

**HABITUATION MODEL OF ARABIC LEARNING IN
MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS
(A CASE STUDY OF PONDOK MODERN
DARUSSALAM GONTOR)**

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Abstract

Acquiring proficiency in Arabic as a non-Arabic native requires effort and constant practice for the language to become carved in the individual's linguistic repertoire. This inquiry aims to analyze and describe in depth the following efforts to familiarize the Arabic language in Gontor. It discusses how Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor applies the Arabic habituation model for understanding Arabic literacy, which discusses the methods, systems, roles of each element, and the results of the habituation. This study employs a qualitative approach that includes direct observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings revealed that the Arabic habituation model in Gontor was carried out systematically, using a direct technique, and that diverse activities and a conducive atmosphere were built in it to promote the habituation, and that every element of the Gontor played a role in generating an optimal language milieu.

Keywords: *Habituation; Arabic Learning; Gontor.*

Abstrak

Untuk mempelajari Bahasa Arab, bagi non-Arab diperlukan ketekunan dan pembiasaan agar bahasa tersebut melekat kepada lisan yang bukan penutur aslinya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan secara mendalam tentang upaya pembiasaan berbahasa Arab di Gontor. Penelitian ini membahas tentang bagaimana sebuah lembaga yang dikenal dengan Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor menerapkan model pembiasaan Bahasa Arab yang didalamnya membahas tentang metode, sistem, peran serta tiap elemen, dan hasil dari pembiasaan tersebut. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang penulis turun langsung melihat, mewawancarai, dan mendokumentasikan segala yang ditemui di Gontor. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model pembiasaan bahasa arab di Gontor dilakukan secara sistematis, dengan direct method, diciptakan berbagai kegiatan dan lingkungan kondusif di dalamnya yang mendukung pembiasaan tersebut, dan setiap elemen Gontor memiliki peran serta dalam pembentukan lingkup berbahasa yang optimal.

Kata Kunci: *Pembiasaan; Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab; Gontor.*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking Arabic can be considered indirectly linked to the Muslim community. The Arab country and civilizations are known to have existed prior to Islam; however, this does not imply that Islam is the Arab nation's forced identity. This is since Islam and its holy writings were revealed in Arab territories and influenced essential issues for post-Islamic Arab states (Yahya, 2019).

Acquiring Arabic is a distinct experience compared to learning other school subjects. When learning Arabic, one must act, practice, and not be ashamed or frightened of making mistakes. If you merely study it theoretically with no practical follow-up, it will almost likely render this learning ineffective

and inefficient, because practical experience in the form of habituation will considerably influence a learner's habits in the future (Abdurakhman & Rusli, 2015). Learning Arabic required consistency that becomes a habit. Habituation refers to repeated activity in daily life to the point where it becomes a habit. Early habituation fosters the transformation of hobbies and habits into ingrained customs, seamlessly integrating them into one's personality.

The introduction of Arabic for non-Arabs consists of several *ṭarīqah* (methods). Hibbatul Wafi quotes from Ali Ahmad Madkur that the most appropriate method to use for the introduction and habituation of Arabic is the *Ṭarīqah Mubāsyarah* (direct method) through the process of familiarizing oneself with Arabic as the primary language and refraining from using the mother tongue, habituation occurs (Ulfa, 2018).

The perpetual method for learning Arabic learning in most educational institutions is the grammar-translation method. In this method, Arabic is studied only in terms of grammar and how to translate it. This was later criticized by Mahmud Yunus that he created his own method named the Direct Method. Mahmud Yunus not only teaches Arabic but also the direct way to fast and simply master Arabic. He replaced the books generally used by classical *madrasas* with his own compositions, one of which is well-known as *durūs al-lughah al-`arabiyah* (Iskandar, 2017).

When referring to methods, it entails exploring approaches related to teaching and education. Education in schools is not primarily seeking to make children the finest writers and achieve good grades. The goal of education is to

produce a generation of very virtuous and dignified individuals. Reading activities that lead to students developing a reading hobby are one approach to attaining that goal (Antoro, 2017). Education and teaching are inseparable. Teaching serves as the teacher's journey to impart lessons on specific subjects to students. This path is premeditated before entering the classroom and executed during the teaching process (Yunus, 1978). To get good educational results, a good system is also needed. Likewise, Arabic language education requires well-structured and systematic educational tools, to ignite students' interest (Zarkasyi et al., 2022).

