



Students' Educational Background and Arabic Reading Skills (*Maharah qira'ah*): A Qualitative Study of Tenth-Grade Students at MAN 1 Medan

Izzatul Munawaroh Siregar¹, Harun Al Rasyid²

^{1,2} Department of Arabic Language and Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of North Sumatra

Email: izzaasiregar@gmail.com, harunalrasyid@uinsu.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received 17/06, 2026

Revised 15/07, 2026

Accepted 28/07, 2026

Keywords:

Educational
Background
Maharh Qira'ah
Arabic Reading Skills
Differentiated
Instruction

Abstract

This study examines how students' educational backgrounds shape Arabic reading skills (*maharah qira'ah*) among tenth-grade students at MAN 1 Medan. Using a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants were an Arabic teacher, a homeroom teacher, and students representing SMP, MTs, and pesantren backgrounds. Documentation of 229 student responses was used to map school origin. The findings show that MTs and pesantren graduates generally have stronger initial readiness in pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, text comprehension, and reading confidence. SMP graduates need more basic scaffolding in identifying Arabic letters, vowel marks, and simple meanings. However, motivation, vocabulary mastery, peer support, teacher strategy, and repeated reading practice enable several SMP graduates to improve. The study recommends differentiated instruction through diagnostic reading, vocabulary scaffolding, graded reading, and peer tutoring.

تجريد

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل علاقة الخلفية التعليمية بمهارة القراءة العربية لدى طلاب الصف العاشر في المدرسة العالية الحكومية 1 ميدان. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي النوعي، وجمعت البيانات من خلال الملاحظة الصفية، والمقابلات، والوثائق المدرسية. شملت المقابلات معلمًا للغة العربية، وولي صف والمعهد الإسلامي. كما استخدمت الدراسة توثيق 229 استجابة MTs و SMP وثلاثة طلاب يمثلون خلفيات، والمعاهد يمتلكون استعدادًا أوليًا أفضل في النطق MTs حول أصل المدرسة. أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب فيحتاجون إلى دعم أساسي في SMP وفهم المفردات، واستيعاب النصوص، والثقة في القراءة. أما طلاب التعرف إلى الحروف والحركات والمعاني البسيطة. ومع ذلك، تسهم الدافعية، وإتقان المفردات، ودعم الأقران، واستراتيجية المعلم، والتدريب المتكرر في تحسين مهارة القراءة. وتوصي الدراسة بالتعليم التفاضلي القائم على التشخيص الأولي، وتقوية المفردات، والتدريب المتدرج، والتعلم التعاوني.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

الخلفية التعليمية
مهارة القراءة
تعليم العربية
التعليم التفاضلي

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis hubungan latar belakang pendidikan siswa dengan keterampilan membaca bahasa Arab (*maharah qira'ah*) pada siswa kelas X MAN 1 Medan. Penelitian menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif melalui observasi kelas, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Informan terdiri atas guru bahasa Arab, wali kelas, serta siswa yang mewakili latar belakang SMP, MTs, dan pesantren. Dokumentasi 229 respons siswa digunakan untuk memetakan asal sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lulusan MTs dan pesantren umumnya lebih siap dalam pelafalan, penguasaan kosakata, pemahaman teks, dan keberanian membaca. Lulusan SMP memerlukan pendampingan dasar dalam mengenali huruf, harakat, dan makna sederhana. Namun, motivasi belajar, mufradat, dukungan teman sebaya, strategi guru, dan latihan berulang dapat mempercepat perkembangan *maharah qira'ah*. Penelitian merekomendasikan pembelajaran diferensiatif melalui diagnosis awal, penguatan kosakata, latihan bertahap, dan tutor sebaya.

Kata kunci:

Latar Belakang
Pendidikan
Maharah qira'ah
Keterampilan
membaca Arab
Pembelajaran
Diferensiatif

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



A. Introduction

Arabic language learning in Madrasah Aliyah is directed not only toward grammatical knowledge but also toward communicative and literacy competence. Students are expected to develop four integrated skills: listening (*maharah istima'*), speaking (*maharah kalam*), reading (*maharah qira'ah*), and writing (*maharah kitabah*). Among these skills, *maharah qira'ah* occupies a strategic position because it enables students to access Arabic texts, build vocabulary, interpret religious and cultural materials, and follow other Islamic studies subjects that use Arabic terms and sources (Ainin, 2006; N. Hasanah, 2025). Recent scholarship likewise shows that globalization and technological change are reshaping the functions and learning environments of Arabic, making literacy instruction increasingly important for navigating contemporary communicative contexts (Fajri & Zulhelmi, 2023).

