

The Effectiveness of Relaxation and Imagination in the Suggestopedia Method on Students' *Maharah al-Kalam* at the Elementary School Level

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Abstrak.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas teknik relaksasi dan imajinasi dalam metode Suggestopedia terhadap peningkatan *maharah al-kalam* (keterampilan berbicara bahasa Arab) siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi eksperimen dengan bentuk *nonequivalent control group design*. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas 25 siswa kelas IV-A SD Al Islah Tulungagung sebagai kelompok kontrol dan 24 siswa kelas IV-B sebagai kelompok eksperimen. Kelompok kontrol memperoleh pembelajaran bahasa Arab secara konvensional melalui metode ceramah, tanya jawab, dan hafalan kosakata, sedangkan kelompok eksperimen memperoleh pembelajaran berbasis Suggestopedia yang memadukan relaksasi, sugesti positif, musik instrumental, imajinasi terpandu, dan latihan percakapan. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes *maharah al-kalam* yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan, dengan penilaian meliputi aspek pelafalan, kelancaran berbicara, ketepatan penggunaan kosakata, dan kemampuan menyampaikan gagasan. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan uji *independent sample t-test* dan rumus N-Gain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata nilai *post-test* kelompok eksperimen (82,46) lebih tinggi secara signifikan dibandingkan kelompok kontrol (71,28). Hasil uji *t* menunjukkan adanya perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok ($p = 0,001 < 0,05$). Selain itu, kelompok eksperimen memperoleh nilai N-Gain sebesar 0,68, sedangkan kelompok kontrol sebesar 0,39. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan relaksasi dan imajinasi dalam metode Suggestopedia efektif dalam meningkatkan *maharah al-kalam* siswa. Metode ini berpotensi menjadi alternatif pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang lebih menarik, mampu meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa, serta mendorong partisipasi aktif dalam berkomunikasi.

Kata Kunci: *Suggestopedia, relaksasi, imajinasi, maharah al-kalam, bahasa Arab.*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of relaxation and imagination techniques within the Suggestopedia method in improving the *maharah al-kalam* (Arabic speaking skills) of elementary school students. A quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group was employed. The research subjects consisted of 25 students from Class IV-A of SD Al Islah Tulungagung as the control group and 24 students from Class IV-B as the experimental group. The control group received conventional Arabic language instruction through lecture, question-and-answer, and vocabulary memorization, while the experimental group received Suggestopedia-based learning that incorporated relaxation, positive suggestion, instrumental music, guided imagination, and conversational practice. Data were collected through a *maharah al-kalam* test administered before and after the treatment, evaluating pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary accuracy, and the ability to convey ideas. Data analysis was conducted using an independent

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sample t-test and the N-Gain formula. The results indicated that the post-test mean score of the experimental group (82.46) was significantly higher than that of the control group (71.28). The t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). Furthermore, the experimental group achieved an N-Gain value of 0.68, compared to 0.39 in the control group. These findings demonstrate that the application of relaxation and imagination within the Suggestopedia method is effective in enhancing students' *maharah al-kalam*. This method has the potential to serve as a more engaging alternative for Arabic language learning, fostering students' self-confidence and encouraging active participation in communication.

Keywords: *Suggestopedia, relaxation, imagination, maharah al-kalam, Arabic language.*

Introduction

Foreign language learning at the elementary school level plays a strategic role in building students' communicative competence from an early age (Al-Maqayis & 2013, 2013). In addition to English, Arabic is one of the foreign languages widely taught in madrasah and Islamic schools in Indonesia due to its dual academic and religious functions. One of the primary objectives of Arabic language learning is to develop *maharah al-kalam* (speaking skills) so that students are able to use the language actively in communicative contexts. However, numerous studies have shown that students' speaking ability in a foreign language tends to be lower than their receptive skills such as reading and listening, as students frequently encounter psychological barriers, limited vocabulary, and insufficient opportunities for speaking practice (Zainuri, 2019).

