

The Implementation of The Literal Translation Method Through The Local Language in Teaching Reading Skills to Grade 12 Students at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah Pasir

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation, pedagogical efficacy, and contextual friction points of the Minangkabau-mediated literal translation method (Metode Terjemah Harfiyah) in teaching Arabic reading skills (Mahārāh Qirā'ah) for unvocalized classical Islamic treatises (kitab kuning). Employing a qualitative descriptive field research design at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir in West Sumatra, data were collected through direct classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with institutional leadership, teachers, and Grade XII students, and administrative document analysis. The empirical findings reveal that instruction follows a systematic three-stage workflow: pre-instructional preparation and spiritual invocations, core execution featuring line-by-line reading drills with embedded Minangkabau grammatical signifiers (e.g., Baramulo for topic, Baalah Baramulo for predicate, Akan for direct object), and concluding summary recitations. Despite initial dialectal friction encountered by non-local students and the time-intensive nature of explicit syntactic parsing ('i' rāb), the method provides an effective cognitive bridge between abstract grammatical frameworks (Naḥw and Ṣarf) and precise textual comprehension. Academic evaluation metrics corroborate this qualitative success, showing a 100% pass rate in Theology (Tawḥīd) and a 98.4% pass rate in Morphology (Ṣarf). The study concludes that preserving and systematically scaffolding localized literal translation methods enhances analytical reading accuracy and preserves traditional Islamic scholarship.

Keywords: Minangkabau Mediation; Literal Translation; Kitab Kuning Pedagogy; Syntactic Parsing; Islamic Education

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary instrument through which internal cognitive and spiritual expressions are communicated. In Islamic tradition, the Arabic language holds a preeminent and sacred position as the medium of divine revelation in the Holy Qur'an (Qur'an 43:3) and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. Beyond its sacral significance, Arabic constitutes the fundamental foundation for comprehending classical Islamic sciences ('Ulūm al-Shar'īyah), including theology ('Aqīdah), jurisprudence (Fiqh), exegesis (Tafsīr), and ethics (Akhlāq). Historically, the systematic codification of Arabic grammar ('Ilm al-Naḥw), initiated under the directive of Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib, emerged to preserve textual integrity against linguistic corruptions (laḥn), ensuring the accurate interpretation of foundational texts (Sumin, 2016).

In Nusantara (modern-day Indonesia), the arrival and proliferation of Arabic are inextricably linked to the historical Islamization of the region, supported by various historical frameworks including the Arab, Gujarat, Persian, and Chinese theories (Rohana, 2016). Over centuries, Arabic education in Indonesia evolved through four distinct developmental stages, progressing from an initial foundational phase focusing on alphabet recognition (*ḥurūf al-hijā'iyah*) for liturgical recitations and daily prayers to a classical textual phase centered on traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and *madrasahs* studying unvocalized texts (*kitab kuning*) across grammar, jurisprudence, and theology. Subsequently, the discipline transitioned into an applied-communicative phase oriented toward active oral and written proficiency, before entering the contemporary digital phase that leverages networked learning platforms (Bahruddin et al., 2021).

Among the four core language skills—listening (*istimā'*), speaking (*kalām*), reading (*qirā'ah*), and writing (*kitābah*)—reading skill (*Mahārah Qirā'ah*) serves as the primary cognitive gateway to intellectual acquisition (Alterkawi, 2023). However, because Arabic is a non-native language for Indonesian learners, mastering *Mahārah Qirā'ah* presents substantial pedagogical challenges. Classical Islamic texts lack diacritics, punctuation, or paragraph divisions, requiring learners to simultaneously integrate syntactical analysis (*Naḥw*), morphological inflection (*Ṣarf*), and rhetorical semantics (*Balāghah*) to decode textual meaning accurately (Febriani & Syihabuddin, 2020).

