

Strategies for enhancing yellow book literacy through the al-miftah lil 'ulum method: A quantitative study at miftahul huda islamic boarding school

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the effectiveness of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method as a strategy for improving reading literacy skills regarding yellow books among the students of Miftahul Huda Islamic Boarding School located in Kalijambe, Sragen. The research question posed is: What is the impact of implementing the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method on the enhancement of yellow book literacy among the students? This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing structured questionnaires distributed to 20 students participating in the program for data collection. Descriptive statistical analysis is applied to interpret the data, focusing on frequency distribution and percentages. The findings indicate that the implementation of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method significantly enhances the students' ability to master the fundamentals of Nahwu and Sharf, independently translate Arabic sentences, and expand their vocabulary comprehension. Additionally, this method fosters increased motivation and engagement among the students in the study of yellow books. These findings underscore the considerable potential of structured methodological interventions in strengthening the literacy of classical texts within Islamic educational institutions. This study recommends the adoption of structured methods such as Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum to improve literacy competencies within the pesantren environment.

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Introduction

The yellow book represents an intellectual heritage of Islam that constitutes an integral part of the scholarly tradition in pesantren throughout Indonesia. Literacy in the yellow book, which encompasses the ability to read, comprehend, and interpret classical Arabic texts without diacritics, serves as a core competency within pesantren education. However, in the current era of globalization and educational modernization, various studies indicate a decline in students' (santri) competencies related to an in-depth understanding of the yellow book. Research conducted by Zarkasyi (2020) notes that shifts in learning patterns among santri, influenced by modernized teaching methods, have contributed to the weakening of the tradition of yellow book literacy in several traditional pesantren (Zarkasyi, 2020).

Previous studies have examined various instructional methods of the yellow book, such as the bandongan and sorogan methods, alongside the integration of digital technologies based on

yellow book applications. For instance, research by Malikhatun Nasikhah (2021) assessed the effectiveness of the conventional bandongan method in enhancing the understanding of classical texts, yet revealed limitations concerning the active participation of santri (Nasikhah, 2021). Meanwhile, another study by Dewantoro (2018) investigated the utilization of digital applications for learning the yellow book and discovered that technology accelerates information access, although it does not replace the necessary skills required to comprehend the structure of classical Arabic texts (Dewantoro, 2018).

From the array of existing research, a notable gap emerges: the insufficient exploration of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method as an innovative strategy to systematically address the challenges of yellow book literacy. The Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method presents a structured approach to teaching classical Arabic grammar to santri; however, it has yet to receive considerable attention regarding its potential impact on enhancing yellow book literacy in Indonesian pesantren, particularly through quantitative approaches aimed at empirically measuring its effectiveness.

The novelty of this study lies in its quantitative analysis of the contribution of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method to the enhancement of yellow book literacy at Pesantren Miftahul Huda. This research not only describes the method but also systematically tests the statistical relationship between its implementation and the literacy outcomes of the santri, thereby providing robust empirical evidence for the advancement of educational strategies in pesantren in the future.

The contribution of this research enriches the body of literature surrounding yellow book literacy in Indonesia by offering an evidence-based approach. Additionally, this study provides practical recommendations for pesantren in selecting more effective educational methods to preserve and advance the classical Islamic intellectual tradition amidst the challenges posed by modern times.

Literature Review

1. Literacy of the Yellow Book in Pesantren

The concept of literacy about the Yellow Book is multifaceted, extending beyond mere proficiency in reading unvocalized Arabic texts. It also encompasses an understanding of the structures of nahwu (grammar) and Sharaf (morphology), as well as the historical and religious contexts surrounding these texts. According to Zamakhsyari Dhofier, mastery of the Yellow Book is a fundamental pillar in the establishment of an autonomous and authoritative intellectual tradition within pesantren (Dhofier, 2011). This literacy serves as a foundation for the emergence of esteemed scholars in the Nusantara region, who have made significant contributions to the development of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia (Ikhsanuddin, Anshory, & Abbas, 2023).

2. Methods of Learning the Yellow Book

In practice, pesantren have developed a variety of methods for teaching the Yellow Book, including bandongan (teacher-led lectures) and sorogan (where students read aloud and receive immediate corrections) (Badi'ah, Salim, & Syahputra, 2021). However, the demands of contemporary society necessitate innovation to ensure the continued effectiveness of these methods. A study conducted by Ali Ja'far (2019) indicates that traditional methods tend to be less effective for the millennial generation of students, who are accustomed to active and interactive learning styles (Ja'far, 2019). Consequently, the methods used for teaching the Yellow Book need to be adapted to align with the characteristics of today's learners.

