The Influence of Seniors in Improving the Arabic Speaking Skills of New Student at Stiba Ar-Raayah

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ABSTRACT

This research explained the role of seniors in assisting new students at *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Arab* (STIBA) in enhancing their Arabic speaking proficiency. The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative research and case study design. Data are gathered through observations and interviews. The findings of this research indicate that seniors have a significant impact on helping new students to improve their Arabic speaking skills at STIBA Ar-Rayyah. Seniors serve as mentors, peers, and a support system that provides positive encouragement to new students. They offer guidance and support both within the campus dormitories and outside, engaging in various activities where Arabic is the primary communication language. Seniors also motivate and help new students gain confidence in speaking Arabic and overcome learning obstacles. This research underscores the importance of non-academic aspects in the educational institution, such as motivation and emotional support, which can have a positive impact on academic performance and personal development of students. The role of seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah fosters a conducive learning environment that aids new students in enhancing their Arabic speaking skills

Keyword   The Influence, Seniors, Arabic, Speaking, Skills

مستخلص البحث

تشرح هذه الدراسة دور الطلاب الأكبر سنا في مساعدة الطلاب الجدد في جامعة الراية في تعزيز مهاراتهم في التحدث باللغة العربية. الطريقة البحثية المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة هي البحث النوعي. تم جمع البيانات من خلال الملاحظات والمقابلات. تشير نتائج هذا البحث إلى أن الطلاب الأكبر سنا لهم تأثير كبير في مساعدة الطلاب الجدد على تحسين مهاراتهم في التحدث باللغة العربية في جامعة الراية. الطلاب الأكبر سنا يعملون كمرشدين وأقران ونظام دعم يقدم الدعم والتشجيع الإيجابي للطلاب الجدد. إنهم يقدمون الإرشاد والدعم سواء داخل السكن الجامعي أو خارجه، من خلال المشاركة في مختلف الأنشطة التي تستخدم اللغة العربية كلغة تواصل أساسية. الطلاب الأكبر سنا أيضًا يحفزون ويساعدون الطلاب الجدد على اكتساب الثقة في التحدث باللغة العربية وتجاوز العقبات التعلمية. علاوةً على ذلك، يخلق رابط الأخوة بين الطلاب الأكبر سنا والطلاب الجدد بيئة تعليمية شاملة وملائمة. تؤكد هذه الدراسة على أهمية الجوانب غير الأكاديمية في المؤسسة التعليمية، مثل الدافع والدعم العاطفي، والتي يمكن أن تكون لها تأثير إيجابي على الأداء الأكاديمي والتنمية الشخصية للطلاب. دور الطلاب الأكبر سنا في جامعة الراية يعزز بيئة التعلم الملائمة التي تساعد الطلاب الجدد في تعزيز مهاراتهم في التحدث باللغة العربية.

كلمات أساسية   التأثير، الطلاب الأكبر سناً، اللغة العربية، مهارات الكلام

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a fundamental aspect of human communication crucial in various life areas. In an academic context, good speaking skills facilitate the effective exchange of ideas among individuals and serve as a key to disseminating knowledge. In an article, it is mentioned that language activities should focus on both linguistic and speaking aspects (Nhut, 2021).

In the professional world, strong speaking skills provide a competitive edge, enabling individuals to lead, motivate, and collaborate more efficiently with their peers. Furthermore, in social contexts, effective speaking abilities facilitate the formation of strong and beneficial interpersonal relationships. Thus, in various aspects of life, speaking skills are a primary tool for understanding, influencing, and advancing oneself in this increasingly complex and interconnected society. Speaking skills are a highly important skill for individuals to possess, as mastering them is a crucial aspect of one's communication development (Ngah et al., 2022).

Active participation in speaking skills in foreign language learning is a requirement for every learner. Moreover, speaking skills in the Arabic language also play a crucial role in the current global context. This is because the Arabic language is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (United Nations, 2023).

One of the most important aspects in acquiring Arabic speaking skills is a supportive social environment, including the presence of seniors who mentor new students (Astuti et al., 2020). This conducive social environment can significantly enhance the process of acquiring speaking skills. New students' language abilities grow more quickly because of the opportunities for active speaking practice and constructive feedback that come from positive social interactions and senior support.

A study mentioned that the role of seniors is highly beneficial in supporting active, creative, and enjoyable learning through the use of various resources (Ardian, 2023). The presence of seniors can encourage new students to participate more, explore new ideas, and utilize various media and innovative learning methods. This creates a dynamic and diverse learning environment, which in turn enhances students' motivation and learning outcomes.