To bridge the gap between grammatical theory and reading comprehension, traditional Islamic educational institutions employ specialized translation methodologies. While general translation varies from free (*ḥurr*) to semantic approaches, the literal translation method (*Metode Terjemah Harfiyah*) remains widely implemented in *pesantren* settings (Hanifah, 2013; Tabrani, 2016). This method strictly adheres to source text structures, mapping syntactic markers (*'i'rāb*) through systematic annotations to train students in precise grammatical parsing and prevent interpretive errors.

As a distinct manifestation of this methodology in regional contexts, traditional Islamic scholars and students in West Sumatra—historically designated as *Anak Siak*—rely on *Metode Terjemah Harfiyah* to master dense classical texts. Notably, several institutions, such as *Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir*, execute this literal translation method using the local Minangkabau language rather than the national standard Bahasa Indonesia (Putra, 2022). In this localized pedagogical model, specific Minangkabau lexical markers correspond directly to Arabic syntactical roles; for example, *Baramulo* denotes the topic (*Mubtadā'*), *Baalāh Baramulo* marks the predicate (*Khabar*), *Yang* signifies an adjective or attributive modifier (*Na'at*), and *Akan* indicates the direct object (*Maf'ūl Bihi*).

While this localized literal translation technique facilitates rapid grammatical acquisition for native Minangkabau speakers, it creates a pedagogical paradox for non-local students originating from outside West Sumatra, such as Jambi, Batam, Bengkulu, and Jakarta. These students encounter a dual language-learning burden: acquiring the local Minangkabau vernacular simultaneously with Arabic syntactical structures before achieving reading fluency. Despite these notable linguistic friction

points, students consistently demonstrate high academic performance in reading assessments. Given this intriguing dynamic, this study investigates the empirical execution, pedagogical advantages, and contextual challenges of this method, focusing specifically on the implementation of the literal translation method via local language in teaching reading skills (Mahārah Qirā'ah) in Grade XII at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive field research design to examine the pedagogical execution and contextual dynamics of the literal translation method (Metode Terjemah Harfiyah) mediated through the local Minangkabau language in teaching Arabic reading skills (Mahārah Qirā'ah). Qualitative descriptive methodology is particularly suited for investigating complex educational phenomena within their natural setting without experimental manipulation or numerical reductionism (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015). By adopting a field-based orientation, this research was conducted at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir, an established Islamic boarding school (pesantren) situated in Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. MTI Pasir was purposively selected due to its distinct pedagogical tradition of utilizing the regional Minangkabau dialect—rather than standard Bahasa Indonesia—as the primary vehicle for literal translation and grammatical parsing (i'rāb) of dense classical Arabic texts (kitab kuning). The field investigation took place over a three-month period, spanning from November 2021 to January 2022.

Data sources were categorized into primary and secondary informants in accordance with qualitative sampling frameworks (Arikunto, 2006). Primary data were gathered directly from key instructional actors and classroom settings, comprising Grade XII Arabic language teachers specializing in classical text studies and Grade XII students actively participating in reading instruction. In addition, classroom interactions during Mahārah Qirā'ah sessions served as primary empirical observations. Secondary data comprised supplementary institutional records, educational artifacts, curriculum guidelines, and administrative documents provided by the school headmaster to contextualize the primary empirical findings.

Data were gathered through two principal qualitative techniques, namely direct observation and planned, semi-structured interviews. Direct non-participant classroom observations were conducted during Grade XII reading comprehension lessons, focusing specifically on the operational application of Metode Terjemah Harfiyah, the integration of Minangkabau lexical indicators (such as Baramulo, Baalah Baramulo, Yang, and Akan), teacher-student dialogues, and non-local students' engagement during textual parsing (Sumarni, 2021). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including the school headmaster, Arabic language instructors, and Grade XII students originating from both Minangkabau and non-Minangkabau background regions, such as Jambi, Batam, Bengkulu, and Jakarta. This flexible interviewing approach allowed for deep probing into pedagogical rationales, learning experiences, dialectal challenges, and adaptive strategies (Rahmadi, 2011).

