

Investigating Arabic Foreign Learning in Indonesian Context: It's Necessity or It's The Demand?

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate student perceptions of learning Arabic from the aspect of learning objectives and strategies for improving the Arabic language skills. This study uses a mixed approach with survey methods and qualitative design with data analysis techniques based on triangulation of data sources. The results show that the orientation of Arabic learners aims to study religion from the Qur'an and Sunnah as well as communication orientation, while the learning strategies they choose vary widely; improving listening skills through watching movies, listening to songs and lectures; speaking skills strategies include communicating collaboratively and practicing independently; reading skills strategies include reviewing readings, reading short stories, and Arabic news; writing skills strategies include writing intensive (*imla'*), answering questions. The findings reveal that, the first is integration of student achievements to master Arabic is a global need, where Arabic is a forum for international communication and the second is electric method can accelerate students' Arabic skills. This research is still limited to variables and discussion topics, so it recommends further research to measure the effectiveness of each strategy adopted by Arabic learners in Indonesia.

Keywords: Arabic Learning; Student's Perception; Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Community identity is recognized through verbal and non-verbal language. One of them is human competence verbally marked through language production activities (Mustofa, Febriani, & Ibrahim, 2021). Language is used by the global community and can be an intermediary for communication between humans. One of the developments in foreign language learning in Indonesia is Arabic. Thus, Arabic is part of a universal language that has developed like any other language in the world. With intense interaction, this foreign language communication pattern can be formed (Krystalli & Mavropoulou, 2021). Efforts to develop language learning can be made formally, one of which is through Arabic courses available at universities.

Various factors that influence language skills, one of which is students' internal motivation (Gunawan, Ainin, & Bahrudin, 2020). In addition, Elachachi (2015) revealed that mastery of Arabic can be encouraged by maximizing the increase in grammatical skills in mastering the language. This option is the main challenge in developing Arabic learning in Indonesia. The encouragement of language acquisition

both in terms of vocabulary and sound elements is expected in a natural way (Russell, 2020). This is the domain of success in learning Arabic in particular.

Arabic learning in Indonesia is growing rapidly, which is marked by various innovations for improving the Arabic skills (Bakry, 2021; Ediyani et al., 2020; Sutaman & Febriani, 2021). Learning development is based on an analysis of learner needs and global demands (Hamid, Halim, & Sahrir, 2020). The various efforts are actually aimed at maximizing the output of learning Arabic in stages.

Various studies reveal that Arabic is a basic demand and need for scientific development. This is in line with the increasing interest in world learners towards Arabic as the language of international communication (Moghazy, 2021). In addition, there are special reasons for world Arabic learners, such as adapting communication for interactions in the global world of work (Kong, Shin, Lee, & Kim, 2020). The high adaptability of global communication also directs Arabic to become a communication intermediary widely used in the international world (Soliman, 2017).

Other than communication, Arabic plays an important role in understanding Islamic teachings. As the Indonesian people have a Muslim majority who demands Arabic as an intermediary to understand the sources of religious studies (Sauri, 2020). The analogy is, if the mastery of Arabic is weak, then you cannot master the Islamic field well. While on the other hand, Arabic can be used as an international communication orientation that can have a wider role (Hannah, Qodim, Sururie, & Rahim, 2019). Communication is a place for self-actualization as humans who live in groups. Thus, Arabic was widely disseminated after the advent of Islam, even though it was centuries before the religion emerged. As a universal religion, Islam has conveyed Arabic to its adherents estimated to number 1.5 billion people (Larabi et al., 2019). Finally, various studies show that Arabic has various elements of importance according to the needs of its learners.

Based on several studies that have been carried out, the orientation of learning Arabic varies. In the previous mapping, the learner orientation is divided into a professional orientation which assumes that Arabic is for work purposes. The other function that Arabic is an academic language that aims to explore knowledge. In addition, Some argue that Arabic serves to strengthen ideology (Mustofa & Febriani, 2021). As marked by the orientation of learning goals, so that different goals will develop different learning strategies as well. After that, learning strategies will produce various outputs according to good learning management standards (Susanto & Desrani, 2022). As the demands of learning are also owned by students or not, so that the process of learning success is built collaboratively with teachers, students and institutions that protect it. (Hockings, Thomas, Ottaway, & Jones, 2018).