3. The Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum Method

The Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method is an approach that emphasizes systematic and practical mastery of Arabic grammar. The Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum text has become a primary reference in several pesantren for establishing a robust foundation in nahwu and sharaf. Research conducted by Moh. Syakur and Hasmi Hashona (2022) found that the use of grammatical-structural methods such as Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum can expedite the achievement of literacy in classical texts compared to more traditional methods that focus predominantly on rote memorization (Syakur & Hashona, 2022). Nonetheless, quantitative research directly examining the effectiveness of this method in enhancing Yellow Book literacy in Indonesian pesantren remains exceedingly limited, thereby creating an opportunity for this study to address this gap in the literature.

Method

1. Type and Approach of Research

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach to explore the relationship between the use of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method and the level of literacy in the yellow book among the students at Pesantren Miftahul Huda. This approach has been selected to obtain an objective empirical representation of the effectiveness of the employed method (Anam et al., 2023; Caroline, 2019; Sugiyono, 2013).

2. Population and Sample

The population in this research comprises all students participating in the yellow book learning program utilizing the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method at Pesantren Miftahul Huda, totaling 20 individuals. Given the small size of the population, total sampling was utilized, whereby every member of the population was included in the sample, resulting in a sample size of 20 students (Arikunto, 1998).

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using a closed questionnaire instrument designed in a Likert scale format to assess the perceptions and literacy levels of the students regarding the yellow book. Furthermore, documentation of academic scores in the yellow book was utilized to complement the analysis.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to illustrate the distribution of the students' literacy scores, as well as simple correlation analysis to examine the relationship between the intensity of the use of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method and the achievements in yellow book literacy. Significance testing was conducted with the assistance of the latest version of SPSS software.

Result and Discussion

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method in enhancing the understanding and reading skills of traditional Islamic texts (kitab kuning) among students (Syarifuddin, Anshory, Abbas, & Suparmin, 2023). The instrument utilized was a perception survey disseminated to 20 respondents, representing the entire sample population. The survey consisted

of nine statements reflecting various aspects of competence, motivation, and perceptions regarding the utilized method.

Overall, the survey results indicate that the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method received a highly positive response from the participants. A significant majority of the respondents demonstrated a high level of acceptance in cognitive aspects (understanding sentence structure and vocabulary), affective aspects (motivation and self-confidence), as well as pedagogical aspects (teaching delivery by instructors). The following section presents a detailed discussion of each indicator.

1. Ease of Understanding Traditional Islamic Texts with the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum Method

Ninety percent of respondents reported that this method consistently or frequently aids them in understanding kitab kuning. Only 10% indicated that it occasionally assists them, and no respondents felt that it rarely or never helped.

The high level of positive response to this indicator suggests that the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method effectively addresses common obstacles faced by learners in comprehending classical Arabic texts. As expounded by Hossein Nassaji, Sandra S. Fotos (2011), one of the primary challenges in teaching classical Arabic is the lack of explicit grammatical context typically found in modern texts (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). The Al-Miftah method, which emphasizes systematic learning of grammar and morphology, significantly assists in bridging this gap.

From a pedagogical standpoint, these results align with the explicit instruction approach, wherein linguistic structures are taught directly and progressively. This method is crucial as adult or adolescent learners who are not accustomed to traditional Arabic language patterns often require explicit guidance to achieve a deeper understanding (Ellis, 2006).

2. Ability to Recognize the Structure of Classical Arabic Sentences

Seventy percent of respondents indicated that they are consistently or frequently able to recognize the structure of classical Arabic sentences after utilizing this method. Thirty percent responded that this ability occurs occasionally, while no respondents reported that they rarely or never succeed in this regard.

This indicator builds on the first and focuses more specifically on the syntactic aspects or sentence structure. The success of this method in enhancing students' syntactic abilities signifies that the strategies employed in Al-Miftah are appropriate for beginner to intermediate learners. According to the Theory of Interlanguage Development (Michael, 1993), second language learners progressively develop a unique language system, evolving through structured exposure and practice. The Al-Miftah method provides the appropriate scaffolding to facilitate this process.

Furthermore, these results also reflect the effectiveness of a form-focused instruction approach, where the primary focus of teaching is directed toward grammatical elements rather than solely on meaning or communication. This approach is particularly suitable for the context of learning kitab kuning, which demands precision in understanding the position and function of each word within sentences.

3. Increase in Confidence When Reading in Front of the Teacher

About the third indicator, 75% of respondents expressed that they feel consistently or frequently more confident when reading Kitab kuning in the presence of their teacher. Only 15%

indicated that they occasionally feel this confidence, while 10% reported that it occurs rarely. None of the respondents stated that they ever experienced such confidence.

The enhancement of self-confidence serves as a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of teaching methods. Within the framework of the Self-Efficacy theory developed by (Bandura, 1997), mastery experience is identified as the most significant factor in fostering an individual's self-belief in specific skills. The data indicates that the Al-Miftah method consistently provides successful experiences for students in understanding and reading traditional Islamic texts, which, in turn, bolsters their self-confidence.

