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MASTERY OF ARABIC VOCABULARY THROUGH THE 'ILQO' MUFRADAT' ACTIVITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN YEAR 7 AT THE MUHAMMADIYAH BOARDING SCHOOL (MBS) IN KERTEK, WONOSOBO

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the experiences of Year 7 female students in mastering Arabic vocabulary through the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek, Wonosobo. This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study method. Data were collected through classroom observation and in-depth interviews with the head of the school, the female teachers who teach the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* programme to Year 7 female students, and representatives of the Year 7 female students participating in the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activities, and were supplemented by documentation, which were then analysed using the Miles and Huberman model comprising data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* programme provides a positive experience for the female students. This activity fostered a sense of joy and enthusiasm, increased motivation to learn, and enhanced vocabulary mastery. However, challenges were also identified that the female students faced whilst participating in *'Ilqo' Mufradat'*, namely difficulties in memorising and understanding the meanings of the vocabulary. To address these challenges, the female teacher devised strategies such as organising a weekly revision programme, offering rewards, and encouraging the use of pocket dictionaries by the female students.

Keywords: *Ilqo' Mufradat, Arabic Vocabulary Mastery, Female Boarding School Students' Learning Experiences, Learning Motivation, Phenomenological Study.*

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language plays a vital role in Islamic education as it is the language used in the Qur'an and Hadith, the primary sources of Islamic teachings. From an Islamic educational perspective, Arabic is not merely regarded as a means of communication but also as the primary tool for understanding, interpreting and developing Islamic teachings in greater depth (Ahmadi, 2024: 12). Consequently, proficiency in Arabic is one of the core competencies that learners in Islamic educational institutions must possess. In the of Arabic language learning, vocabulary (mufradat) is a crucial component. Vocabulary forms the main foundation for the development of language skills, both receptive skills such as listening and reading, and productive skills such as speaking and writing

(Nasarudin et al., 2025: 66). The more vocabulary learners master, the greater their ability to understand and actively use Arabic in various communicative situations.

However, vocabulary acquisition cannot develop optimally through formal classroom learning alone. An environment that supports active language use is required to make the language acquisition process more meaningful. One approach widely used in Arabic language learning in Islamic educational institutions is *bi'ah lughawiyyah*, or a language-rich environment (Silviani, Sunardin, & Zain, 2026: 12). This environment enables learners to become accustomed to hearing, understanding and using Arabic in everyday activities, so that learning takes place naturally and continuously. One form of implementing the '*bi'ah lughawiyyah*' is the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity. This activity focuses on introducing Arabic vocabulary to pupils, which they then memorise, understand and use in everyday communication. Through this practice, pupils not only acquire additional vocabulary but are also trained to use it actively in real-life interactions within the educational environment.

The Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek Wonosobo is one of the educational institutions that implements an Arabic language learning programme based on a language-immersion environment. One of the flagship programmes carried out is the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity, which takes place regularly every morning before lessons begin. In this activity, female students are given Arabic vocabulary to memorise and recite, and are expected to be able to use it in everyday communication within the boarding school environment.

Although this programme has been carried out routinely, the female students' experiences of participating in the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity vary considerably. Some female students have reported an improvement in their vocabulary mastery, increased motivation to learn, and greater confidence in using Arabic. However, others still face difficulties, particularly in memorising vocabulary, understanding meanings, and applying them in everyday communication. This phenomenon indicates that success in vocabulary acquisition is not solely determined by the existence of a learning programme, but is also influenced by each individual's learning experience.

The vocabulary mastered by students will not yield optimal benefits if it is not applied in real-life language practice, particularly in speaking skills, which constitute one form of active communication in Arabic. One approach widely recognised for its effectiveness in Arabic language teaching is the application of *bi'ah lughawiyyah*, that is, an Arabic-speaking environment designed to encourage learners to use Arabic in various everyday situations (Arina Wahyuni, 2025:3). *Bi'ah lughawiyyah* is understood as a system of environments encompassing physical, social and institutional dimensions that collectively foster the habit of using Arabic. The physical dimension includes spaces, facilities and learning media that provide exposure to the Arabic language.

