An Experimental Study of the Mustaqilli Method to Enhance the Reading Skills (Mahārah al-Qirā'ah) of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Mustaqilli method in addressing reading difficulties among eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Kendari.

Design/methods/approach – This research employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design. The participants consisted of eighth-grade students from MTsN 1 Kendari, divided into two groups: class VIII.3 as the experimental group and class VIII.2 as the control group. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and tests. For data analysis, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used for normality, Levene's test for homogeneity, and the Mann-Whitney U test for non-parametric statistical analysis, with the assistance of SPSS version 26, due to the non-normal distribution of the data.

Findings - The implementation of the Mustaqilli method in class VIII.3 involved: (1) the presentation of learning objectives, a brief definition of Mustaqilli, vocabulary introduction, and explanation of the material. The core activities included group analysis and sentence translation, followed by writing on the board. The lesson concluded with reflection and review by the teacher. (2) A significant difference was found in the mahārah al-qirā'ah learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups, as indicated by the Mann-Whitney test results: a significance value of 0.032 for the pre-test and 0.048 for the post-test—both below the threshold of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis confirmed a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group employing the Mustaqilli method.

Research implications/limitations – The study highlights the application of the Mustaqilli method in teaching mahārah al-qirā'ah to class VIII.3 as a promising alternative for improving reading skills in Arabic language learning. In addition to observations, interviews, documentation, and testing, the data collection process incorporated relevant literature, including scholarly articles and journals, to support the findings.

Originality/value – This research contributes significantly to Arabic language pedagogy, particularly in enhancing mahārah al-qirā'ah, by demonstrating the effectiveness of the Mustaqilli method in fostering active and participatory comprehension for non-Arabic-speaking learners.

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Introduction

As one of the essential language skills that students are expected to master, *mahārah al-qirā'ah* (reading skill) must be developed from an early stage, as it serves as a foundational element in students' ability to comprehend and become proficient in learning the Arabic language. According to Khotiah, Arabic language proficiency among secondary school students should ideally reach at least a moderate or good level, given that Arabic instruction begins at the elementary or *madrasah ibtidā'iyyah* level (Sitorus & Ahkas, 2023). This is crucial to ensure that students are able to understand Arabic texts accurately and apply this skill across various communicative contexts, including religious practices (*'ubūdiyyah*) and daily interactions (Hidayah, n.d.).

In general, the objective of teaching *mahārah al-qirā'ah* is to enable students to read Arabic texts fluently and accurately, while also comprehending the meanings embedded within those texts (Ishak & Fitriyanti, 2020). To achieve this, Arabic language teachers must provide exercises tailored to specific learning indicators (Rathomi, 2019). Reading holds significant urgency not only within the field of education but also in human life more broadly (Tania & Isnaini, 2023).

Ahmadi defines reading as a process through which readers extract messages intended by the writer (Ahmadi & Ilmiani, 2020). Essentially, reading is the process of recognizing letter forms and grammatical structures while acquiring and understanding both explicit and implicit ideas contained within a written text (Muhsyanur, 2014). Viny and Sarah state that reading involves gaining meaning from written content through vocalization, and this activity is inherently linked with listening, speaking, and writing skills (Alpian & Yatri, 2022). The comprehension constructed from reading a text is an active process in which readers do not passively absorb meaning but rather engage interactively, linking the information presented in the text with their prior background knowledge (Wicaksono et al., 2015).

Reading is classified as a receptive skill, involving two key aspects: the ability to convert written symbols into sounds, and the ability to derive meaning from the written and spoken representations of those symbols. Students who excel in reading tend to perform better in other academic subjects across educational levels, and vice versa. The cognitive domain involved in reading is highly complex, ranging from lower-order thinking skills such as remembering and understanding, to higher-order skills such as analyzing and creating. Effective application of cognitive skills in reading involves recognizing letters and words (remembering), grasping word meanings (understanding), analyzing and drawing conclusions from texts—particularly through critical reading (Fauzet, n.d.).

