

Bringing Innovation in Learning Arabic Speaking Skills for Students of Madrasah Diniyah: Hand Puppet Media as A Model

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Abstract: The Arabic language learning process at Madrasah Diniyah is still dominated by reading and memorizing vocabularies, this is not in line with the main principle of language identity itself which states that language is speech and verbal communication. This research aims to measure the effect of using hand puppet media on improving the speaking skills (Mahārah al-Kalām) of Madrasah Diniyah students. The research departs from a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental method, one group pretest-posttest design model. The data source comes from students obtained through observation and test techniques. The source triangulation technique was chosen to validate the data obtained, and then analyzed using the T-test technique. The results of this research show that there is a significant influence between the use of hand puppet media and improving the speaking skills (Mahārah al-Kalām) of Diniyah Madrasah students. This is based on the results of the T-Test calculation which concludes that the T-Count is greater than the T-Table at the 5% significance level is 2.12 and 1% significance is 2.92. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Keywords: Hand Puppets; Learning Media; Speaking Skills; Madrasah Diniyah.

Abstrak: Proses pembelajaran bahasa Arab di Madrasah Diniyah masih didominasi dengan aktifitas membaca dan menghafal kosakata, hal ini tidak sejalan dengan prinsip utama identitas bahasa itu sendiri yang berbunyi bahasa adalah ujaran dan komunikasi verbal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur pengaruh penggunaan media boneka muppet terhadap peningkatan keterampilan berbicara (Mahārah al-Kalām) santri Madrasah Diniyah. Penelitian berangkat dari pendekatan kuantitatif dengan jenis metode pre-eksperimen model one group pretest-posttest design. Sumber data berasal dari siswa yang diperoleh melalui teknik observasi dan tes. Teknik triangulasi sumber dipilih guna memvalidasi data yang diperoleh, dan selanjutnya di analisis menggunakan teknik T-test. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh yang cukup signifikan antara penggunaan media tangan muppet dan peningkatan keterampilan berbicara (Mahārah al-Kalām) santri Madrasah Diniyah, hal ini berdasarkan hasil perhitungan melalui Uji-T yang menyimpulkan bahwa nilai T-Hitung lebih besar dari nilai T-Tabel pada taraf signifikansi 5% sebesar 2,12 dan signifikansi 1% sebesar 2,92. Dengan demikian maka hipotesis nol ditolak, sedangkan hipotesis alternatif diterima.

Kata Kunci: Boneka Tangan; Media Pembelajaran; Keterampilan Berbicara; Madrasah Diniyah.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that speaking skills (Mahārah al-Kalām) are one of the most important forms of linguistic activity for both young and old. It is considered the most important and basic part of practicing and using a language, including Arabic itself

(Qomaruddin et al., 2023; Syamaun, 2016). In fact, people use speaking skills more than writing skills, which means they speak more than they write.

We often find that many people make the main goal of learning Arabic to be able to speak and communicate well. Likewise, when we say "that person is good at English" for example, it comes to mind that he speaks it and is good at communicating in that language. This is in line with one of the paradigms that states that language is speech (*al-Lughah Hiya al-Kalām*). Therefore, teachers must try their best to arouse students' passion for speaking and their tendencies towards various types of oral communication, in addition to that teachers also need to know the methods, techniques and learning media that must be used to help students develop their abilities in speaking skills.

In fact, the spirit of learning Arabic at Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah Mifathul Ulum Gresik is still dominated by reading Arabic texts, memorizing vocabulary and Arabic grammar rules, so that speaking skills that are considered important are not directly proportional to their reading and memorization skills. This is in line with the orientation of most classical Pesantrens in Indonesia which still emphasize mastery of reading yellow books (*Kutub al-Turaş*) in learning Arabic (Rosyad et al., 2023), although there are also several modern Pesantrens that view Arabic as a language of communication and diplomacy (Primaningtyas & Setyawan, 2019). Therefore, the researcher sees that it is appropriate that with the existing vocabulary and mastery of basic Arabic grammar rules, students at Madrasah Diniyah need to be encouraged to improve their speaking skills in Arabic. In this context, the researcher motivates and guides the students to be confident and not hesitate to use vocabulary in their speaking through hand puppet media.

The use of learning aids or media is a key component in most language programs and activities. Jack stated that learning with hand puppets makes it easier for teachers to explain material to students (Richards, 2001). The use of hand puppets, whether in the form of *pewayangan* or others, is very easy and more enjoyable. Its popularity as a medium of entertainment and education can be traced back centuries (Confino, 1972). Faurot saw that these hand puppets generally have soft bodies and heads, their basic movements can be easily controlled (Faurot, 2009). Various types of puppets used by teachers such as hand puppets, finger puppets, *pewayangan*, and others. This provides benefits for teachers because they have a model in attracting students' attention and improving their speaking skills.