Previous research has shown that the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity plays an important role in improving learners' vocabulary acquisition and fostering Arabic language habits. One such study indicates that these activities are carried out through the stages of *ilqo'*,

tikrar, tatbiq, and taqwim, which are capable of gradually shaping language habits (Syaifudin et al., 2022: 65–66). However, these studies have largely focused on the programme's effectiveness and aspects of learning evaluation, whilst research highlighting female students' subjective experiences in the vocabulary acquisition process remains scarce. This research gap highlights the need for a more in-depth study of how female students experience the process of vocabulary acquisition through the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity, including their learning experiences, the challenges they face, and the strategies they employ to overcome them. Consequently, this study aims to explore the experiences of Year 7 female students in acquiring Arabic vocabulary through the *Ilqo' Mufradat* activity at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) in Kertek, Wonosobo.

METHOD

The approach used in this study is descriptive qualitative, utilising field research. The study was conducted at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek Wonosobo to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Year 7 female students in mastering Arabic vocabulary through the *Ilqo' Mufradat* activity. This approach is based on the philosophy of post-positivism, in which the researcher acts as the primary instrument in collecting and interpreting data naturally without manipulating the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2022). The focus of the research includes the process of familiarisation, memorisation, and the use of vocabulary in everyday communication, as well as the benefits and challenges experienced by the female students whilst participating in these activities.

Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe the implementation of the '*Ilqo' Mufradat*' activity and the interactions of the female students during the learning process. Interviews were conducted with the headteacher, female teachers, and Year 7 female students to obtain information regarding their experiences, perceptions, motivations, and obstacles in mastering Arabic vocabulary. Documentation was utilised as supporting data in the form of school profiles, learning materials, and activity records that reinforced the research findings.

Data analysis was carried out continuously from the data collection process until the research was completed, adopting the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions (Sugiyono, 2022). Data validity was tested through triangulation of various sources and techniques, as well as member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations were consistent with the information provided by the informants (Fatiatun et al., 2021). Through these stages, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the *Ilqo' Mufradat* programme in improving the Arabic vocabulary proficiency of female students in the pesantren environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation carried out at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek Wonosobo, the *Ilqo' Mufradat*

activities provided a diverse learning experience for Year 7 female students in the process of improving their understanding and mastery of Arabic vocabulary. These experiences not only improved their language skills but also evoked feelings such as joy, interest, motivation and a sense of challenge whilst participating in the activities. These findings indicate that mastery of vocabulary does not occur simply through rote memorisation, but is developed through active interaction between the female students and the language-rich environment fostered within the boarding school.

The majority of female students stated that the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity was enjoyable. This feeling arose because the learning process was presented in an engaging manner, ensuring that the vocabulary memorisation activities did not lead to boredom. Hana explained that she enjoyed taking part in the activity because the learning system used was engaging and enjoyable (*Interview with Hana, Year 7 student*). A similar experience was shared by Aini, who stated that the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity motivated her because there was a culture of friendly competition in reciting the memorised vocabulary to the female teacher (*Interview with Aini, Year 7 female student*). Observations showed that throughout the activity, the female students appeared active, focused and enthusiastic in following each stage of the learning process. This indicates that a pleasant learning atmosphere can enhance students' engagement in the Arabic language learning process. This finding is in line with the concept of *student engagement*, which explains that student engagement is evident through effective effort and willingness, as well as active participation in learning activities to achieve learning success (Rahmah Hastuti, Puspita Zahra Arimurti, and Ardaffa Azra Kalandoro, 2023:3). The female students' active participation, focus and enthusiasm whilst taking part in the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activities indicate a high level of engagement in learning, thereby supporting the process of mastering Arabic vocabulary. Physical and emotional well-being also have a significant impact on motivation to learn. Students who are healthy, well-fed and in a good mood will find it easier to concentrate than those who are ill, hungry or experiencing emotional distress (Ika Nur Iliza and Ma'mun Hanif, 2025:3).

