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## Efforts to Improve Students' Ability to Read Classical Islamic Texts through the *Nabdatul Bayan* Book at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo

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**Abstract:** The ability to read kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts) is an essential competence for pesantren students, as it serves as the foundation for understanding classical Islamic scholarship, including fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and ethics. However, field realities indicate that many students still experience difficulties in reading unvowelled Arabic texts, particularly in terms of accuracy of vowelization, understanding sentence structures, and reading independently. This study aims to analyze the learning strategies of the Nabdatul Bayan book, examine the improvement of students' ability to read classical Islamic texts, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the learning process at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The research subjects consist of one teacher, twenty-four students, and one ma'had administrator. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings indicate that the learning of the Nabdatul Bayan book is implemented systematically through gradual instruction of nahwu and shorof rules, the application of bandongan and sorogan methods, practice in reading classical texts, and routine evaluation. The implementation of these strategies has proven effective in improving students' reading abilities in terms of reading fluency, accuracy of vowelization, understanding sentence structures, and reading independence. Furthermore, students' perceptions of the use of the Nabdatul Bayan book show highly positive responses. The main supporting factors include the concise structure of the book, teacher competence, and a conducive pesantren environment, while the inhibiting factors include differences in students' initial abilities and limited learning time.

**Keywords:** Nabdatul Bayan book, ability to read classical Islamic texts, learning strategies, pesantren, nahwu and shorof

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### Introduction

The ability to read *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) is a fundamental competence that must be possessed by pesantren students, as these texts serve as the primary sources for studying and understanding the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, including fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and ethics. Mastery of reading *kitab kuning* not only requires fluency in reading unvowelled Arabic texts but also necessitates a solid understanding of Arabic grammatical rules, particularly *nahwu* and *shorof*, so that the meanings of the texts can be comprehended accurately and contextually.

However, field realities indicate that the ability to read *kitab kuning* among students remains relatively low, including at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo. Many students experience difficulties in determining correct vowelization, understanding sentence structures, and linking Arabic grammatical rules with the texts they read. This condition is influenced by several factors, including low learning motivation, weak mastery of *nahwu* and *shorof*, and the application of

learning methods that have not yet been fully effective, resulting in suboptimal outcomes in *kitab kuning* learning (Silvia, Ainol, & Solihin, 2025).

Various previous studies have examined efforts to improve students' ability to read *kitab kuning* through the implementation of specific learning methods and programs. One such study investigated the implementation of the *Nubdzatul Bayan* program, which was proven to accelerate students' ability to read *kitab kuning* at MTs Darul Lughah Wal Karomah through a structured and systematic learning approach focused on *nahwu* and *shorof* (Silvia et al., 2025). These findings indicate that directed mastery of Arabic grammatical rules can serve as a solution to the problem of low reading ability in *kitab kuning*.

In addition, research conducted by Nurzin, Ni'mah, and Solehudin (2024) shows that the management of an accelerated *kitab kuning* reading program using the *Nubdzatul Bayan* method at Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School was able to improve students' reading abilities within a relatively short period. The results of this study emphasize that structured program planning, learning strategies, and evaluation significantly contribute to the success of *kitab kuning* learning in the pesantren environment.

Relevant studies outside the pesantren context also demonstrate that innovations in learning methods have a significant effect on improving reading skills. For example, the implementation of the *Iqra'* and *tahfiz* methods has been shown to enhance students' ability to read and write the Qur'an in madrasah settings (Somantri, Nurhasan, Aini, & Puranti, 2025). These findings reinforce the view that the selection of appropriate learning methods and media is a key factor in developing reading skills, even across different types of texts and learning contexts.

Nevertheless, studies on the application of *Nubdzatul Bayan* in *kitab kuning* learning still reveal a research gap. Most previous studies tend to be descriptive and focus on the general effectiveness of the program, without examining in depth the specific learning strategies employed in the *Nabdatul Bayan* book and how these strategies are applied to students in salaf pesantren with diverse backgrounds of Arabic language proficiency. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to understand the learning process, pedagogical strategies, and dynamics of *Nabdatul Bayan* instruction within the specific context of pesantren education.

