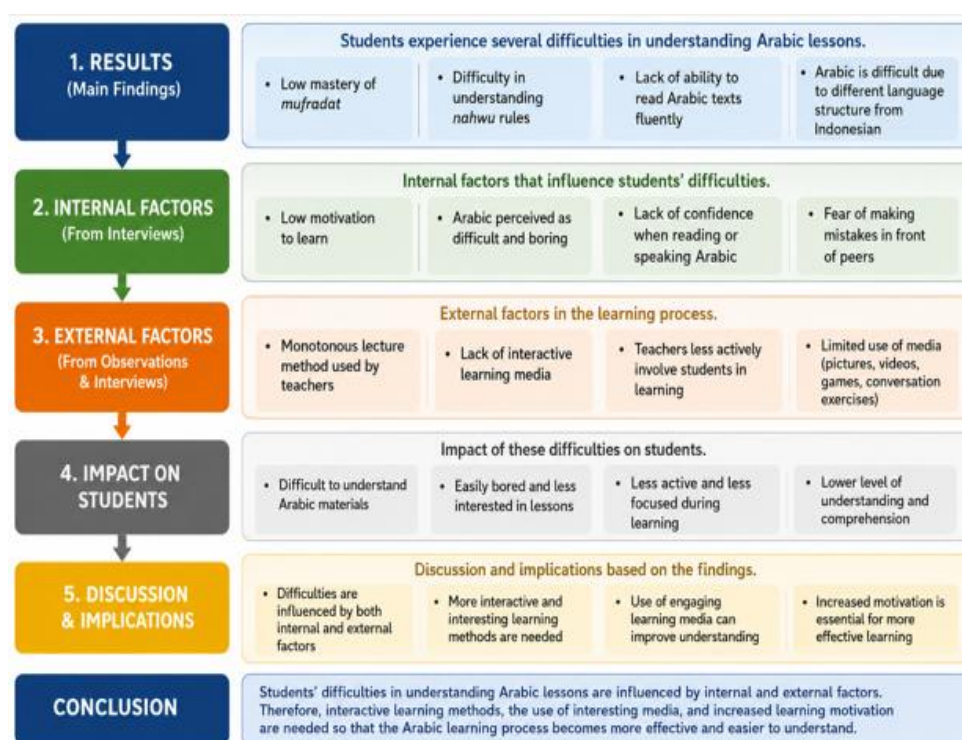


Figure 3. Students' Arabic Learning Difficulties, Contributing Factors, Impacts, and Strategies for Improving Learning Effectiveness

Figure 3 summarizes the main findings and discussion of students' difficulties in understanding Arabic. The difficulties involve *mufradat*, *nahwu*, reading skills, motivation, and confidence. Internal and external factors contribute to these challenges, resulting in lower comprehension and participation. The findings emphasize interactive learning methods, engaging media, regular practice, and increased motivation to improve Arabic learning effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Generation Z students face substantial challenges in understanding Arabic, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, reading, motivation, and classroom participation. The comprehension distribution presented in Figure 2 reinforces the qualitative findings. The largest proportion of students, 30%, falls into the “cukup” category, while 27% are categorized as “kurang.” Only 20% demonstrate good comprehension, and

10% reach the very good category, whereas 13% are categorized as very poor. This distribution suggests that most students have not yet achieved strong and consistent comprehension of Arabic learning materials.

The dominance of the “cukup” and “kurang” categories can be related to students’ limited mastery of mufradat. The study identifies vocabulary as the most prominent linguistic difficulty because students who do not recognize sufficient Arabic words will struggle to read, translate, and interpret texts. Vocabulary knowledge is also closely connected with other language skills. When students lack basic words, they may find grammatical explanations difficult to follow, experience problems constructing sentences, and become hesitant when responding to teachers. Therefore, strengthening mufradat should be considered a foundational step in improving overall Arabic comprehension.

Another important difficulty concerns nahwu and sharaf. The findings show that students perceive Arabic grammatical structures as complicated and different from Indonesian. Such differences may increase students’ cognitive burden, especially when grammatical rules are introduced without sufficient contextual practice. Students may memorize rules but remain unable to apply them when reading or producing sentences. This indicates that grammar learning should not be separated from meaningful language use. Exercises involving short dialogues, contextual sentences, guided reading, and practical examples can help students connect grammatical concepts with actual communication.

