



CONSTRUCTIVIST-BASED ARABIC READING PEDAGOGY IN A HETEROGENEOUS STUDENT CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM MA'HAD IAIN KERINCI

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the instructional strategies employed by Arabic language educators in teaching reading skills (*maharah al-qira'ah*) to students at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, who possess diverse educational backgrounds. Specifically, it explores how teachers adapt their pedagogy to students' prior Arabic grammar knowledge, particularly among those with *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) experience. Grounded in constructivist learning Theory, this qualitative research adopts a phenomenological approach involving classroom observations and in-depth interviews with six instructors and twelve students over four months. Data were thematically analyzed to capture recurring pedagogical patterns and learner experiences. The findings reveal that the constructivist approach is more effective in advanced-level classes, as students with prior grammatical knowledge actively engage in meaning construction. A key strategy identified is the use of *i'rab* (grammatical analysis), which enhances students' ability to decode and comprehend Arabic texts. The study underscores the pedagogical value of *i'rab* within a constructivist framework and highlights the necessity of aligning instructional strategies with students' linguistic backgrounds. These insights contribute to the development of context-sensitive Arabic reading instruction in heterogeneous academic settings.



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INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, the Arabic language holds two essential positions: as a subject of study and as a tool for communication and knowledge acquisition. In the first position, Arabic is regarded as an independent discipline, characterized by its specific features and scientific structures. In the second position, it functions as a medium or instrument that facilitates a more profound understanding of various fields of knowledge, as well as serving as a means of communication and interaction (Musthafa & Hermawan, 2018). Moreover, although Arabic is considered a foreign language by the majority of Indonesians, it is not unfamiliar to the ears of the Muslim community (Satrio, 2018).

The instruction of Arabic as a second or foreign language has emerged as a significant area of pedagogical inquiry, particularly within Islamic higher education institutions situated outside the Arab-speaking world. This field presents a dual set of challenges: the inherent linguistic complexity of Arabic and the diverse sociocultural and educational backgrounds of learners. Addressing these challenges requires the application of pedagogical frameworks that promote effective and context-sensitive language acquisition (Haerullah et al., 2024). This study investigates the implementation of a constructivist-based reading pedagogy within the heterogeneous student environment of the *Ma'had* at IAIN Kerinci, aiming to uncover how such an approach facilitates deeper, more meaningful engagement with Arabic texts.

On the other hand, in Arabic language education, there is a subject known as "reading skills," which is a component of language proficiency instruction. According to Sheira Ayu Indrayani, as cited by Lis Susiawati and colleagues in their article entitled "The Teaching of *Mahārah Qirā'ah* for Mastery of Text meaning on Character Education", reading skills in the Arabic language education program fall under the comprehension stage. At this stage, students aim to acquire knowledge through reading comprehension, such as by reading Arabic-language texts and classical Islamic books (Susiawati et al., 2022).

In general, the primary objective of learning reading skills is to enable students to read Arabic texts accurately and to comprehend their meaning. In the process of teaching reading skills, educators must pay close attention to students' abilities in reading comprehension. Achieving this goal will allow students not only to read the text properly but also to understand the content they read (Mohamed Nasirudin et al., 2022). However, in essence, even a teacher with a well-planned Arabic language lesson cannot guarantee the absence of challenges during the learning process. Therefore, it is necessary to implement appropriate, organized, and structured teaching methods (Makruf, 2016). In the context of Arabic language instruction, differences in students' comprehension are frequently observed, particularly at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci.

Moreover, the challenges encountered in Arabic language learning at the school level differ significantly from those at the university level. One of the significant obstacles in teaching Arabic at the university level is the uneven distribution of students' language skills. This issue not only affects departments that offer Arabic language courses as a general requirement, but also extends to Arabic-related majors themselves, including both Arabic literature and Arabic education programs. This situation stems from the admission of graduates from both Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and non-boarding schools, as well as public schools. Consequently, this leads to a significant disparity among students in terms of Arabic language proficiency, resulting in an imbalance in Arabic language learning (Mansyur, 2022).

Although various studies have explored Arabic language instruction in general, particularly in the context of Arabic language instruction, teachers often face challenges in managing classrooms where students possess varying levels of understanding (Setiadi et al., 2022). In such circumstances, the teacher's contribution becomes highly essential. Teachers are required to provide instruction that not only motivates students' ideas but also enables them to develop their abilities to the fullest potential (Ananda et al., 2023). Limited attention has been given to specific teaching strategies for *mahārah qirā'ah* (reading skills) in classrooms characterized by heterogeneous student backgrounds (Yanwari et al., 2021). Existing literature tends to focus on general pedagogical issues without addressing how instructors can effectively accommodate differing levels of prior knowledge and skill in Arabic reading. (Wibowo et al., 2021). This study seeks to address this gap by examining constructivist-based reading instruction tailored to diverse learner profiles within the context of the *Ma'had* at IAIN Kerinci.