Maharah qira'ah should therefore be understood as more than oral decoding. It includes accurate pronunciation, recognition of letters and vowel marks, vocabulary comprehension, sentence-level understanding, and the ability to construct meaning from a written text. This broad definition is important in the Madrasah Aliyah context because

students are expected to read Arabic passages in textbooks and to connect those texts with Qur'anic, hadith, fiqh, and Islamic cultural history materials. Previous studies have also emphasized that reading proficiency develops through repeated practice, interaction with meaningful texts, and the use of appropriate learning strategies (Febrianingsih, 2021; Zahiroh & Mahliatussikah, 2024). Recent studies of Arabic reading reinforce this multidimensional view: reading performance depends on accurate decoding and comprehension, while vocabulary mastery and higher-order assessment are central to understanding written texts (Azzahra & Baroroh, 2024; Fitri & Musdizal, 2024; Nasution, 2023).

In practice, however, tenth-grade students do not enter Madrasah Aliyah with the same level of readiness. Students at MAN 1 Medan come from different educational backgrounds: public junior high schools (SMP), Islamic junior high schools (MTs), and pesantren. These backgrounds create unequal initial exposure to Arabic. MTs graduates usually have studied Arabic as a formal subject since the previous level; pesantren graduates are often accustomed to reading Arabic religious texts or kitab; while many SMP graduates encounter intensive Arabic learning only after entering Madrasah Aliyah. This diversity may influence pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, reading confidence, and classroom participation. For non-native learners, prior exposure works together with linguistic knowledge, motivation, and the learning environment, so initial differences should be treated as developmental starting points rather than fixed limits (Almelhes, 2024). Error-analysis research also shows that weaknesses in syntactic recognition can interfere with accurate Arabic text reading even among students who have already studied the language (Rahmayani et al., 2023).

The problem is pedagogically significant. If the teacher treats all students as having the same initial competence, students with limited exposure may fall behind, while students with stronger Arabic backgrounds may not be sufficiently challenged. The Arabic teacher interviewed for this study stated that the difference is visible at the beginning of learning: MTs and pesantren students generally know the basics of reading Arabic texts and vocabulary, while students from SMP still need guidance from the beginning. This finding indicates that educational background must be considered as part of classroom diagnosis, not as a label that permanently determines student success. This need for diagnosis is consistent with recent needs-analysis research showing varied learner

preferences and readiness for differentiated Arabic materials (Nuriani et al., 2025). Communicative instruction can increase activity and confidence, but its effectiveness is also shaped by vocabulary limitations, anxiety, facilities, and differences in student ability (Az-Zahra & Syafe'i, 2025).

Several studies on Arabic reading have discussed learning methods, digital materials, active learning strategies, and vocabulary development (Faiqoh & Baity, 2024; Kamalia et al., 2022; Sahriani & Lubis, 2023; Zahiroh & Mahliatussikah, 2024). These studies are useful, but many of them focus on improving reading ability after instruction rather than examining how students' previous schooling shapes their initial readiness in *maharah qira'ah*. Research on heterogeneous student backgrounds in the transition from junior secondary education to Madrasah Aliyah remains limited, especially in the context of MAN 1 Medan. Recent evidence further identifies limited vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntactic control as recurrent barriers to Arabic text comprehension (Amanda & Lubis, 2025; Ma'ruf & Mathorayah, 2024). At the broader Madrasah Aliyah level, learning problems also involve motivation, literacy, pedagogy, media, and assessment, suggesting that reading readiness should be interpreted within an interacting instructional system rather than through school background alone (Nazhifah & Syafe'i, 2025).