Other research reveals that technological advances and globalization have led to the need for international communication using foreign languages (Muh, 2019). As Mustofa et al., (2021) describe that Arabic has a strong scientific adaptation and improvisation compared to other languages. Through this urgency, research is still needed regarding the identification of the Arabic language in terms of its goals and strategies among Indonesian students. This study serves to map the objectives and classification of the strategies adopted by the learners in developing their Arabic competence. Thus, this study can show the needs of Arabic learners in each of their

language skills. The research findings also encourage recommendations for learners to adopt appropriate strategies for each skill.

METHOD

This study used a mix-method approach with a simultaneous design. *First*, the researchers used survey methods and Case method. Survey method to explore students' perceptions of the objectives of learning Arabic and the strategies they use in the learning process. While the case study provides an in-depth and systematic phenomenon to determine the focus of research on identifying Arabic language learning in universities that fall into the category of needs or demands (Yin, 2003). The instruments used to collect data are a list of interviews, observation sheets and a list of required documentation. In this context, this research refers to the instruments used to collect data from informants. In particular, researchers used interviews to collect data from informants. The interview technique aims to explore experience and allows in detail to get answers from informants.

The informants are students from Sabili Islamic Institution Bandung. The population in this study amounted to 22 students. while the sample was taken using a saturated sample technique where all the population was used as a sample in this study. The informants came from the Department of Islamic Religious Education and Sharia Economics who studied Arabic as one of the compulsory subjects. Researchers use interview, observation and documentation techniques to collect data.

Data collection was carried out by interviewing Sabili Islamic Institution Bandung students studying Arabic as a foreign language. In the preparatory step, the survey aims to identify how students evaluate the quality of learning proposed by the service for learning and the level of satisfaction with learning in this format. A questionnaire was developed, the classification of questionnaire questions was based on three criteria: content, form and function. Based on the research logic, the optimal number of questions, the answers to them provide complete information as many as 25 questions. Survey conducted in June 2021.

Researchers approach potential respondents and establish relationships. Investigators explain the purpose of interviewing respondents about learning Arabic in Indonesia. The researcher asked the respondent time to explain more about the study. The researcher provides potential interviewees with a consent form that explains all aspects of the study, such as confidentiality, privacy, potential harm, intention to withdraw, and other aspects of the study. After the respondent participated in writing, the interview was comfortable for the participants. Structured interview discussion according to the questions in the google form. The observation process was carried out to observe student responses to learning Arabic in terms of learning activities. This is to ensure that the interview answers submitted can be accounted for in the future. In addition, the existence of a documentation study also plays a role in providing concrete data on Arabic learning planning at the Sabili Islamic Institution Bandung.

The validity aspect examines the extent to which the research examines the subject to be studied. Rahardjo (2020) also added that reliability is very important because of the basis on which the findings are assessed to be applied in other contexts. The validity discussed in this case is the validity of the interview in examining the interview items related to students' perceptions of learning Arabic. The validity

technique implemented was First, the investigator tested the interview questions to ensure that they were reliable in examining the subject. The researcher avoids ambiguity in the questions. The researchers also ensure that the teacher allows the process of interview process, and the respondent agrees to the structured interview to ensure that the research findings are authentic and rational.

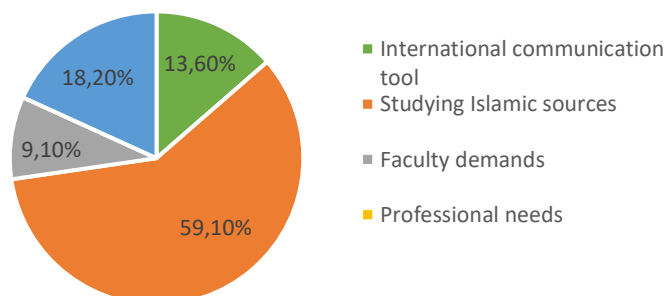
The data analysis technique developed is data triangulation, with the following steps: *First*, the researchers collect data through specified data collection techniques. *Second*, the researchers reduces the data needed according to the topic of discussion. *Third*, the researchers present the data according to the problem formulation that has been set. *Finally*, the researchers conclude the data after an in-depth analysis process of the data presented (Creswell, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Purpose of Learning Arabic In Indonesia