Furthermore, in order to enhance students' Arabic language proficiency, every educator needs to identify the appropriate methods, strategies, and learning models for teaching Arabic. Educators must also possess a variety of teaching models that can be utilized and adapted to meet the specific needs of the students (Diah & Ni'mah, 2023). Particularly in learning reading skills, educators need to design appropriate and contextualized teaching methods and strategies in order to accommodate the needs and unique characteristics of each student (Andrian & Yul, 2023). Additionally, the author identified issues at *Ma'had* LAIN Kerinci, where students reported having diverse learning experiences from their previous educational levels.

Every endeavor necessitates the use of appropriate methods and strategies, and learning Arabic is no exception; it requires particularly specialized approaches. The methods and strategies employed by educators play a crucial role in facilitating students' acquisition of the Arabic language. These strategies have been shown to significantly enhance students' abilities in speaking, comprehension, and the practical use of Arabic in various real-life contexts. This indicates that a supportive language environment, when combined with practical instruction (Yul et al., 2023). Effective education relies on the implementation of diverse methods and strategies throughout the teaching and learning process. Therefore, identifying and applying the most suitable approaches is of paramount importance (Hidayah, 2022).

The term constructivist originates from the root word constructive. In the Indonesian language, konstruktif refers to something that possesses qualities of improvement, development, or advancement. In English, the word constructive similarly denotes "one who builds," emphasizing the act of creating or contributing positively to a process (Efgivia et al., 2021). According to Asrori, constructivism is the notion that knowledge resides in the learner's mind, and that the educator does not merely transfer knowledge to the student's mind. Instead, learners must construct and define what they have learned. Furthermore, learners adjust this knowledge following their prior experiences.

Consequently, the constructivist Theory may not be effectively applied in teaching reading skills to students who lack a foundational background in reading, particularly those who are not alumni of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This is because the Theory requires students to take an active role in engaging with Arabic texts, which demands a certain level of prior competence in reading skills.

The presence of students with diverse learning experiences, as observed by the author at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci, presents a significant challenge. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the strategies employed by educators at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci in addressing the issues mentioned above. The focus is on how these educators facilitate effective learning among students, despite their differing educational backgrounds and prior learning experiences.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The purpose of using the qualitative method is to investigate and analyze the subjective experiences of both students and teachers at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci. The phenomenological approach was chosen to enable the researcher to observe the phenomena that occur. Phenomenology is the 'logical' science of things as they appear (phenomena) (Nuryana et al., 2019). The subjects of this study are the educators and students at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci. This context is crucial to investigate due to the limited existing research on Arabic language pedagogy within this institution.

Additionally, *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci implements unique educational policies that integrate diverse educational backgrounds, which create specific challenges and opportunities in teaching Arabic reading skills. Therefore, examining this context can provide valuable insights into effective pedagogical strategies tailored for heterogeneous student populations. Data collection in this study was carried out through interviews with both educators and students. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the educators' strategies in teaching reading skills to students with diverse learning backgrounds and to assess whether the strategies employed facilitate effective reading skill development. Additionally, the researcher conducted direct observations of the research subjects and gathered documentation to obtain more reliable data.

The procedure for this study involves the researcher conducting interviews with educators and students at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci, as well as making classroom observations. Observation is a method of data collection carried out through systematic monitoring, accompanied by detailed documentation of the conditions or behaviors of the observed subjects. According to Nana Sudjana, observation is defined as a systematic observation of the phenomena under investigation (Ardiansyah, 2022). Following the interviews, the researcher collects data from the interview results and additional relevant data. The data analysis phase in this study employs thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze data to identify patterns or themes within the data collected by the researcher (Sanah et al., 2024). The analysis of this study focuses on the teaching of reading skills at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci. The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing and presenting it, followed by drawing conclusions, which are presented as the final findings of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The various learning experiences of students at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci reveal that some students shared their previous methods of learning reading skills at Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). They applied a gradual learning approach, starting with reading texts with diacritical marks (*harakat*), followed by progressing to reading texts without diacritical marks, such as classical Arabic texts (*kitab kuning*). In addition, this learning process was also

accompanied by the practice of *i'rab* (grammatical analysis). Some students also revealed that their previous method of learning reading skills at the *pesantren* involved understanding what was read aloud by the teacher. Additionally, they were encouraged to memorize a large number of Arabic vocabulary words (*mufraḍat*) (Amilya & Yul, 2025). Some students mentioned that their previous learning method at the *pesantren* involved memorization, followed by reading Arabic texts. Additionally, they were taught to understand *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology) to interpret these texts.

