



## Students' Learning Experiences in Nahwu Instruction at MAN 3 Cirebon: A Phenomenological Study of Problems and Learning Strategies

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**Abstract:** This study aims to comprehensively describe the problems and solutions in Nahwu instruction among Grade X students at MAN 3 Cirebon. The research focuses on the conceptual difficulties students experience and the factors that influence the learning process. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, using in-depth interviews and classroom observations involving thirty students. The results indicate that the students' main difficulties fall into four categories: (1) confusion in distinguishing types of *ḍamīr* and identifying their referents, (2) difficulty in recognizing *jamā' taksīr* patterns due to the wide variety of *wazn* and morphological forms, (3) complexity in applying the rules of 'adad-ma'dūd, and (4) inability to determine *i'rāb* resulting from weak foundational understanding of Nahwu. These difficulties are influenced by internal factors such as diverse educational backgrounds from Islamic boarding schools, limited experience with Nahwu, and students' physical and psychological conditions, as well as external factors such as mismatched teaching styles and an uncondusive classroom environment. The study also identifies several strategic efforts, such as scaffolding, rule visualization, and gradual practice, as recommendations for improving Nahwu instruction. Therefore, this study addresses a gap in previous research that has paid insufficient attention to students' learning experiences through the perspective of the meanings they construct for themselves when facing difficulties in learning Nahwu.

**Keywords:** *Nahwu, Learning Difficulties, Problems and solutions*

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning is a fundamental component of the curriculum in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly at the Madrasah Aliyah level, where students are expected to develop a deep understanding of Arabic texts (Nakra, 1996). As a core subject within the field of Islamic studies, Arabic functions not only as a linguistic skill but also as a primary gateway to understanding classical and contemporary Islamic literature (Khumaini, 2022). Therefore, the quality of Arabic language instruction in madrasah institutions plays a strategic role in shaping students' academic, religious, and cognitive competencies, as well as determining their success in accessing knowledge in a broad and comprehensive manner (Pera Aprizal, 2021).

In line with these demands, the Madrasah Aliyah curriculum positions Arabic language learning as a subject oriented toward the mastery of linguistic rules and the

analytical comprehension of texts (*qirā>'ah*). Students are not only expected to memorize vocabulary but are also required to understand sentence structures, the relationships among linguistic elements, and the meanings contained in Arabic texts, whether vowelized or unvowelized (Gajah et al., 2023). Therefore, Arabic language instruction in the madrasah curriculum emphasizes the mastery of grammatical aspects as a fundamental foundation for accurate and contextual text comprehension.

One of the most essential components in mastering the Arabic language is the study of 'ilm al-naḥw (Arabic grammar) (Ahmad & Basyir, 2025). Naḥw is a linguistic discipline that examines fundamental grammatical rules derived from Arabic linguistic principles to determine the grammatical endings of words in sentences (Nurhayati, 2020). Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-Ghulayaynī, 2008 in (Krisnawilujeng et al., 2023) defines

naḥw as a scientific framework that functions to analyze the basic structure of the Arabic language, including letter forms and the determination of word endings based on their syntactic position within a sentence, encompassing both *i'rāb* and *binā'* aspects. Functionally, *naḥw* plays a crucial role in identifying sentence roles, understanding sentence structures, and clarifying meaning in Arabic (Fatahillah & Wahyudin, 2025). Therefore, *naḥw* serves as an important instrument in facilitating non-native learners' understanding of Islamic literature.

Despite its significant role in supporting Arabic comprehension, the learning of *naḥw* is often perceived as difficult and challenging by many students in practice (Rosyidi, 2020). Field evidence indicates that numerous students experience difficulties when analyzing sentence structures, determining correct word endings, or applying grammatical rules to unvowelized Arabic texts (Ulin Nuha & Musyafaah, 2023). This phenomenon signals the presence of underlying issues in the process of teaching and learning *naḥw* that warrant deeper investigation.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at MAN 3 Cirebon, several tenth-grade students were found to experience difficulties in understanding fundamental *naḥw* concepts, such as identifying *i'rāb*, distinguishing types of *ḍamīr*, and applying numerical rules (*'adad-ma'dūd*). Classroom observations also revealed that some students struggled to actively participate in *naḥw* lessons, particularly when the instructional delivery relied heavily on abstract grammatical explanations. These initial observations indicate the presence of learning challenges that warrant further in-depth investigation.