This study addresses that gap by analyzing how students' educational backgrounds relate to their Arabic reading skills and by identifying other factors that reduce or widen the gap. The study asks two questions: (1) How do students' educational backgrounds influence their initial *maharah qira'ah* at MAN 1 Medan? and (2) What learning factors support the development of Arabic reading skills among students with different educational backgrounds? The study contributes practically to Arabic teachers by offering a differentiated-instruction framework for heterogeneous classes, and academically by positioning educational background as an initial readiness factor that interacts with motivation, vocabulary mastery, classroom strategy, and reading practice.

B. Research Methods

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. The design was selected because the study aimed to describe learning experiences, classroom interactions, and differences in students' Arabic reading readiness rather than to measure statistical correlation alone. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for exploring educational phenomena

in their natural setting and for understanding how participants interpret their learning experiences (Creswell, 2014; Fiantika et al., 2022).

The research was conducted at MAN 1 Medan, a madrasah where tenth-grade students come from diverse educational backgrounds. The research focused on *maharah qira'ah* learning in grade X because this level represents the transition period in which students from SMP, MTs, and pesantren meet in the same Arabic classroom. The main data sources were classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Documentation included student-background data and classroom learning records relevant to Arabic reading skills.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling. The interview informants consisted of one Arabic teacher, one homeroom teacher, one student from MTs, one student from SMP, and one student from pesantren. These informants were selected because they represented both instructional and learner perspectives. The teacher provided information about classroom strategy and differences in initial competence, while students provided information about their previous learning experiences, difficulties, and improvement efforts.

Documentation data were used to contextualize the interview and observation findings. A student-background document recorded 229 responses regarding students' school origin before entering MAN 1 Medan. The data show that 44.5% of respondents came from MTs, 40.2% from SMP, and 15.3% from pesantren. These figures demonstrate that the classroom population is not dominated by a single educational pathway; instead, it is relatively heterogeneous, with almost balanced proportions of MTs and SMP graduates and a smaller but significant group of pesantren graduates.

Data collection proceeded in three stages. First, classroom observation focused on students' pronunciation, recognition of vowel marks, vocabulary comprehension, understanding of reading passages, and participation when asked to read or explain texts. Second, interviews were conducted to obtain deeper accounts of students' previous Arabic-learning experiences and teachers' responses to learner heterogeneity. Third, documentation was analyzed to map student background and to strengthen the credibility of observational and interview data.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or

verification (Miles et al., 2020). In the data-condensation phase, excerpts from observations, interviews, and documentation were selected based on their relevance to educational background and *maharah qira'ah*. In the data-display phase, the data were organized into categories: pronunciation readiness, vocabulary mastery, comprehension, participation, motivation, and teacher strategy. In the conclusion-verification phase, patterns were interpreted by comparing data from teachers, students, and documents.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing the teacher's explanation, the homeroom teacher's view, and student narratives from different backgrounds. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing observation, interview, and documentation data. This process helped ensure that the findings were not based on a single participant or a single data-collection technique.

Table 1. Data sources and analytical focus

Data source	Participants / documents	Analytical focus
Observation	Grade X Arabic reading class	Pronunciation, vowel recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, and participation
Interview	Arabic teacher, homeroom teacher, MTs student, SMP student, and pesantren student	Learning history, initial difficulties, confidence, and improvement strategies
Documentation	229 student-background responses and classroom records	School origin before entering MAN 1 Medan and support for field findings

C. Result and Discussion.

1. Results

a. Students' Educational Backgrounds

The documentation data show that Grade X students at MAN 1 Medan have heterogeneous educational backgrounds. Of the 229 documented students, 44.5% graduated from Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), 40.2% from public junior high schools (SMP), and 15.3% from Islamic boarding schools or pesantren.

Table 2. Students' educational backgrounds before entering MAN 1 Medan

Previous educational background	Percentage	Approximate number of students (n = 229)
Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs)	44.5%	102
Public Junior High School (SMP)	40.2%	92
Pesantren	15.3%	35

The data indicate that almost half of the students had previously studied Arabic in a madrasah environment. Meanwhile, a considerable proportion of the students came from public junior high schools and generally had limited or no formal Arabic-learning experience before entering MAN 1 Medan.

The Arabic teacher confirmed that these differences became apparent during the initial Arabic lessons. Students demonstrated different levels of familiarity with Arabic letters, vowel marks, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures.

b. Initial Reading Readiness of MTs and Pesantren Graduates

Students from MTs and pesantren generally demonstrated stronger initial readiness in learning *maharah qira'ah*. They were more familiar with Arabic texts, basic vocabulary, pronunciation, and, in some cases, elementary nahwu and sharaf.

