

# DEVELOPING A MAHĀRAH AL-QIRĀ'AH TEACHING MODEL BASED ON GRAMMATICAL AND DISCOURSE COMPETENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to develop a mahārah al-qirā'ah teaching model based on grammatical competence and discourse competence applicable for teaching mahārah al-qirā'ah to undergraduate students of Arabic Language Education Department, and determine the effectiveness of the developed model in teaching reading comprehension. This study used Borg & Gall's research design and model development, consisting of seven steps. The study voluntarily involved students in three IAINs in West Sumatera, IAIN Padang, IAIN Bukittinggi, and IAIN Batusangkar in the academic year of 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Four techniques: observation, interview, documentation, and test were employed to collect data. The combination of descriptive qualitative and quantitative techniques were utilized to analyse data. Two findings are documented of which the first is, the developed teaching model set based on grammatical competence and discourse competence is feasible to be used for teaching mahārah al-qirā'ah for undergraduate students of Arabic Language Education Department while the second is, the implementation of the developed model is effective in teaching reading comprehension.*

**Keywords:** Learning Model, Mahārah al-Qirā'ah, Grammatical Competence, Discourse Competence.

## INTRODUCTION:

Reading is the most basic and important skill for second (Weisi, 2012) and foreign language learners. The reading skill is often required for academic, professional, and personal purposes (Jahangard, Moinzadeh, & Karimi, 2011). In academic settings, reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information and the primary means for independent learning. Reading also provides the foundation for synthesis and critical evaluation skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2001).

Reading is much more than pronouncing words (Tovani, 2000). Comprehension is a central goal of reading (Grabe, 2009). Comprehension is a kind of up-market synonym for understanding (Smith, 2004). Therefore, reading comprehension can be defined as the ability to understand information in a text (Lopez, 2008). Reading must be about thinking and constructing meanings. Understanding how meaning is constructed from printed texts is essential if teachers are to improve the comprehension of their students (Tovani, 2000).

In learning Arabic, the reading skill (termed mahārah al-qirā'ah in Arabic) is the main objective which the particular learners wish to attain, whether with Arabic as second language or as a foreign language. According to (Abdullah, 2008), various research results indicated that most learners study Arabic in order to be able to read Alquran, Hadis, and classical books written in Arabic.

Mahārah al-qirā'ah is one of the most important subjects at Jurusan PBA (Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab 'Arabic Language Education Department'). Mahārah al-qirā'ah belongs to the group of subjects called MKK (Mata Kuliah Keilmuan dan Keterampilan 'Science and Skill Subject'). The learning of this subject is oriented towards reading comprehension. It denotes that after completing mahārah al-qirā'ah class, students are hopefully able to comprehend the meaning of texts in Arabic. Comprehension is a central matter in reading process and should become the focus of learning because the main objective of reading is comprehension of the text being read.

Based on a preliminary study about the learning of mahārah al-qirā'ah at Jurusan PBA within three IAINs (Institut Agama Islam Negeri 'State Institute for Islamic Studies') in West Sumatera, Indonesia, namely, IAIN Padang, IAIN Bukittinggi, and IAIN Batusangkar in the academic year of 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, the researcher concerned here discovered the phenomena which are almost the same. The subject called mahārah al-qirā'ah is worth four up to six semester credit units (with classes divided into mahārah al-qirā'ah I, II, and III respectively) but there is no clear difference yet in the expected reading comprehension aspect among those levels of mahārah al-qirā'ah. The insufficiency in the number of available lecturers to deliver classes on mahārah al-qirā'ah is somehow a possible factor in creating the difference between the lecture taught in mahārah al-qirā'ah I and mahārah al-qirā'ah II or III. It also causes an overlapping among class materials. Besides, the learning of mahārah al-qirā'ah is text-oriented which means that the texts become the points of reference in designing the learning material. The difference in level among the classes of mahārah al-qirā'ah is only in the texts being used. Majority of the texts used are not authentic texts, either, so that they do not sufficiently attract students' interest.

Students' learning achievement in the class of mahārah al-qirā'ah is also low in level. On an average only 20-30 % of the students who have attended the mahārah al-qirā'ah class are able to comprehend texts well. According to a lecturer of the subject, the low level of students' ability in comprehending texts is caused by the insufficient adequacy of their background knowledge in being used for text comprehension, implying, among others, that they do not possess sufficient vocabulary, understand grammar, and understand the inter-sentential relation in paragraphs or the inter-paragraph relation in texts.