One of the higher education institutions in Indonesia that focuses on Arabic language learning is Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Arab (STIBA) Ar-Rayyah, with its vision of "Becoming an Excellent Arabic Language-Based Higher Education Institution in Indonesia by 2030" (Ar-Raayah, 2023).

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Arab (STIBA) Ar-Rayyah, as an institution of higher education with a focus on the Arabic language, has an important mission, which is to produce graduates capable of speaking and communicating fluently and qualitatively in Arabic using the campus-asrama concept. STIBA Ar-Raayah's

vision is to become an outstanding Arabic language-based Higher Education Institution in Indonesia. Its mission is to provide excellent, competitive, and professional Arabic language-based education, conduct research and development in Arabic language-based educational technology, and empower the community based on Islamic values (Huda et al., 2023).

Proficiency in the Arabic language is not only a crucial requirement for achieving academic goals at STIBA Ar-Rayyah but also in various broader life contexts. However, for new students embarking on their journey to learn this language, they often encounter various obstacles that make the learning process challenging. The complexity of the Arabic language and its significant differences from other languages, especially Indonesian, can be barriers to mastering Arabic (Marpuah & Sulton, 2019).

In this context, the role of seniors, students who have gone through various stages of Arabic language learning at STIBA Ar-Rayyah and have mastered it, becomes increasingly important. They are not just more experienced students; they also serve as real-life examples of Arabic language proficiency in the campus environment, including in the dormitories, mosques, cafeterias, and various other places. The role of seniors in guiding, inspiring, and assisting new students is a key factor in enhancing Arabic speaking skills at STIBA Ar-Rayyah. Thus, the purpose of this study is to learn more about how seniors support new students and help them overcome the obstacles in their path to become proficient Arabic speakers.

By understanding the role of seniors more comprehensively, STIBA Ar-Rayyah and similar educational institutions can improve the quality of their Arabic language education, create a more productive Arabic language learning environment, and help students achieve higher levels of proficiency in speaking Arabic.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative methodology in its field investigation. The research was conducted during the period from August 2023 to December 2023. Following Lexy J. Moleong's framework, the aim of this research is to comprehend the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, in a comprehensive (holistic) manner, and to be expressed in the form of verbal descriptions using language, especially within a specific naturalistic context, utilizing various naturalistic methods (Moleong, 2007).

This research uses a case study design and the method employed in this research is the descriptive-qualitative method. Description is beneficial for accurately portraying the characteristics of data in accordance with their natural properties (Djajasudarma, 2006). The research subjects are all students in the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters of STIBA Ar-Rayyah who reside in the dormitory. Data for the research are gathered through various information collection methods such as observation (through observing and recording senior activities) and interviews (with various stakeholders including the director of the student dormitory, chairman of the Student Executive Board (BEM), chairman of student activities, seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, and new students. This approach is used to obtain in-depth and comprehensive data and to better understand the existing issues.

To validate the data, the researchers employ a data truth verification technique using two approaches: completeness of references and triangulation techniques. After successfully collecting relevant data, the next step is to analyze the data using an analytical model that refers to the Miles & Huberman approach. This analytical model consists of three main stages: data display, data reduction, and verification or drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Bahasa Arab (STIBA) Ar-Raayah is a higher education institution located at Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan KM. 6 RT 01 RW 05, Kampung Cimenteng, Sukamulya Village, Cikembar District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. It was established in the year 2012 (Qurani et al., 2023)(Rasyad et al., 2019).

One of the advantages of STIBA Ar-Raayah is the availability of student dormitories for students from the beginning to the end of their semesters (Al Fudiah et al., 2023). This creates a deep and supportive Arabic language environment, enabling students to fully engage in developing their Arabic speaking skills and gaining a comprehensive learning experience.

Additionally, STIBA Ar-Raayah has implemented a policy of using Arabic as the mandatory language of communication for all members of the academic community (Kusumah, 2019). This fosters a norm that encourages the use of Arabic in the daily interactions between faculty, students, and administrative staff. This policy not only places positive pressure on the development of Arabic speaking skills but also creates a supportive environment where students are motivated to communicate in Arabic.

New students at STIBA Ar-Raayah are high school graduates with varying levels of Arabic language skills, most of them do not have no prior experience or knowledge of the language. Before entering higher education, they are required to undergo a one-year Arabic preparatory program. This preparatory program is designed to equip new students with comprehensive Arabic language skills, particularly in speaking, as the entire learning process at STIBA Ar-Raayah is conducted exclusively in Arabic. Through this immersive approach, students are expected to achieve a level of proficiency that allows them to participate effectively in an entirely Arabic-speaking academic environment.