The MTs student interviewed stated that Arabic had been studied since Grade VII. Consequently, the Arabic materials taught at MAN 1 Medan were not entirely unfamiliar. During classroom activities, MTs graduates generally read Arabic texts more fluently and recognized common vocabulary more quickly than students without previous Arabic-learning experience.

Pesantren graduates also demonstrated relatively strong initial reading readiness. Their advantage resulted not only from learning Arabic as a formal subject but also from regular exposure to Arabic texts and kitab reading. The pesantren student explained that daily activities in the boarding school had familiarized students with Arabic script, pronunciation, vocabulary, and reading practices.

Classroom observations also showed that students with pesantren backgrounds were generally more willing to read aloud, answer questions, and participate in Arabic-reading activities. Nevertheless, their abilities were not uniform. Some students could pronounce Arabic texts fluently but still experienced difficulties understanding vocabulary and sentence meanings.

c. Reading Challenges Experienced by SMP Graduates

Students from public junior high schools generally experienced more fundamental difficulties in learning *maharah qira'ah*. Many of them had not studied Arabic intensively before entering MAN 1 Medan.

The SMP graduate interviewed stated that Arabic had not been studied before entering the madrasah. At the beginning of Grade X, the student found it difficult to recognize connected Arabic letters, distinguish vowel marks, pronounce words accurately, and read sentences fluently.

The difficulties experienced by SMP graduates can be classified into three main areas:

- Orthographic recognition, including identifying Arabic letters, recognizing their connected forms, and distinguishing vowel marks.
- Phonological accuracy, including pronouncing specific Arabic sounds and reading words fluently.
- Semantic comprehension, including understanding vocabulary, phrases, and sentence meanings.

Classroom observations showed that some SMP graduates hesitated when reading aloud, stopped in the middle of sentences, misread vowel marks, or pronounced certain Arabic sounds inaccurately. Even when they could pronounce the words, some students did not understand the content because of limited vocabulary mastery.

However, the teacher reported that several SMP graduates improved after several months of learning. Their improvement was supported by regular practice, home study, strong learning motivation, teacher guidance, and assistance from classmates with stronger Arabic backgrounds.

d. Vocabulary Mastery, Motivation, and Classroom Confidence

Vocabulary mastery emerged as one of the main factors influencing students' Arabic-reading comprehension. Students with broader vocabulary knowledge could understand the general content of texts more easily. In contrast, students with limited vocabulary often had difficulty understanding sentences even when they could pronounce the words correctly.

Motivation also influenced the development of students' reading skills. The teacher observed that students who practised regularly and actively sought assistance showed greater improvement than students who relied only on classroom instruction. Some SMP graduates attempted to overcome their difficulties by studying at home, asking the teacher questions, and seeking help from MTs or pesantren classmates.

Differences were also found in classroom confidence. Students with previous Arabic-learning experience were generally more confident when reading aloud, responding to questions, and participating in discussions. Conversely, some SMP graduates appeared hesitant or embarrassed because they perceived their Arabic abilities as lower than those of their classmates.

e. Teacher Strategies in Heterogeneous Reading Classes

The Arabic teacher implemented several strategies to address differences in students' initial abilities. At the beginning of the semester, the teacher repeated basic materials, particularly Arabic-letter recognition, pronunciation, vocabulary, and simple sentence patterns.

The teacher also organized collaborative learning groups. Students with stronger Arabic backgrounds were encouraged to assist classmates who experienced difficulties. Through these groups, students could practise reading, discuss vocabulary, correct pronunciation, and understand the content of texts together.

The main strategies identified in the learning process included:

- reviewing fundamental Arabic-reading materials;
- providing vocabulary explanations before reading;
- using gradual reading exercises;
- organizing collaborative learning groups;
- encouraging peer assistance;
- giving additional support to students experiencing difficulties; and
- evaluating students' pronunciation and comprehension.

f. Summary of the Findings

The findings demonstrate that students' previous educational backgrounds influence their initial readiness in learning Arabic reading skills. MTs and pesantren

graduates generally begin with greater familiarity with Arabic texts, vocabulary, and pronunciation. SMP graduates generally require more foundational support.