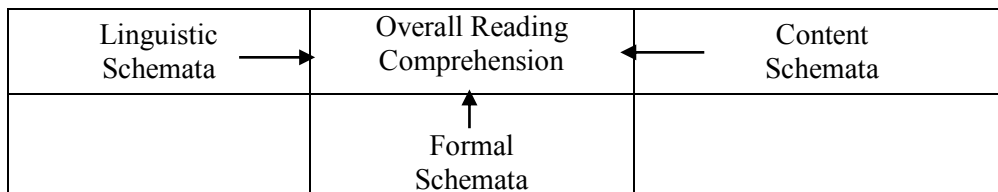
Comprehension is a constructive process in which the reader creates meaning based on his background knowledge (Gunning, 2010). The reader brings a wide range of background knowledge to reading and actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting it in terms of the background knowledge activated by the reader (Grabe, 2009). According to Huang (2009), comprehending words, sentences, and entire texts requires the ability to relate the material (the present visual information printed on the page) to one's own knowledge (the non-visual information already stored and organized in the brain).

According to schema theory, reading comprehension is an interactive process between the text and the reader's prior knowledge in order to recreate the intended meaning (Jahangard, Moinzadeh, & Karimi, 2011). Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. Every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

The readers's background knowledge (prior knowledge) is called 'schema'. There are three major types of schemata which are closely related to reading comprehension, namely, linguistic schemata, formal schemata, and content schemata. Linguistic schemata refer to the background knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and

idioms. Formal schemata, often known as textual schemata, refer to the background knowledge of the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of different written text types. Content schemata refer to the knowledge of the world or the background knowledge of the content domain of a text (Ahmadvand & Barati, 2014); (Huang, 2009); (Salmi, 2011). Figure 1 explains about the interaction of three types of schemata (Levine & Reves, 1994).

**Figure 1: The Interaction of Three Types of Schemata**



Reading comprehension involves activating the appropriate schemata in order to make sense of incoming information. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the activation of background knowledge prior to reading in order to facilitate comprehension (Jahangard, Moinzadeh, & Karimi, 2011). When students possess three schemata, they are in a better position to comprehend their assigned reading. Deficiency in any of the above schemata will result in a reading comprehension deficit. Understanding the role of schema in the reading process provides insights into why students may fail to comprehend text material (Issa, 2006).

(Gascoigne, 2005) affirms that most studies about L2 reading have concluded that the readers rely upon different sets of competencies while reading. The commonly identified sets of competencies include grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

In relation with the learning of mahārah al-qirā'ah at Jurusan PBA, students' low-level ability in comprehending texts as stated by the aforementioned lecturer of the subject is because of their weakness in two competencies, namely, grammatical competence and discourse competence, because they do not possess sufficiently adequate vocabulary, grammar, the inter-sentential relation in paragraphs (cohesion) or the inter-paragraph relation in texts (coherence). Therefore, activating the two competencies before reading is need to be done.

Grammatical competence includes knowledge of morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics. Discourse competence includes the ability to understand cohesive devices such as pronouns and conjunctions, as well as the ability to recognize how coherence is used to maintain the message's unity (Gascoigne, 2005). Grammatical competence and discourse competence are two competence types that are important in reading. (Grabe, 1991) affirms that fluent readers need a sound knowledge of language structure and a large recognition of vocabulary (grammatical competence). According to (Mu, 2006), the knowledge of cohesion and coherence (discourse competence) directly influences reading comprehension.

The activation of grammatical competence and discourse competence can contribute to two schemata, namely, linguistic schemata, and formal schemata (Tahsildar & Yusoff, 2014); (Uysal, 2012). The research concerned here developed a model of teaching mahārah al-qirā'ah that lecturer could use to overcome students' weaknesses in certain areas of competence needed for text comprehension and particularly weaknesses in grammatical competence and discourse competence.

**METHOD:**

The model of development used is 'R&D (Research and Development) model' from (Borg & Gall, 1983) as reference, which was performed up to the 7th step, i.e., research and information collecting, planning, developing preliminary form of product, preliminary field testing, main product revision, main field testing, and operational product revision. The development went through steps that were grouped into four stages of development, namely, preliminary study, development, preliminary field testing, and main field testing.

Basically, the preliminary study was made in the course of needs analysis so that important components that needed to be developed and certain aspects, that needs to be paid attention to, during the model development could be formulated. The preliminary study was conducted through literature study and field study. The field study was done at Jurusan PBA of three IAINs in West Sumatera, namely, IAIN Padang, IAIN Batusangkar, and IAIN Bukittinggi.

After preliminary study, the procedure of model development was continued by entering the stage of product development. The results of the preliminary study became the basis for product development. In the initial step, a design of a mahārah al-qirā'ah teaching model with grammatical competence and discourse competence as basis was developed. With the model design as basis, a teaching model set was constructed, consisting of the

syllabus, lesson plan, learning material, and assessment set. After the teaching model was constructed, validation was made in the course of attaining a valid model. The teaching model is validated by two experts and two practitioners by using validation sheet as the data collection instrument. The collected data were validation results and suggestions on the developed teaching model set. Then a revision was done in accordance with both the results and suggestions from validators.