Since Islam entered the archipelago In the 11th and 12th centuries AD (*masehi*), Arabic in essence already has solid roots and is well known to the Indonesian people (Wekke, 2015). The practice of speaking Arabic has been ongoing since then, although teaching Arabic is only needed to understand the Qur'an and hadith and other Islamic sciences. However, at this time the Arabic language is growing in Indonesia not only as a means to understand Islam but other needs that require people to learn Arabic. The needs and goals of the Arabic language can be described as follows:

Figure 1. Arabic Learning Objectives



Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that the purpose of learning Arabic until now still aims to study Islamic sources, which is 59.1%, while as a communication tool it is 13.6%, and 9.1% demands from faculties or study programs. As much as 18.2% of it is for other needs. If we look at the purpose of learning Arabic itself, it does not exist for professional needs, namely 0%. As we can see from the description regarding why it is necessary to learn Arabic, several respondents stated that:

“Arabic is very clear as the language used in the Al-Quran Al-Karim. I think that fact is the strongest reason why you should learn Arabic” (7th respondent Df, 2021)

“Because through understanding Arabic, it will be easy for us to memorize, understand what is in the Qur'an, hadith and Islam as a whole. It is impossible for us to understand the Qur'an and Hadith except by understanding Arabic” (3rd respondent Aa, 2021)

Many similar expressions that are described in response to the same intention, namely they study Arabic based on understanding the Qur'an and hadith and other

Islamic sources that use Arabic. There are also many great scholars who motivate Muslims to be eager to learn Arabic. As Umar bin Khattab emphasized that "learn Arabic, indeed it is part of your religion". The Qur'an also clearly states that:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“Verily, we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand it.” (Q.S yusuf:02)

In addition, there is an expression that the purpose of learning Arabic is not only to understand the Qur'an, but the expression has noble values, namely as follows:

“In addition to being able to speak Arabic by learning Arabic itself, we can study several verses in the Qur'an to determine where the fiil, fail musana, mufrod, jama' are located, because sometimes in the translation in the Qur'an the words are standard. , or incomplete., well there is one of the reasons why we have to learn Arabic, besides we are good at speaking Arabic, we can also understand the meanings in the Qur'an, one of which is of course by practicing and teaching it (12th respondent Mt, 2021)”

This expression is very closely related to learning Arabic is also a means to better understand religion. Whoever wants to study religion and teach religion to many people should learn Arabic. Imam Ash-Shafi'i said "Who controls grammar, he is facilitated to understand all knowledge". (Syadzarat ad-Dzahab, pg. 1/321). One of the informants stated that the respondent's relationship with learning Arabic was stated as follows:

“Arabic is a unique language and has various styles of language (4th respondent Ay, 2021)”

If we look at the expression in line with the meaningful translation in the Indonesian manuscripts by the foundation for the translation or interpretation of the Qur'an appointed by the minister of religion, namely as chairman, Prof. R.H.A Soenarjo S.H has translated (Q.S yusuf: 02) with other meanings as follows:

“Indeed, we have sent it down (the Qur'an) as an Arabic reading, so that you may understand it.” (Yusuf:2)

Based on the results of some of the respondents' statements above, it can be seen that some of the students still consider learning Arabic to be a necessity for learning Islam. Some of the respondent's learning Arabic is only a demand from the faculty or study program, which is that the Arabic language course is a compulsory subject that must be taken. And several other respondents study Arabic as an international communication tool and the purpose of learning Arabic is relevant according to global needs. As one of the informants revealed that:

“At this time Arabic is no longer only considered as the language of pesantren and the language of the yellow book, but has begun to be used in everyday language and also as a pattern for the association of young people today with it being recognized as an international language and also as an international language. in schools in the world such as America, Africa, Singapore, India and other countries that require students to know Arabic, even now according to me Arabic has begun to be used by several organizations in the world (11th respondent Sn, 2021)”

However, there is one informant that I see who is still questioning the purpose of learning Arabic as a global need.

“Where are the learning objectives? if speaking of Global Needs, does the Arabic language material taught cover the Global level material? or rather the material being taught is still basic material and far from global needs” (4th respondent Ay, 2021).

