



Research Article

Game-Based Learning for Arabic Vocabulary Development: The Implementation of “Mughamarah fil ‘Arabiyyah” in a Junior High School

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Abstract. Vocabulary mastery plays a fundamental role in Arabic language learning, particularly at the secondary school level where students begin to develop more complex language skills. However, vocabulary instruction in many schools remains dominated by teacher-centered and memorization-based approaches, which often result in low student engagement and limited retention. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah, a non-digital game-based learning medium, in improving students' Arabic vocabulary mastery. The study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. The participants consisted of 12 eighth-grade students at SMP Bina Dakwah, Bogor, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a 20-item Arabic vocabulary test administered before and after the implementation of the game-based learning intervention. Descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test were used to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery, with the mean score increasing from 68.18 in the pretest to 90.67 in the posttest. These findings indicate that Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah is an effective instructional medium for enhancing Arabic vocabulary learning, particularly in educational contexts with limited technological resources. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of non-digital game-based learning media and offers practical insights for teachers seeking engaging vocabulary instruction strategies in resource-limited classrooms.

Keywords: Arabic Vocabulary Learning, Game-Based Learning, Instructional Media, Non-Digital Board Game, Secondary Education.

Abstrak. Penguasaan kosakata memainkan peran fundamental dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab, khususnya di tingkat sekolah menengah di mana siswa mulai mengembangkan keterampilan bahasa yang lebih kompleks. Namun, pengajaran kosakata di banyak sekolah masih didominasi oleh pendekatan yang berpusat pada guru dan berbasis hafalan, yang seringkali mengakibatkan keterlibatan siswa yang rendah dan retensi yang terbatas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menguji efektivitas Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah, media pembelajaran berbasis game non-digital, dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Arab siswa. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain pra-eksperimental satu kelompok pretest–posttest. Partisipan terdiri dari 12 siswa kelas delapan di SMP Bina Dakwah, Bogor, yang dipilih melalui pengambilan sampel bertujuan. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes kosakata bahasa Arab 20 item yang diberikan sebelum dan setelah implementasi intervensi pembelajaran berbasis game. Statistik deskriptif dan uji t sampel berpasangan digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penguasaan kosakata siswa, dengan skor rata-rata meningkat dari 68,18 pada pretest menjadi 90,67 pada posttest. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah merupakan media pembelajaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Arab, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan dengan sumber daya teknologi yang terbatas. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pedagogi bahasa Arab dengan memberikan bukti empiris tentang efektivitas media pembelajaran berbasis permainan non-digital dan menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi guru yang mencari strategi pengajaran kosakata yang menarik di kelas dengan keterbatasan sumber daya.

Kata Kunci : Pembelajaran Kosakata Bahasa Arab, Pembelajaran Berbasis Permainan, Media Pembelajaran, Permainan Papan Non-Digital, Pendidikan Menengah.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component in Arabic language learning, particularly for beginner learners at the elementary and secondary school levels. Vocabulary functions as the foundation upon which other language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are developed. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners encounter significant difficulties in understanding texts, expressing ideas, and engaging in meaningful communication. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition cannot be treated as a supplementary element but must be positioned as a core prerequisite for successful foreign language learning, including Arabic (Bahri, 2025; Kurniawan, 2024).

In many Arabic language classrooms, especially at the secondary school level, vocabulary instruction is still dominated by conventional, teacher-centered approaches. Teachers typically introduce new vocabulary by listing words on the board, providing translations, modeling pronunciation, and asking students to memorize the words through repetition. Although this method may facilitate short-term recall, it often fails to support long-term retention and meaningful use of vocabulary in communicative contexts. As a result, students tend to forget newly learned vocabulary quickly and show limited ability to apply it functionally (Farhan et al., 2024; Fengyu, 2023). Such practices also contribute to low learning motivation and passive student participation.

One of the key factors influencing the effectiveness of vocabulary learning is the use of instructional media. Instructional media are tools or resources utilized to deliver learning content in ways that stimulate students' attention, interest, and active engagement (Fahmi & Muta'ali, 2021). Media are not limited to physical tools but also include visual, audio, audiovisual, and interactive activities designed to facilitate learning. According to Simanjuntak et al. (2021), instructional media serve as essential components that help make abstract information more concrete, accessible, and engaging for learners.

From a pedagogical perspective, instructional media perform several important functions (1) the attention function, which attracts learners' focus; (2) the cognitive function, which supports comprehension and memory; (3) the affective function, which enhances motivation and emotional involvement; and (4) the compensatory function, which assists learners who struggle with verbal explanations (Bajorek & Gawronski, 2018). In Arabic language learning, media play a crucial role in presenting vocabulary meaningfully, illustrating usage contexts, and providing opportunities for students to practice language actively rather than passively memorizing word lists.