The low level of foreign language speaking ability represents a persistent paradox in Indonesian educational practice (Syah et al., 2023). Despite years of studying Arabic and English, many students still struggle to express ideas orally. This condition indicates that language learning has not fully encouraged the use of language as a means of communication. Instruction overly focused on grammatical mastery and rote memorization often yields good linguistic knowledge but fails to develop genuine communicative competence (Yakin, 2022).

From the perspective of second language acquisition, Krashen (1982) asserts that successful language learning is determined not only by mastery of linguistic rules, but also by the learner's psychological state. Through the Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen explains that anxiety, fear, and low self-confidence can obstruct the intake of linguistic input into the acquisition process (Rasyid, 2021). Therefore, language instruction must be designed in an environment that is comfortable, low-pressure, and affords students the opportunity to use language naturally.

One approach consistent with these principles is the Suggestopedia method, developed by Georgi Lozanov. This method integrates relaxation, positive suggestion, music, and imagination to create a conducive learning environment. Lozanov (1978) argued that a relaxed learning state can optimize learners' mental potential, enabling the learning process to proceed more effectively. In language instruction, Suggestopedia provides space for students to interact without fear of making errors, thereby allowing speaking confidence to develop more optimally (Yakin, 2022).

Relaxation and imagination are two key components of Suggestopedia that are particularly relevant to improving *maharah al-kalam*. Relaxation helps reduce anxiety that commonly arises when students are asked to speak in a foreign language, while imagination enables students to construct more meaningful communicative contexts. Research on language anxiety indicates that affective factors have a significant relationship with students'

communicative performance in a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). Accordingly, instruction that effectively reduces emotional barriers has the potential to enhance students' participation and speaking ability (S Fahrurrozi, 2021).

Although Suggestopedia has been widely applied in foreign language learning, studies that specifically examine the effectiveness of relaxation and imagination on the maharah al-kalam of elementary school students remain relatively scarce, particularly within the context of Arabic language learning in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of relaxation and imagination within the Suggestopedia method in improving the maharah al-kalam of Class IV students at SD Al Islah Tulungagung. The findings are expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of more communicative, enjoyable, and student-centered Arabic language learning strategies.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group design. The research subjects consisted of 49 Class IV students at SD Al Islah Tulungagung, comprising 25 students from Class IV-A as the control group and 24 students from Class IV-B as the experimental group. Prior to the treatment, both groups were administered a pre-test to measure their initial maharah al-kalam ability. The control group received Arabic language instruction using conventional methods, including lecture, question-and-answer, and vocabulary memorization, while the experimental group received instruction using the Suggestopedia method, which encompassed relaxation activities, positive suggestion, instrumental music playback, guided imagination, contextual dialogues, and conversational practice. The treatment was conducted over six sessions using identical instructional materials for both groups. Following the treatment, students were administered a post-test consisting of a simple conversational task assessed based on pronunciation, speaking fluency, vocabulary accuracy, and ability to convey ideas. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine score changes, an independent sample t-test to identify differences in learning outcomes between the two groups, and the N-Gain calculation to measure the degree of improvement in students' maharah al-kalam.

Result And Discussion

Research Findings

The pre-test results indicated that the initial maharah al-kalam ability of students in both the control and experimental groups was relatively comparable. The mean pre-test score of the control group was 58.24, while the experimental group obtained a mean of 59.13. The minimal difference between these scores suggests that both groups possessed nearly equivalent Arabic speaking ability prior to the treatment. In general, most students still encountered difficulties in accurately pronouncing vocabulary, constructing simple sentences, and conveying ideas orally with fluency.

Following six sessions of instruction, both groups demonstrated improvement in maharah al-kalam. Nevertheless, the improvement observed in the experimental group was considerably higher than that of the control group. The control group, which received conventional instruction, obtained a mean post-test score of 71.28, whereas the experimental group, which received the Suggestopedia treatment, achieved a mean post-test score of 82.46. These results indicate a notable difference in Arabic speaking achievement following the treatment.