METHOD

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive research is to explain a social phenomenon in the Arabic-speaking process of Islamic boarding school students at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo, and to demonstrate Gontor students' Arabic language skills. The research was carried out in May and June 2022 in the student dormitories, classes, policy maker offices, and fields where students speak Arabic daily. The research participants consisted of Gontor students studying in grades 1-6 at *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI), along with the teacher council and Pondok authorities. The unit of analysis in this study was Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo. The data for this research were obtained through three main sources: observations of KMI students in grades 1-6 concerning their language activities, interviews with these students, and some documentation from stakeholders involved in Pondok Language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arabic Language Habituation Model

The Arabic language should be studied by Muslims, especially prospective *'alim*, since the skill is tied to the knowledge of how to build Islamic rules based on Arabic, such as the science of Usul Fiqh and the like (Arwani, 2017).

The approach used to develop the language skills of his students involves continuous verbal practice and occasional exceptions. Everyone in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is required to speak Arabic and English regularly. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor practices Arabic to generate a candidate for *'alim* who is modernist and knowledgeable, rather than mindlessly *taqlid* to one teacher because understanding Arabic is the key to Islamic study. English was chosen as the equivalent of Arabic in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor because it is an international language used almost everywhere in the world, and many Islamic books have been re-translated into this language by Western scientists, so that when a prospective *'alim* wants to know the meaning of a classic Islamic book that has been translated and rewritten, he does not feel confused, afraid, or incompetent in understanding the context contained in the book (Zulkarnain, 2016).

The interview results indicate that Arabic language learning model in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is different from most *salaf* schools. Generally, *nahwu* will be learned first *أَوَّلًا أَنْ تُعَلَّمَ النَّحْوُ أَوْلَى*, while in Gontor *أَوَّلًا أَنْ تُعَلَّمَ اللُّغَةُ أَوْلَى*, we learn Arabic first, then learn Nahwu starting from grade 2.

The Arabic learning model is characterized by a direct language application approach, which is complemented by the

study of language rules. This method exhibits notable distinctions in its progression compared to other approaches such as the *tarjamah* method which burdens the teacher with word-by-word translation. The teacher is required to play an active role and fully master the text to help students memorize every vocabulary (Hanifah, 2018). Another similar method, *Bandongan*, focuses on the teacher's understanding of the science, with pupils merely serving as recipients. Of course, each of these strategies has advantages and downsides in terms of science. The direct technique is considered more effective for the actualization of education in speeding the capacity to utilize Arabic, which is not their mother tongue, as Europe began to do it massively in the 19th century compared to the methods mentioned earlier (Kurniawan, 2014).

The observation results show that in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, the language habituation model is divided into two halves in one month, with two weeks of compulsory Arabic and the other two weeks of English. The system is required to communicate in the language that was utilized that week. If pupils are detected not speaking according to the schedule, they will be punished by the language department.

Curriculum in Gontor

The curriculum of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is divided into three parts, namely: intracurricular, extracurricular, and co-curricular. Intra-curricular activities include indoor lessons at specific times. Extracurricular activities are outside the classroom such as seminars, exercises that hone students' soft skills, and the like. Then co-curricular activities are in the form of sports, language clubs, and so forth. All activities conducted fall within the framework of the

extensive and continuous Arabic-English habituation system (Fahham, 2013).

The observation shows that the books that discuss the rules of the Arabic language studied in Gontor do not require the learner to memorize the entire text, but rather emphasize aspects of understanding, the ability to re-explain and summarize the book's text into a context in which there is an indirect process of memorizing with an emphasis on the introduction and use of each new vocabulary acquired. Books with unique grammatical rules that are utilized from grade three KMI to grade six, such as *'ilmu ṣarf* (Kasim, 2013). *Nahwu wāḍih, balāghah* and *'ilmu mantiq* are studied at every level with the target being students' understanding and the application of new *mufradat* from these books to speaking and writing directly in sentences, not just memorizing them. There are also special lessons on composing in Arabic known as *insha'* and *imla'* lessons to support students' Arabic literacy skills. Basic Arabic lessons with *durusul lughah* are used as a starting hand for students in grades 1, 1 intensive, and 2 KMI before studying more difficult books. There are also special lessons on the history of the development of Arabic literacy which are studied with *adab al-lughah* and *tarikh adab 'arabi* as additional lessons for developing students' talents in Arabic.