Thus, this section will discuss the strategies employed by educators at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci in teaching reading skills to students with diverse learning backgrounds. This will be explored through a constructivist approach that emphasizes the active role of students in constructing understanding based on their prior knowledge. To support these strategies, teachers maximize the use of various learning resources, including classical texts, grammatical materials, and group discussions. This also includes the utilization of e-learning platforms, which enable the integration of digital technology into the learning process, allowing students to access materials more flexibly and interactively anytime and anywhere (Yul, Aflisia, et al., 2022).

Teachers' Strategies in Teaching *Mahārah al-Qirā'ah* (Reading Skills)

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, several specific strategies employed by teachers in teaching *mahārah al-qirā'ah* (reading skills) were identified. Observations revealed that teachers often utilize interactive reading sessions where students are encouraged to read aloud and engage in group discussions to enhance comprehension. Interviews with educators highlighted the importance of adapting materials to accommodate varying proficiency levels among students, employing scaffolding techniques to support weaker readers while challenging advanced learners. Documentation analysis showed that lesson plans frequently incorporate authentic texts relevant to students' interests and cultural backgrounds, fostering greater motivation and contextual understanding. These findings provide a detailed picture of how teachers navigate the complexities of heterogeneous classrooms to improve students' Arabic reading skills effectively.

Reading skill is the ability to analyze and comprehend the content of a text through both oral recitation and internal reflection. It also involves the engagement of students' reasoning and cognitive faculties. In the learning process, effective teaching strategies are essential, particularly in the study of *Mahārah al-Qirā'ah* (reading skills). Therefore, educators must adopt strategies that both motivate and facilitate students' understanding of the material. As some scholars have stated, '*al-ṭariqah ahammu min al-maddah*'-the the method is more important than the material (Nurcholis et al., 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that an effective method or strategy is more important than the material itself.

At the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci, teachers teach reading skills by providing students with Arabic texts, such as the Fiqh book *Safinat al-Najāh* and other classical Arabic texts. During the learning process, the teacher first translates the text while students listen attentively. After the teacher reads the passage, students are then asked to reread it individually, replicating the way the teacher read it.

However, before engaging with the texts, the teacher equips students with foundational knowledge of Arabic grammar, specifically *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology), to ensure accurate reading of the Arabic texts. This approach is explicitly applied in advanced classes, as these students already possess prior learning experience in this area.

In teaching *nahwu* and *sharaf*, instructors at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci not only deliver content related to Arabic grammar, but also guide students to memorize the material that has been taught. Students are then allowed to recite their memorization individually to the teacher. The *nahwu* book used in instruction is *Al-Ajurrūmiyyah*, while for *sharaf*, the book *Matan Binā' wa al-Asās* is utilized. Most of the students receiving this instruction have previously studied these texts, which supports their ability to engage with the material more effectively.

In addition, teachers at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci also implement a discussion-based learning method known as mudzakah. Mudzakah is considered a practical approach, as it allows students to practice their discussion skills within a group forum actively. This method is also applicable in the study of classical Arabic texts (*kitab kuning*), enhancing students' comprehension and critical engagement with the material (Addawami et al., 2024).

By employing the mudzakah method, teachers are able to assess and understand students' abilities in argumentation. Argumentation is a crucial skill in daily life, as nearly every aspect of human activity involves making arguments. Through argumentation, an individual can substantiate or refute statements based on evidence and relevant factors (Boogaart et al., 2021). Therefore, individuals engaged in argumentation must be capable of justifying the statements they present.

Through this method, teachers are also able to assess students' understanding of both the material they have previously acquired (at their respective *pesantren*) and the new content introduced by the teacher at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci. Additionally, teachers can observe the level of student engagement and participation in the learning process.

About this, the approach employed by the teachers at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci, as previously mentioned, along with students who possess diverse prior learning experiences, facilitates their ability to read, comprehend, and explain what they have read. Furthermore, both teachers and students can actively engage in the learning process of *maharah qir'ah* itself.

Table 1. Analysis of Strategies for Understanding Arabic Texts at IAIN Kerinci

Characteristic	Reading Skills	Classical Texts	Grammatical Foundations	Advanced Class	Discussion Method	Constructivist Approach
Cognitive & Analytical	Understanding the Content	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Teaching Material	Not available	Authentic Arabic Texts	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Basic Knowledge	Not available	Not available	Understanding Text Structure	Not available	Not available	Based on prior knowledge
Target Audience	Not available	Not available	Not available	Only alumni students	Not available	Not available

Characteristic	Reading Skills	Classical Texts	Grammatical Foundations	Advanced Class	Discussion Method	Constructivist Approach
Objective or Goal	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Development of argumentation skills	Not available
Results	Easier text comprehension	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Implementation of the Constructivist Approach in Learning

Based on observations conducted during classroom sessions at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, it was evident that the constructivist approach was actively applied in various learning activities. Teachers encouraged students to engage in collaborative problem-solving and group discussions, allowing learners to construct their understanding through interaction. Interviews with educators revealed that they deliberately designed tasks that required students to connect new knowledge with their prior experiences, fostering deeper cognitive engagement. Documentation, including lesson plans and student work, confirmed the use of authentic materials and real-life contexts to make learning more relevant and meaningful. These findings highlight how the constructivist approach facilitates active learning and student-centered pedagogy in a heterogeneous classroom environment.