Along with the development of learner-centered pedagogy, game-based learning has emerged as an effective alternative approach in language education. Game-based learning integrates elements of challenge, competition, and interaction that create enjoyable yet meaningful learning experiences. For junior secondary school students who are in the transitional stage from childhood to adolescence, games align well with their cognitive and affective characteristics, making learning more engaging and motivating (Krath et al., 2021). Through games, vocabulary

learning becomes an active process in which words are recalled, processed, and applied in simulated communicative situations rather than merely memorized.

Previous studies have demonstrated that game-based media, both digital and non-digital, positively affect students' motivation, participation, and vocabulary retention. Various instructional games, such as flashcards, word-matching games, and digital platforms like WordWall, Kahoot!, Quizizz, and LingoHut, have been shown to improve language learning outcomes (Putri et al., 2022). However, the adoption of technology-based media is not always feasible in all educational contexts, particularly in schools with limited technological infrastructure.

Several scholars have also emphasized the pedagogical benefits of game-based learning in vocabulary instruction. Recent studies indicate that game-based learning can significantly enhance students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary acquisition in language classrooms (Al-Azawi et al, 2020). Similarly, research by Tokac et al (2022) shows that game-based learning environments promote deeper cognitive processing and improve students' learning outcomes compared to conventional instructional methods. In the context of Arabic language learning, Alqahtani (2021) highlights that vocabulary mastery remains a central component of language proficiency and requires instructional strategies that encourage active learner participation and meaningful interaction with lexical items.

Despite these findings, most existing studies have primarily focused on digital game-based learning environments, while limited attention has been given to non-digital instructional games specifically designed for Arabic vocabulary learning, particularly in schools with limited access to technological resources. Therefore, exploring low-technology instructional media that can support vocabulary learning remains an important area of investigation.

This challenge is evident at SMP Bina Dakwah, Bogor Regency, where access to digital devices and stable electricity is limited. Based on classroom observations and interviews with the Arabic language teacher, students often struggle to remember newly learned vocabulary and display low motivation during lessons. Instructional practices remain largely repetitive and teacher-centered, resulting in minimal student involvement and ineffective vocabulary internalization. Consequently, there is a need for innovative, low-tech, and engaging instructional media that can function effectively within such constraints.

In response to these challenges, a physical game-based instructional medium called Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah was developed. The term Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah means "Adventure in Arabic," reflecting the game's concept of guiding students through an exploratory learning experience. This medium takes the form of a board game resembling a Snakes and Ladders game, using Arabic numerals and vocabulary-based quiz cards. Students are required to answer vocabulary questions correctly to advance in the game, thereby encouraging active recall of vocabulary and sustained learning engagement (Irsyad, 2025).

The Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of learning simultaneously. Cognitively, students practice vocabulary recall and understanding; affectively, competition and gameplay foster intrinsic motivation; and psychomotorically, students are actively involved in the

learning process. Previous studies conducted by the primary researcher indicate that innovative instructional media, such as educational teaching aids, puzzles, WordWall, and multimodal approaches, can enhance student participation, curiosity, and comprehension in Arabic language learning (Falah et al., 2024; Fahmi & Apriyanti, 2024; Fahmi & Latuf, n.d.; Fatchiatuzahro et al., 2025). However, none of these studies specifically examined competitive, non-digital board games designed exclusively for Arabic vocabulary learning.

Furthermore, research contributions by Abdul Hakim and colleagues from the Arabic Language Education Department at UNJ emphasize the importance of instructional innovation in Arabic learning. Studies on interactive digital tools such as Mentimeter demonstrate improvements in teachers' instructional competence, while research on multimedia and guided writing shows enhancements in students' critical thinking and writing quality (Abdul Hakim, 2019; Setiadi et al., 2023). Additionally, the use of simple yet interactive media such as "Kartu Shah" has been shown to increase student engagement and classroom interaction (Arifah et al., 2024). Despite these advancements, empirical studies focusing on non-digital board game-based learning for Arabic vocabulary remain scarce.

This condition highlights a clear research gap, as most existing studies emphasize digital games or simple visual media rather than competitive board games designed specifically for Arabic vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of using Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah on students' Arabic vocabulary mastery at the eighth-grade level of SMP Bina Dakwah. By addressing this gap, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically to Arabic language pedagogy and, practically, to the development of innovative, contextual, and technology-independent instructional media for vocabulary learning.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the effect of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game-based learning medium on students' Arabic vocabulary mastery. Quantitative methods are particularly suitable for this research as they enable objective measurement of learning outcomes through numerical data and statistical analysis. The research design adopted in this study was a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, which allows the researcher to compare students' learning performance before and after the implementation of the instructional intervention.