As well as providing an enjoyable experience, the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity is also perceived as engaging because it does not merely focus on memorising vocabulary, but also trains the female students' ability to construct sentences and use vocabulary in

everyday communication. Lunna revealed that initially she found it difficult to construct Arabic sentences, but these difficulties gradually diminished after receiving guidance from her teacher and the language department (*Interview with Lunna, Year 7 female student*). Meanwhile, Arrum stated that using Arabic in everyday communication makes interacting with friends more enjoyable (*Interview with Arrum, Year 7 female student*). This finding is in line with the concept of the communicative approach, which emphasises the importance of interaction and active communication in the language learning process. The communicative approach prioritises the involvement of learners in using the language directly so that language skills can develop through real-life communication practice. In Arabic language learning, the ability to speak correctly and effectively is one of the primary objectives achieved through active interaction and communication (Yenni Yunita and Rojja Pebrian, 2020:2). This aligns with the concept of *bi'ah lughawiyah*, which positions the language environment as the primary means of language acquisition through daily exposure and interaction. This finding is supported by Samsul Huda (2025:3), who states that the Arabic language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) is crucial in enhancing Arabic language proficiency for students who are studying and wish to master the language. The presence of a language environment in Islamic boarding schools enables female students to accustom themselves to using Arabic, thereby allowing their vocabulary to develop more effectively.

The positive experiences gained whilst attending *the Ilqo' Mufradat* course have helped to foster a motivation to learn Arabic amongst the female students. This motivation is evident in their desire to continue expanding their vocabulary and their confidence in using Arabic in various activities within the pesantren. Hafiza and Afifah revealed that they began to be able to understand parts of Arabic conversations when the pesantren welcomed guests from Sudan, although they did not yet fully grasp the entire content of the conversations (*Interview with Hafiza and Afifah, Year 7 female students*). The experience of understanding conversations with native speakers gave them a sense of confidence whilst encouraging them to continue improving their Arabic language skills. This finding reinforces the view that a conducive language environment contributes to an increase in students' intrinsic motivation to learn Arabic.

On the other hand, the process of mastering Arabic vocabulary through *the 'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity also presents challenges for the female students. Isti revealed that she felt challenged because she had to memorise a foreign language that differed from the language used in everyday life (*Interview with Isti, Year 7 female student*). This challenge becomes even more apparent when the female students have to use the vocabulary in everyday communication. Husna explained that sometimes the person she was speaking to did not understand what she meant, so she had to consult a dictionary to find the correct word (*Interview with Husna, Year 7 female student*). This situation demonstrates that the process of second language acquisition requires time, continuous practice, and a supportive environment that enables learners to keep practising the use of the target language in various communicative situations. This finding is consistent with research indicating that the acquisition of Arabic as a second language occurs not only through formal classroom learning but also through the use of the language in everyday communication within a boarding school environment. An environment that provides learners with opportunities to use Arabic actively can support the language acquisition process and gradually improve their language proficiency (Baso Pallawagau and Rasna, 2022:5).

Nevertheless, the process of mastering vocabulary is not without its challenges. The research findings indicate that difficulty in memorisation is the most common challenge faced by female students. Umi revealed that she often struggles when memorising independently because the vocabulary she has learnt is easily forgotten (*Interview with Umi, Year 7 female student*). Observations also revealed that some female students had to repeat their memorisation several times before reciting it to their teacher. In addition to difficulties with memorisation, some female students also struggled to understand the meanings of vocabulary words they found difficult. Aini, Lunna and Arrum explained that they often use a pocket dictionary to look up the meanings of vocabulary they do not yet understand (*Interview with Aini, Lunna and Arrum, Year 7 female students*). This indicates that mastery of Arabic vocabulary is influenced not only by the ability to memorise, but also by the ability to understand the meaning and usage of words in the appropriate context.

Another factor influencing the female students' learning experience is their individual psychological state. Aira revealed that her level of enthusiasm for participating in *Ilqo' Mufradat* depends heavily on her current mood (*Interview with Aira, Year 7 female student*). When she is in a good mood, she enjoys taking part in the activity, whereas when she is in a bad mood, the activity sometimes feels tedious. This finding indicates that the learners' internal factors influence their engagement in the language learning process.