Based on classroom observations conducted at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, it was evident that the constructivist approach was actively implemented across a variety of learning activities. Instructors consistently encouraged students to engage in collaborative problem-solving and group discussions, providing opportunities for learners to construct their understanding through social interaction, reflection, and idea exchange. Within this dynamic classroom environment, students were positioned not merely as recipients of knowledge but as active participants in the learning process (Nurhamidah et al., 2024). Interviews with educators revealed that instructional activities were intentionally designed to foster deep cognitive engagement. Lecturers developed tasks that enabled students to connect new knowledge with their prior experiences, thereby reinforcing conceptual understanding and promoting critical and reflective thinking. The educators demonstrated a high level of pedagogical awareness by adapting instructional strategies to the diverse backgrounds and needs of their students. (Andrian & Yul, 2023)

Furthermore, documentation such as lesson plans and student work evidenced the consistent use of authentic materials and real-life contexts in teaching and learning practices. The integration of relevant and applicable content made the learning experience more meaningful and increased student motivation (Husna et al., 2025). These findings affirm the effectiveness of the constructivist approach in fostering an active, interactive, and student-centered learning environment, particularly within the heterogeneous classroom setting of *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci.

In studying reading skills at the university, educators not only equip students to read Arabic texts fluently but also to adhere to the rules of *nahwu* and *sharaf* (Ansyah et al., 2020). But they are also equipped to comprehend the texts they read and extract the main ideas, enabling readers to apply them in real-life situations (Ritonga et al., 2018).

The method implemented by the instructors at the *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci to build students' knowledge involves a learning approach where students are given material individually, and they are required to explain the material they have received, which they had previously studied in their respective *pesantren*. During the explanation process, only the students engage in the discussion while the instructor merely listens. In this way, students can actively participate in arguing and reasoning.

In addition, after students explain the materials they have been given, the instructor provides additional information related to the topics they have discussed. The instructor also offers methods that can facilitate students' understanding of the material provided. The materials shared by the instructor for explanation are related to Arabic grammar, specifically *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology).

The study of *nahwu* and *sharaf* aims to encourage, guide, develop, and nurture students' abilities to foster a positive attitude towards the Arabic language. This ability applies to both receptive and productive skills. Receptive ability refers to the skill of reading Arabic texts and understanding the content of those texts. On the other hand, productive ability refers to the skill of using Arabic for communication, whether orally or in writing. In order to practice Arabic effectively, it is necessary to understand and delve into the branches of Arabic linguistics, with the most fundamental being *nahwu* and *sharaf* (Ardiansyah & Muhammad, 2020).

Furthermore, the teachers at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci also apply a learning approach based on constructivist Theory, which involves active student participation in the learning process. As seen at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, after the teacher provides students with foundational knowledge of Arabic grammar, which serves as the framework for reading Arabic texts correctly, the teacher then guides them to practice *i'rāb*. In this stage, students actively engage in determining the syntactic position of words within a text.

In addition, the teacher also provides their method for teaching students how to apply *i'rāb* to an Arabic text. This method, which is accessible to students with various learning backgrounds, enables them to determine the syntactic position of a word easily. The teacher uses symbols, each with its specific meaning. For instance, the symbol "م" (beginning or '*adaam*') represents the subject (*mubtada'*), while the symbol "خ" (that or is) represents the predicate (*khabar*), among many other symbols.

It turns out that by applying the *i'rāb*-based reading strategy along with the use of symbols that carry specific meanings, the instructor can facilitate students at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci who come from diverse learning backgrounds in identifying the grammatical functions of words within a sentence more easily. Moreover, learning reading skills through this method cannot be separated from Arabic grammar. This ensures that the learning process proceeds effectively and remains aligned with the established rules and structures of the Arabic language.