As we know that the development of Arabic in Indonesia is not growing so fast and fast. Arabic still has many shortcomings and problems surrounding its teaching, so it can be seen that there is very little interest in learning Arabic in Indonesia. This is in accordance with several studies which state that learning Arabic in Indonesia is still experiencing several problems, both from linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. For this linguistic problem, it is an internal factor whose source comes from language such as sound grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, writing and grammar. Meanwhile, non-linguistic problems have external sources that come from non-linguistic sources such as textbooks, learning methods, learning facilities and infrastructure, interest and motivation to learn. (Amirudin, 2017). So it still needs much improvement in learning Arabic itself in Indonesia.

The Use Of Arabic Learning Strategies

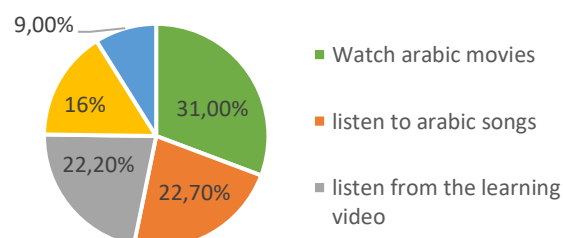
Learning Arabic is a discipline consisting of various aspects of skills. Aspects of these skills include listening skills (*maharah istima'*), speaking skills (*maharah kalam*), reading skills (*maharah qiraah*), and writing skills (*maharah kitabah*) (Mustofa, 2011). These four skills are sequential and interrelated language skills. People who learn Arabic will easily master Arabic if they start by practicing these skills sequentially starting from listening, speaking and so on. Likewise, he will have difficulty really having good Arabic skills if he learns it without heeding the systematic skills that he must master. (Rahmaini, 2015).

Listening Skills

Listening skill 'is one of the four language skills that are learned first (listening, speaking, reading and writing). According to Hasan Sahatah in his book says that good listening skills will be very useful in understanding the main ideas in detail. As a child does is to listen first. Therefore, to practice other language skills, istima' art is first taught before others (Syahatah, 2002).

In Arabic itself, even adults cannot immediately speak Arabic, they go through several stages of learning both formally and independently (Elwin & Khoirun, 2018). Some students who are not majoring in Arabic have their own way of learning Arabic. To practice listening skills and improve their skills. It reveal the following ways they learn:

Figure 2. Listening learning strategies



Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that some students have different ways of learning to improve listening skills. Watching Arabic films is a method that many respondents use to practice their listening skills. As one of the respondents revealed how to learn, namely:

"I used to get used to watching Arabic films, ranging from those with translations to plain ones (8th respondent Df, 2021)"

This expression is in accordance with research by Elwin and Khoirun who said that the use of film media in listening learning can improve students' abilities, especially in special abilities and at the same time increase vocabulary (Elwin & Khoirun, 2018). So that students can understand the storyline of the film with video besides just listening to the conversation. Film media is also a learning media which is categorized in audio-visual media (Susanto, Muafiah, Desrani, Ritonga, & Hakim, 2022). In Muassomah research also said that the implementation of special learning using audio-visual methods can make learning more interesting and increase student effectiveness in learning (Sari & Muassomah, 2020).

The media facilities that are often used to search for the content they are interested in are many through YouTube media. Youtube is indeed the most widely used audio-visual media for both entertainment and learning media (Azhari, 2015). As several respondents stated that:

"I am listening and viewing on YouTube more". "By listening to learning videos such as YouTube, etc." (14th respondent Nr, 2021).

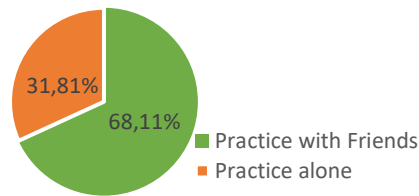
Widyantara and Rasna's research says that the use of YouTube in language learning has a very effective influence on improving students' listening skills (Widyantara & Rasna, 2020).

Speaking Skills

Speaking is part of the skills learned by learners, so speaking skills are considered a very basic part in learning foreign languages including Arabic. (Sutinah, 2013). Speaking skills are the ability to express articulation sounds or words to express thoughts in the form of ideas, opinions, desires, or feelings to the other person because speaking is a system of signs that can be heard and seen that utilizes a number of muscles and muscle tissue of the human body. To convey thoughts in order to meet their needs (Rosni Samah, 2014).