The use of hand puppets with various types in language learning is not new. This can be traced in several previous studies that show a positive influence in the use of these media on improving Arabic speaking skills for early childhood (Qureshi et al., 2022), as well as increasing student interest so that they are more enthusiastic in learning (Jaelani & Kholifah, 2023). The use of puppets that match the character of the story not only affects the fluency of students' speech but also the motivation and self-confidence of students (Ahmadi & Mohamadi, 2017; Toledo & Hoit, 2016), reduces students' anxiety to speak in a foreign language and changes their negative views and perceptions of foreign languages (Prabhakaran & Yamat, 2017). Moreover, the use of puppets media such as *wayang kulit* with certain characters can be used in religious subjects as an artistic-pedagogical tool (Güleç, 2023), because it has values that are linear with Islam itself (Arifin, 2017).

Based on the explanation above, this study contributes to strengthening the existing formal findings by expanding the research area related to Arabic, as well as the

characteristics of students in non-formal Islamic educational institutions. These two things have not been commonly mentioned in research at the same time. Arabic with its various features is very different from other languages, as well as the terminology of students with non-formal education has criteria that cannot be equated with students in formal education in general. Thus, this study aims to measure the influence of hand puppet media on Arabic speaking skills for students of Madrasah Diniyah.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental type through a one group pretest and posttest design which aims to determine the researcher's intervention on a group of people before and after treatment. This study attempts to test the hypothesis between two variables (Dimitrov & Rumrill Jr, 2003), which in this case are hand puppet media and improving Arabic speaking skills. In this context, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is separate, which means that it can be represented, also the relationship between cause and effect is clear, value-free, and the research object prioritizes the product rather than the process (Rosyad et al., 2024).

The sample of this study consisted of seventeen students of Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah, who were taken through a purposive technique from the total population of students at Madrasah Diniyah Miftahul Ulum Gresik. The sampling technique is based on certain considerations and characteristics based on the researcher's considerations (Tongco, 2007). Data sources originating from students and the learning class environment are obtained through observation and test techniques with instruments in the form of structured observation guidelines and verbal and written question drafts. To obtain valid data, the researcher utilized the source triangulation technique, then the data was analyzed using the T-Test formula, where in this way it will be known whether there is a mutually influencing relationship between the two variables (Arikunto, 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Puppet Media in Mahārah Kalām Learning

Media is considered a very important and strategic instrument in education that plays a role in determining the success of the learning process, while for students the existence of media can directly provide its own dynamics and perspectives. Generally, learning media is a tool to help the learning process, it is like the main link in bridging learners with learning resources (Oka, 2022). Arsyad argues that learning media is a tool that can help the learning process and functions to clarify the meaning of the message, to achieve learning goals (Arsyad, 2011). Therefore, the creative use of media will increase the possibility for students to learn more, master what is learned better, and improve skills according to learning goals (Riyana, 2012).

Hand puppets are one type of puppet that is controlled by the hands that occupy the inside of the puppet (Sinclair, 1995). *Sarong* puppets are a variation of hand puppets, and like *wayang* that requires one of the puppeteer's hands inside the puppet sheath that holds a stick to control the head and body. The reason behind the naming of hand puppets is because it is wrapped around the fingers, like clothes that are stretched over the player's arms.

Hand puppets are the latest model in the use of puppets as educational aids. Since 1940, hand puppets have been widely used in American schools, and began to

be famous in Indonesia in the late 90s through television shows at that time with a puppet named Susan played by Ria Enes (Daryanto, 2010). Some teachers use hand puppets to create interest in subjects, such as representing a historical fact or improving students' ability to master a foreign language through hand puppets that speak using one of those languages. Dayanto stated that the urgency of using hand puppet media can save time, space, costs, and preparation. In addition, it can also develop students' imagination and activeness in learning, encourage their desires and interests in the learning process.

There are several types of puppets that can be used to improve Arabic speaking skills, including muppet hand puppets as used in this study to attract attention and stimulate students. In line with this, Daryanto groups the types of puppets into five types, namely:

1. **Finger Puppets:** These puppets are made from simple tools such as bottle caps, ping pong balls, small bamboo that can be used as puppet heads. As the name implies, these puppets are played using fingers. The puppet's head is placed on the tip of our finger. It can also be made of a glove-like material, where the tip of the glove's finger is already in the shape of a puppet's head so that we just must play it (Daryanto, 2010).