The model resulting from the revision underwent preliminary field testing using the one-group pretest-posttest design. With results of the preliminary field testing as basis, revision was made and the results underwent main field testing i.e., testing on a larger scale using the pretest-posttest control group design. After main field testing, product was revised when it was found that the model was not yet fit.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

This section presents the data obtained at each step of the research and development. The steps of the research and development model with the data obtained at each of the steps are as follows.

**Initial Product Development:**

The development of an initial draft of the teaching model was initiated with a formulation of the objectives to be attained through the class of mahārah al-qirā’ah. In formulating the objectives, the researcher referred to the levels of reading ability stated in Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). For the class of mahārah al-qirā’ah I, the researcher decided the objectives in line with the reading ability at the level between B1-B2 according to CEFR and integrated it with the grammatical competence and discourse competence which becomes the basis of the model development. Grammatical competence consists of knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, and syntax whereas the discourse competence consists of knowledge of cohesion and coherence.

The texts were selected in accordance with the objectives formulated. In addition, the texts were also adapted to the grammatical and discourse components which became the focus of discussion. Priority was given to authentic texts. Then the teaching model set was constructed, consisting of the syllabus, lesson plan, learning material, and assessment set.

Each lesson in the model consisted of two parts. The first part was for the schemata stage, which was the stage of students’ competence formation, namely, the formation of their grammatical competence and their discourse competence. The second part was for the text comprehension stage. Each learning aspect was organized in accordance with the interest of the learning of reading using grammatical competence and discourse competence as basis.

After development, the preliminary draft of the teaching model was validated by four validators i.e., two experts and two practitioners. The validation results of the developed teaching model set were tabulated according to each component and subcomponent that were in the validation instrument. Then the mean score for each aspect validated from the four validators was calculated. Further the scores were converted into qualitative data by means of a scale with four values to determine the criteria for fitness of the developed teaching model set. A recapitulation of the validation results of the developed teaching model set is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Validation Results of The Developed Teaching Model Set

No.	Components	Expert Validator		Practitioner Validator		Mean	Criteria
		1	2	1	2		
1	Syllabus	3.68	3.12	3.93	3.50	3.56	Very Good
2	Lesson Plan	3.77	3.27	4	3.88	3.73	Very Good
3	Learning Material	3.53	3.12	3.88	3.71	3.56	Very Good
4	Assessment Set	3.87	3.20	4	3.80	3.72	Very Good
<b>Mean</b>							Very Good

Based on Table 2, it could be concluded that the mean score of the validation results of the whole teaching model set was 3.63 with the criterion, very good denoting that the validators judged the developed teaching model set was ready to be tested. However, there were some suggestions from the validators like additions or improvements in some parts in both aspects of content and writing. Therefore, the teaching model set could be used for testing at the next stage after revision in accordance with the suggestions given by validators.

**Preliminary Field Testing:**

The preliminary field testing used the one-group pretest-posttest design, using a group of students. The preliminary field testing was done to know the effectiveness of the developed teaching model in improving the students’ ability in mahārah al-qirā’ah. The developed teaching model effectiveness was measured by comparing pre-test and post-test scores. The results of the preliminary field testing on the teaching model set are presented as follows.

**Table 2: Description of Pretest and Posttest Data in the Preliminary Field Testing**

No.	Data Description	Pretest	Posttest
1	Mean	63.33	73.33
2	Standard Deviation	8.16	6.83
3	Minimum Score	50.00	65.00
4	Maximum Score	75.00	85.00

The effectiveness of the developed teaching model in increasing the students’ ability in mahārah al-qirā’ah was inferred through this comparison in the preliminary field testing. The results show that the value of significance is 0.042. The criteria are that when  $asympt.sig (2-tailed) < \alpha$ , it means that there is a significant difference and when  $asympt.sig (2-tailed) > \alpha$ , then there is a difference but it is not significant. With a specified level of significance i.e., ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, it could be concluded that the pretest scores differed significantly with the posttest scores (because  $0.042 < 0.05$ ) thus inferring that the developed teaching model is effective in improving students’ ability in mahārah al-qirā’ah.

An observation of the accomplishment of the learning by means of the developed teaching model set was made by two observers who helped the researcher observe all the learning activities throughout the learning process in class. Through observation, the two observers were trained first in order to be able to use the observation sheet to assess the accomplishment of the learning. A summary of the results of the observation on the accomplishment of the learning in the preliminary field testing is presented in Table 4.