At STIBA Ar-Raayah, all students are required to live in the dormitory throughout their studies. New students are placed in dormitory rooms that are also occupied by several senior students. The seniors living in the dormitory rooms act as room leaders and are responsible for providing guidance to new students. Their role is crucial in supporting the adaptation of new students and accelerating their learning process through direct interaction and practical assistance in daily life.

The role of seniors in improving the Arabic speaking skills of new students at STIBA Ar-Rayyah

The Influence of seniors in assisting new students in improving Arabic speaking skills is one of the crucial aspects of the learning experience at STIBA Ar-Rayyah. This research will unveil the impact of senior students in guiding, providing support, and motivating new students in their efforts to master the Arabic language. Seniors not only serve as peers but also serve as key role models in shaping effective Arabic-speaking skills among new students. Thus, this paragraph will give a broad summary of the importance of senior students' contribution to STIBA Ar- Raayah's inclusive and productive learning environment.

Zachary believes that mentoring is a mutual engagement and collaboration between two or more individuals, where all parties share equal responsibility and accountability to assist the mentee in achieving jointly established learning goals (Kaswan, 2012).

At STIBA Ar-Rayyah, the mentoring provided by seniors to new students plays a central role in the development of Arabic speaking skills. This mentoring encompasses two crucial aspects: guidance within the campus dormitory environment and mentoring that takes place outside the dormitory. Within the dormitory, senior students play a primary role in guiding new students. They provide structured guidance through the establishment of study dormitory groups and evening supplementary lessons (study groups).

These dormitory study groups are led by competent senior students who excel in language skills and are directly supervised by the dormitory head. The activities are centered around discussions of *tarakib nahwu* and *shorof* as well as *mothala'ah* (recitation) with the aim of enhancing students' ability to construct sentences in accordance with the correct Arabic language rules. These dormitory study group sessions take place in the dormitory's hall and are conducted after the Isha prayer, lasting for one hour.

Following these sessions, there is an additional evening lesson (group study) lasting for 30 minutes. These activities are guided by each dormitory room leader. The method employed during these sessions takes the form of *tathbiq allughoh* (language practice) with a pattern of *munaqosyah* (discussion) and *muhadatsah* (conversation). The purpose of these activities is to familiarize students with pronunciation and the construction of sentences in Arabic that adhere to the correct Arabic language rules.

The role of seniors in assisting new students extends to unstructured activities such as helping them understand classroom materials that they haven't grasped during regular class hours, providing examples of sentences or vocabulary that are unfamiliar, correcting errors in sentences or vocabulary, sharing personal experiences, and offering practical advice regarding everyday Arabic language usage. In this context, mentorship within the dormitory helps new students overcome practical obstacles in speaking Arabic and feel more comfortable and motivated in using the language. Seniors, with their experience, provide guidance in improving speaking fluency, overcoming shyness, and understanding the cultural context surrounding the Arabic language. Mentorship in the dormitory also fosters a close social bond between new students and seniors, creating a supportive environment for enhancing Arabic speaking skills.

On the other hand, mentoring outside the dormitory involves broader interactions between new students and seniors in various extracurricular activities supervised by the Student Executive Board (BEM) under the oversight of the Student Affairs Department. Through these activities, new students have the opportunity to practice speaking Arabic in deeper and more diverse contexts because all these activities use Arabic as the communication language.

The activities are (1) Scientific Activities: These activities include seminars, academic dialogues, training sessions, book discussions, and academic competitions among students on campus; (2) Field Activities: Field activities encompass all events held outside of the classroom, such as sports, social service activities, and outdoor adventures. Arabic serves as the communication language among students during all field activities; (3) Dawah Activities: Dawah activities are conducted under the auspices of the STIBA Ar-Rayyah Student Executive Board (BEM) and involve practical guidance on student etiquette, moral values,

and matters related to Islamic jurisprudence. Emphasis is placed on performing the five daily prayers and adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet, such as praying Tahajjud and observing fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, among other practices; (4) Studio Activities (Information and Documentation): Studio activities include journalism, bulletin publication, and the creation of films and documentary videos for information and documentation purposes; (5) Arabic Language Lecture Training: This activity aims to familiarize students with public speaking, enrich their vocabulary with beautiful expressions and proverbs, using quotes from poetry, statements of scholars, the Quran, and hadith. These lectures take place in the mosque and are conducted after every obligatory prayer, except after the Fajr prayer, with each lecture lasting approximately three minutes.