Interestingly, this condition is also evident among tenth-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 3 Cirebon, the majority of whom have a *pesantren* background or have previously received Islamic boarding school education. Ideally, such educational experience should make *naḥw* a relatively familiar subject for these students. However, empirical findings reveal that despite their *pesantren* background, students continue to face difficulties with fundamental grammatical concepts, such as *i'rāb*, the use of *ḍamīr*, *jam' taksīr*, and the rules of *'adad-ma'dūd*. This discrepancy between students' religious educational background and their actual grammatical competence indicates a gap between ideal assumptions and the reality of learning practice. Therefore, this condition constitutes an important research gap, particularly in exploring students' learning experiences, the factors contributing to their difficulties, and the meanings they construct regarding the learning of *naḥw* within a *pesantren*-based Madrasah Aliyah context.

Several previous studies have indicated various forms of difficulties experienced by students in learning the Arabic language. One such study was conducted by (Sanusi et al., 2024) in his research entitled *Kecakapan "Arabic Teachers Pedagogical Competence: Cultural*

*Approach in Enhancing the Students' Communicative Skills"*. The findings reveal that students frequently experience confusion in determining grammatical gender in the use of *ḍamīr* (pronouns). This difficulty is influenced by the linguistic background of Indonesian, which does not distinguish gender in pronoun usage. Additionally, learning processes that tend to lack methodological variation further contribute to students' increasing difficulties in communicating in Arabic.

The second study, conducted by (Azhari, 2020) and entitled "*Jamak Taksir dalam QS Yasin (Analisis Perspektif Nahwu)*", employed a qualitative research method with a library research approach. The study concludes that students' difficulties in understanding the meaning of Surah Yasin are caused by the varied forms of *jam' taksīr*, which often lead to confusion. Moreover, students' limited ability to analyze morphological changes from singular to plural forms also contributes significantly to these difficulties.

The third study, conducted by (Miswar et al., 2024) in his research entitled "*Semantic Analysis of Qur'anic Language Style on Literacy, utilized a qualitative method with an exploratory approach"*. The findings indicate that difficulties in Qur'anic literacy comprehension stem from limited mastery of *'ilm al-naḥw*, particularly in understanding complex sentence structures found in Qur'anic verses. This condition negatively affects readers' overall level of literacy mastery in engaging with the Qur'anic text.

These findings indicate that problems in learning *naḥw* are not merely linguistic difficulties but also involve a lack of cognitive and methodological understanding in the learning process. Nevertheless, previous studies have predominantly focused on identifying learning problems, while research that explores students' lived experiences in dealing with these difficulties remains very limited.

Although numerous studies have examined students' difficulties in learning *naḥw*, most of them primarily emphasize the identification of linguistic errors or instructional problems. Limited attention has been given to how students themselves experience these difficulties and construct meaning from their learning processes, particularly within a *pesantren*-based Madrasah Aliyah context. Previous studies tend to focus on technical grammatical challenges without sufficiently exploring students' subjective perspectives and lived experiences. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by investigating *naḥw* learning difficulties through a phenomenological lens, highlighting students' learning experiences and the meanings they attribute to these challenges, as well as the strategies they perceive as helpful in overcoming them.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to explore in depth the learning experiences of tenth-grade

students at MAN 3 Cirebon in relation to difficulties in learning nahwu; (2) to identify the contributing factors underlying these difficulties; and (3) to investigate the solutions and efforts employed to address them. This research is expected to provide scholarly benefits for the development of syntactic studies, particularly in the context of Arabic language education.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design aimed at exploring students' lived experiences in learning nahwu. The phenomenological approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of how students perceive, experience, and interpret the difficulties they encounter in nahwu learning, as well as the learning strategies and solutions they experience and consider helpful in addressing these challenges. In this context, the term "solutions" refers to strategies and instructional practices as perceived and experienced by students and teachers in the classroom, rather than solutions that are experimentally tested or quantitatively measured for effectiveness. This approach allows the researcher to examine students' learning experiences as they are directly lived and perceived within the natural context of the learning process (Creswell & N., 2018).