Apart from the activities, there is a unique weekend arrangement for class five KMI students. Once a year, they are allotted a week to collectively read classic books provided by the Pesantren. During this time, they engage in reading, recitation, and immerse themselves in the content. At the end of the week, the supervising teachers or *musyrif* will ask each student to summarize and share the knowledge they have

gained from these books. This experience allows the students to fulfill one of the prerequisites of becoming a devout individual. This can be done since students already master Arabic. In addition, there are also *fathul mu'jam* activities which will be tested at the end of the semester for senior students using the *al-munjid* dictionary (*fil lughah wal adab wal 'ulūm*) and *al-mu'jam al-mufahras* (*li alfāz Al-Quran Al-Karīm*). Students were tasked with locating synonyms, antonyms, and grammatical categories of terms in the *al-munjid* lexicon during the activity. In terms of activities at *fath al-mu'jam al-mufahros*, students are tasked with looking for meanings in various forms of sentences in the passages of Qur'an. Both activities required students to incorporate new language from the two dictionaries into *al-kalimah al-mufidah* and utilize it in writing and orally among students at the time.

Language System in Gontor

According to an interview with Salman Al-Farisi, students' activities both inside and outside of the classroom are all practical areas in developing a love for Arabic and English:

Over time, the language teaching and learning model in the boarding house has evolved. In the classroom, first-grade students receive special Arabic material five times a week. This ensures they have a strong foundation in the language for their development at Gontor. In the following classes (2-6 KMI), all Arabic and Islamic lessons are taught in Arabic to meet the requirements of becoming an 'alim. Language learning outside the classroom is also extensive, with vocabulary sessions held after dawn, encouraging students to construct 3 correct sentences from three new vocabularies given by the teacher. There are muhadatsah activities (Arabic-language dialogues) on Tuesdays and Fridays, tahsinul lughah activities on Tuesdays and Sundays for grades 5 and 6. Additionally, there are speech practices in three languages (Arabic-English-Indonesian), theater competitions in

Arabic, singing competitions in Arabic and English, and occasional events each week, all aimed at improving students' language skills. (Interview results)

Other activities outside formal education become supporting factors for students' Arabic literacy. Activities such as *ilqo al-mufradāt*, *tahsīn al-lughah*, *muhaddasah*, *muhāḍarah*, and similar activities are also an important part of developing students' Arabic literacy, with the four main language skills.

These can happen because the focus of Gontor's Arabic language habituation model is not just on reading, memorizing, and understanding the book, but also on mastering Arabic itself. In the future, each *santri* (student) will choose a path, whether it is only to master the classics or to become accomplished translators, foreign diplomats, politicians, business people, Arabic teachers, and so on because Gontor has provided the key, which is mastering Arabic and English.

For KMI students in grades 5 and 6, the activity created is a continuation of previous education. In addition to leadership character education, they are taught Arabic in more depth, with direct guidance from the teacher's council. Class 6 KMI disciplinary violators will face harsher punishment, and those who resist and refuse will be expelled from the boarding school immediately. Expulsion from the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor includes disciplinary education that cannot be appealed by anyone from any background.

Punishment in education faces pros and cons. Many are skeptical and refuse to accept any form of punishment for reasons that are based on the ideas of 'humanist' Western intellectuals. Some individuals believe that physical punishment is the only method to educate (Fauzi, 2016;

Nurjanah & Makarim, 2018). Punishment in Islamic education is widely explained in the words of the Prophet (ﷺ), one of which is in the following hadith:

عَنْ عَمْرِ بْنِ شُعَيْبٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ جَدِّهِ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مُرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِينَ وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشْرِ وَفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ .

'Amr ibn Shu'ayb reported from his father, from his grandfather (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Command your children to pray when they are seven years old, and beat them for (not offering) it when they are ten, and separate them in beds." (Abu Dawud).

Referring to the words of the Prophet (ﷺ), punishment is indispensable for disciplined students. It is intertwined with Islamic education to produce responsible and ethical students. Similarly, there is a requirement for punishment as a result of *mujawwizun nim* in Gontor's Arabic language education system, which is based on habituation, so that the existing system continues in the appropriate corridor. Of course, this punishment is not in the form of injurious physical violence, as stated by Abu Hasan Al-Qabasyi, who stated that beating will only make children resent their educators and that if they must hit, they should avoid the face or other sensitive parts, but hit the soft parts of their feet, which have no effect on physical disability (Arifin, 2009).