Despite students' prior fluency in reading the Qur'an, many still encounter persistent difficulties in comprehending Arabic texts. Vocabulary mastery is a key prerequisite for reading comprehension. Students' ability to learn foreign languages—be it Arabic, English, or Mandarin—is heavily influenced by their level of vocabulary knowledge. In this context, vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in enhancing students' memorization quality and reading comprehension. The goal is to familiarize students with foreign texts and enable them to grasp at least a portion of the overall content, thereby allowing them to engage with the material meaningfully (Sitorus & Ahkas, 2023).

Low levels of reading literacy can impede students' understanding of other academic subjects. Inability to read proficiently may hinder students from keeping up with more advanced materials that require a strong grasp of reading skills to understand concepts and content (J, 2017). The low percentage of students actively participating in Arabic reading instruction also correlates with poor learning outcomes in this area (Susanti, 2019).

Additional contributing factors to reading difficulties include the diversity of students' educational backgrounds (Khotiah, 2020). The continued reliance on conventional teaching methods, demotivation in learning Arabic, unsupportive learning environments, and the inherent challenges of the Arabic language itself—such as difficulty writing Arabic script, identifying sentence meanings, understanding sentence structure, and limited vocabulary instruction—all contribute to students' inability to read Arabic texts comprehensively (Masnun et al., 2022). Moreover, insufficient engagement in Qur'anic reading is often linked to a lack of parental involvement and support at home (Lamianor, 2023).

The method is a strategy or approach selected by the teacher to effectively deliver the learning materials and achieve the instructional goals (Akhiruddin et al., 2020). Thus, the teaching method plays a vital role as a tool for facilitating the teaching and learning process. An effective method is expected to foster students' learning development alongside the instructional activities provided by the teacher (Dimyati, n.d.).

Teachers' mastery of learning methods greatly influences the progress of the instructional process. Unengaging methods can weaken students' motivation and ultimately hinder the achievement of learning outcomes, particularly in *mahārah al-qirā'ah*. In fact, it is often emphasized that *al-ṭarīqah ahammu min al-māddah*—the method is more important than the content itself (Nurcholis et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers must carefully consider various aspects before selecting a teaching method. These considerations include alignment with instructional objectives, students' readiness and cognitive maturity, availability of supporting resources, and the teacher's competence in implementing the method effectively (Rohmi & Budiyanto, 2020).

As an alternative instructional approach to address these challenges, the *Mustaqilli* method emerges as a rapid and effective means of teaching students to read classical Arabic texts and acquire Arabic language proficiency. This method integrates multiple Arabic language skills such as reading, translation, writing, composition, and speaking. The term *Mustaqilli*, meaning "independent," underscores the emphasis on student autonomy and active engagement in the learning process. KH. Agus Shohib Khoironi, the originator of this method, describes *Mustaqilli* as an approach that demands students to learn independently and actively so that they can achieve proficiency in Arabic across various linguistic competencies (Khotimah, n.d.). The implementation of the *Mustaqilli* method is thus considered relevant for achieving both language comprehension and skill development (Pratama & JF, 2024).

Several previous studies have investigated the application of the *Mustaqilli* method. Alam Budi Kusuma's research, titled "The Effect of the Mustaqilli Method on Arabic Text Reading Skills among Male Takhaṣṣuṣ Students at Madrasah Aliyah Wahid Hasyim Yogyakarta," focused on the influence of the *Mustaqilli* method on students' *qirā'ah* abilities. The method was shown to be effective within Arabic language instruction, particularly in sharpening students' skills in reading Arabic texts. In this context, the madrasah curriculum integrates *Mustaqilli* as a core element in Arabic language education, aiming to strengthen reading skills essential for accessing classical Islamic texts in Arabic (Kusuma, 2018). The

present study differs from Kusuma's in terms of research subjects, the use of a T-test, and the specific reading materials employed.