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the key instrument responsible for ensuring the continuity and integrity of the research process. In this study, the researcher also applied bracketing or epoché, which involves suspending prior assumptions, preconceived knowledge, and personal experiences related to the understanding of nahwu. This step was undertaken to ensure that the processes of data collection and analysis authentically represent participants' subjective experiences as they were lived and perceived, free from the researcher's personal perspectives (Moustakas, 1994).

In accordance with the characteristics of phenomenological research, data collection was conducted directly by the researcher without the involvement of field assistants. This approach was adopted to preserve the integrity of the data's meaning and to avoid interpretive discrepancies between the researcher and other parties. The researcher's direct involvement facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the nahwu learning context and the authentic experiences encountered by students throughout the learning process (Jailani, 2023).

Data collection techniques in this study consisted of in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions, lived experiences, and difficulties in learning nahwu, as well as the learning strategies and instructional practices that they perceived as helpful in addressing these

difficulties. Classroom observations were carried out to examine the teaching-learning process, teacher-student interactions, and classroom conditions in which such difficulties and learning strategies emerged (Creswell & N., 2018). In this study, the data collection process was not intended to experimentally test the effectiveness of particular instructional solutions, but rather to understand how problems and solutions are experienced, perceived, and practiced within the natural classroom context.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, namely the selection of subjects based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Patton, 2015). The criteria included: (1) tenth-grade students at MAN 3 Cirebon who were currently enrolled in or had previously completed nahwu instruction; (2) students with diverse educational backgrounds, both from pesantren and non-pesantren settings; and (3) students who exhibited indications of difficulties in understanding nahwu, either academically or based on self-reported experiences. Based on these criteria, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten tenth-grade students at MAN 3 Cirebon who were considered capable of providing rich and meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Data analysis in this study followed Moustakas' phenomenological approach, which comprises five principal stages: (1) horizontalization, in which all statements of participants' experiences are initially treated with equal value; (2) data reduction, involving the identification of essential statements and the elimination of irrelevant or repetitive data; (3) clustering significant statements into meaning units to formulate core experiential themes; (4) validating the emergent themes by examining their consistency with empirical data to ensure alignment with participants' actual experiences; and (5) developing Individual Textural Descriptions (ITD) that systematically portray participants' experiences based on the validated themes and are supported by verbatim excerpts from the interview data (Moustakas, 1994).

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through criteria encompassing credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through member checking and method triangulation by integrating interview and observational data. Dependability was addressed through systematic documentation of the research process, while confirmability was maintained through the application of bracketing and the presentation of participants' verbatim quotations to ensure that the findings were grounded in empirical evidence (Lincoln & G., 1985).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The study entitled Nahw (Arabic Grammar) Learning in Grade X at MAN 3 Cirebon (Problems and Solutions) aims to explore in depth the learning experiences of tenth-grade students in studying nahwu, particularly the difficulties they encounter, as well as to identify possible solutions to address these challenges. Based on interviews conducted on November 11, 15, and 18, the following data were obtained:

### Difficulties in Understanding Fundamental Concepts of nahw

#### 1. Students' Confusion in Understanding Ḍamīr (Pronouns)

The majority of tenth-grade students at MAN 3 Cirebon experienced confusion and difficulty in learning Ḍamīr. Many students reported being unable to distinguish between attached pronouns (Ḍamīr muttaṣil) and detached pronouns (Ḍamīr munfaṣil). In addition, identifying the referents of pronouns within texts posed significant challenges for some students, resulting in inaccuracies when translating Arabic texts. These difficulties are reflected in the interview excerpts from participants MN and CL as follows:

*"To be honest, throughout my experience of learning Arabic, the part I find most confusing is Ḍamīr. I often cannot distinguish between attached pronouns (Ḍamīr muttaṣil) and detached pronouns (Ḍamīr munfaṣil)"* (Participant MN)

*"In Arabic learning, especially in nahwu, I still do not fully understand Ḍamīr. Usually, when we are given assignments to translate texts, my classmates and I often feel confused about identifying the referents of the pronouns."* (Participant CL)