Picture 1. Finger Puppets

2. **Hand Puppets:** In finger puppets we can play one character from each fingertip, just like in hand puppets. In this hand puppet we can only play one puppet with one hand. It is called a hand puppet, because this puppet only consists of a head and both hands, while the body and legs are only clothes that cover the arms of the person playing it, besides that the way to play it is only using hands without using other tools. How to play it using the index finger to move the puppet's head, while the thumb and other fingers to move the hands. In Indonesia, the use of hand puppets as a medium for education and learning in schools has been widely applied, even used outside of school such as in the film series "Si Unyil" (Ardhiani et al., 2021).



Picture 2. Hand Puppets

3. **String Puppets:** The way it moves is through a string connecting the head, hands, and feet. String puppets or "marionettes" are widely used in western

countries. The striking difference between string puppets and other puppets is that the head, hands, and feet can be moved according to our wishes. The way to move it is with a string, so that the position of the person playing it is above the puppet. Playing string puppets requires regular practice, because playing this string puppet requires more difficult skills than playing other puppets. The advantage of string puppets is that they are more alive than other puppets because they are close to human movements or real characters.



Picture 3. String Puppets or Marionette Puppets

4. Shadow Puppets: This type is played by displaying shadow movements. Shadow Puppets are one type of puppet that is played by displaying the movements of the puppet's shadow. In Indonesia, especially in Java, it is known as "Wayang kulit". However, for school purposes, this type of puppet is considered less effective, because to play this puppet requires a dark and closed room, and lights are needed to create shadows on the screen.



Picture 4. Shadow Puppets

5. Stick Puppets: So, called because the way to play it is with sticks. The sticks are connected to the hands and body of the puppet. Wayang Golek which originates from West Java is included in this type of puppet. To using stick puppets as educational and learning media in schools, the characters are made according to the existing conditions. For example, military figures, merchants, villagers, fishermen or certain types of professions. Stick puppets can be made from soft wood such as candlenut, kapok, and others.



Picture 5. Stick Puppets

In relation to improving speaking skills, the use of hand puppet media is one of the right ways. The puppet is then designed based on the character of the story content related to the learning material. Hand puppets are imitation objects in the form of humans or animals that are played with one hand. Hand puppets can be used

as educational media and can be played in the form of puppets. The types of puppet characters chosen in this study are lion and goat animal characters, this is because the theme of the material that the researcher will use is a story about both. Storytelling is the most common and productive speaking activity because it involves the mind, mental readiness, courage, and clear speech so that it is easily understood by others (Ardhiani et al., 2021).

In this context, the application of hand puppet media to students of Madrasah Diniyah is carried out through 3 stages, namely pretest, treatment, and posttest. The general steps are as follows:

1. The teacher tells the story of "Lion the King of Jungle" in Indonesian as well as in simple Arabic.
2. The teacher asks students to write down the points of the story.
3. The teacher asks students to develop the written points into a story.
4. Students translate the story into Arabic.
5. The teacher gives students the opportunity to ask questions related to Arabic vocabulary that they do not yet know.
6. Students take turns retelling the story of "Lion the King of Jungle" according to the storyline that has been developed using Arabic.

The fundamental difference lies in points one and six, where in the pretest stage, teachers and students did not use hand puppets as media, whereas in the posttest stage, this media was used. Through these two steps, it will be known whether there is a mutually influencing relationship between the two variables, namely the use of hand puppet media and Arabic speaking skills.

The Influence of Muppet Hand Puppet Media on Speaking Skills (Mahārah Kalām)

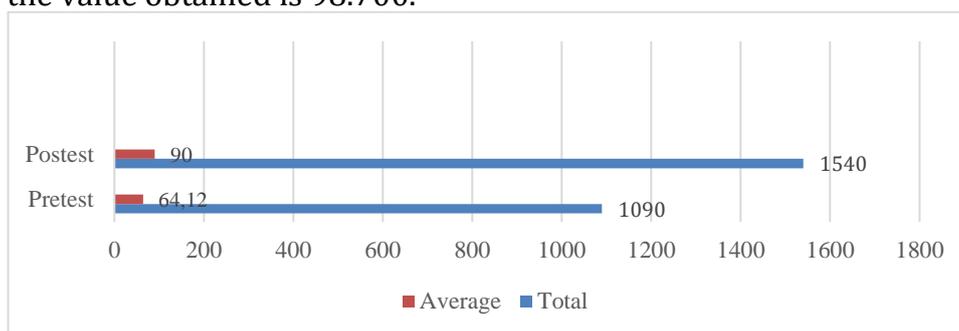
There were seventeen students of Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah who learned using muppet hand puppet media to improve their speaking skills in Arabic. Before the treatment was carried out, the students were first given a pre-test with several questions covering the elements of pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and understanding. After conducting the pre-test, the treatment was carried out followed by a post-test.