Another relevant study is by Isnol and Inni, titled "Implementation of the Mustaqilli Method in Enhancing Arabic Learning Outcomes among MTs Mambaul Ulum Students." The research emerged from concerns about the perceived lack of interest in Arabic among students due to a monotonous curriculum, unengaging teaching methods, and inadequate instructional media. The implementation of the *Mustaqilli* method in this study was found to foster student engagement and create a more enjoyable learning environment, facilitating comprehension and practical application of Arabic (Khotimah, n.d.). While both studies used the *Mustaqilli* method, the present study focuses specifically on *mahārah al-qirā'ah*, whereas Isnol and Inni employed a qualitative approach to explore broader aspects of Arabic learning.

Similarly, Nabila and Dadi's study, titled "A Study of the Implementation of the Mustaqilli Method in Arabic Language Instruction at Vocational Schools," analyzed how the *Mustaqilli* method impacts students' Arabic language development. This method, with its emphasis on learner autonomy, sentence construction, and consistent practical application, was shown to positively influence students' communication skills. The previous instructional approaches had primarily focused on reading and writing skills. While both studies investigate the *Mustaqilli* method, the current research differs in its methodological approach and its more specific focus on reading competence (Zakiya & Mulyadi, 2019).

Another relevant work is by Abidah Umayya, titled "Application of the Mustaqilli Method in Arabic Language Classes at MTsPN 4 Medan." This study identified *Mustaqilli* as a comprehensive approach aimed at mastering reading, writing, translation, and composition skills in Arabic. However, challenges in its implementation included students' varied backgrounds and levels of Arabic proficiency. The method nevertheless helped students recognize Arabic language patterns more easily through classroom practice (Umayya, 2023). While both studies employ the *Mustaqilli* method, the current research utilizes a quantitative quasi-experimental design with a focus on a single language skill, whereas Umayya adopted a qualitative approach centered on general understanding of Arabic as a subject.

Also relevant is the research by Nur Fitriani Fatihah, titled "Implementation of the Mustaqilli Method in Improving Arabic Learning Outcomes at the Asshidiqiyah Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta." This study examined the extent to which the method enhanced students' comprehension of Arabic content by minimizing grammar instruction and emphasizing practical sentence formation. The findings showed a significant increase in student engagement and performance, indicating stronger active proficiency in Arabic (Fitriani, 2022). Both studies utilize the *Mustaqilli* method, but this study applies it specifically to *mahārah al-qirā'ah* using a quantitative quasi-experimental design, while Fatihah's study employed classroom action research without focusing on a particular language skill.

Given the significance of these challenges in Arabic language learning, the present study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the *Mustaqilli* method in enhancing students' reading proficiency. Specifically, this research aims to investigate the significant impact of this method when applied in experimental classroom settings for teaching *mahārah al-qirā'ah*.

Methods

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The quasi-experimental design includes control over certain variables but does not fully control for all external variables that may affect the experimental outcomes (Payadnya & Jayantika, 2018). The research was conducted at MTsN 1 Kendari, with eighth-grade students serving as the subjects of the study.

2. Sampling Technique and Research Subjects

The sampling method used was non-probability sampling involving two classes: Class VIII.3 was designated as the experimental group, which received instruction using the *Mustaqilli* method, while Class VIII.2 served as the control group, which was taught using conventional teaching methods.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection involved the use of unstructured observation, interviews, documentation, and tests (pre-test and post-test):
- Observation was conducted to monitor the learning activities during the classroom instruction.
- Interviews were carried out to obtain in-depth information that could not be captured through observation alone.
- Documentation included the analysis of students' attendance records, academic scores, lesson plans (*RPP*), and classroom photographs during the learning process.
- Tests were administered in two stages—pre-test and post-test—to measure students' reading proficiency before and after the implementation of the *Mustaqilli* method.

4. Instrument Validation and Reliability Testing

The instruments used in this study were tested for both validity and reliability:
- Content validity was used to examine the multiple-choice test items, with a validity coefficient result of 0.339.
- Instrument reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.762, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.6 for acceptable internal consistency. This method is particularly suitable for instruments such as essays, questionnaires, or surveys that may include multiple correct answers (Yusup, 2018).

