MOTIVATION AND OBSTACLES IN MASTERING ARABIC CONVERSATION AMONG STUDENTS OF STEI PERMATA BOJONEGORO: QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Arabic conversational ability is one of the essential competencies for students at Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in supporting the understanding of Islamic sciences and academic communication. However, in practice, not all students are able to master Arabic speaking skills effectively. This study aims to describe the motivations and obstacles faced by students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro in mastering Arabic conversation. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The research subjects were students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro who were enrolled in Arabic language courses. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Keywords: Learning Motivation, Learning Obstacles, Arabic Conversation, University Students, Qualitative Study

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1. INTODRUCTION

Arabic occupies a central position in Islamic education as it is the original language of the Qur'an and Hadith, which constitute the primary sources of Islamic teachings. For students in Islamic higher education institutions, Arabic is not merely a subject to be studied but a vital tool for accessing classical and contemporary Islamic texts, engaging in academic discourse, and developing intellectual competence. Consequently, mastery of Arabic language skills is an essential requirement for students, particularly those studying in institutions with Islamic orientations.

Arabic language learning encompasses four fundamental skills: listening (istima'), speaking (kalam), reading (qira'ah), and writing (kitabah). Among these skills, speaking or maharah al-kalam is often regarded as the most challenging. Speaking requires not only knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to apply this knowledge spontaneously in real communication contexts. Moreover, speaking skill is closely related to psychological factors such as confidence, motivation, and anxiety.

In practice, many students demonstrate adequate abilities in reading Arabic texts or understanding grammatical rules but face considerable difficulties when required to speak Arabic fluently. This phenomenon is also evident among students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro. Preliminary observations indicate that although students attend Arabic language classes regularly, their opportunities to practice speaking are limited, and many of them feel hesitant or anxious when communicating orally in Arabic.

Learning motivation plays a crucial role in determining students' success in acquiring speaking skills. Motivation influences students' willingness to participate actively, practice consistently, and persist in overcoming learning difficulties. Conversely, various obstacles—both internal and external—can hinder the development of Arabic conversational skills. These obstacles may include limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, lack of supportive environments, and teaching methods that emphasize theory over practice.

Based on this background, this study focuses on examining the motivation and obstacles experienced by students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro in mastering Arabic conversation. By understanding these factors comprehensively, this research is expected to contribute to the improvement of Arabic language learning practices, particularly in enhancing students' speaking abilities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Higher Education
Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education institutions is designed to equip students with the linguistic competence required to understand Islamic texts and participate in academic communication. Arabic is not only studied as a linguistic system but also as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge and cultural values. Therefore, Arabic instruction in Islamic universities is expected to integrate linguistic proficiency with functional and communicative competence.

In this context, Arabic language learning is oriented toward developing students' abilities in the four language skills in a balanced manner. However, several studies indicate that speaking skills often receive less emphasis compared to reading and grammar. This imbalance results in students who possess theoretical knowledge of Arabic but lack practical speaking competence.

2.2 Arabic Conversational Skill (Maharah al-Kalam)
Maharah al-kalam refers to the ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings orally in Arabic in a clear and understandable manner. This skill involves various components, including pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary mastery, grammatical correctness, fluency, and pragmatic appropriateness. Speaking skill also requires learners to respond spontaneously and interactively in communication situations.

Communicative language teaching emphasizes the importance of providing learners with ample opportunities to practice speaking through interactive activities such as dialogues, role-playing, discussions, and language games. When learners are actively engaged in meaningful communication, their speaking skills are more likely to develop effectively.

2.3 Learning Motivation in Language Learning
Learning motivation is a psychological factor that significantly influences students' engagement and achievement in language learning. Motivation determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning behavior. In language acquisition, motivation is particularly important because mastering a language requires long-term commitment and continuous practice.

Motivation can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal factors such as personal interest, enjoyment, and self-awareness of the importance of learning Arabic. Extrinsic motivation originates from external influences such as grades, institutional requirements, lecturers' encouragement, and future career prospects. Students who possess strong motivation tend to be more proactive, confident, and resilient in facing learning challenges.

2.4 Obstacles in Mastering Arabic Conversation

Despite having sufficient motivation, learners often encounter various obstacles in mastering Arabic speaking skills. Internal obstacles include limited vocabulary, insufficient grammatical mastery, pronunciation difficulties, and low self-confidence. Fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers can further inhibit students' willingness to speak.