The teacher addressed these various challenges through a number of learning strategies integrated with the bi'ah lughawiyyah programme within the pesantren environment. One of the strategies implemented was weekly murajaah, aimed at reinforcing the female students' recall of the vocabulary they had learnt. Regular repetition allows vocabulary to be retained longer in memory, making it easier to use in everyday communication. In addition, the female teachers also give rewards to female students or groups who actively recite their memorised material and consistently use Arabic in their daily lives. According to Ustadzah Nur Choirina Ma'rufah, the provision of rewards serves as both a form of appreciation and an incentive to keep the female students motivated in their Arabic studies (*Interview with Ustadzah Nur Choirina Ma'rufah*). This strategy is in line with learning motivation theory, which explains that rewards can boost learners' enthusiasm and participation in learning activities.

Another strategy is the use of pocket dictionaries as a learning aid. Pocket dictionaries are used not only when the female students encounter difficulties understanding the meanings of vocabulary words, but also when they are constructing sentences and engaging in everyday communication in Arabic. Aira revealed that she often consults the dictionary when she forgets the meaning of a word, whilst Afifah stated that the dictionary is a tool she frequently uses when speaking with her friends (*Interviews with Aira and Afifah, Year 7 female students*). The results of the observation showed that almost all female students brought a pocket dictionary as part of their preparation before taking part in the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity. This finding indicates that pocket dictionaries serve as a self-learning tool that helps the female students expand and strengthen their command of Arabic vocabulary. This finding is supported by research on the use of pocket dictionaries in maharah kalam learning, which shows that pocket dictionaries help learners find the vocabulary needed for communication, facilitate

sentence construction, and boost their confidence in speaking Arabic as vocabulary is easier to find and understand (Nilna Karomah and Abdul Muntaqim Al Anshory, 2022:10).

Overall, the research results indicate that the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity, supported by the implementation of a *'bi'ah lughawiyah'*, makes a positive contribution to the Arabic vocabulary proficiency of female students in Year 7 at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek, Wonosobo. A conducive language environment, the habitual use of Arabic in everyday communication, and the support of learning strategies implemented by the teachers have proven effective in helping the female students improve their vocabulary mastery whilst building their confidence in actively using Arabic. These findings are consistent with various studies showing that a language-rich environment plays a vital role in improving Arabic language competence through habitual use, communicative practice, and ongoing social interaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, the *'Ilqo' Mufradat'* activity at the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Kertek Wonosobo has proven to be an effective method in helping Year 7 female students understand and master Arabic vocabulary. The learning experience gained by the female students not only deepened their understanding of the words studied but also instilled a sense of enjoyment, interest, motivation and a sense of challenge whilst participating in the activity. This positive experience stems from the fact that the learning process is not merely about memorisation, but is accompanied by the practical application of Arabic language skills, making the use of Arabic an integral part of daily life within the boarding school environment. In this way, the vocabulary learnt is not merely memorised but also used in real-life conversations, thereby creating a more meaningful learning experience.

Nevertheless, the process of understanding vocabulary still faces several obstacles, both internal and external. These obstacles include difficulties in memorising vocabulary, difficulties in understanding the meaning of certain words, limitations in constructing sentences and speaking Arabic, as well as the influence of psychological factors such as feelings of sadness and a lack of self-confidence. These obstacles indicate

that understanding Arabic vocabulary is a complex process, as it depends not only on the students' cognitive abilities but is also influenced by their mental readiness, enthusiasm for learning, and an environment that supports the language learning process. To address these various issues, the teacher implemented learning strategies integrated with the 'bi'ah lughawiyah' programme, namely by conducting weekly revision sessions, offering rewards, and using pocket dictionaries. These strategies help improve retention, boost motivation to learn, and assist in understanding and mastering Arabic vocabulary. By combining 'Ilqo' Mufradat' activities, a supportive language environment, and ongoing guidance, the female students have the opportunity to improve their vocabulary mastery.

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