The pronunciation aspect assessed in this context is the accuracy of pronouncing the sound or *Harakat* of a word or sentence. While the grammar aspect is limited to sentence structure with simple patterns such as subject, predicate, object, and time or place information. The aspect of fluency in speaking without stuttering is also a consideration in the test. Likewise, the aspect of understanding what is in their notes or thoughts is in line with what is said and told in front of the class. Several of these aspects have met the criteria and general objectives in learning Arabic speaking skills, so that the pretest and posttest models used by researchers can be applied in determining the mutually influencing relationship between the two variables. This is in line with the views of applied linguistics experts on the general objectives of learning speaking skills, including:

1. Pronunciation of sound articulation correctly.
2. Pronouncing Arabic sounds and doing various types of stress and intonation in a way that is acceptable to Arabic speakers.
3. Expressing thoughts using appropriate grammatical forms.

4. Using some forms of Arabic culture that are acceptable and appropriate for age, social level, applied characteristics, and obtaining some basic information about Arab and Islamic heritage (Shehata, 1992).
5. Mastering the word and sentence system that helps him express what he wants to say in conversational situations (Al-Nâqah, 1985).

Based on the overall results and the average in the post-test, it showed that most of the students had better speaking skills than before using the muppet hand puppet media. The pretest score obtained in total was 1090 with an average of 64,12. While the posttest results with a total of 1540 and an average of 90. Thus, the value of $\sum X^2$ is 82.500 while the value of $\sum Y^2$ is 140.600 and if totaled based on the $\sum XY$ formula, the value obtained is 98.700.



Picture 6. Pretest and Posttest Scores

Furthermore, to find out whether the muppet hand puppet media is effective and influential in improving the speaking skills of students at Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah, the researcher used the T-Test formula. Based on the results of the calculation based on the formula, a *rho* value of 934,0339 was successfully obtained. To find out more about whether there was an effect, a *rho* value calculation was carried out with a significance level of 1% and 5%. Furthermore, to calculate the T-Test, the degrees of freedom were first determined. Through the table investigation method, a *df* value of 15 was obtained, thus the T value with a significance level of 5% was 2,12 while at a significance level of 1% it was 2,92.

Based on these results, it is known that the T-Count is greater than the T-Table, therefore a significant difference was found between before and after using the muppet hand puppet media. Thus, the null hypothesis (*H₀*) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted (*H_a*). Furthermore, the researcher stated that the use of muppet hand puppet media influenced the Arabic speaking skills of students at Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah.

Learning media has a big role in the educational process, its use must be in accordance with the teaching material and the level of students to achieve the goals that have been set in each activity. Mapping the right type of learning media can help students understand learning topics easily and enjoyably (Baidha', 2021; Prananingrum et al., 2020). In relation to Arabic speaking skills, the use of media such as hand puppets helps to diversify reinforcement techniques that play a role in ensuring the learning process and building positive responses from students and helps increase participation in a positive way.

The use of hand puppet media is a unique way to attract attention and encourage the interest of Madrasah Diniyah students in improving Mahārah al-Kalām. The use of this media has proven effective in the process of learning Arabic generally and Mahārah al-Kalām especially. These positive results are based on the suitability

of the characteristics of the muppet hand puppet media with storytelling skills which are part of expression skills. The muppet hand puppet media requires its users to be able to express each storyline according to the character attached to the puppet form and Arabic language learning materials, and these expression patterns are formed in oral speech act patterns.

The positive influence of using hand puppet media in improving speaking skills has been widely tested with various research approaches. This is in line with Rosyidah's view as quoted by Rohman that learning media plays an important role in three things, including as a communication role (Rohman & Yusuf, 2022). The characteristics of Madrasah Diniyah students who are still in childhood tend to prefer learning while playing, so the use of media is considered very suitable and appropriate in the learning process for their age, although it can also be used for adults (Furoidah, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The similarity of characteristics between Mahārah al-Kalām and muppet hand puppet media are interrelated, so they have the potential to influence each other, as stated in this study which shows that based on the T-Test calculation, the use of muppet hand puppet media has an effect on increasing Mahārah al-Kalām of students at Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah Awwaliyah, which is proven by the T-Count value being greater than the T-Table value with a significance level of 5% of 2,12 while at a significance level of 1% it is 2,92. In this context, learning Arabic speaking skills (Mahārah al-Kalām) can be attempted to be further improved through the design of creative and innovative learning media that are adjusted to the age and intellectual level of learners or students, so that at a higher level the use of puppet media can be adjusted in form, elements and characteristics.

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