These findings indicate that Ḍamīr is perceived by students as one of the most complex and confusing components of nahwu. Such difficulties suggest students' limited ability to connect grammatical forms with their syntactic functions within a contextual framework.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of (Sya'bani & Bin Has, 2023), who reported that several university students continue to experience confusion in applying attached pronouns (Ḍamīr muttaṣil) and detached pronouns (Ḍamīr munfaṣil). Students frequently make errors in distinguishing between these two types of pronouns, which inevitably leads to incorrect responses when answering questions. The convergence of these findings indicates that difficulties related to Ḍamīr are not confined to the secondary school level but represent a broader issue in nahwu learning that extends to higher education.

#### 2. Difficulties in Understanding jam' taksīr

The interview data obtained from several students indicate considerable difficulties in recognizing broken plural (jam' taksīr) forms within Arabic sentences. These difficulties are primarily related to the large number of plural patterns (wazn)

that must be identified, as well as morphological changes that do not follow regular or predictable patterns. This condition is reflected in the following statement by participant H:

*"I often feel confused when the teacher gives questions about identifying broken plurals. Even though I have learned their patterns in the Islamic boarding school, I still find it difficult to determine the correct pattern when doing the exercises"* (Participant H)

These findings indicate the presence of cognitive load in students' learning processes. Such cognitive burden arises from the necessity to recognize numerous broken plural patterns and from the irregular morphological changes that deviate from standard forms, which consequently contribute to difficulties in word formation.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings reported by (Kawijaya & Mustofa, 2025), who revealed that some university students experience difficulties in identifying broken plural patterns that differ from sound feminine plurals (jamak mu'annath sālim) and sound masculine plurals (jamak mudhakkar sālim), whose patterns are relatively more consistent. This condition negatively affects the quality of students' writing. These difficulties are partly attributed to the limited availability of digital learning resources that specifically address broken plural forms.

Furthermore, the findings of Kawijaya and Mustofa reinforce the results of the present study. Both studies demonstrate that difficulties related to jamak taksīr are not merely technical issues of memorizing patterns, but rather indicate a significant cognitive burden experienced by students when confronted with highly varied forms lacking consistent patterns. The scarcity of learning resources that explicitly and systematically explain broken plurals further contributes to the emergence of these difficulties (Luthfi et al., 2025).

#### 3. Confusion in Understanding Numerical Rules (al-Arqām / 'Adad-Ma'dūd)

Several students also experienced difficulties in understanding the rules of numerals (al-arqām), commonly referred to as 'adad-ma'dūd, particularly when determining whether the accompanying noun should take the accusative (manṣūb) or genitive (majrūr) case. This difficulty is evident in one participant's statement, who reported frequent uncertainty when completing exercises involving numerals and their counted nouns, as illustrated below:

*"When the teacher gives questions about translating numerical sentences, I often feel confused"*

*about determining the grammatical position of the ma'dūd whether it should be in the accusative or genitive case.*" (Participant FA)

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by (Rifa'i, 2021), which reported that errors in the use of al-'adad wa al-ma'dūd among students of Arabic language education reached 40%. This result indicates an insufficient understanding of Arabic grammatical rules when constructing sentences. Similarly, (Sholihah Niswatush & Putri, 2023) found that errors in applying 'adad-ma'dūd rules constitute one of the most frequent syntactic problems encountered by university students in writing undergraduate thesis abstracts. These findings reflect a lack of mastery in Arabic writing skills, supporting the view that maharah kitābah is one of the most challenging language skills compared to other language competencies.

The convergence of the findings from Rifa'i and Sholihah with the results of the present study suggests that errors in applying 'adad-ma'dūd rules indicate a more fundamental gap in contextual grammatical understanding. Both studies imply that numerical expressions in Arabic require complex cognitive processing. Such difficulties suggest that learners have not yet been able to fully integrate numerical rules with syntactic structures. Therefore, difficulties related to 'adad-ma'dūd are not merely caused by the number of rules involved, but also by the lack of instructional strategies that help students recognize the logical relationship between numerals and the grammatical position of words within a sentence (Misbahuddin et al., 2025).