Qualitative data were analyzed systematically using an interactive data analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Bungin, 2011; Rahmadi, 2011). During data condensation, raw qualitative data derived from field notes, observation protocols, and interview transcripts were systematically sorted, coded, and categorized to filter out irrelevant details and focus strictly on empirical patterns related to literal translation strategies, grammatical signifiers, and dialectal learning barriers. Condensed data were then displayed through narrative accounts and analytical matrices to facilitate the identification of structural relationships between local linguistic markers and Arabic syntactical comprehension. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification phase synthesized analytical patterns to generate coherent theoretical and practical insights regarding the efficacy and challenges of localized translation methodologies in Mahārah Qirā'ah instruction, with conclusions continuously verified against raw field data to ensure qualitative rigor and interpretive validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Context and Pedagogical Rationale of MTI Pasir

Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir was established on January 5, 1937, under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Husain Amin, inspired by the educational vision of Sheikh Sulaiman Ar-Rasuli, a prominent Minangkabau Islamic scholar and co-founder of the Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (PERTI). Situated in Pasir Village, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, the institution expanded over the decades to accommodate a growing student body, transferring administrative leadership in 1964 to Sheikh Owais Qarni Husain, who established the expansive Lapehan Vitalic campus, and subsequently in 2019 to Ustadz Dulimeni. Guided by a vision of academic excellence rooted in Islamic faith and piety (Iman dan Taqwa), MTI Pasir operates on an intensive six-day academic schedule from Sunday to Friday, reserving Saturdays for students' personal and financial errands. The institutional curriculum integrates formal religious ('Ulūm al-Shar'īyah) and general sciences, supplemented by mandatory evening classical text studies (kitab kuning) and student-led public speaking activities (muḥāḍarah) designed to cultivate communicative competence and scholarly leadership within an Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah framework.

The Minangkabau-Mediated Literal Translation Method (Metode Terjemah Harfiyah)

The literal translation method (Metode Terjemah Harfiyah) as operationalized at MTI Pasir represents a localized pedagogical strategy that maps the syntactic and morphological structures of classical Arabic texts word-for-word into the native Minangkabau language. Unlike neighboring Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in West Sumatra, such as MTI Canduang or Pesantren Ashabul Yamin, which predominantly utilize standard Bahasa Indonesia for literal text translation, MTI Pasir explicitly preserves the regional Minangkabau dialect as the principal medium of instruction. Historically traced to the pedagogical lineage of Sheikh Sulaiman Ar-Rasuli at the traditional surau of Canduang, this localized method functions as both a semantic translation tool and an immediate syntactical parsing (i'rāb) indicator. By embedding specific Minangkabau lexical markers directly beneath Arabic words, the method enables learners to simultaneously decode lexical meaning and identify precise grammatical roles within unvocalized Arabic sentences.