External obstacles involve instructional and environmental factors, such as teacher-centered learning methods, limited speaking practice opportunities, and the absence of an Arabic-speaking environment outside the classroom. These conditions can reduce students' exposure to authentic language use and hinder the development of speaking fluency.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore students' motivation and obstacles in mastering Arabic conversation. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and feelings related to Arabic language learning.

The research participants were students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro who were enrolled in Arabic language courses. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had relevant experience in learning Arabic speaking skills.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to obtain students' perspectives on their motivation and difficulties in speaking Arabic. Classroom observations were carried out to examine learning activities and students' participation during Arabic lessons. Documentation included syllabi, lesson plans, and learning materials used in Arabic courses.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied, along with member checking to confirm the accuracy of the findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Students' Motivation in Mastering Arabic Conversation

The findings indicate that students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro generally possess strong motivation to learn Arabic conversation. Intrinsic motivation is reflected in students' awareness of the importance of Arabic for understanding Islamic sciences and improving academic competence. Many students expressed a desire to be able to communicate in Arabic fluently as a form of self-development and intellectual achievement.

Extrinsic motivation also plays a significant role. Students are encouraged by lecturers who emphasize the importance of speaking practice and provide positive reinforcement. Academic demands, such as course requirements and assessments, further motivate students to engage in Arabic learning activities.

4.2 Obstacles in Mastering Arabic Conversation

Despite their motivation, students face several obstacles in mastering Arabic conversation. The most prominent internal obstacle is limited vocabulary mastery, which makes it difficult for students to express ideas spontaneously. Lack of self-confidence and fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors also hinder students' willingness to speak.

External obstacles include the lack of an Arabic-speaking environment beyond the classroom. Arabic is rarely used in daily communication on campus, resulting in limited opportunities for continuous practice. Additionally, some learning methods still focus heavily on grammar and translation, providing insufficient time for interactive speaking activities.

4.3 Discussion

The results suggest that motivation alone is not sufficient to ensure mastery of Arabic speaking skills. Effective learning requires the integration of motivational factors with appropriate teaching strategies and supportive environments. Communicative learning approaches that prioritize student interaction and practical language use are essential for overcoming existing obstacles.

4.4 Analysis of Motivational and Obstructive Factors from a Theoretical Perspective

The findings of this study indicate that students' motivation in mastering Arabic conversation cannot be separated from the interaction between internal and external factors. Theoretically, this condition aligns with motivational learning theories which suggest that success in language learning is influenced by a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arising from students' religious and academic awareness serves as a strong initial foundation in learning Arabic. The awareness that Arabic is the primary key to understanding the sources of Islamic teachings provides an internal drive that is long-term and relatively stable.

In the context of Islamic higher education, intrinsically motivated learning based on religious values has distinctive characteristics, as it is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward fulfilling spiritual and intellectual needs. This perspective positions Arabic as both a means of worship and a tool for intellectual development. Theoretically, such motivation tends to be more sustainable than motivation that is purely instrumental. Nevertheless, the sustainability of this motivation still requires adequate instructional support so that it can be optimally actualized.

Despite strong intrinsic motivation, it does not automatically result in optimal speaking proficiency. The fact that students continue to experience difficulties in speaking practice—particularly related to limited vocabulary and low self-confidence—indicates a gap between motivation and language performance. This condition underscores that motivation must be facilitated through appropriate, structured, and practice-oriented learning processes in order to be transformed into tangible communicative skills.

From the perspective of second language acquisition, the obstacles encountered by students can be explained through the concept of the *affective filter*. This concept emphasizes that emotional factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of self-confidence can hinder both language input and oral language production. When the affective filter is high, students tend to become passive, reluctant to participate, and avoid using Arabic orally, even when they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge.

In Arabic language learning, students' affective conditions are often influenced by instructional practices that overly emphasize structural accuracy and immediate error correction. Such practices may increase anxiety and reduce students' willingness to speak. Therefore, from a theoretical standpoint, Arabic language instruction should be designed using a more humanistic and communicative approach that views errors as a natural part of the learning process and encourages students to actively use the language.