#### 4. Difficulties in Applying I'rāb (Grammatical Inflection)

The interview results with students at MAN 3 Cirebon (Buntet Pesantren) reveal that several students experience difficulties in determining the final vowel endings of sentences and identifying their grammatical functions. One informant, identified as AQ, stated that he often feels confused when required to analyze the i'rāb of a sentence:

*"To be honest, every time I am asked to analyze sentence structures, I often find it difficult. It becomes even harder when I have to present it in front of the class—I feel like I am not capable of doing it."* (Participant AQ)

These findings indicate that difficulties in applying i'rāb are not merely technical in nature, but are closely related to students' weak grammatical understanding. As a result, students experience confusion when analyzing sentence structures, particularly in texts without vowel markings.

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by (Marsiah et al., 2021), which reported that many students still experience difficulties in learning i'rāb, especially when analyzing unvowelled Arabic texts. Such

conditions often cause students to feel cognitively burdened, leading them to perceive Arabic language learning merely as a formal academic requirement rather than as a meaningful learning need. Other studies have also indicated that many learners have not yet mastered the foundational principles of nahwu, which consequently affects their ability to understand and apply i'rāb effectively.

Factors Contributing to Difficulties in Learning Nahwu  
Students' difficulties in learning nahwu do not emerge spontaneously but are influenced by various interrelated factors. In this study, these factors are categorized into two main types: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors refer to conditions originating within the students themselves, while external factors are those arising from outside the students, such as environmental influences. The explanation of these factors is presented as follows.

#### Internal Factors

Based on the interview results, one internal factor influencing students' difficulties in learning nahwu is their diverse educational backgrounds. Almost all students at MAN 3 Cirebon are santri from different Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), resulting in varied prior experiences in learning nahwu. Some students come from salaf pesantren, where they are accustomed to analyzing sentence structures, while others come from modern tahfidz-based pesantren that place greater emphasis on Qur'an memorization and provide limited instruction in nahwu. This condition is reflected in the statement of AQ as follows:

*"The reason I do not deeply understand i'rāb is that during my time in MTs, my pesantren focused mainly on Qur'an memorization. That is why I can easily grasp vocabulary memorization tasks, but when I am faced with sentence analysis, I feel left behind."* (Informant AQ)

These findings indicate that differences in prior learning experiences significantly affect students' cognitive readiness to understand nahwu, particularly in the analysis of sentence structures. Students who are not accustomed to systematic nahwu instruction tend to experience greater difficulties when confronted with more complex grammatical analysis.

The results of this study are consistent with Panji's (Negoro et al., 2022) findings, which reveal that one of the causes of learning difficulties among students at Al-Ghifary Islamic boarding school is their diverse educational backgrounds. Some students have previously studied in pesantren environments, while others have not. These findings suggest that students' educational backgrounds play a crucial role in shaping their learning outcomes in the future.

Another internal factor contributing to students' difficulties in learning nahwu is their physical and psychological condition, such as fatigue, drowsiness, and

lack of concentration during classroom instruction. Most students reported feeling sleepy because their energy had been depleted by boarding school activities that often continued until late at night. This finding is reflected in the statement of FH as follows:

*"I cannot really focus in class. I often feel sleepy during nahwu lessons. It is not because the subject is uninteresting, but because I have many activities at the boarding school at night, such as Qur'anic recitation, madrasah classes, and sometimes additional assignments. As a result, when I attend classes early in the morning, it feels difficult to concentrate immediately."* (Respondent FH)

In addition, ceremonial and institutional activities also disrupt students' rest time, preventing their physical condition from fully recovering before the learning process begins. This condition is illustrated in the statement of H as follows:

*"When class time begins, I often feel sleepy because I am exhausted. On certain days, the boarding school holds activities until midnight, which leaves me with insufficient time to rest."* (Respondent H)

These findings indicate that suboptimal physical conditions have a direct impact on students' mental readiness to receive instructional material, particularly nahwu, which requires a high level of concentration and analytical ability. Physical fatigue not only reduces students' focus but also diminishes their learning motivation, causing them to become passive during the learning process.