Syntactic and Morphological Mapping System

The operational mechanics of Metode Terjemah Harfiyah at MTI Pasir rely on a systematic taxonomy of localized grammatical markers that explicitly signal the syntactical function ('i'rāb) of each Arabic lexical item. In nominal structures, topic components (Mubtadā') are prefaced with the marker Baramulo (e.g., Zaidun qā'imun translated as "Baramulo Zaid..."), whereas predicate components (Khabar) are marked by Baalah Baramulo (e.g., "...baalah baramulo urang yang berdiri"). Verbal sentence subjects (Fā'il) are designated by interrogative-relative markers Sia nan for animate entities or A nan for inanimate entities (e.g., Qāma Zaidun translated as "Telah berdiri [sia nan telah berdiri] si Zaid"), while passive subjects (Nā'ib al-Fā'il) utilize Sia nan di or A nan di (e.g., Dhūriba 'Umaru translated as "Telah dipukul [sia nan dipukul] si Umar"). Furthermore, direct objects (Maf'ul Bihi) are systematically identified by the prepositional marker Akan (e.g., Naşara Zaidun 'Amran translated as "Telah menolong si Zaid akan si Umar"), absolute objects (Maşdar) by Akan Sempurna, adjectival modifiers (Na'at) by Yang, appositives (Badal) by A nan iyo, circumstantial modifiers (Ḥāl) by Hal Keadaan, specifications (Tamyīz) by Nisbah, causal modifiers (Maf'ul Min Ajlih) by Karna, co-objects (Maf'ul Ma'ah) by Beserta, vocative particles (Munādā) by Wahai, negation nouns (Ism Lā) by Jenis, and temporal or locative adverbs (Ẓarf Az-Zamān/ Al-Makān) by Pada or Di. Modifiers of particle-governed nominal sentences are similarly demarcated, with Khabar Inna marked by Baa Sasungguhnyo and Khabar Kāna marked by Baa Adonyo.

In addition to syntactic role mapping, the method enforces strict morphological translation rules based on derived verb and noun forms (Şarf). Past-tense verbs (Fi'l Māḍi) are translated using the past-time indicator Telah (e.g., naşara as "telah melihat"), present or continuous verbs (Fi'l Muḍāri') using Sedang (e.g., yanşuru as "sedang menolong"), and imperative verbs (Fi'l Amr) using direct command suffixes (e.g., uktub as "tulislah"). Morphological nominal derivatives receive specific lexical treatments: active participles (Ism Fā'il) are translated as "orang yang...", passive participles (Ism Maf'ul) as "yang di...", and elative forms (Ism Tafḍīl) as "lebih...". To achieve complete textual transparency in unvocalized and unpunctuated classical manuscripts, instructors also require explicit oral and written identification of demonstrative referents (mushār ilayh), personal pronoun referents (marji' ad-ḍamīr), and prepositional or adverbial attachments (muta'allaq ḥarf al-jarr/ ẓarf).

Classroom Instructional Execution

The classroom implementation of Metode Terjemah Harfiyah follows a structured three-stage pedagogical workflow designed to foster both spiritual readiness and cognitive engagement. In the pre-instructional phase, teachers thoroughly cross-reference target classical texts (kitab kuning) with secondary commentaries to ensure comprehensive mastery before class. Instruction opens with traditional Islamic greetings, collective supplications, and the recitation of Al-Fātiḥah dedicated to the text's original author, institutional founders, and deceased scholars (tabarruk), thereby establishing an authentic religious learning environment. During core execution, the instructor initiates a review of previous material by calling upon individual students to recite and parse prior passages. This is followed by student reading drills designed to evaluate vocalization accuracy and syntactical

understanding. The teacher then reads the new text line-by-line, articulating the full Minangkabau literal translation with embedded syntactic markers, while explaining underlying morphological variations and syntactic variations (*i'rāb*). Lessons conclude with summary reading recitations, closing prayers, and formal dismissals.

Pedagogical Friction Points and Implementation Challenges

Despite its demonstrated effectiveness in structural decoding, the implementation of Metode Terjemah Harfiyah via the Minangkabau language presents notable pedagogical friction points across instructional, student, and methodological dimensions. At the instructional level, teachers recruited from non-MTI Pasir educational backgrounds experience initial adaptation challenges in mastering the institution's specialized Minangkabau translation formulas and syntactical markers. At the student level, non-local learners originating from regions outside West Sumatra—such as Jambi, Batam, Bengkulu, and Jakarta—encounter a dual-language learning burden, requiring them to acquire conversational and academic Minangkabau simultaneously with Arabic syntactical frameworks. Additionally, entry-level Grade XII students often exhibit foundational weaknesses in *Naḥw* (syntax) and *Ṣarf* (morphology), which limits their ability to independently apply translation markers without extensive teacher scaffolding. Methodologically, the explicit, repetitive articulation of grammatical markers renders the translation process time-intensive and slow, while dialectal variations between regional boarding schools highlight a broader need for standardized literal translation conventions in classical text pedagogy.