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis utilized non-inferential statistical methods.
- Normality testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The data were considered normally distributed if the p-value exceeded the significance level of 0.05. Conversely, a p-value below 0.05 indicated that the data were not normally distributed (Nasrum, 2018).
- Homogeneity testing was conducted using the Levene Test.
- For datasets that were not normally distributed, the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test was employed to determine the statistical significance of differences between the experimental and control groups.

Result

1.   Arabic Reading Skill Instruction in the Experimental Class

1.1.   Designation of Experimental and Control Classes

The implementation of Arabic reading (*maharah qirā'ah*) instruction took place from May 3 to May 17, 2023, over the course of five sessions, each lasting 3 × 4 lesson periods (JP). The experimental class (VIII.3) was taught using the *Mustaqilli* method, while the control class (VIII.2) received instruction through a conventional Arabic teaching method. The instructional materials were derived from the students' LKS (Student Worksheet) and the Grade VIII Arabic Language Textbook. The experimental group consisted of 35 students (18 female and 17 male) from MTsN 1 Kendari. The instructional sessions were held twice a week with a time allocation of 2 × 40 minutes per session.

1.2.   Instructional Procedures

The Arabic reading instruction in the experimental class consisted of three key stages:

(1) Pre-test Phase: Conducted at the beginning to assess students' initial reading ability using a combination of Arabic text reading and multiple-choice questions.
(2) Treatment Phase: A special instructional intervention was applied to enhance the students' reading proficiency through the *Mustaqilli* method.
(3) Post-test Phase: Administered at the end of the learning process to measure the improvement in students' reading skills.

Each phase was designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the students' progress in reading skills throughout the instructional period. The *Mustaqilli* method was introduced in Class VIII.3 by first clearly explaining the learning objectives, followed by a concise definition of the *Mustaqilli* method. Vocabulary (*mufradat*) and material were then presented comprehensively.

During the core learning activity, representatives from each group were asked to analyze and translate selected Arabic sentences provided on small slips of paper. The results of their analysis were written on the board. In the final segment of the lesson, the teacher offered reflective feedback and summarized the key points to ensure full student comprehension.

1.2.1   Pre-Test Implementation

The pre-test for the experimental class was conducted on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, from 13:30 to 14:50. It consisted of 14 multiple-choice questions aimed at assessing the students' *qirā'ah* skills. Out of the 35 students in Class VIII.3, 31 students participated in the test. Prior to the test, the researcher introduced themselves, explained the objective of the research—focusing on Arabic language instruction using the *Mustaqilli* method—and gave detailed instructions regarding the test. Students were instructed not to open any books and to complete the test individually. The test content was derived from previously studied material in their textbooks. The pre-test session proceeded smoothly. Following the test, the researcher gave a brief explanation of effective strategies for reading Arabic texts and outlined the upcoming learning activities using the *Mustaqilli* method.

1.2.2 Treatment I

The first treatment session for Class VIII.3 was conducted on May 16, 2023. The session began with greetings, a group prayer, attendance, and readiness checks. The Arabic teacher introduced the researcher, who then took over the session using the *Mustaqilli* approach. After explaining the method, the researcher addressed classroom distractions through an ice-breaking activity to regain students' focus.

Students were provided with reading materials and a mini dictionary, and they were guided through essential vocabulary and sentence meanings, which were written on the board and repeated for reinforcement. Students then worked in pairs to complete fragmented sentences by identifying sentence structures and translating them. Group representatives wrote their answers on the board, and other groups provided feedback. The researcher gave corrections and asked students to rewrite the corrected answers in their notebooks. The session concluded with a reminder to review the material, followed by a closing prayer and farewell.

1.2.3 Treatment II

The second treatment session was conducted on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, from 13:30 to 14:50, with 32 students in attendance. The researcher arrived 14 minutes late due to a scheduling conflict with the previous lesson. The session began with a brief review of the previous material, which remained relevant to the current topic, and then continued with translation exercises from the second paragraph to the end of the text. To ensure equitable participation, the researcher reorganized the student groups.