Nevertheless, educational background does not permanently determine students' achievement. Motivation, regular practice, vocabulary development, teacher guidance, and peer assistance contribute to reducing initial differences among students.

Table 3. Summary of findings

Finding	Field evidence
MTs graduates demonstrate stronger initial readiness	They have previously learned Arabic and are familiar with basic vocabulary and texts.
Pesantren graduates show greater reading habituation	They are accustomed to Arabic script, pronunciation, and kitab reading.
SMP graduates experience more fundamental difficulties	They struggle with letters, vowel marks, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension.
Vocabulary influences comprehension	Students with broader vocabulary understand texts more easily.
Motivation supports improvement	Diligent students improve through home study and regular practice.
Confidence affects classroom participation	Students with previous Arabic experience participate more actively.
Teacher intervention reduces ability gaps	Basic review, collaborative groups, and peer support help struggling students.

2. Discussion

a. Educational Background as a Factor in Initial Reading Readiness

The findings indicate that educational background influences students' initial readiness in learning *maharah qira'ah*. Students from MTs and pesantren generally possess stronger foundational abilities because they have previously encountered Arabic vocabulary, texts, pronunciation, and grammatical elements.

Previous exposure enables students to connect newly introduced materials with their existing knowledge. MTs graduates benefit from structured Arabic instruction at the previous educational level, whereas pesantren graduates benefit from regular exposure to Qur'anic reading, Arabic texts, and kitab learning.

However, their previous educational backgrounds should not be interpreted as a guarantee of complete reading proficiency. Some students may be able to pronounce Arabic texts fluently but still experience difficulties understanding their

meanings. Therefore, reading proficiency involves more than oral pronunciation; it also requires vocabulary mastery, grammatical awareness, and comprehension.

The findings also show that SMP graduates' initial difficulties are not permanent. Although they begin with limited Arabic-learning experience, their abilities can develop through systematic guidance, repeated practice, motivation, and supportive classroom interaction. Thus, educational background should be regarded as an initial readiness factor rather than a fixed determinant of achievement.

b. Arabic Reading as an Integrated Competence

The difficulties identified among SMP graduates demonstrate that *maharah qira'ah* is an integrated competence involving orthographic recognition, phonological accuracy, vocabulary knowledge, and semantic comprehension.

Students must first recognize Arabic letters and their connected forms. They must then associate these written symbols with appropriate sounds before accessing the meanings of words and sentences. A weakness in one component can affect the overall reading process.

This interpretation is consistent with the view that Arabic reading involves both the accurate recognition of written forms and the construction of meaning from a text (Febrianingsih, 2021). Therefore, students who pronounce texts accurately cannot automatically be categorized as proficient readers when they do not understand the content.

Vocabulary mastery occupies a central position in this process. Students with sufficient vocabulary can identify the meaning of important words, infer the content of sentences, and understand the main ideas of texts. This finding is consistent with studies showing that structured vocabulary memorization, communicative practice, game-based learning, and visual media can improve students' access to meaning and classroom participation (Hanifansyah & Mahmudah, 2024; M. Hasanah et al., 2024; Nasution, 2023; Tarigan & Ahkas, 2023).

c. The Roles of Motivation and Learning Practice

The improvement experienced by several SMP graduates indicates that motivation and sustained practice can reduce differences caused by previous educational backgrounds. Students who actively practise reading, study

vocabulary, ask questions, and seek assistance demonstrate more significant progress.

This finding challenges the assumption that previous educational background is the only factor determining students' Arabic-reading achievement. Although prior exposure provides an initial advantage, students' later development depends on their engagement in the learning process.

Students with limited previous experience can gradually catch up when they receive appropriate guidance and demonstrate strong motivation. Conversely, students with MTs or pesantren backgrounds may fail to develop their abilities when they do not practise consistently.

Therefore, teachers need to develop regular reading routines, provide achievable learning targets, and recognize students' progress. Such strategies can strengthen students' motivation and encourage them to participate actively in the learning process.

d. Classroom Confidence and Participation

The findings reveal a close relationship between students' perceived ability and classroom participation. Students with previous Arabic-learning experience generally display greater confidence because they are familiar with the language. They are more willing to read aloud, answer questions, and participate in discussions.