These results are supported by Musa's study, which found that optimal physical conditions (including fitness, stamina, and overall health) enable students to engage more effectively in the learning process (Musa & Ghofur, 2024). Similarly, Manshur's research emphasizes that psychological inhibiting factors can reduce students' enthusiasm for learning, thereby hindering their ability to fully engage in the learning experience (Manshur et al., 2023).

### External Factors

In addition to internal factors, this study also identified several external factors that contribute to students' difficulties in learning nahwu. These factors arise from the influence of students' learning environments, including a mismatch between students' learning styles and the instructional approaches applied during the learning process. Many students reported that the delivery of material, which tends to be fast-paced and memorization-oriented, does not align with their learning needs. Instead, they require gradual explanations, visual representations, and concrete examples to better understand the material. This condition is reflected in the interview with GR, who stated:

*"I prefer learning that presents images with colors, such as using colored markers to highlight different grammatical positions in a sentence."* (Informant GR)

This finding indicates that some students have a visual learning preference, which facilitates their understanding of the material through the use of colors, diagrams, or clear visual markers. This result is supported by the study conducted by (Baiquni et al., 2025), which found that PowerPoint-based learning media have advantages in audio-visual features by integrating text, images, and videos. Such integration supports VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) learning styles and enhances students' comprehension in Arabic language learning. Therefore, applying instructional strategies that align with students' learning styles can serve as a potential solution to reduce recurring difficulties during the learning process (Djara et al., 2023).

Another external factor influencing these difficulties is the lack of a conducive classroom environment, which disrupts students' concentration. Several students admitted that the classroom atmosphere is often noisy, making it easy for them to become distracted. Others also reported that the classroom environment tends to be monotonous and unengaging. These findings are consistent with interviews conducted with CL and MN, as presented below:

*"I actually want to understand the material, but the class is often noisy. Sometimes the teacher's explanation is interrupted because the classroom is not calm. As a result, when doing the exercises, I end up feeling confused."* (Respondent CL)

*"The classroom atmosphere is often not conducive. Some students talk to each other, while others go in and out of the class. When that happens, I become confused when the teacher moves on to more difficult explanations."* (Respondent MN)

These findings indicate that an unsupportive classroom environment prevents students from fully following the teacher's explanations, which in turn negatively affects their understanding of nahwu and causes some students to fall behind in the learning process. This finding is further reinforced by the study conducted by (Zurqoni et al., 2020), who argued that one of the inhibiting factors in Arabic language learning in Indonesia is the learning environment. A less conducive learning environment, limited learning facilities, and minimal peer support can hinder students' concentration and engagement in the learning process.

Thus, the quality of the learning environment plays an equally important role in determining students' comprehension of nahwu. When the classroom atmosphere is not supportive, students' focus is easily disrupted. Therefore, creating an engaging, well-organized, and calm learning environment is essential to

ensure that nahwu instruction can be conducted more effectively and optimally.

### Efforts and Solutions to Improve Nahwu Learning

Based on the interview data collected, several efforts and expectations were expressed by students to improve the effectiveness of nahwu learning. Some respondents emphasized the importance of delivering instructional material gradually, beginning with simple examples and then progressing to more complex ones. This finding is reflected in the interview with MN, who stated:

*"I usually understand the lesson better when the teacher explains easy examples first, and only after that moves on to more difficult ones."* (Respondent MN)

This finding reflects students' learning experiences, in which a gradual or progressive presentation of instructional material was perceived as helpful in facilitating their understanding of nahwu concepts. For some students, beginning with simpler examples before moving on to more abstract material made the learning process feel more structured and reduced feelings of confusion. In addition, students expressed expectations for the use of more contextual examples that are closely related to the vocabulary found in the texts being studied. This expectation was expressed by CL as follows:

*"I hope nahwu lessons include more direct examples in sentences. If it is explained only theoretically, it is difficult for me to understand. Maybe if it is often linked to texts or readings that we usually encounter, it would be easier to comprehend."* (Respondent CL)

This suggests that nahwu learning becomes more effective when grammatical theory is presented within authentic language contexts, enabling students to directly observe the application of grammatical rules within sentence structures.