From an affective perspective, elevated self-confidence positively influences motivation and the sustainability of the learning process. This is particularly pertinent considering that reading traditional Islamic texts is often perceived as a complex and challenging activity; thus, students lacking self-confidence are likely to withdraw from such tasks. Through a systematic approach, this method has successfully cultivated a learning environment that empowers learners.

4. Understanding Vocabulary in Classical Texts

Eighty percent of respondents indicated that they are always or frequently able to comprehend the vocabulary found in classical texts after participating in instruction utilizing the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method. Only twenty percent responded that they do so occasionally, while no respondents stated that they do so rarely or never.

Understanding vocabulary serves as a fundamental foundation in the study of classical Arabic. The vocabulary present in classical texts often comprises archaic terms, uncommon synonyms not typically employed in modern Arabic, and contextually meaningful words that vary depending on the field of knowledge (such as jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism). The Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method, which emphasizes vocabulary introduction as a vital component of learning, has proven effective in bridging this lexical gap.

These findings align with (Michael, 1993) Lexical Approach theory, which posits that language acquisition is more effective when the focus is placed on learning vocabulary in phrases or contextual applications. Within the context of studying classical texts, mastery of vocabulary is crucial for students to not only grasp the literal meanings of words but also to understand the nuances and contextual implications of those meanings. The Al-Miftah method appears to facilitate this through its contextual and tiered approach.

Another factor that supports the effectiveness of vocabulary learning within this method is the use of thematic and repetitive approaches. Through deliberate repetition and emphasis on root words, students are introduced to the rich morphological system of the Arabic language. This enables them to not merely memorize words but also comprehend the structures and derivatives of word formation.

5. Ability to Independently Interpret Arabic Texts

Seventy percent of respondents stated that they are always or frequently able to independently interpret unvowelled Arabic texts after studying this method. Twenty-five percent responded that they do so occasionally, while only five percent indicated that they do so rarely, with no participants indicating that they have never done so.

This indicator serves as a benchmark for a higher level of learning success, as it necessitates interpretative and analytical skills to engage with texts without direct guidance from an instructor. It also represents a more complex learning achievement, encompassing grammatical proficiency, lexical understanding, and contextual interpretation.

From the perspective of Bloom's Taxonomy, the ability to interpret unvowelled Arabic texts independently reflects cognitive levels of "analyzing" and "evaluating," rather than merely "remembering" or "understanding." This suggests that the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method effectively guides students to not only memorize rules but also to apply them functionally in reading and understanding classical texts.

In terms of language pedagogy, this ability indicates the realization of learner autonomy, a primary goal in 21st-century language education. According to Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002), learner autonomy allows students to control their learning objectives, processes, and evaluations. Thus, success in this indicator signifies that the employed method effectively fosters a conducive learning environment for the development of learner autonomy (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002).

6. Increased Motivation in Studying Classical Texts

Eighty-five percent of respondents reported that this method consistently or frequently enhances their motivation to study classical texts. Only fifteen percent indicated that they are motivated occasionally, and no respondents felt that they are rarely or never motivated.

Motivation is a critical element for long-term learning success. In the context of studying classical texts—often perceived as challenging, rigid, and demanding—enhancing student motivation is a noteworthy achievement that should not be underestimated. A high level of motivation correlates positively with increased reading frequency, effort in understanding texts, and active class participation.

According to the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), motivation can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic types. The Al-Miftah method appears to effectively stimulate both forms of motivation. Intrinsically, students experience a sense of challenge and engagement within a systematic learning process that provides a feeling of progression. Extrinsically, achievements in understanding classical Islamic texts offer significant social and religious recognition, particularly within the context of pesantren education or traditional Islamic institutions (Deci & Ryan, 2013).

The effectiveness of this method in enhancing motivation can also be elucidated through Expectancy-Value Theory, which posits that students' perceptions of their abilities (expectancy) and the value attributed to tasks (value) determine the level of effort they exert. The Al-Miftah method addresses both aspects: it fosters a sense of capability through learning scaffolding and enhances the perceived value by emphasizing the relevance of the material and its significance in religious life.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Respondents' Scores for Each Learning Indicator

No	Assessment Indicator	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
1	Ability to comprehend unvocalized Arabic text	65	25	10	0	0

2	Application of <i>Nahwu</i> rules in reading	70	20	10	0	0
3	Application of <i>sharf</i> rules in understanding word forms	60	30	10	0	0
4	Understanding of vocabulary (<i>mufradat</i>) in <i>kitab kuning</i>	75	15	10	0	0
5	Ability to independently interpret texts	50	20	25	5	0
6	Increased motivation to study <i>kitab kuning</i>	65	20	15	0	0
7	Systematic mastery of <i>nahwu</i> and <i>sharf</i> rules	55	20	20	5	0
8	Active participation in the learning process	60	20	20	0	0
9	Teacher's role in facilitating <i>kitab kuning</i> comprehension through the Al-Miftah method	75	20	5	0	0