In contrast, students who perceive their abilities as lower may experience anxiety, embarrassment, or fear of making mistakes. Such feelings can reduce their willingness to participate, even when they have the potential to improve.

Therefore, Arabic-reading instruction should address both linguistic competence and emotional readiness. Teachers need to create a classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are treated as a natural part of learning. Positive feedback, gradual tasks, and supportive peer interaction can help students develop confidence.

Peer-assisted learning is particularly relevant in heterogeneous classrooms because it provides struggling students with more personalized assistance. Structured peer tutoring can increase interaction, strengthen engagement, and improve students' confidence in Arabic-language learning (Hanifansyah et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2024).

e. Differentiated Instruction in Heterogeneous Classes

The teacher's strategy of reviewing basic materials and organizing collaborative groups reflects the principles of differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction recognizes that students do not enter the classroom with identical abilities, experiences, and learning needs.

Repeating fundamental materials is necessary for students who have not previously studied Arabic. However, this repetition should be carefully managed so that students with stronger backgrounds remain intellectually engaged. MTs and pesantren graduates can be assigned more advanced activities, such as identifying main ideas, translating passages, analysing sentence structures, or presenting text content.

Meanwhile, SMP graduates can receive more foundational support in letter recognition, pronunciation, vocabulary, and simple comprehension. In this way, the same text can be used with different levels of tasks according to students' readiness.

The teacher's collaborative-group strategy is also consistent with active-learning principles that emphasize student interaction, practice, and adaptation to learners' needs (Kamalia et al., 2022; Sahriani & Lubis, 2023). Evidence from the Senior Teaches Junior model similarly shows that structured near-peer interaction can support Arabic-vocabulary development when students' roles and teacher supervision are clearly organized (Masnun et al., 2024).

f. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings, Arabic teachers in heterogeneous Grade X classes should implement several instructional measures.

First, teachers should conduct diagnostic reading assessments at the beginning of the semester. The assessment should examine students' ability to recognize letters, pronounce words, understand vocabulary, and comprehend simple texts.

Second, teachers should provide vocabulary scaffolding before students read a text. Important words can be introduced through pictures, examples, synonyms, antonyms, or simple sentences.

Third, teachers should implement graded-reading activities. Students may begin with short, fully vowelised texts before progressing to longer texts with fewer vowel marks and more complex sentence structures.

Fourth, peer tutoring should be organized systematically. Students with stronger Arabic backgrounds can assist classmates, but the teacher must provide clear tasks and monitor the interaction so that peer tutoring does not become unstructured dependence.

Fifth, formative assessment should be carried out continuously to monitor changes in pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, fluency, and comprehension. Evaluation is important for determining the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved and for identifying students who require further support (Muhammad Noor & Syafei, 2025).

Graded reading can also be supported by active-comprehension techniques and relevant digital media. Previous studies have shown that digital reading strategies and web-based visual media can improve students' engagement and comprehension of written texts (Rusman et al., 2025; Suparman & Wahyuningsih, 2024).

g. Interpretation of the Relationship between Background and Reading Ability

Overall, the relationship between educational background and *maharah qira'ah* should be understood as interactive rather than deterministic. MTs and pesantren backgrounds provide students with an initial advantage, but this advantage must still be developed through systematic instruction.

Similarly, an SMP background may result in initial difficulties, but these difficulties can be reduced through motivation, repeated practice, vocabulary development, differentiated instruction, and peer support.

The main contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that heterogeneous educational backgrounds should not be addressed through uniform instruction. Instead, teachers need to adopt adaptive teaching based on students' diagnosed abilities and changing learning needs.

Therefore, educational background should function as a basis for instructional planning rather than as a permanent label of students' abilities. The ultimate goal is to provide equitable learning opportunities so that all students can progressively develop fluency, vocabulary mastery, confidence, and comprehension in Arabic reading.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that students' educational background influences the Arabic reading skills (*maharah qira'ah*) of tenth-grade students at MAN 1 Medan, especially in the early stage of learning. MTs and pesantren graduates generally demonstrate stronger readiness in pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, text comprehension, and classroom participation because they have had previous exposure to Arabic learning. SMP graduates tend to require more basic guidance, particularly in recognizing letters, vowel marks, and simple meanings.