The study also reveals that Arabic literacy remains an obstacle for some students. Difficulties in recognizing hijaiyah letters, understanding harakat, and reading Arabic texts fluently can directly affect comprehension. Reading is not simply a mechanical activity; it provides access to vocabulary, sentence structures, and meaning. When reading ability is weak, students require greater effort to process even relatively simple material. Consequently, systematic reading practice should accompany vocabulary and grammar instruction, particularly for students whose foundational literacy remains limited.

In addition to linguistic factors, motivation strongly influences students’ learning experiences. The findings indicate that some students consider Arabic difficult and boring, resulting in limited concentration and participation. Low confidence also discourages students from reading or speaking Arabic because they fear making mistakes in front of peers. This situation can create a cycle in which limited participation reduces practice, insufficient practice slows improvement, and slow improvement further decreases confidence. Teachers therefore need to create learning situations in which mistakes are treated as a normal part of language development rather than as a source of embarrassment.

The classroom learning process is another significant factor. Observations and interviews indicate that teachers often rely on lecture-oriented methods, while interactive activities and learning media are used less frequently. A predominantly teacher-centred approach may reduce opportunities for students to practice Arabic directly. For Generation Z learners, the findings suggest the importance of varied activities that encourage interaction and active participation. Pictures, videos, educational games, conversation exercises, and collaborative tasks can make abstract vocabulary and grammar more accessible while increasing students’ engagement.

The learning environment also deserves attention. The study finds that students rarely practice Arabic outside the classroom because Arabic use is not sufficiently habituated in their surrounding environment. Without regular exposure, classroom learning may remain disconnected from everyday communication. Support from teachers, families, and schools can therefore strengthen opportunities for students to use Arabic naturally. Simple routines, such as greetings, short conversations, vocabulary practice, or reading activities, may provide repeated exposure and gradually improve confidence.

These findings have important implications for Arabic language teaching. First, teachers should prioritize gradual vocabulary development and integrate mufradat with reading, speaking, and writing activities. Second, grammar should be taught contextually rather than primarily through rule memorization. Third, learning media and interactive strategies should be incorporated to reduce boredom and encourage participation. Fourth, students need continuous opportunities to practice Arabic in supportive environments. Such strategies address both the linguistic and psychological barriers identified in the study. Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' Arabic comprehension difficulties cannot be attributed to a single cause. They emerge from the interaction of limited vocabulary, grammatical challenges, weak reading skills, low motivation, limited confidence, monotonous teaching methods, insufficient learning media, and inadequate opportunities for practice. The comprehension pattern in Figure 2 supports this broader interpretation, showing that only a minority of students reach very good or good levels. Improving Arabic learning therefore requires an integrated approach that combines linguistic strengthening, interactive pedagogy, supportive classroom relationships, and sustained practice. This approach can help Generation Z students develop stronger comprehension, greater confidence, and more meaningful engagement with Arabic learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on "Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Understanding Arabic Lessons", it can be concluded that students experience various difficulties in the Arabic language learning process. These difficulties include low mastery of mufradat, difficulty understanding the rules of nahwu and sharaf, and lack of ability to read Arabic texts. In addition, low motivation to learn and low confidence also affect students' ability to understand Arabic subject matter. The results of the study show that the factors that cause learning difficulties come from internal and external factors. Internal factors include low interest in learning and lack of practice in Arabic. Meanwhile, external factors include monotonous learning methods, lack of use of learning media, and a less supportive learning environment. This condition causes students to be less active and easily feel bored during the learning process. Therefore, a more interactive and interesting learning method is needed so that students can more easily understand Arabic lessons. Teachers also need to use varied learning media and provide regular exercises. Thus, students' ability to understand Arabic lessons can be improved, and learning objectives can be achieved well.

Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely thank the local university and educational institutions for their support throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the teachers and students who contributed valuable information and participation. Their cooperation and assistance greatly supported the completion of this study and its publication.

Author Contribution

Desti Ana Ananda contributed to conceptualization, data collection, investigation, analysis, and manuscript preparation. Muthoifin contributed to research supervision, methodology, interpretation of findings, critical review, and manuscript revision. Both authors discussed the results, approved the final manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research or its publication. The study was conducted independently, without personal, institutional, commercial, or financial relationships that could influence the research process, interpretation of findings, manuscript preparation, or publication decision.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The authors used artificial intelligence tools solely to support language editing, grammar checking, and improvement of manuscript clarity. AI tools were not used to generate research data, conduct analysis, determine findings, or replace scholarly judgment. The authors reviewed, verified, and accepted full responsibility for the final content.

Funding

This research received partial institutional support from the local university where the study was conducted. Additional research and publication expenses were independently financed by the authors. The funding arrangements supported research activities and publication costs without influencing the study design, data interpretation, findings, or conclusions.

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