This is reinforced by the statement of Dr. K.H. Sirajul Huda Ma'mun, Lc., M.Ag, the Director of Mahad at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, who emphasizes the significant role and contribution of seniors in improving the Arabic speaking skills of new students. This is primarily achieved through the guidance they provide, both within and outside the dormitory. According to him, seniors are not only peers but also role models and mentors for new students in their efforts to master the Arabic language.

In addition to guidance, he mentions that seniors are involved in various language and non-language activities. One example is the "*ilqa' kalimat*" activity conducted after obligatory prayers, except for Fajr prayer. Activities like this provide new students with the opportunity to actively practice speaking Arabic, expand their vocabulary, and improve their grammar.

He also discusses the evolution of the role of seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah over time. Initially, when Mahad Ar-Rayyah was founded, dormitory study groups were directly guided by instructors. However, as time passed and the competency of seniors in Arabic speaking skills improved, this role was taken over by senior students. Instructors shifted to the role of supervisors and controllers of these activities, while senior students actively guided new students. This reflects the positive dynamics within the learning community at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, where new students can effectively learn from their more senior peers.

Mentoring also serves as an education in building trust in the mentor. This trust is considered a key factor for success in mentoring. When someone has complete trust in their mentor, it becomes a determining factor in achieving success, both in this world and the hereafter.

Through mentoring, someone who was previously average can achieve extraordinary accomplishments, provided they have strong belief and engage in mentoring consistently (Az-Zahidda, 2009). Furthermore, mentoring has a

positive impact on students' academic performance and psychosocial aspects (Ismail et al., 2007).

Overall, mentoring at STIBA Ar-Rayyah creates a holistic and inclusive learning environment where new students feel supported in overcoming challenges in speaking the Arabic language. This enhances their social and cultural experiences during their time in college in addition to helping them with speech development. One of the main components in helping new students succeed in their Arabic language studies—particularly in speaking the language—is mentoring, which also equips them with the confidence they need to engage with people from around the world.

Motivation and support from seniors in assisting new students to improve their Arabic speaking skills

Motivation and support from seniors are key factors in helping new students improve their speaking skills in Arabic. The language learning process, especially for a foreign language, is often filled with challenges. However, when new students receive encouragement and guidance from seniors who have gone through the same journey, they can feel more motivated and confident in developing their speaking skills. Motivation is one of the main elements that drive individual behavior in the learning process. Based on a review of the literature, it can be seen that the effectiveness of learning activities is greatly influenced by the encouragement and stimuli that come from both internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) factors (Yah & Lubis, 2018).

Based on the results of interviews with several new students at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, it is revealed that the role of seniors is crucial in helping them develop their Arabic speaking skills. The new students express that seniors provide motivation and high spirits in the Arabic language learning process. Two respondents, Dafa Al-Fikri and Muhammad Rizki, stated, "The seniors always provide us with tremendous support. They not only impart technical lessons but also offer strong motivation. They often remind us to keep learning Arabic, even when we face difficulties or feel unsure."

Another statement from Ma'ruf Ahmad and Devan Muhammad Asa Ardana, who are new students, is, "Our seniors always inspire us. They share their experiences and provide valuable advice. They consistently emphasize that with effort and perseverance, our Arabic speaking skills will improve over time."

These statements reflect the positive role of seniors in providing motivational support to new students. They serve as role models and encouragers who help new students overcome obstacles in learning Arabic and continue to develop their speaking skills for a better future.

Furthermore, the results of interviews with seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah indicate that they play a role in guiding new students. They continue to provide support and encouragement to new students to keep them enthusiastic about learning Arabic.

The seniors diligently guide new students and encourage their enthusiasm for learning Arabic. One senior, Azkiya Al-Ghifari (Chairperson of STIBA Ar-Rayyah's Student Executive Board), stated, "We always encourage them not to be afraid to speak Arabic even if they are just starting to learn. We want them to feel confident in speaking. We focus not only on mistakes but on progress. We want new students to feel comfortable speaking, and if there are errors, it's part of the learning process."

Furthermore, seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah feel a strong bond with their new students. They consider new students as their own siblings and provide sincere support. One statement affirms this, "We have a sibling-like bond here. We help, support, and remind each other. That's why the alumni bond here is very strong."

Statements from Walid Riwdwanullah, the head of Qism Ansyitoh, affirm, "We see new students as our own siblings. We feel responsible for helping them as best as we can."Based on the results of these interviews, it portrays a close-knit and supportive community at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, where seniors play the role of mentors who support and help new students feel supported in learning Arabic, particularly in speaking the Arabic language.