Structured habituation will form behavior and character. Edward Lee Thoomdike and Ivan Pavlov describe that psychologically, one's character depends on how he gets his education and habits (Syah, 2019). Habituation requires a

structured supervision system. In Gontor, a backup system is a must to ensure the current system keeps running. Supervision is crucial for proper values, milieu, and conditions (Anggraini, 2019).

All activities at Gontor take place inside a strict and directed language discipline environment. Every member of the boarding school, including teachers and junior students, is obligated to communicate exclusively in Arabic, making it an essential part of their daily life and a vital means of exchanging information among individuals. During a football match, for example, the referee issues a warning in Arabic, commentators give comments in Arabic, players communicate with one another in Arabic, coaches give directions in Arabic, and the audience and all participants must speak Arabic, so there is no gap for someone to say a word in a language other than Arabic and English.

All the above-listed activities will not operate well unless they are accompanied by the roles of each element in Gontor. The observation shows that everyone in Gontor must speak Arabic without exception; even when the author interviewed the sources, none of them would offer a statement in anything other than Arabic. As a result, this habituation model can operate smoothly and without significant obstacles. This analysis draws upon different viewpoints, including Gordon B. Davis' statement, which describes a system as having interconnected devices, each performing a specific function, all working in harmony to achieve a unified objective. The term "role" is defined as an element that operates within its capabilities, contributing to the system's overall usefulness (Soekanto, 2005).

The Role of Every Element in Gontor

After explaining how the systemic process of the Arabic language habituation model works at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, we describe the roles of everyone who is under the Gontor flag in the Arabic language habituation endeavor. Soekanto (2013) defines a role as a mandatory activity carried out by someone who has that responsibility. According to this remark, the function is a task that is carried out by everyone subject to the demands and auspices of that responsibility.

The role of everyone at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor in the Arabic language habituation of Gontor pupils is as follows: The Kyai serves as a major role model for teachers and students. The teacher acts as an educator during the lesson, providing knowledge to all of their students. When teachers talk outside the classroom, such as in the school office, they always speak proper Arabic, and when they meet students, they always speak correct Arabic. For example, when one of the teachers is on duty in the administration of the boarding school and must interact with students, he is required to communicate in Arabic. Senior students are a direct example to their juniors. Therefore, to reach the senior level, students are equipped with intensive and sustainable Arabic (Suharto et al., 2019). Junior students adhere to language discipline wholeheartedly, always converse in the language permitted by the boarding school, minimize violations, and are not embarrassed if they mispronounce a new vocabulary or expression they learn, implying that continuing education has a significant impact on them. Fellow students become role models for one another; students who are always active, hardworking, and disciplined

will provide positive atmosphere for other students, particularly those who are learning Arabic. Every non-teacher or non-*santri* employee who is not a graduate of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor helps students develop their Arabic language skills. For example, when meeting with students, kitchen staff other than teachers and students (kitchen women and others), they use simple Arabic, such as: "tuzid arruzz?", which can be interpreted as 'Do you want to add rice?', or other phrases, and do not allow them to speak in their daily language.

The involvement of all elements in the Arabic language habituation model has inadvertently created a system. This indicates that the Arabic language education system at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has been established, whether it was intentionally designed, is currently being implemented, or has already been applied with the awareness of each participant. Harijono defines a system as a collection of objects that are correlated and collaborate in functional connectivity to unite generating perfect results (Djojodihardjo, 1984). According to the insights of numerous experts, the importance of each aspect in constructing a system is critical for its long-term success. This finding is visible in Gontor's Arabic language education system, where the habituation model stresses optimizing every element to ensure the success of Arabic language teaching.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings given, Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor employs a full Arabic habituation system in addition to English. Both languages are scheduled alternately for two

weeks each month in this approach. The efficiency of this technique is backed up by a mechanism that ensures adherence and discipline among Gontor residents in terms of imposed language usage. Furthermore, Arabic language habituation at Gontor is integrally related to the core curriculum of *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI), and includes a variety of extracurricular courses, allowing for optimal Arabic proficiency. Everyone at Pondok Modern Gontor carries the responsibility of maintaining discipline and adherence to the established language rules. This structured and integrated approach effectively promotes Arabic language habituation in the Pesantren environment.

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