The research was conducted at SMP Bina Dakwah, located in BTN Leuwiliang Permai, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. The study took place from November 2025 to January 2026, encompassing several stages including research preparation, administration of the pretest, implementation of the treatment using the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah media, administration of the posttest, data analysis, and interpretation of results. The selected research setting reflects the contextual reality of schools with limited access to technological facilities, making it appropriate for examining the effectiveness of non-digital instructional media.

The population of this study consisted of all students at SMP Bina Dakwah, totaling 36 students across three grade levels. A purposive sampling technique was

employed to select the research sample, resulting in 12 eighth-grade students being chosen as participants. This grade level was selected because the students had already received basic Arabic instruction in the previous academic year, providing sufficient foundational knowledge to engage with the learning intervention, while not being under the pressure of final examinations experienced by ninth-grade students. Therefore, the selected sample was considered representative and suitable for measuring the impact of the instructional medium.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a vocabulary mastery test consisting of 20 short-answer items. The test items were developed based on the Arabic vocabulary taught in the themes Al-Mihnah and Al-Amkinah, as outlined in the junior high school Arabic textbook. The same test format was used for both the pretest and posttest to ensure objectivity and comparability of results. Prior to implementation, the test instrument underwent validation and reliability testing to ensure its appropriateness for the research context. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while data normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which is recommended for small sample sizes.

Data collection was carried out in three main stages. First, a pretest was administered to measure students' initial vocabulary mastery before exposure to the instructional treatment. Second, the treatment phase involved the implementation of Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah during Arabic language learning sessions. Students were divided into small groups of three to four members and participated in the board game, which required them to answer vocabulary questions in order to advance. During this phase, the researcher also conducted classroom observations to document student engagement, participation, and interaction. Third, a posttest was administered after the completion of the treatment to assess changes in students' vocabulary mastery.

In addition to test data, observational data and documentation were collected to support the quantitative findings. Observations focused on students' behavioral responses, motivation, and level of participation during the learning process, while documentation included students' test scores, attendance records, and photographs taken during classroom activities.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize pretest and posttest scores, including measures such as mean, minimum and maximum scores, and overall learning improvement. Inferential analysis was performed using a paired sample t-test to determine whether the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. This test was selected because it is appropriate for comparing two related sets of scores obtained from the same participants. The hypotheses tested in this study consisted of a null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah media on students' Arabic vocabulary mastery, and an alternative hypothesis stating that the use of the media has a significant effect on vocabulary mastery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the effectiveness of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game-based learning medium in improving Arabic vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students at SMP Bina Dakwah. A total of 12 students participated in the study and were involved in all stages of the research, including pretesting, instructional treatment, and posttesting. The intervention was conducted during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year and focused on vocabulary learning through a non-digital board game specifically designed for Arabic language instruction.



Figure 1. Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah Learning Media

Quantitative data were collected using a vocabulary mastery test consisting of 20 short-answer items based on the themes Al-Mihnah (Professions) and Al-Amkinah (Places). These themes were selected because they represent core vocabulary components in the junior high school Arabic curriculum and require students to recall and apply lexical items rather than merely recognize them. The same test format was administered before and after the intervention to ensure the comparability of results.

The descriptive analysis of the pretest scores indicated that students' initial Arabic vocabulary mastery was generally low to moderate. The minimum pretest score was 40, while the maximum score reached 90. The mean score of 68.18 and median score of 70 suggest that many students had not yet achieved adequate mastery of basic Arabic vocabulary. This condition reflects common challenges in Arabic language learning contexts, where vocabulary instruction often emphasizes memorization without sufficient opportunities for contextualized practice (Farhan et al., 2024; Fengyu, 2023).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test Scores

Statistics	Score
Jumlah Siswa	12
Minimum Score	40
Maximum Score	90
Mean	68,18
Median	70

After the implementation of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah learning medium, the posttest results demonstrated a substantial improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. The minimum posttest score increased to 65, while the maximum score reached a perfect score of 100. The mean score rose sharply to 90.67, with a median score of 90. Compared to the pretest results, this indicates an average gain of 22.49 points. Such an increase suggests not only quantitative improvement but also a qualitative shift in students' ability to recall and apply Arabic vocabulary more confidently and accurately.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Post-test Scores

Statistics	Score
Number of Students	12
Minimum Score	65
Maximum Score	100
Mean	90,67
Median	90

To further examine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pretest and posttest scores. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment ($p < 0.05$). This finding confirms that the improvement was not due to chance and provides strong empirical support for the effectiveness of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah medium. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, indicating that the use of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game significantly influenced students' Arabic vocabulary mastery.