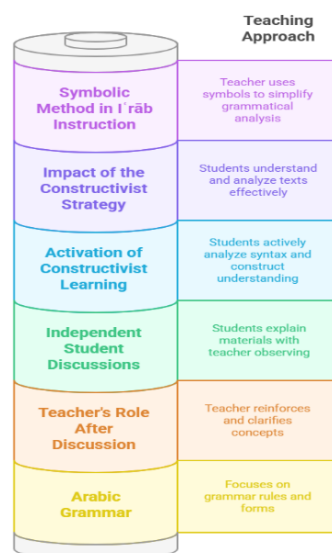


Figure 1. A Constructivist and Symbolic Approach to Teaching Arabic Syntax

One of the novel findings of this study is the teacher's innovation in teaching *i'rāb* through the use of simplified grammatical symbols, such as "م" for *muḥtada'* (subject) and "خ" for *ḵabar* (predicate), which are contextually developed according to the students' needs. This method has not been widely documented in the existing literature on constructivist-based Arabic language instruction. The use of such symbolic representation has proven to be effective in:

- Facilitates students from diverse educational backgrounds in comprehending Arabic sentence structures more efficiently and accurately.
- Enhances students' memory and understanding of syntactic functions within texts.
- Reducing cognitive barriers in the learning of *nahwu* and *sharaf*, which are often perceived as complex and abstract.

With this strategy, the teacher successfully creates a bridge between grammatical Theory and text comprehension practice, while also expanding the application of the constructivist approach creatively and adaptively. This contributes significantly to the development of a more flexible and contextual Arabic language learning model, particularly in the context of religious higher education institutions. The learning model being developed not only aligns with academic needs but also takes into account the social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the students (Yul & Andrian, 2024). Through this approach, the learning process becomes more relevant and meaningful, encouraging active student engagement in the more profound comprehension of Arabic texts. The integration of pedagogical aspects with Islamic contextual understanding makes the model more adaptive to the dynamics of religious higher education (Parhan et al., 2024).

Analysis of Teacher Strategies from a Constructivist Perspective

The analysis of teacher strategies reveals a precise alignment with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize active learner engagement, social interaction, and the construction of knowledge through experience. Teachers at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci employed

methods that encouraged students to actively participate in the learning process, such as collaborative group work, peer discussions, and problem-solving tasks. These strategies support the constructivist view that knowledge is not passively received but actively built by learners through meaningful interactions.

Observational data showed that teachers often facilitated activities where students linked new reading materials to their prior knowledge and cultural contexts, fostering deeper comprehension. Interviews with educators confirmed their intentional use of scaffolding techniques to guide students in constructing understanding step-by-step, tailored to each student's individual learning needs. Documentation of lesson plans reflected this approach by incorporating authentic and contextualized texts that resonate with students' backgrounds. Overall, the teachers' strategies not only reflect constructivist theories but also effectively address the challenges of teaching Arabic reading skills to a heterogeneous group of learners, promoting autonomy, critical thinking, and collaborative learning.

Qirā'ah is one of the four skills considered essential by language experts. The type of reading or *qirā'ah* can be seen as a comprehensive study from two aspects: psychological and linguistic. In terms of etymology, psycholinguistics is a combination of two elements: psychology and linguistics. Both have distinct meanings and methods, but they share a focus on the study of language or linguistics as their formal object (Romadhon et al., 2024).

According to Shalih Nashiraat in Mahdir Muhammad, *qirā'ah* is the process of interaction between the reader and a text. There are also several areas of knowledge that a reader needs to possess to read effectively, including: first, knowledge of grammatical structure (*nahwu*), second, understanding of the science of morphology (*sharaf*), third, familiarity with the culture of the language's speakers, and so on (Muhammad, 2020).

Additionally, at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, in studying reading skills, the teacher not only asks students to read the text but also to translate it and understand the content of the text. In translating, students are required to meet specific criteria, such as paying attention to the grammatical structure (*nahwu*) and morphology (*sharaf*). In this way, the teacher can apply the constructivist Theory, where students actively engage with each other in translating Arabic texts and determining their grammatical roles.

Mahdir Muhammad states that learning reading skills through a social constructivist approach provides teachers of *qirā'ah* with tools and principles that enable them to assist students in active participation. It also allows students to engage in an active dialogue with the text. Furthermore, this constructivist approach is also applied to active students or learners (Muhammad, 2020). For example, students are given an Arabic text without translation, and then they are asked to translate it. In addition, students are required to master grammar (*nahwu*) and morphology (*sharaf*) to foster active engagement in learning reading skills.

As applied in *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, this learning approach is implemented by the instructors in advanced classes, such as for students who have previously studied in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), where they have already learned reading skills and, in addition, possess an understanding of grammar (*nahwu*) and morphology (*sharaf*). Furthermore, the instructors at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci also provide methods that facilitate students' understanding of *nahwu* and *sharaf*, enabling them to read Arabic texts easily. The instructors also implement a learning approach based on discussions, allowing students to actively engage in learning reading skills. Additionally, the instructors ensure that students memorize

nahwu and *sharaf* rules so they can easily respond when questions arise while reading Arabic texts or Arabic-language books.