**Table 3: The Results of The Observation in The Preliminary Field Testing**

No.	Session	Accomplishment Percentage (%)		Mean (%)	Criteria
		Observer 1	Observer 2		
1	I	75.00	75.00	75.00	Good
2	II	81.25	75.00	78.13	Good
3	III	87.50	81.25	84.38	Very Good
Mean (%)		81.25	77.08	79.17	Good

Based on the data collected from the observation on the accomplishment of the learning by means of the developed teaching model in the preliminary field testing, the mean scores for the learning accomplishment of the three sessions were respectively 75.00 %, 78.13 %, and 84.38 %. The mean score for the learning accomplishment of the three sessions altogether was 79.17 % and the criterion was good.

**Main Field Testing:**

The main field testing was done after the preliminary field testing and the revision was done based on the results retrieved from the preliminary field testing. The main field testing used the pretest-posttest control group design with two groups of students. The group in the experimental class was given the treatment using the developed teaching model while the group in the control class was given the treatment using the teaching model usually used by the lecturer.

The data for the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups was analyzed. The analysis used was t-test with independent samples. The data was first tested for normality and homogeneity. In the test of normality, the value of significance obtained for the experimental and control groups were 0.587 and 0.220 respectively. The test criteria was that when  $asympt.sig (2-tailed) < \alpha$ , it means that the data is not normally distributed whereas when  $asympt.sig (2-tailed) > \alpha$ , then the data is normally distributed. With a level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, it could be concluded that the values of significance for the two groups were greater

than 0.05 ( $0.587 > 0.05$  and  $0.220 > 0.05$ ). It means that the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental and control groups are normally distributed.

As far as the test of homogeneity is concerned, the value of significance obtained was 0.277. The test criteria is that when  $F_{obtained} > F_{table}$  or  $sig < \alpha$ , it means that the data is not homogenous and when  $F_{obtained} < F_{table}$  or  $sig > \alpha$ , it means that the data is homogenous. With a level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, it could be concluded that the value of significance was greater than 0.05 ( $0.277 > 0.05$ ), meaning that the data were homogenous.

A hypothesis testing was conducted by using the t-test with independent samples with the purpose of discovering the effectiveness of the developed teaching model in improving the students' ability in mahārah al-qirā'ah. The value of significance was 0.025. With a level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, then  $sig$  (2-tailed)  $< \alpha$  ( $0.025 < 0.05$ ), meaning that on the average the increase from the pretest scores to the posttest scores of the experimental class (14.2105) was significantly different from that of the control class (9.0476). It indicated that the experimental class was greater in improvement than the control class. It implied that the developed teaching model can improve students' ability in mahārah al-qirā'ah. So  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted.

The results of the observation on the accomplishment of the learning by means of the developed teaching model in the main field testing are presented in Table 5.

Table 4: The Results of The Observation in The Main Field Testing

No.	Session	Accomplishment Percentage (%)		Mean (%)	Criteria
		Observer 1	Observer 2		
1	I	81,25	75,00	78,13	Good
2	II	87,50	87,50	87,50	Very Good
3	III	81,25	93,75	87,50	Very Good
4	IV	93,75	87,50	90,63	Very Good
5	V	100,00	93,75	96,88	Very Good
Mean (%)		88,75	87,50	88,13	Very Good

The mean scores for the accomplishment of the learning of the five sessions in the main field testing were respectively 78.13 %, 87.50 %, 87.50 %, 90.63 %, and 96.88 %. The mean score for the learning accomplishment of the five sessions altogether was 88.13 % and the criterion was very good.

**Product Revision:**

The revision of the developed teaching model was done in three stages, namely, after the validation, after the preliminary field testing, and after the main field testing. The revision in the first stage was on all subsets of the model with varying portions, the revision in the second stage was on lesson plan and the teaching materials, and the revision in the third stage was on the aspect of the writing only.

The stages of development process resulted a mahārah al-qirā'ah teaching model based on grammatical competence and discourse competence. It was a learning model with emphasis on the importance of grammatical competence and discourse competence as basic knowledge for the teaching of mahārah al-qirā'ah. With the stages of development undergone, hopefully, the resulting model set could be used in teaching and learning and could improve students' ability in the class of mahārah al-qirā'ah.

**CONCLUSION:**

With the results of the research and development that have been done as basis, it could be concluded that the product of development in the form of the model of learning is fit to be used for the learning of mahārah al-qirā'ah for students of the Arabic Language Education Department. According to validators, the feasibility to use the whole set of developed teaching model is, very good with an average score of 3.67. The developed teaching model is also effective in improving the students' ability in reading comprehension. The value of significance obtained in the preliminary field testing and the main field testing were 0.042 and 0.025 ( $< 0.05$ ).

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