Interpretation

1–3. Structural Aspects of Language (Syntax, Morphology, and Unvowelled Arabic Reading)

The predominance of choices indicating "always" and "often" in the first three indicators reflects the success of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method in equipping students with fundamental syntactic and morphological tools. Syntax and morphology, two essential components of classical Arabic structure, have been focused on and progressively instilled. The contextual learning strategies employed, such as text-based inductive grammar, have proven effective in facilitating the internalization of linguistic rules (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). This method avoids approaches that are solely reliant on the memorization of the definitions of rules, instead promoting the development of structural awareness through direct reading exercises. The efficacy of this approach is supported by (Ellis, 2006), who asserts that grammar instruction embedded within real contexts is more comprehensible and applicable.

4. Vocabulary Mastery

With 90% of respondents selecting "always" and "often," the vocabulary aspect demonstrates the most remarkable results. This indicates that the method excels in cultivating lexical competence, which serves as a foundation for reading classical Arabic texts. The contextual approach—rather than a simple word list—enables students to recognize the functional meanings of words, by the principles of the lexical approach (Michael, 1993).

5. Ability to Independently Interpret Texts

Although this indicator received a lower percentage of "always" (50%), such a result is understandable since independently interpreting unvowelled Arabic texts requires the integration of various skills: grammatical, lexical, and semantic. Nonetheless, 70% of respondents reported their success (50% "always," 20% "often"). This demonstrates that the method is capable of

gradually fostering learner autonomy (Little et al., 2002), even though there is variability in levels of success among individuals.

6. Motivation in Learning Kitab Kuning

Eighty-five percent of respondents consistently expressed motivation from this method. According to the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), intrinsic motivation, which arises from the relevance of the material and perceived success, is a positive indicator of long-term learning processes. The Al-Miftah method builds self-confidence through incremental progress and meaningful content.

7. Integrated Mastery of Syntax and Morphology

In this indicator, 75% of respondents felt that their mastery has increased systematically. This signifies that the integration of morphology and syntax learning has successfully transformed from rote memorization to applied understanding. This is consistent with (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) scaffolding principle, which posits that higher skills are developed through stages and gradual support.

8. Active Participation in the Learning Process

With over 80% of respondents reporting active participation, this indicator illustrates that the Al-Miftah method does not confine students' roles to mere listeners but instead encourages active involvement. This is crucial in creating a constructivist learning environment (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), where students build knowledge independently with the guidance of the teacher.

9. Role of the Teacher as a Facilitator

The final indicator records the highest results, with 95% of respondents acknowledging the significant role of the teacher. The teacher not only conveys content but also facilitates, guides, and regulates the students' thought processes in reading the Kitab Kuning. This role aligns with the concepts of mediated learning and the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

In summary, all nine indicators collectively demonstrate the effectiveness of the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method across various learning aspects of Kitab Kuning: linguistic, affective, and cognitive. This is particularly attributed to the method's systematic, progressive, and contextual nature. The active engagement of students, the teacher's role as a facilitator, and the enhancement of motivation together form an ideal learning environment for the study of classical Arabic texts.

Conclusion

This research emphasizes that the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method has proven effective in enhancing the reading and comprehension skills of classical Arabic texts (kitab kuning) among students in Islamic educational institutions. Based on the analyzed survey data, there is a strong tendency indicating that students exhibit significant progress in their mastery of nahwu (grammar), Sharaf (morphology), and mufradat (vocabulary), as well as their ability to read unvocalized texts with contextual understanding.

The success of this method is reflected in the predominance of responses indicating "always" and "often" across nine key learning indicators established in the study. This method optimally facilitates cognitive aspects, such as structural and lexical comprehension of the Arabic language, while also positively affecting affective aspects, including student motivation and engagement in

the learning process. Moreover, the role of the teacher as a facilitator and guide in the application of this method has contributed significantly to the success of the learning process.

The strengths of the Al-Miftah method lie in its systematic and contextual approach, which avoids verbalistic learning and mechanical memorization. Conversely, this approach enables students to construct understanding through direct application and the development of critical thinking skills concerning the texts. From a pedagogical perspective, this method aligns with scaffolding principles and constructivism, while supporting the attainment of learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation in the study of complex classical languages.

Therefore, the Al-Miftah lil 'Ulum method warrants consideration as a standard model for teaching kitab kuning in various Islamic educational institutions, whether formal or informal. This research recommends further development in the form of teacher training based on this method and the formulation of an integrative curriculum that emphasizes measurable indicators, similar to those utilized in this study.

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