Based on this background and research gap, this study offers novelty by focusing on the *Nabdatul Bayan* book as the primary learning medium and by examining in detail the learning strategies applied to improve students' ability to read *kitab kuning* at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo. Specifically, this study aims to analyze the learning strategies of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book, to examine the extent to which it enhances students' *kitab kuning* reading ability, and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in efforts to improve students' ability to read *kitab kuning* through the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book.

### Method

This study employed a qualitative approach within a naturalistic paradigm. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the learning process of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book, the instructional strategies implemented by the teacher, and students' learning experiences in improving their ability to read *kitab kuning*. Through this approach, the researcher was able to obtain a comprehensive and contextual understanding of learning phenomena that occur naturally in the pesantren environment without any manipulation of research variables.

The type of research used was descriptive qualitative research. This study focused on systematically, factually, and deeply describing the implementation of *Nabdatul Bayan* learning and its impact on improving students' *kitab kuning* reading ability. This research was not intended to test specific hypotheses but rather to describe and analyze learning practices as they occur in the field.

The research was conducted at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo, an Islamic boarding school that consistently uses the *Nabdatul Bayan* book as the primary reference in teaching *nahwu* and *shorof*. The selection of this research site was based on the consideration that the institution has a structured *kitab kuning* learning program that is relevant to the focus of the study.

The research subjects consisted of one *Nabdatul Bayan* teacher as the key informant who provided information related to instructional strategies and learning methods, twenty-four students participating in *Nabdatul Bayan* learning as the main informants to explore learning experiences and the development of *kitab kuning* reading skills, and one pesantren administrator as a supporting informant who provided data regarding policies and the implementation of the learning program. The research population comprised all students participating in *Nabdatul Bayan* learning at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo. The selection of informants was determined using purposive sampling based on the level of involvement and relevance of the informants to the research focus.

Data collection techniques in this study included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly examine the *Nabdatul Bayan* learning process, interactions between teachers and students, and learning activities taking place in the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and pesantren administrators to obtain comprehensive information regarding learning strategies, challenges encountered, and the impact of using the *Nabdatul Bayan* book on students' ability to read *kitab kuning*. In addition, documentation was used to complement the research data, including learning syllabi, activity schedules, learning evaluation records, and other relevant archives related to the implementation of the learning process.

Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model. The analysis process began with data reduction, which involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Next, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives, matrices, or tables to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships among the data. The final stage of data analysis was conclusion drawing and verification, which involved interpreting the data to identify meanings, patterns, and research findings that were continuously verified throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussion

### Learning Strategies of the *Nabdatul Bayan* Book at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo

Based on in-depth interviews with the *Nabdatul Bayan* teacher, direct observations of the learning process, and information obtained from the ma'had administrator, it was found that the learning of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book was designed and implemented in a systematic and structured manner. The learning strategies applied did not merely focus on the delivery of *nahwu* and *shorof* materials but were also directed toward strengthening students' ability to directly apply these grammatical rules in reading *kitab kuning*. The teacher emphasized the importance of gradual learning, starting from the understanding of basic rules and progressing to their application in analyzing unvowelled Arabic texts.

Observational findings indicated that the teacher combined the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods as the main learning strategies. Through the *bandongan* method, the teacher explained grammatical rules and provided examples of sentence analysis in a classical, group-based setting. Meanwhile, the *sorogan* method was used to train students to read *kitab kuning* individually and receive immediate correction. In addition, the ma'had administrator stated that the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book had been established as an official learning policy within the *kitab kuning* reading reinforcement program, as it was considered suitable for students' characteristics and effective in building practical foundations of Arabic language competence.