From a theoretical standpoint, the effectiveness of this medium can be explained through the lens of game-based learning theory. According to Krath et al. (2021), educational games integrate elements of challenge, competition, and interaction, which stimulate learners' cognitive and affective engagement. In the present study, students were required to actively retrieve previously learned vocabulary to answer quiz questions correctly before advancing in the game. This process aligns with the principle of retrieval

practice, which posits that repeated recall strengthens memory retention more effectively than passive review. By repeatedly accessing their lexical knowledge during gameplay, students reinforced their long-term memory of Arabic vocabulary.

In addition, the game-based format helped reduce students' affective barriers to learning. Traditional vocabulary instruction in Arabic classrooms often creates anxiety, especially when students are required to memorize and recite vocabulary individually. In contrast, the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah medium created a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere in which mistakes were treated as part of the game rather than as failures. This condition supports Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which emphasizes that low anxiety and high motivation facilitate language acquisition. Students appeared more willing to participate, attempt answers, and engage with Arabic vocabulary without fear of negative evaluation.

Another contributing factor to the success of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah medium is its competitive yet collaborative nature. Students played in small groups, which encouraged peer interaction, discussion, and mutual support. While competition motivated students to perform better, collaboration allowed them to negotiate meaning and learn from one another. This social dimension of learning is consistent with sociocultural theories of language acquisition, which emphasize the role of interaction in developing linguistic competence. As observed during the treatment sessions, students frequently discussed possible answers and corrected each other's mistakes, thereby deepening their understanding of vocabulary usage.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of game-based learning in language education. Bustang and Usman (2025) reported that educational games significantly improved students' language achievement and motivation by promoting active participation. Similarly, Fahmi and Latuf (2025) found that game-based instructional media enhanced vocabulary retention and reduced students' boredom during language learning activities. However, the present study contributes new insights by focusing on a non-digital board game specifically designed for Arabic vocabulary learning, thereby addressing the needs of schools with limited technological resources.

The non-digital nature of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah medium is particularly noteworthy. Unlike digital platforms such as Kahoot! or WordWall, this board game does not require electricity, internet access, or electronic devices. This characteristic makes it highly adaptable to under-resourced educational settings, such as SMP Bina Dakwah. The success of this medium demonstrates that innovative and effective learning tools can be developed without relying on advanced technology, provided that they are grounded in sound pedagogical principles and aligned with learners' characteristics.

From a pedagogical perspective, the implementation of Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah supports a shift toward student-centered learning. During the intervention, the teacher acted primarily as a facilitator who guided the learning process, clarified rules, and observed student participation. Students, on the other hand, assumed an active role in constructing knowledge through gameplay. This approach contrasts sharply with traditional teacher-centered vocabulary instruction, which often limits students' opportunities for meaningful engagement. As emphasized by Fahmi and Ma'arif (2025),

student-centered learning environments are crucial for fostering deeper understanding and functional language use.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game-based learning medium is not only effective in improving Arabic vocabulary mastery but also capable of transforming the learning experience into a more engaging, motivating, and meaningful process. The combination of cognitive reinforcement through retrieval practice, affective support through enjoyable learning, and social interaction through collaborative gameplay provides a comprehensive framework for effective vocabulary instruction. These findings suggest that Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah can serve as a viable alternative instructional medium for Arabic language teachers, particularly in contexts where technological resources are limited.

Despite these promising findings, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, involving only twelve students from a single school, which may limit the generalizability of the results. In addition, the study employed a pre-experimental design without a control group, making it difficult to isolate the effect of the intervention from other possible factors. Future research could involve larger samples, experimental designs, and longer intervention periods to further examine the effectiveness of non-digital game-based learning in Arabic vocabulary instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of the Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah game-based learning medium is effective in improving Arabic vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students at SMP Bina Dakwah. The effectiveness of the medium is reflected in the substantial increase in students' learning outcomes, with the mean score rising from 68.18 in the pre-test to 90.67 in the post-test. The statistical analysis further confirmed that this improvement was significant, indicating that the observed learning gains were attributable to the instructional intervention rather than random variation.

In addition to improving students' test performance, the implementation of the game-based medium also contributed to a more engaging and participatory learning environment. Through interactive gameplay, students were encouraged to actively recall and apply vocabulary while interacting with their peers in a low-anxiety setting. These findings demonstrate that Mughamarah fil 'Arabiyyah can serve as a practical and pedagogically sound instructional medium for Arabic vocabulary learning, particularly in educational contexts with limited technological resources.

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