Studying *nahwu* and *sharaf* serves to encourage, guide, develop, and foster students' abilities in order to cultivate a positive attitude toward the Arabic language, both receptively and productively. Receptive skills refer to the ability to read Arabic texts and comprehend the messages contained within them. Productive skills, on the other hand, involve the ability to use the language as a means of communication, whether spoken or written. To practice Arabic accurately and effectively, it is essential to understand and master the branches of Arabic grammar, particularly *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology) (Ardiansyah & Muhammad, 2020).

Furthermore, the instructor at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci implements a learning approach by providing students with Arabic-language texts and guiding them in performing *i'rāb* using symbol-based representations. This method remains closely tied to Arabic grammatical principles, thereby enabling students to engage in *mahārah qirā'ah* (reading skill) instruction actively. Such an approach aligns well with the constructivist learning Theory, which emphasizes active student participation in constructing knowledge.

Students with diverse learning backgrounds have expressed that the instructional methods implemented by the teacher at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, particularly those outlined previously, have significantly facilitated their comprehension of reading skills. They reported that these methods are more effective and accessible compared to the approaches used in their previous learning experiences at traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).

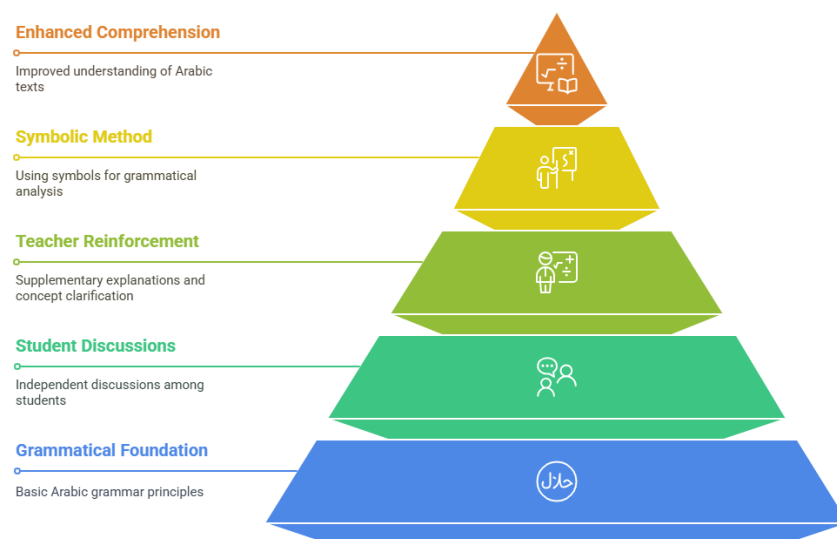


Figure 2. The Constructivist Learning Pyramid for Arabic Language at IAIN Kerinci

The teaching of *mahārah qirā'ah* at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci demonstrates the effectiveness of the constructivist approach in enhancing students' cognitive abilities in reading, translating, and comprehending Arabic texts. Beyond focusing on technical aspects such as pronunciation and grammatical rules (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), the instructional strategies employed by the instructor also promote active student engagement through dialogical interaction with texts and peer-to-peer discussions.

Teacher Evaluation and Reflection on the Reading Skills Instruction Process at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that teachers at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci routinely engage in both formal and informal evaluation and reflection practices regarding their instruction of reading skills (*mahārah al-qirā'ah*). Observations indicated that teachers frequently assess students' comprehension through formative techniques such as questioning, summarizing activities, and peer feedback. These evaluations allow teachers to monitor students' progress in real time and adjust their instruction accordingly.

Interviews with teachers revealed that reflective practice is considered an essential component of their professional development. Many teachers reported keeping teaching journals or engaging in post-lesson discussions with colleagues to identify which strategies were effective and which needed improvement. They also reflected on student engagement, participation, and the relevance of reading materials used in class. Documentation analysis supported these findings, showing records of teacher self-evaluations, student assessment results, and revisions in lesson planning based on reflective input. These practices reflect a constructivist understanding of teaching as a dynamic, responsive process, where the teacher not only facilitates learning but also continuously adapts based on student needs and classroom realities.

In the process of teaching reading skills at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, the teacher does not merely function as a transmitter of knowledge but also as an active evaluator who reflects on the effectiveness of the applied instructional strategies. Evaluation is a systematic process conducted to assess the effectiveness of the learning process and the extent to which students have achieved the intended competencies (Yul, Andrian, et al., 2022). Evaluation is conducted continuously through observation of students' active participation in *i'rāb* activities, group discussions, and their ability to comprehend and translate Arabic texts. This reflection is critical within the framework of constructivist-based learning, as it enables instructors to adapt their teaching approaches to the diverse learning backgrounds of the students. Through this evaluative process, teachers can assess the extent to which students can construct understanding based on their prior experiences, as well as identify areas that require further reinforcement.