To obtain a clearer overview of the level of implementation of each learning strategy, the researcher mapped the learning strategies of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book based on interview, observation, and documentation data. The results of this mapping are presented in percentage form, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Learning Strategies of the *Nabdatul Bayan* Book

Learning Strategy	Description	Percentage of Implementation
Gradual explanation of rules	Basic to advanced <i>nahwu-shorof</i>	100%
<i>Bandongan</i> method	Classical explanation	100%
<i>Sorogan</i> method	Individual reading practice	100%
<i>Kitab kuning</i> reading exercises	Direct application of rules	91.7%
Routine evaluation (reading submission)	Correction and feedback	87.5%

Based on Table 1, it can be understood that the learning strategies of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo were implemented comprehensively and consistently. This is evident from the 100% implementation rate of gradual rule explanation, the *bandongan* method, and the *sorogan* method. The gradual explanation of *nahwu* and *shorof* rules indicates systematic instructional planning, in which students are guided from basic understanding to more advanced levels. This strategy aligns with the characteristics of *kitab kuning* learning, which requires mastery of Arabic grammatical rules as a fundamental foundation before independent reading practice.

The full implementation of the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods demonstrates that learning was not only oriented toward knowledge transfer but also toward the development of students' practical skills. The *bandongan* method allowed the teacher to provide comprehensive and uniform explanations to all students, while the *sorogan* method functioned as a means of individual evaluation of students' reading abilities. The combination of these two methods created a balance between classical instruction and personal guidance, enabling students to directly correct their reading errors through teacher supervision.

Meanwhile, the strategies of *kitab kuning* reading exercises and routine evaluation showed slightly lower percentages, namely 91.7% and 87.5%, but remained within a high category. This indicates that a small number of students still faced difficulties in participating optimally in reading exercises or were not fully consistent in submitting their readings. Nevertheless, the presence of applicative exercises and continuous evaluation remained crucial factors in improving learning quality. Routine evaluation through reading submission functioned as a feedback mechanism that helped students continuously correct errors while strengthening the internalization of *nahwu-shorof* rules in the practice of reading *kitab kuning*.

### Improvement in Students' *Kitab Kuning* Reading Ability

To determine the effectiveness of using the *Nabdatul Bayan* book in improving students' *kitab kuning* reading ability, the researcher analyzed the development of students' reading skills after participating in intensive learning sessions. This analysis was based on four main aspects of *kitab kuning* reading ability: reading fluency, accuracy of vowelization (*harakat*), understanding of sentence structure, and reading independence. These aspects were selected because they represent the basic competencies that students must master in order to read unvowelled Arabic texts correctly and independently within the pesantren environment.

Interviews with the 24 students participating in *Nabdatul Bayan* learning revealed positive changes in their *kitab kuning* reading abilities. Before participating in the learning process, most students admitted experiencing difficulties in reading unvowelled Arabic texts, particularly in

determining correct *harakat*, understanding sentence structures, and identifying word functions within sentences. At the initial stage, students tended to rely heavily on the teacher's explanations and lacked both the confidence and ability to read *kitab kuning* independently.

After participating in *Nabdatul Bayan* learning, students began to demonstrate significant improvements in their reading abilities. They were able to read *kitab kuning* texts more fluently, made fewer errors in vowelization, and gradually understood the relationship between *nahwu*–*shorof* rules and sentence structures. Several students also reported that they had become more confident in reading *kitab kuning* without waiting for direct examples from the teacher, indicating increased self-confidence and learning independence.

These findings were reinforced by classroom observations and the teacher's evaluation records, which showed that most students experienced increased reading independence. Students no longer fully depended on the teacher to determine *i'rab* and sentence meanings but were able to conduct simple analyses independently based on the rules learned from the *Nabdatul Bayan* book. Data obtained from observations, reading evaluations, and interviews were then classified into three categories improved, sufficient, and not improved to provide a clearer picture of variations in students' achievement levels. A summary of the improvement in students' *kitab kuning* reading abilities is presented in percentage form in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Level of Improvement in Students' *Kitab Kuning* Reading Ability

Reading Ability Aspect	Improved	Sufficient	Not Improved
Reading fluency	19 students (79.2%)	4 students (16.7%)	1 student (4.1%)
Accuracy of harakat	18 students (75%)	5 students (20.8%)	1 student (4.2%)
Understanding of sentence structure	17 students (70.8%)	6 students (25%)	1 student (4.2%)
Reading independence	20 students (83.3%)	3 students (12.5%)	1 student (4.2%)

Based on Table 2, it is evident that the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* book had a positive impact on improving students' *kitab kuning* reading abilities at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo. The aspect of reading fluency showed improvement among 79.2% of students, indicating that the majority were able to read *kitab kuning* texts more fluently than before participating in the learning process. The percentage of students who did not experience improvement was relatively small, at only 4.1%, suggesting that the implemented learning strategies were effective in enhancing basic Arabic reading skills.