Students actively engaged by asking questions regarding unclear material and task instructions. The researcher responded with concise and easy-to-understand explanations. Toward the end of the session, some students appeared tired and distracted, prompting the researcher to initiate an ice-breaking activity and issue firm reminders to maintain classroom order.

Groups that completed their tasks presented their answers on the board, while the rest of the class observed and participated in a collaborative correction session with the researcher's guidance. In the final part of the session, the researcher conducted a vocabulary- and sentence-based Q&A review to reinforce students' understanding of the material.

1.2.4 Posttest

The posttest was conducted on May 20, 2023, during the first and second periods from 07:30 to 08:20. Its primary aim was to assess students' understanding after receiving the instructional treatments during the *maharah qirā'ah* sessions. A total of 31 students participated in this assessment.

The test comprised 10 questions, with a level of difficulty comparable to that of the earlier pretest. All questions were answered individually, and no group collaboration was permitted.

2 Comparison of Learning Outcomes Between Experimental and Control Classes

To evaluate the learning outcomes in both the experimental and control classes, the researcher employed two stages of testing: pretest and posttest. The following results were obtained after administering the treatments:

Table 1

Comparison of Learning Outcomes Between Experimental and Control Classes

Class	Pretest	Posttest	Improvement
Experimental	65.28	88.46	0.61
Control	74.24	84.24	0.17

Based on Table 1 presented above, the pretest and posttest results for the experimental class demonstrate a significant improvement. The average pretest score was 65.28, which increased to 88.46 in the posttest. This reflects an increase of 0.61, indicating that the instructional method applied in the experimental class was effective in enhancing students' qirā'ah skills, as evidenced by the considerable improvement in their average scores following the learning process.

In contrast, the control class also showed an improvement, with scores rising from 74.24 to 84.24, an increase of 0.17, which is relatively modest compared to the experimental group.

3. Statistical Analysis

3.1. Normality Test

A normality test was conducted on both the pretest and posttest data for the experimental and control classes using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The decision rule:

- If Sig > 0.05, data is normally distributed.
- If Sig < 0.05, data is not normally distributed.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 26. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2

Shapiro-Wilk test

Data Type	Class	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.	Description
Pretest	Experimental	0.00	Not Normally Distributed
Posttest	Experimental	0.00	Not Normally Distributed
Pretest	Control	0.01	Not Normally Distributed
Posttest	Control	0.00	Not Normally Distributed

Referring to the results of the qirā'ah pretest and posttest presented on the Table 2, it is evident that the experimental class obtained a significance value (Sig.) of 0.00 for both types of data, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the data do not follow a normal distribution. Similarly, the normality test results for the control class showed a significance value of 0.01 for the pretest and 0.00 for the posttest, both of which are also less than 0.05. Based on the overall results from both classes, it can be concluded that all data from the experimental and control groups do not meet the assumption of normal distribution.

3.2. Homogeneity Test

The Levene's Test was used to test for homogeneity of variance. The results are as follows:

Table 3

Homogeneity Test of exsperiment and control class

Pretest

Data	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	Description
Exsperiment Control	2.072	1	67	0.155	Homogeneous

Posttest

Data	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	Description
Exsperiment Control	0.163	1	67	0.688	Homogeneous

Based on Table 3 above, it is shown that the significance value of the pretest data for both the experimental and control classes is 0.155, which is greater than 0.05. Similarly, the posttest data for both groups yielded a value of 0.688, which is also greater than 0.05. It can be concluded that the pretest and posttest data from both the experimental and control classes are homogeneous. Although the data do not follow a normal distribution, the assumption of homogeneity is fulfilled. Therefore, the requirements for conducting a t-test are not met. As a result, the next stage of analysis was conducted using a non-parametric statistical test, namely the Mann-Whitney test.