In speaking skills that are concerned with content and meaning in delivering messages orally, of course there are various forms of steps or ways that can be done according to the level of mastery of language skills that the learner has. Some of them Arabic learners choose their own ways to improve their language skills, especially in the ability of the respondents to express their ways as follows:

Figure 3. Strategies for learning to speak



Based on the results of the questionnaire that I threw to the respondents, I concluded that the various expressions of the respondents' answers trained their speaking skills by talking and practicing with friends as shown by the percentage of 68.11% of respondents. As stated by one of the respondents as follows:

“Usually in order to be fluent in Arabic, I always practice it with friends, for example by greeting in simple language” (6th respondent, 2021).

Those who choose this method will be very effective in improving their speaking skills. Speaking is an aspect of two-way communication, namely between the speaker and the listener reciprocally. So it will be very effective when you can talk to fellow friends to make improvements and justify each other (Nurmala, 2020). There are respondents who already have the provision of language skills to improve them again, he does it directly with his Arab friends. as expressed as follows:

“I chat with Arab friends in a WA discussion group, sometimes we go through zoom to share experiences” (5th respondent Aa, 2021).

As for other strategies carried out by respondents to improve their speaking skills by practicing alone or independently, this is shown by 31.81% of respondents using this method. Those who feel less confident in practicing directly with the other person, this method is an alternative way to most easily improve one's language skills. Can speak anything in front of the mirror while making improvements to speech style and intonation. Also psychologist Daniel Swigley from the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology revealed that there is a positive impact on the brain of someone who likes to talk to himself in the mirror. Usually, people who do that tend to have extraordinary brain intelligence, this can be applied in Arabic by expressing Arabic (Yusvida, 2020).

Reading Skills

Reading is a language skill whose training activities are carried out after speaking skills training. In general, reading activities are a process of communication between readers and writers through reading texts (Rathomi, 2019). The ability to recognize and understand the contents of something written (written symbols) by reciting and digesting it in the heart. This definition indicates that speaking skills contain two aspects, namely, changing written symbols into sound symbols and capturing the meaning of the whole situation symbolized by these written and sound symbols. The second aspect is the core of reading activities without ignoring the first aspect because the first aspect underlies the second skill (Nurcholis, Hidayatullah, & Rudisunhaji, 2019). The following are the expressions of the respondents in learning reading skills:

Figure 4. Strategies for learning to read

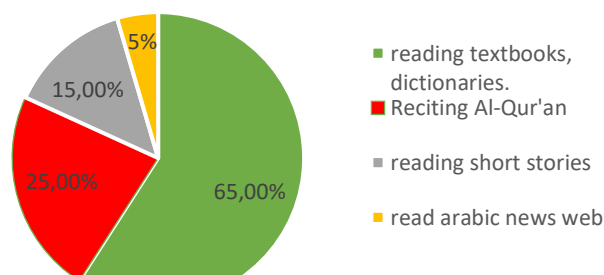


Figure 4. Strategies for learning to read

Based on the figure above, it shows that many of the students use the method of reading textbooks and Arabic dictionaries to practice their reading skills, this is indicated by the percentage of respondents as much as 65% using this method. As a beginner, of course, this method is very effective because reading textbooks and understanding Arabic dictionaries is under the supervision and guidance of teachers or lecturers in learning (Hai & Harianto, 2017). Furthermore, several other respondents used the method by diligently reading the Koran to improve reading skills. As al-Ghali and Abdullah said that in reading practice, one should pay attention to aspects such as, sounding letters correctly according to pronunciation and distinguishing sounds of letters that are similar and close together in pronunciation, connecting symbols with meaning, distinguishing *hamzah washal* and *hamzah qatha'*, paying attention to long harokat. and short. Based on these aspects, reading the Qur'an can help achieve reading skills (Al-Ghali & Hamid, 2012).

Furthermore, several other respondents read more short stories to improve their reading skills. Reading short stories is a reading comprehension activity, meaning that the respondent must understand the plot of the small things in the story. Reading short stories is suitable as a strategy to improve our reading comprehension and is mostly done by those who are not beginners anymore, due to the language style and level of difficulty (Hamdy, 2020). Furthermore, there is one respondent who chooses to read Arabic news from electronic media such as the web and social media. As his expression:

"I often use Arabic news portals, either on the Web or on Instagram and other social media to practice reading skills" (4th respondent Ay, 2021)

Based on several studies and experiences, many influencers use foreign news portals to improve their language skills. quoted from idn times several things related to the importance of reading news to improve language skills, namely: 1) can learn and add relevant and up-to-date vocabulary, 2) free and abundant learning resources such as the BBC web, Buzzfeed news and many more, 3) improve reading skills if the news is accessed via the web or newspaper media and does not have audio, 4) can determine their own level of ability and preferred topics, 5) can learn anytime and anywhere with updated sourcesso it can be concluded that reading news in foreign languages can greatly help in improving language skills, especially reading.