Impact on Reading Skills (Mahārah Qirā'ah) and Academic Outcomes

The integration of local Minangkabau markers within Metode Terjemah Harfiyah serves as an effective cognitive bridge that links explicit grammatical analysis (*i'rāb*) directly to reading comprehension (Mahārah Qirā'ah). Reading unvocalized classical texts requires readers to simultaneously construct semantic meaning and verify syntactic correctness to avoid interpretive errors (*laḥn*). By forcing learners to assign explicit syntactical labels to every word during translation, the method prevents passive guessing and trains students in precise analytical reading. Qualitative feedback from theology (Tawḥīd) instructors confirms that this literal translation framework facilitates rapid comprehension of dense classical treatises across multiple disciplines, including jurisprudence, exegesis, and prophetic traditions.

This qualitative efficacy is further corroborated by student academic performance metrics in Grade XII examinations. In Theology (Tawḥīd), all 64 enrolled students successfully passed the summative assessment (minimum passing score of 65/100), with 22 students scoring exactly 65 and two students achieving perfect scores of 100. Similarly, in Morphology (*Ṣarf*), 63 out of 64 students passed the examination, with scores ranging from 70 to 98 and only one student falling below the passing threshold with a score of 60. These empirical results demonstrate that while the Minangkabau-mediated literal translation method introduces initial linguistic friction for non-local learners, its systematic structural rigor ultimately equips students with high levels of reading proficiency and grammatical accuracy in classical Arabic text analysis.

CONCLUSION

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that the operationalization of the Minangkabau-mediated literal translation method (*Metode Terjemah Harfiyah*) at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Pasir follows a systematic, three-stage pedagogical workflow designed to integrate grammatical parsing (*'i'rāb*) directly into reading comprehension (*Mahārah Qirā'ah*). Teachers initiate lessons with structured pre-instructional preparation and introductory reviews of previous material, before guiding students through line-by-line readings of classical Arabic texts (*kitab kuning*). By embedding specific Minangkabau lexical signifiers directly beneath unvocalized Arabic words, instructors enable learners to decode core morphological structures (*Ṣarf*) and map precise syntactic relationships (*Naḥw*). This structured recitation and parsing routine systematically connects root lexical meanings to sentence-level grammar, concluding with summary recitations and spiritual invocations.

Despite its demonstrated pedagogical value, the implementation of this localized translation method faces distinct friction points across instructional, student, and methodological dimensions. The primary challenge stems from the dialectal barrier encountered by non-local students originating from outside West Sumatra, who must acquire academic Minangkabau vernacular simultaneously with complex Arabic grammatical frameworks. Furthermore, entry-level Grade XII students frequently exhibit initial weaknesses in foundational syntax and morphology, making it difficult to apply translation formulas independently without extensive teacher scaffolding. Methodologically, the explicit and repetitive articulation of syntactical markers renders classroom instruction highly time-intensive, requiring extensive, long-term practice before syntactical parsing transitions from a deliberate decoding exercise into an internalized cognitive reading skill (*malakah*).

Nevertheless, the Minangkabau-mediated literal translation method proves exceptionally effective in fostering advanced reading skills (*Mahārah Qirā'ah*) for unvocalized classical Islamic treatises. By requiring learners to identify exact syntactical functions—such as topics (*Mubtadā'*), predicates (*Khabar*), verbal subjects (*Fā'il*), direct objects (*Maf'ūl Bihi*), and adjectival modifiers (*Na'at*)—the method eliminates passive guessing and prevents structural misinterpretations (*laḥn*). This rigorous syntactic mapping ensures that students construct accurate semantic meaning from dense, unpunctuated texts, thereby providing a reliable cognitive bridge between abstract grammatical rules and functional text comprehension.

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