3.1. Mann-Whitney U Test

This test was chosen because the data did not meet the normality assumption. To conduct this analysis, the researcher used SPSS version 26. The purpose of using this non-parametric test was to examine the research hypothesis and make decisions based on the results of the statistical analysis. The criteria for hypothesis testing using the Mann-Whitney U test are as follows:

- If Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted.
- If Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, then H_0 is accepted, and H_a is rejected.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney Test Results for Pretest Scores of the Experimental and Control Classes

Data	Sig. (2-tailed)	Conclusion
Pretest	0.032	Significant Difference Observed

Based on the Mann-Whitney test Table 4 above, the researcher concluded that the pretest results of the experimental and control groups yielded a two-tailed significance value of 0.032, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Table 5

Mann-Whitney Test Results for Posttest Scores of the Experimental and Control Classes

Data	Sig. (2-tailed)	Conclusion
Posttest	0.048	Significant Difference Observed

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney test in Table 5, it was found that the posttest scores of both the experimental and control classes showed a significance

value of 0.048, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a significant difference between the two groups (experimental and control).

Based on the Mann-Whitney U test results for both pretest and posttest, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the experimental class (using the *Mustaqilli* method) and the control class (using the conventional method). The findings demonstrate that the Mustaqilli method had a significantly greater impact on students' reading proficiency compared to the conventional method.

Discussion

1. Implementation of the *Mustaqilli* Method in Teaching *Mahārah Qirāʾah* to Grade VIII.3 Students at MTsN 1 Kendari

The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the *Mustaqilli* method in enhancing students' Arabic reading skills (*mahārah qirāʾah*) in the experimental class. The *Mustaqilli* method is generally employed to facilitate independent learning among students in acquiring Arabic language proficiency. The approach encourages learners to actively engage in various language activities—such as reading, translating, comprehending, composing, analyzing, and speaking—in a self-directed and contextual manner.

The principal objective of this method is to foster learner autonomy and promote the practical use of Arabic through structured linguistic patterns. This is consistent with the findings of Nur (as cited in Fitriani, 2022), who argued that the *Mustaqilli* method is effective in improving students' understanding of Arabic materials. Similarly, research conducted by Zakiya and Mulyadi (2019) reported that the implementation of the *Mustaqilli* method significantly supported students at SMK Darut Tauhid in communicating in Arabic. Further corroborating evidence is provided by Pratama and JF (2024), who reported an average N-Gain score of 70% in the experimental class, indicating the method's effectiveness.

This study expands upon prior research by specifically examining the empirical impact of the *Mustaqilli* method on reading proficiency. The results suggest several critical implications for Arabic language instruction, particularly in the context of Islamic junior secondary education. The attainment in the implementation of this method carries crucial implications, including the following:

1.1. Enhancement of Learner Autonomy

The application of the *Mustaqilli* method significantly fosters students' ability to learn independently, especially in reading, interpreting, translating, and composing Arabic sentences. This independent learning culture forms a crucial foundation for sustained improvement in Arabic language instruction.

1.2. Increased Active Participation in the Learning Process

This method creates a more interactive and participatory classroom atmosphere. Students are no longer passive recipients of information; rather, they are actively engaged in sentence analysis and translation exercises. Such involvement promotes greater self-confidence in using the Arabic language.

1.3. Development of Contextual Arabic Language Use

Through continuous practice in composing and translating Arabic sentences, students develop a natural linguistic sensitivity and are encouraged to think within the grammatical and syntactic frameworks of the Arabic language. This habitual exposure enhances their contextual fluency.

1.4. Effectiveness in Improving Reading Skills (*Qirāʾah*)

The results of the posttest indicate that students in the experimental class who were taught using the *Mustaqilli* method achieved significantly higher gains compared to those in the control class, who received instruction via conventional methods. This finding underscores the method's relevance and applicability in improving Arabic reading literacy.

1.5. A Viable Alternative to Conventional Arabic Teaching Methods

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing development of Arabic language teaching methodologies. In particular, the *Mustaqilli* method offers a practical and pedagogically sound alternative to conventional approaches, especially in the context of Islamic schools and madrasahs, where student motivation and learning outcomes remain critical concerns.