In addition to a contextual approach, instructional visualization also emerged as an important expectation among students. Several respondents stated that the use of colors to mark grammatical categories (such as *mubtada'*, *khabar*, or *ma'dūd*) helps them distinguish word functions within sentences. This finding is illustrated in the statements of FA and GR as follows:

*"From my personal perspective, nahwu learning would be more helpful if there were visual examples, such as using different colors on the board. This way, we can identify which words function as mubtada', khabar, or ma'dūd. I find it difficult to understand explanations that rely only on oral instruction."* (Respondent FA)

*"I prefer learning that includes visual elements. For example, using colored markers to highlight different grammatical positions in a sentence makes the lesson easier to understand than using only black-and-white writing. I*

*hope that nahwu learning in the future will be more varied and less monotonous."* (Respondent GR)

These findings indicate that the integration of visual elements can enhance students' learning engagement and strengthen their understanding of complex grammatical structures. Similar findings are also evident in students' independent learning strategies, as expressed by AM during the interview:

*"When studying independently, I usually create a specific table for ḍamīr. It makes the material more practical and easier to remember."* (Respondent AM)

Overall, the interview findings suggest that students perceived nahwu learning to be more manageable when teachers implemented a gradual instructional approach, used contextual examples, integrated visual aids, and organized grammatical rules systematically. These instructional practices were experienced by students as supportive in facilitating their understanding of nahwu, rather than as empirically tested indicators of instructional effectiveness.

These findings are further supported by Nurlaili's research, which emphasizes the importance of differentiated instruction. This approach involves the use of varied methods, such as project-based learning, instructional media, group discussions, and the presentation of materials that are adjusted to students' levels of understanding and learning difficulties (Nurlaili Hidayatul Baiti et al., 2024). Therefore, the application of differentiated learning is highly relevant in nahwu instruction, as it enables teachers to tailor instructional strategies to the diverse needs and levels of students' comprehension.

Another study conducted by (AL-Qadri et al., 2021), entitled *"The Prevalence of Academic Learning Difficulties: An Observation Tool"*, also supports these findings by demonstrating that the use of visual media on online platforms helps students cope with difficulties in reading and comprehending written information. Moreover, such media allow learning activities to be adjusted to students' learning pace and preferred learning styles. Therefore, the integration of flexible, student-centered pedagogical approaches becomes a crucial strategy for improving the quality of nahwu instruction.

Based on the interview findings indicating students' need for the gradual delivery of learning materials, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of scaffolding theory. This perspective suggests that structured guidance from simpler to more complex material may support students' understanding of nahwu concepts (Bliss et al., 1996). The participants' experiences indicate that a more structured and guided learning process helped them feel more confident and motivated when engaging with grammatical concepts (Hammond, 2001).

In addition, participants highlighted the importance of visual learning media, particularly colored visual tables, in supporting their comprehension of grammatical patterns. The interview data indicate that visual representations assisted students in categorizing grammatical forms, distinguishing between patterns, and making learning materials more engaging (Saidah et al., 2025). From the students' perspective, visual media were experienced as helpful in facilitating understanding and retention of complex nahwu materials.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that nahwu learning at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Cirebon is still characterized by complex challenges, particularly in students' understanding of fundamental grammatical concepts such as *ḍamīr*, *jam' taksīr*, *al-arqām*, and *i'rāb*. These difficulties arise from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' diverse educational backgrounds and their physical and cognitive conditions during the learning process. External factors relate to instructional approaches that are not fully aligned with students' learning needs, as well as classroom environments that do not optimally support the learning of abstract grammatical concepts.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that students perceive nahwu learning as more manageable when instructional materials are delivered gradually, supported by contextual examples and visual aids. Students' learning experiences indicate that a structured progression from simple to more complex grammatical explanations helps reduce confusion and enhances comprehension. These findings highlight the importance of instructional strategies that emphasize clarity, sequencing, and contextualization in addressing students' learning difficulties in nahwu, particularly from the students' own perspectives.

This study contributes to Arabic language education by offering an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences in learning nahwu within a pesantren-based Madrasah Aliyah context, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. However, this study is limited by the small number of participants and its focus on a single grade level in one institution. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve broader participant groups or different educational settings and to consider mixed-method or experimental designs to further examine instructional strategies suggested by students' learning experiences.

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