All students are expected to master the four language skills to achieve success in the process of learning Arabic. Among these skills, reading (*qirā'ah*) plays a particularly significant role, as it aligns closely with and supports the development of the other language competencies (Dahlan et al., 2021). This is because reading allows individuals to explore new worlds, thereby expanding their knowledge, enjoying the reading experience, and comprehending the texts they engage with.

In educational activities, whether in the context of language learning or other academic disciplines, reading skills are an integral component. Reading plays a vital role in daily life as it significantly contributes to an individual's academic, personal, and social development (Hamid et al., 2020). In the context of Arabic language learning, reading skills play a significant role. According to the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 000912 of 2013, one of the outcomes of Arabic language learning is to develop communication skills in Arabic, both oral and written. Therefore, it is increasingly evident

that Arabic language education, particularly in the aspect of reading (reading skills), is essential to be studied (Wulandari et al., 2025).

Reading a text in Arabic requires specific skills that need to be mastered, such as memorizing or mastering Arabic vocabulary as well as grammatical aspects like *nahwu* and *sharaf*. Understanding reading in Arabic is essential to recognize sentences and the symbols written, allowing comprehension of each sentence. Difficulty in reading can result in a lack of information and knowledge. Therefore, a reading culture is essential, especially when it comes to reading texts in Arabic (Hamka et al., 2021). According to Mustofa and Hamid, as cited in Sekar Wulandari and colleagues, reading skills refer to the ability to interpret the meaning of symbols with the aim of comprehending the text accurately. In other words, reading skills involve the ability to understand written symbols and convert them into sounds (Wulandari et al., 2025).

As practiced at the *Ma'had* of IAIN Kerinci, in learning reading skills, the teacher applies the method of reading with *i'rāb*, in which symbols are used to help students determine the position and function of a word. For instance, symbols such as 'م' (*mim*) are interpreted as 'the beginning' or 'as for.' In contrast, 'خ' (*kh*) is interpreted as 'it is' or 'that is,' along with many other symbols that each have specific meanings and serve distinct grammatical functions, such as *mubtada'*, *khobar*, *fā'il*, *maf'ul*, *badal*, and more.

In addition, the teacher also provides students with an understanding of Arabic grammar (*nahwu* and *sharaf*), even though these students already possess prior knowledge of these subjects. At the *Ma'had*, the teacher aligns this instruction with the students' current level of understanding, as the students do not share the same *pesantren* background. As a result, the students naturally possess diverse learning experiences. Therefore, the teacher at the *Ma'had* provides instruction on *nahwu* and *sharaf* using methods that effectively facilitate students' understanding and are adaptable to their levels of comprehension.

Furthermore, the teacher also implements learning through *tamrināt* (exercises), which serve as a means to assess each student's ability, taking into account their diverse prior learning experiences. These exercises help identify students' understanding, both from their previous education at Islamic boarding schools and from the instruction provided at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci.

Discussion

Challenges and Solutions in Teaching Reading Skills at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci

Field data gathered through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and document analysis reveal several challenges faced in teaching *mahārah al-qirā'ah* (reading skills) at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci. One of the primary challenges observed was the significant disparity in students' reading proficiency levels. This heterogeneity often led to difficulties in maintaining equal engagement during reading activities, as some students struggled to decode basic texts while others progressed more rapidly. Interviews with teachers highlighted additional challenges, including limited time allocation for focused reading instruction and students' varying motivation levels. Teachers expressed concerns about the lack of reading habits among some students, especially those from non-*pesantren* backgrounds, who had minimal prior exposure to Arabic texts. Another issue raised was the insufficient availability of differentiated instructional materials tailored to students' diverse needs.

Despite these obstacles, the teachers implemented several practical solutions. Differentiated instruction was commonly employed, with teachers designing tiered tasks based on student ability. Documentation showed the use of individualized reading assignments and flexible groupings to support peer-assisted learning. Teachers also integrated contextual and relatable texts to foster greater interest and motivation. Regular informal assessments were used to track progress and inform adjustments in teaching strategies. These findings illustrate that while teaching reading skills in a heterogeneous classroom presents clear challenges, responsive and adaptive strategies grounded in constructivist principles can effectively address them.

Given the importance of education for each individual, the learning process must incorporate instructional innovations and appropriate strategies for delivering material to ensure effective student learning. Moreover, the teaching and learning process involves both teachers and students, who must actively engage in the process. This is particularly crucial in the context of learning a foreign language such as Arabic, where teachers must employ effective strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of the material presented (Indriani, 2024).