2. The Influence of the *Mustaqilli* Method in Teaching *Mahārah Qirāʾah*

The findings of this study reveal a significant difference in Arabic reading proficiency (*mahārah qirāʾah*) between the experimental class (taught using the *Mustaqilli* method) and the control class in the Grade VIII.3 at MTsN 1 Kendari. This conclusion is supported by the statistical analysis conducted on the test data. Due to the non-normal distribution of the dataset, the researcher applied the non-parametric Mann–Whitney U test for hypothesis testing.

The experiment involving the application of the *Mustaqilli* method in both groups demonstrated a statistically significant impact, with a post-test significance value of 0.048 (< 0.05), and a pre-test significance value of 0.032 (< 0.05). These findings indicate that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Thus, there is a statistically significant difference in Arabic reading achievement between the experimental and control groups.

The results of the pre-test show no notable differences between the two classes. However, it should be noted that the control class had low attendance during the pre-test session, which may have influenced the data. In the experimental class, the highest score recorded was 96.8, and the lowest was 35.1. Meanwhile, in the control class, the highest score was 96.6, and the lowest was 18.

Both internal and external factors—such as students' motivation, discipline, personal enthusiasm, educational background, and learning environment—are known to affect academic achievement (Maulana Maslahul Adi, 2020).

The purpose of any teaching method is to develop students' individual competencies to address the problems they face. This aligns with the core objective of the *Mustaqilli* method, which emphasizes student autonomy in learning. The method focuses on practical application of grammatical theory through sentence construction exercises in Arabic. In this way, students are stimulated to actively engage in the practice and development of Arabic sentence structures (Effendi & Setiawan, n.d.).

The positive influence of the *Mustaqilli* method on student achievement is also supported by the findings of Kusuma (2018), which reported an increase in students'

performance: written test scores rose from 79.36 to 84.77, while oral test scores improved from 60.14 to 85.91.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted at MTsN 1 Kendari involving Grade VIII students and the implementation of the *Mustaqilli* method in the teaching of *Mahārah Qirāʾah* (Arabic reading skills), it can be concluded that the teaching process in class VIII.3 was initiated by presenting the learning objectives, introducing the *Mustaqilli* method, providing relevant vocabulary (*mufradāt*), and delivering the main material. During the core activity, students worked in groups to translate and annotate specific sentences, then presented their results on the whiteboard. The session concluded with a reflection on the material that had been covered.

There was a statistically significant difference in *Mahārah Qirāʾah* learning outcomes between the experimental class, which applied the *Mustaqilli* method, and the control class, which did not. This is evidenced by the post-test average score of the experimental group, which was 88.46, compared to 84.24 in the control group. Thus, it can be concluded that the *Mustaqilli* method positively influenced students' learning outcomes in Arabic reading skills.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute meaningfully to the improvement of students' academic performance and support the development of innovative methods in Arabic language instruction. Furthermore, this study may serve as a valuable reference for future research and offer new insights into the enhancement of Arabic reading proficiency.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Kamilatus Salsabila was responsible for designing the research framework, implementing the Mustaqilli method in the classroom, and overseeing the data collection process, including the administration of both pre-test and post-test assessments. She conducted the data analysis using SPSS, interpreted the findings, and developed the manuscript, including the literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions. All sections of the article were completed in accordance with standard academic research writing practices.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. This includes datasets generated and analyzed during the research process, such as pre-test and post-test scores from both the experimental and control groups, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation related to the implementation of the Mustaqilli method in teaching Mahārah Qirāʾah. These data are used to ensure transparency, validity, and reproducibility of the results presented in this article. Due to confidentiality agreements and institutional guidelines, some data may be restricted from public access but can be shared for academic purposes with appropriate permissions.

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Declaration of interests statement

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the conduct of this research and the publication of this article.

Additional information

This study highlights that the Mustaqilli approach is effective in enhancing students' Arabic reading skills by making the learning process more participatory and student-centered. Rather than relying solely on memorization, students collaborate in groups, translate, and engage in vocabulary-related activities that keep them actively involved. The method encourages learner autonomy and boosts students' confidence in using Arabic in daily communication. These findings suggest that more innovative and adaptive teaching methods such as Mustaqilli can be beneficial in Islamic educational institutions and warrant further exploration.

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