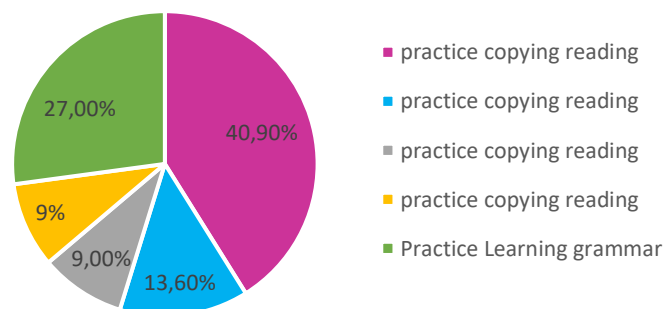
Writing Skills

Writing is the last order of skills that must be understood by Arabic learners. In Arabic, writing skills are called *maharah kitabah*. Writing skills are defined as the ability to describe or express the content of thoughts, ranging from simple to complex aspects (Fajriah, 2017). In writing Arabic, there are two aspects of ability that must be

developed, namely technical ability and production ability. The technical ability in question is being able to write Arabic with correct writing intensive (*imla'*), arrangement (*qawaid*), and the use of punctuation marks (*al-tarqim address*). The ability to produce is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, ideas and feelings into Arabic writing correctly, logically, and systematically (Mustofa, 2011).

Based on the above understanding, of course, to learn writing skills, you need your own way to practice these abilities. Some students revealed that as beginners they did various ways to improve their ability to improve their writing skills. As I conclude, several ways respondents express their strategies are as follows:

Figure 5. Learning to write strategies



The figure above shows that many respondents use a method with a lot of practice in writing intensive (*imla'*) 'whatever it is about Arabic, which is shown with a result of 40.9%. As a beginner, there was one respondent who revealed that he practiced writing Arabic a lot by rewriting the alphabet letters. Meanwhile, 27% of those who already have Arabic language skills practice their writing skills by learning grammar. As mentioned above, this includes technical ability in writing Arabic.

In training and improving writing skills, as many as 9% of respondents use methods by practicing composing (*insya'*), and studying (*muthola'ah*). In accordance with the components of writing ability above, a person's ability to express their ideas in writing is the ability to produce. This is in accordance with Rusyana's opinion in the study that writing is the ability to use language patterns in its delivery in writing to express an idea/message. (Kuraedah, 2015). A total of 9% of respondents also like to write quotes or commonly called aphorisms in the form of motivation. As stated by one respondent as follows:

"I often write Arabic, even I love writing Arabic so much, any words must be poured into Arabic script" (10th respondent If).

As the expression said, the respondent began to practice his writing skills from small things so as to improve his skills and interest in writing Arabic. What we know is that the most basic writing skill is the ability to write Arabic letters either separately or in sequence. After this ability is mastered, then it can be improved on the ability to compose sentences, compose paragraphs, until finally being able to make an article, or writing in its entirety (Helmanto, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The researchers conclude that learning Arabic in Indonesia is an urgent point. This is marked by the existence of a learning goal orientation that is closely related to

the aspect of scientific development, the demands religious studies and communication in the global world. The learning strategies vary widely; for improving listening skills, the student's can watching movies, listening a songs, and listening the information from lectures. The other strategies can communicate collaboratively or practice alone. Other strategies are writing intensively, answering questions, reviewing readings, reading short stories, and news in Arabic. The findings show that the integration of student achievements to master Arabic is a necessity in the global era, where Arabic is a forum for international communication as well as to broaden religious knowledge. Other findings indicate that the eclectic method can accelerate students' Arabic skills. On that basis, this study reveals that learning Arabic for students at the university level is a necessity to fulfill their learning orientation. Thus, the developed strategy shows that students use eclectic strategies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This research is still limited to the use of samples and the application of the method. Thus, there is a great opportunity for further research to reveal the sustainability of the orientation of learning Arabic in Indonesia.

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