In the field of education, challenges in the learning process are inevitable, whether faced by students or teachers. Ria Indriani states that in Arabic language learning, students are expected to acquire at least one of the four essential language skills: listening (*mahārah al-istima'*), speaking (*al-kalām*), reading (*al-qira'ah*), and writing (*al-kitābah*). Among these, reading proficiency (*mahārah al-qira'ah*) is considered a fundamental skill that must be realized in the process of Arabic language education. Reading is thus a key competency that learners need to achieve in their journey of mastering Arabic (Binti Jasni & Ardiansyah, 2020). Equipped with reading skills, explicitly referring to the ability to read Arabic texts and comprehend their content, students engage in a cognitive process that involves both visual perception and mental interpretation. Reading is an activity that not only utilizes the sense of sight but also requires the reader to process and internalize the meaning conveyed by the text (Sungkar, 2019).

In addition to being able to read Arabic texts correctly and following the linguistic patterns of the Arabic language, students are required to study *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology), so that they can read accurately based on Arabic grammatical rules. At Ma'had IAIN Kerinci, the presence of students who previously studied at various *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) has led to significant differences in learning experiences, levels of understanding, and other academic backgrounds. Therefore, instructors need to adapt their teaching strategies in reading instruction to accommodate students' diverse prior learning experiences.

The primary objective of learning *mahārah al-qira'ah* (reading skills) is to equip students with the ability to read Arabic texts following the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, particularly *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology). Proficiency in reading Arabic texts is an essential skill for students in developing their foreign language competence, specifically in Arabic. Therefore, the methods and strategies employed by instructors must be engaging and compelling to stimulate student interest and enhance satisfaction in the learning process.

As a result, several problems emerge, including students' lack of interest in learning Arabic due to monotonous instructional methods, and significant difficulties faced by learners, particularly in reading and comprehending Arabic texts (Siregar et al., 2024). As

observed at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, a notable challenge arises from the diverse educational backgrounds of students, particularly those who have previously studied reading skills at various Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Consequently, each student possesses a different level of understanding and interpretation of Arabic reading skills, which affects the uniformity of learning outcomes in the classroom.

Learning reading skills constitutes a fundamental aspect of language proficiency that must be achieved by students when studying the Arabic language (Lubis et al., 2023). Therefore, due to the various learning experiences of students at IAIN Kerinci, the teachers at this institution apply a reading skill learning method using *i'rāb*. Hanzuar suggests that *i'rāb* has often been interpreted as *taghyir* (changer), *taghayyur* (change), or *atsar* (signs of *i'rāb*) (Hanzuar, 2019). In addition, students are also assisted in reviewing the lessons they had previously learned at their respective *pesantren*, such as *nahwu* and *sharaf*.

Limas Dodi explains that *nahwu*, in its literal sense, refers to Arabic grammar. At the same time, in technical terms, it is defined as '*qawa'id*', the rules used to identify the forms of words in Arabic and their syntactic positions, whether standing alone or within a sentence. Meanwhile, *sharaf* (morphology) means 'to change.' In terminology, it refers to the transformation of a word from its original form into various derived forms to achieve intended meanings, which can only be realized through morphological modification (Huda et al., 2020). Subsequently, after conducting interviews with several students possessing diverse prior learning experiences at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci, the author found that the instructional strategies implemented by the educators significantly facilitated students' acquisition of reading skills. This was evident despite the variations in students' prior understanding and approaches to reading instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the instructional approach to Arabic reading skills at *Ma'had* IAIN Kerinci by focusing on the integration of *i'rāb*-based methods and constructivist pedagogy. The findings reveal that successful reading comprehension in Arabic is deeply rooted in the learners' mastery of foundational grammar—*nahwu* and *sharaf*—which facilitates accurate interpretation of sentence structure and meaning. The implementation of an *i'rāb*-oriented model in the early stages of instruction enables learners to engage actively with the syntactic dimensions of Arabic texts. Furthermore, the application of constructivist Theory in more advanced classes demonstrates a positive impact on student autonomy and engagement. By aligning instruction with students' varied learning backgrounds and prior exposure to Arabic, educators effectively foster a more dynamic and student-centered learning environment. These approaches collectively support the development of reading competence that is both linguistically grounded and pedagogically responsive. The study contributes to the field of Arabic language pedagogy by providing a practical framework for integrating grammatical analysis with active learning strategies. It also highlights the importance of contextualized instruction that considers the learners' diverse educational histories. However, as this study was limited to a single institution, further research is recommended to validate the findings across broader educational settings and student populations. Future studies may also investigate the long-term impact of *i'rāb*-based instruction on learners' overall Arabic proficiency.

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