In addition to internal factors, external factors such as the language environment and instructional methods also exert a significant influence on the mastery of Arabic conversation. The limited use of Arabic in daily communication within the campus environment results in insufficient continuous language exposure for students. However, theories of language acquisition emphasize that speaking skills develop through intensive, repetitive, and meaningful interaction. Without a supportive environment that encourages active use of Arabic, learning tends to remain at the cognitive level and fails to develop into communicative competence.

Instructional methods that remain heavily focused on grammar and translation further contribute to students' limited speaking ability. Theoretically, structurally oriented approaches provide minimal opportunities for developing fluency and spontaneity in

speech. In contrast, communicative approaches position language as a tool for social interaction, thereby encouraging students to use Arabic in more authentic and functional contexts. Consequently, the integration of strong motivation, communicative teaching strategies, and a supportive language environment becomes a fundamental prerequisite for the development of students' *maharah al-kalam.*

5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. Lecturers are encouraged to implement communicative and student-centered teaching methods that provide ample opportunities for speaking practice. Institutions should also support the creation of an Arabic-speaking environment through language programs, extracurricular activities, and campus policies that encourage the use of Arabic.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Arabic language learning, particularly in the context of Islamic higher education. The findings emphasize that learning motivation is an important factor; however, it does not stand alone in determining success in mastering *maharah al-kalam* (Arabic speaking skills). Motivation needs to be integrated with communicative learning strategies and supported by a conducive language environment in order to produce effective speaking ability.

This study also strengthens the view that language learning approaches that are overly oriented toward grammar mastery and translation tend to be less effective in developing speaking skills. Therefore, theories of Arabic language instruction in higher education should place greater emphasis on balancing structural aspects with communicative aspects, so that students not only understand Arabic theoretically but are also able to use it in real communicative situations.

5.2 Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results of this study provide several recommendations for lecturers, institutions, and administrators of Arabic language learning programs. First, Arabic language lecturers are encouraged to apply more communicative and participatory teaching methods, such as group discussions, pair dialogues, conversation simulations, and oral presentations in Arabic. These activities can increase students' frequency of Arabic use and foster their confidence in speaking.

Second, lecturers need to create a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere. Mistakes in speaking should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process rather than something to be avoided. In this way, students will feel more comfortable and confident in attempting to use Arabic orally.

Third, institutions are expected to play an active role in developing an Arabic-speaking environment on campus. This can be achieved through the establishment of Arabic language communities, the organization of extracurricular activities such as *Arabic Day*, Arabic speech or conversation competitions, and the use of Arabic in certain contexts outside the classroom. A supportive environment will help students practice Arabic more naturally and continuously.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to a qualitative investigation of students at a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could involve larger samples, mixed-method approaches, or comparative studies across different institutions.

6.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for future research. Subsequent studies may employ quantitative approaches or mixed

methods to measure more objectively the relationship between learning motivation and Arabic speaking proficiency. In addition, comparative research involving multiple Islamic higher education institutions may provide a broader understanding of variations in students' motivation and learning obstacles across different contexts.

Future research may also focus on examining the effectiveness of specific communicative teaching methods in improving *maharah al-kalam*, or on analyzing the role of language environment and educational technology in supporting students' Arabic speaking skills. Through such investigations, research on Arabic language learning in higher education can continue to develop and make more substantial contributions to the field of Islamic education.

7. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that students of STEI Permata Bojonegoro have relatively strong motivation to master Arabic conversation. This motivation consists of intrinsic motivation—such as awareness of the importance of Arabic for understanding Islamic sciences and improving self-competence—and extrinsic motivation derived from lecturers' encouragement, academic demands, and study requirements. This motivation serves as a crucial foundation in Arabic language learning, particularly in developing speaking skills.

However, students' motivation still encounters various obstacles, both internal and external. Internal obstacles include limited vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes when speaking Arabic. External obstacles include the lack of a supportive Arabic-speaking environment and learning methods that are not yet fully oriented toward communicative approaches.

Therefore, this study emphasizes that successful mastery of Arabic conversation is not determined solely by high learning motivation but also requires the support of appropriate learning strategies and a conducive language environment. Lecturers are encouraged to apply more communicative and participatory learning methods and to promote an Arabic-speaking culture on campus so that students' motivation can be optimized and existing obstacles can be minimized.

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