Furthermore, seniors at STIBA Ar-Rayyah emphasize the importance of alumni connections. They describe that the relationships built during their time at STIBA Ar-Rayyah do not end after graduation. Instead, these bonds continue to evolve into strong alumni relationships. Ahmad Sufyan states, "We perceive new students as part of our family here. We hope that the sense of brotherhood will persist and continue to foster connections, both through alumni networks and on an individual basis."

These statements depict the commitment of seniors to provide long-term support to new students, assist them in ongoing Arabic language development, and maintain strong bonds of brotherhood and connection within the alumni network. This reflects the values of solidarity and collaboration among the academic community at STIBA Ar-Rayyah.

Based on all the interview findings, it becomes evident that the role of seniors in guiding, motivating, and fostering brotherhood with new students is crucial. The brotherly relationships established between seniors and new students create a conducive and supportive learning environment at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, which positively impacts the enhancement of new students' Arabic speaking skills.

The research findings reveal that seniors' role in the learning environment at STIBA Ar-Rayyah significantly contributes to improving the Arabic speaking

skills of new students. Seniors not only serve as peers but also act as mentors who provide strong motivation and the emotional and moral support needed by new students.

Seniors provide motivation and support specifically for learning the Arabic language, especially Arabic speaking skills. They set examples of how to overcome obstacles and challenges faced by new students. In this context, the seniors' experiences serve as inspiration for new students to continue learning, striving, and not giving up on improving their Arabic speaking abilities.

Besides motivation, emotional and moral support from seniors is a critical factor in the development of new students' speaking skills. Seniors create brotherly relationships with new students, making them feel accepted and valued in the learning community. This support instills confidence in new students during the Arabic language learning process, especially in speaking Arabic. With this support, new students become more confident in practicing Arabic speaking and overcoming the difficulties they encounter.

Overall, the findings of this research emphasize the positive role of seniors in providing motivation and emotional and moral support to new students. This is a crucial factor in the Arabic language learning process, particularly in developing Arabic speaking skills at STIBA Ar-Rayyah. It aids in improving new students' Arabic speaking skills and strengthens their confidence in facing learning challenges. The motivation provided by seniors to new students represents extrinsic motivation, and this extrinsic motivation also has a positive impact on the learning process (Güvendir, 2016).

The success of the senior's role in providing motivation and emotional support to new students reflects the importance of intergenerational relationships within an educational institution. Positive collaboration between seniors and new students creates a conducive and inclusive learning environment for Arabic language learning, particularly in speaking Arabic.

Inclusive education is an educational system that offers opportunities for all participants to learn together in an educational environment, taking into account their diversity and individual needs. Its aim is to enable the full potential of learners to develop optimally. The spirit of inclusive education is to provide access to education for as many learners as possible, including those with special needs, so that they can receive quality education tailored to their needs (Garnida & Sumayyah, 2015).

Furthermore, seniors also serve as successful role models for new students, demonstrating that proficiency in Arabic speaking skills can be achieved through dedication and perseverance. They motivate new students to keep learning and practicing, overcome the fear of making mistakes, and enhance their Arabic speaking skills.

Additionally, the role of seniors in providing emotional support helps new students overcome confusion, anxiety, and stress they may experience during the Arabic language learning process. This support acts as a stimulus and encouragement for new students to speak Arabic without shame or fear of making mistakes.

In the context of learning Arabic, especially speaking Arabic, this research reveals that educational institutions can consider the role of seniors and their interactions with new students as a crucial factor in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Creating a supportive and conducive learning environment, with effective senior roles in motivation and support, can help new students improve their Arabic speaking skills. It also underscores the importance of non-academic aspects in education that can influence students' academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the role of seniors in enhancing the Arabic speaking skills of new students at STIBA Ar-Rayyah is highly significant. Seniors not only act as mentors and peers but also as a support system providing positive encouragement to new students. Their support extends beyond the campus dormitory and includes various activities such as study groups, evening supplementary lessons (study groups), academic activities, fieldwork, outreach activities, studio activities, and Arabic language lecture coaching activities, where Arabic becomes the primary communication language.

Seniors also create an inclusive and conducive Arabic language learning environment, helping new students overcome barriers and anxieties in learning Arabic, especially in speaking. Furthermore, the brotherly bond formed between seniors and new students continues as a strong alumni relationship, reflecting the long-term commitment of seniors in providing support and motivation.

This research underscores the importance of non-academic aspects within an educational environment, such as motivation and emotional support, which can have a positive impact on academic performance and personal development. Thus, the role of seniors in Arabic language learning, particularly in improving new students' Arabic speaking skills at STIBA Ar-Rayyah, plays a key role in creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment.

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