Nevertheless, educational background is not the only determinant of *maharah qira'ah*. The study found that motivation, vocabulary mastery, repeated reading practice, teacher strategy, and peer support also play significant roles in improving reading skills. Some students from SMP backgrounds showed meaningful progress after receiving guidance, practicing regularly, and learning collaboratively with peers. Therefore, Arabic reading ability should be viewed as a developing competence rather than a fixed result of previous schooling.

The practical implication is that Arabic teachers in heterogeneous Madrasah Aliyah classrooms need to apply differentiated instruction. Diagnostic assessment, vocabulary scaffolding, graded reading, repeated oral practice, and peer tutoring can help reduce ability gaps and make reading classes more inclusive. The limitation of this study is that it focuses on one school and uses a qualitative design, so the findings are not intended for broad statistical generalization. Future research may combine qualitative observation with reading-test data across several madrasahs to measure more precisely how educational background, motivation, and vocabulary mastery interact in the development of *maharah qira'ah*.

Bibliography

- Ainin, M. (2006). Pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis kompetensi dan kontekstual. *Al Qalam*, 23(1), 125–146. <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v23i1.1453>
- Almelhes, S. (2024). Enhancing Arabic Language Acquisition: Effective Strategies for Addressing Non-Native Learners' Challenges. *Education Sciences*, 14(10), 1116. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14101116>
- Amanda, S. P., & Lubis, M. R. N. (2025). Analisis kesulitan siswa dalam memahami teks bahasa Arab pada maharah qira'ah. *Bilingua*, 3(2), 54–58.

<https://doi.org/10.33752/bilingua.v3i2.10775>

- Az-Zahra, M., & Syafe'i, I. (2025). Qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of the communicative learning model in Arabic language instruction. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(2), 86–97. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i2.11>
- Azzahra, L. Q., & Baroroh, R. U. (2024). Inovasi penilaian maharah al-qira'ah pada buku teks bahasa Arab berdasarkan penilaian HOTS. *Jurnal Alfazuna: Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 9(1), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.15642/alfazuna.v9i1.3962>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. In Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.12.1.82.s2>
- Faiqoh, P. K., & Baity, A. N. (2024). Inovasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab dengan buku digital Silsilah Allisan untuk penutur non-Arab. *Al-Lahjah: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa Arab, Dan Kajian Linguistik Arab*, 7(1), 740–745. <https://doi.org/10.32764/allahjah.v7i1.4329>
- Fajri, A., & Zulhelmi, A. (2023). POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE. *An-Nahdah Al-'Arabiyah*, 3(2), 109–120.
- Febrianingsih, D. (2021). Keterampilan membaca dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. *Salimiya: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Keagamaan Islam*, 2(2), 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.2906/salimiya.v2i2.335>
- Fiantika, F. R., Wasil, M., Jumiya, S., Honesti, L., Wahyuni, S., Mouw, E., Jonata, Mashudi, I., Hasanah, N., Maharani, A., Ambarwati, K., Noflidaputri, R., Nuryami, & Waris, L. (2022). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Y. Novita (ed.)). PT Global Eksekutif Teknologi.
- Fitri, S. F., & Musdizal. (2024). Analysis of Arabic reading skills at Modern Islamic Boarding School Arafah Sungai Penuh, in the 12th grade of Aliyah. *Al Mahara: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 10(1), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.14421/almahara.2024.0101-08>
- Hanifansyah, N., & Mahmudah, M. (2024). Enhancing Arabic vocabulary mastery through communicative strategies: Evidence from Malaysia. *Al-Ta'rib: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab UIN Palangka Raya*, 12(2), 263–278. <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.9082>
- Hanifansyah, N., Mahmudah, M., & Syakur, S. A. (2024). Peer tutoring as a collaborative approach in Arabic language learning. *Lahjatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 4(1), 26–43. <https://doi.org/10.38073/lahjatuna.v4i1.2181>

Students' Educational Background and Arabic Reading Skills (Maharah Qira'ah): A Qualitative Study of Tenth-Grade Students at MAN 1 Medan