In terms of *harakat* accuracy and understanding of sentence structure, the percentage of students who experienced improvement was also relatively high, at 75% and 70.8%, respectively. This indicates that mastery of *nahwu* and *shorof* through the *Nabdatul Bayan* book contributed significantly to students' ability to determine correct vowelization and understand relationships between words within sentences. Nevertheless, some students remained in the "sufficient" category, suggesting that the internalization of grammatical rules requires sustained time and continuous practice, particularly for students with heterogeneous Arabic language backgrounds.

Meanwhile, the aspect of reading independence showed the highest result, with 83.3% of students experiencing improvement. This finding indicates that *Nabdatul Bayan* learning not only enhanced technical reading skills but also fostered students' self-confidence and independence in reading *kitab kuning* without full reliance on teacher guidance. The high level of reading independence reflects the success of a learning approach that combines rule explanation, direct practice, and routine evaluation, enabling students to gradually apply acquired knowledge independently in *kitab kuning* reading activities.

### Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the *Nabdatul Bayan* Textbook

In addition to being analyzed through improvements in technical reading skills, the effectiveness of learning using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook was also examined based on students' perceptions as the main subjects of learning. Students' perceptions constitute an important aspect because they reflect the level of acceptance, ease of use, and meaningfulness of the textbook in the process of learning to read *kitab kuning*. To obtain this overview, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires with 24 students who actively participated in learning activities using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo.

The collection of perception data aimed to determine the extent to which students viewed the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook as an easy-to-understand learning medium, helpful in mastering *nahwu* and *shorof* rules, and facilitating the process of reading *kitab kuning*. In addition, students' perceptions were also used to assess the feasibility of implementing the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook sustainably within the pesantren curriculum. The results of students' perceptions are presented in percentages to clarify trends in students' evaluations of the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Students' Perceptions of the *Nabdatul Bayan* Textbook

Statement	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree
The textbook is easy to understand	20 students (83.3%)	3 students (12.5%)	1 student (4.2%)
Helps in understanding nahwu–shorof	22 students (91.7%)	2 students (8.3%)	0 students (0%)
Facilitates reading kitab kuning	21 students (87.5%)	3 students (12.5%)	0 students (0%)
Suitable for continuous use	23 students (95.8%)	1 student (4.2%)	0 students (0%)

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the majority of students have positive perceptions of the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook in learning to read *kitab kuning*. A total of 83.3% of students stated that the textbook is easy to understand, indicating that the presentation of material in the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook is considered appropriate to students' ability levels. This high level of comprehension is inseparable from the systematic structure of the textbook, which begins with basic rules and progresses to more advanced levels, as well as the use of applicative examples that facilitate students' gradual understanding of *nahwu* and *shorof* concepts.

Furthermore, for the statement that the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook helps in understanding *nahwu* and *shorof*, the percentage of students who agreed reached 91.7%, with no respondents expressing disagreement. This finding confirms that the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook effectively serves as an applicative medium for learning Arabic grammar. A solid understanding of *nahwu* and *shorof* constitutes the main foundation for reading *kitab kuning*; therefore, the high level of positive perception in this aspect aligns with the improvement in students' reading abilities shown in the previous table.

In addition, students' perceptions of the ability of the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook to facilitate reading *kitab kuning* were also very high, with 87.5% of students agreeing. Even more strikingly, 95.8% of students considered the textbook suitable for continuous use, indicating a high level of satisfaction and trust in its effectiveness. These results suggest that the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook is not only pedagogically effective but also psychologically accepted by students as a helpful, relevant, and sustainable learning resource within the pesantren tradition of *kitab kuning* instruction.

### Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Learning the *Nabdatul Bayan* Textbook

In addition to analyzing learning strategies and improvements in students' *kitab kuning* reading abilities, this study also examined the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of learning using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook. Identifying these factors is important for comprehensively understanding the conditions that influence both the success and the constraints of

the learning process. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the *Nabdatul Bayan* instructor, students, and ma'had administrators, which were then analyzed to determine the most dominant factors experienced by students during the learning process.

Supporting and inhibiting factors were analyzed based on students' perceptions as the primary subjects of learning and then presented in percentages to indicate trends and levels of influence for each factor. The quantitative presentation of data aims to clarify qualitative findings obtained from interviews and observations. The results of the analysis of supporting and inhibiting factors in learning the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Supporting and Inhibiting Factors (Percentage of Students)

Supporting Factors	
Faktor Pendukung	Persentase
Supporting Factor	Percentage
Concise and systematic textbook structure	91.7%
Instructor competence	87.5%
Pesantren environment	83.3%
Inhibiting Factors	
Inhibiting Factor	Percentage
Differences in students' initial abilities	75%
Limited learning time	66.7%
Fluctuating learning motivation	58.3%
Burden of memorizing other textbooks	54.2%

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that the main supporting factor in learning the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook is its concise and systematic structure, with a percentage of 91.7%. This indicates that the majority of students consider the organization of material in the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook easy to understand and helpful in learning *nahwu* and *shorof* rules gradually. A simple and straightforward structure enables students to link theory with the practical reading of *kitab kuning*, thereby making the learning process more effective.

In addition, instructor competence is also a significant supporting factor, with a percentage of 87.5%. Instructors who understand students' characteristics and are able to combine the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods are considered to play a major role in improving learning quality. Other supporting factors include a conducive pesantren environment (83.3%) and continuous evaluation (79.2%), indicating that the academic atmosphere of the pesantren and the presence of regular feedback through reading submissions contribute to strengthening the internalization of Arabic grammatical rules in reading *kitab kuning*.

On the other hand, the most dominant inhibiting factor is the difference in students' initial abilities, with a percentage of 75%. Variations in educational background and basic Arabic proficiency mean that not all students can follow the learning process at the same pace. In addition, limited learning time (66.7%) and fluctuating learning motivation (58.3%) also pose challenges to optimal learning implementation. Another inhibiting factor is the burden of memorizing other textbooks (54.2%), which causes some students to experience difficulties in managing their study time. Nevertheless, the presence of strong supporting factors indicates that learning using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook still has great potential to improve *kitab kuning* reading abilities, provided that these obstacles can be managed through more adaptive learning strategies.

### Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that learning using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook at Ma'had Darul Lughah Wal Karomah Probolinggo is implemented systematically and in a structured manner through the application of comprehensive learning strategies, including the gradual

explanation of *nahwu–shorof* rules, the use of *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods, *kitab kuning* reading exercises, and routine evaluation through reading submissions. These learning strategies are not only oriented toward theoretical mastery but also emphasize students' ability to directly apply Arabic grammatical rules in the practical reading of *kitab kuning*. This demonstrates that the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook functions effectively as a learning medium that supports the strengthening of basic reading skills for unvowelled Arabic texts within the pesantren environment.

Furthermore, the use of the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook has proven to significantly improve students' *kitab kuning* reading abilities, particularly in aspects of reading fluency, accuracy of vowelization, understanding of sentence structure, and reading independence. Predominantly positive student perceptions, along with supporting internal and external factors such as the concise structure of the textbook, instructor competence, and a conducive pesantren environment further reinforce the effectiveness of this learning approach. Although several inhibiting factors remain, such as differences in students' initial abilities and limited learning time, learning using the *Nabdatul Bayan* textbook still has great potential for sustainable development through more adaptive learning strategies. Thus, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of *kitab kuning* learning, particularly in efforts to improve students' reading abilities in pesantren contexts.

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