- Hasanah, M., Hasibuan, R., & Jundi, M. (2024). Elevating Arabic vocabulary learning: Integrating Teams Games Tournament and Show & Tell method. *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 11(1), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v11i1.37937>
- Hasanah, N. (2025). Maharah qira'ah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. *Nur El-Islam: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Sosial Keagamaan*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.51311/nuris.v12i2.1160>
- Hidayah, S. N., Ilmiani, A. M., & Samdouni, S. (2024). Peer tutoring activities implementation in Arabic language development at Indonesian Islamic universities. *Journal of Arabic Language Learning and Teaching (JALLT)*, 2(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jallt.v2i1.159>
- Kamalia, K., Nasution, W. N., & Nasution, S. (2022). Implementation of active learning strategies in improving Arabic language skills for students of STAI As-Sunnah Tanjung, North Sumatra. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(2), 1793–1802. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i2.1902>
- Ma'ruf, M. A., & Mathoriyah, L. (2024). Analisis kesalahan sintaksis dalam membaca teks Arab pada siswa serta alternatif peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran bahasa Arab di sekolah. *Al-Lahjah: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa Arab, Dan Kajian Linguistik Arab*, 7(2), 794–803. <https://doi.org/10.32764/lahjah.v7i2.4902>
- Masnun, M., Hanifansyah, N., & Khalid, S. M. S. bin. (2024). Senior Teaches Junior (STJ) approach in enhancing Arabic vocabulary through Kitab Af'al: A case study in Malaysia. *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies*, 9(2), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.24865/ajas.v9i2.851>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Muhammad Noor, I. I., & Syafei, I. (2025). Teachers' perceptions of Arabic language learning evaluation: A descriptive qualitative study. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(3), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i3.16>
- Nasution, M. H. (2023). FA'ALIAT BERNAMAJ HIFZU AL-MUFRADAT LIFAHM QIRA'AT FII ALLUGHAT AL-'ARABIYAT LITULAAB AL-FASL SABI' BII MA'HAD BAHARUDDIN JANJI MUARA TAIS. *An-Nahdah Al-'Arabiyah*, 3(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.22373/nahdah.v3i1.2172>
- Nazhifah, S., & Syafe'i, I. (2025). An Analysis of Arabic Language Learning Problems in

- Madrasah Aliyah and Their Solutions. *Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Pusaka Cendekia*, 1(3), 108–113. <https://doi.org/10.65427/puscen.v1i3.12>
- Nuriani, R. I., Mahliatussikah, H., & Alfian, M. (2025). Analysis of students' needs for differentiation-based Arabic language teaching materials. *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning*, 8(2), 708–720. <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i2.29692>
- Rahmayani, D., Fatihah, S. A., Maula, M. D., & Umbar, K. (2023). Analisis kesalahan dalam membaca teks Arab mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Arab. *Ad-Dhuha: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Budaya Islam*, 4(1), 40–51. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ad-dhuha.v4i1.23033>
- Rusman, M., Fahra, N. A., & Syamsu, P. K. (2025). The effect of web-based puzzle media on enhancing Arabic reading comprehension among students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. *IJ-ATL (International Journal of Arabic Teaching and Learning)*, 9(1), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijat.v9i1.10982>
- Sahriani, N., & Lubis, Z. (2023). Analisis metode pembelajaran bahasa Arab di Madrasah Aliyah Laboratorium UINSU Medan. *Manazhim: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(2), 867–879. <https://doi.org/10.36088/manazhim.v5i2.3539>
- Suparman, N. S., & Wahyuningsih, D. (2024). Reading comprehension in the digital age: Strategies for STAI Nurul Falah students. *Alsuna: Journal of Arabic and English Language*, 7(2), 191–199. <https://doi.org/10.31538/alsuna.v7i2.5954>
- Tarigan, N. R., & Ahkas, A. W. (2023). The development of web-based image puzzle media for Madrasah Tsanawiyah students. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 4(3), 719–731. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i3.603>
- Zahiroh, N., & Mahliatussikah, H. (2024). Penggunaan permainan Scrabble untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Arab siswa kelas VII MTsN. *JoLLA: Journal of Language, Literature, and Arts*, 4(6), 567–575. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um064v4i62024p567-575>