The improvement in students' ability was further reflected in the N-Gain calculation. The experimental group obtained an N-Gain value of 0.68, classified in the medium-to-high

category, while the control group obtained an N-Gain value of 0.39, falling within the medium category. These findings indicate that the improvement in Arabic speaking ability in the experimental group progressed more effectively than in the control group.

To determine the significance of differences in learning outcomes between the two groups, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The analysis yielded a significance value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the control and experimental groups. This finding suggests that the application of the Suggestopedia method had a positive effect on improving students' maharah al-kalam.

Beyond score improvements, classroom observations during the treatment revealed behavioral changes in the experimental group. Students appeared more actively engaged in conversational activities, more willing to express opinions in Arabic, and exhibited greater enthusiasm compared to before the treatment. The relaxation and imagination activities incorporated in the lessons helped create a comfortable learning atmosphere, enabling students to speak Arabic with greater confidence.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that relaxation and imagination within the Suggestopedia method contribute positively to the enhancement of students' maharah al-kalam. These findings can be explained through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter theory, which posits that anxiety, fear of making errors, and low self-confidence can hinder the language acquisition process. In Arabic language learning, elementary school students often avoid speaking due to concerns about mispronunciation or incorrect vocabulary use. Through relaxation activities combined with positive suggestion, students were placed in a more comfortable psychological state, reducing affective barriers and encouraging them to speak Arabic more confidently. This condition is consistent with the findings of Horwitz et al. (1986), who demonstrated that language anxiety is one of the primary factors influencing students' communicative performance in a foreign language.

Beyond reducing emotional barriers, relaxation also plays a role in enhancing students' cognitive readiness during learning. Lozanov (1978) explained that a relaxed learning environment allows learners to utilize their mental capacities more optimally. When students are in a comfortable state, their attention and concentration toward the learning material increase, making the reception and retention of new vocabulary more effective. In the context of maharah al-kalam, improved mastery of vocabulary and language structure provides a stronger foundation for students to express ideas orally. Consequently, the improvement in speaking ability found in this study was influenced not only by affective factors, but also by enhanced cognitive processing quality during instruction.

The imagination component of the Suggestopedia method also made a significant contribution to the development of students' speaking ability. Imagination enables students to construct mental representations of the communicative situations being studied, rendering language use more contextual and meaningful. According to Brown (2007), effective language learning must provide students with opportunities to use language in authentic and communicative contexts. Through guided imagination activities, students not only memorized vocabulary but also employed it in conversational scenarios closely related to their own experiences. This condition helped students develop speaking fluency while simultaneously enhancing their ability to formulate and convey messages spontaneously.

The findings of this study reinforce the view that success in foreign language learning is determined not solely by mastery of linguistic aspects, but also by students' psychological state and learning experiences. The combination of relaxation and imagination within the

Suggestopedia method is capable of creating a safe, enjoyable, and communicative learning environment that motivates students to engage more actively in speaking. These results align with previous research demonstrating that Suggestopedia effectively improves speaking skills and student participation in foreign language learning. Accordingly, the Suggestopedia method may be considered as an alternative instructional approach for Arabic language learning at the elementary school level, particularly for developing *maharah al-kalam* through the reinforcement of affective aspects and meaningful communicative experiences.

Another important finding emerging from this study is that the effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method can also be explained through the perspective of social constructivism. Speaking proficiency develops more effectively when learners actively construct meaning through interaction rather than merely memorizing linguistic forms. During relaxation and imagination activities, students were encouraged to participate in dialogues, role-playing, and communicative exchanges that required them to negotiate meaning with peers and teachers. Such learning experiences are consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which social interaction and appropriate instructional scaffolding facilitate learners' progression toward higher levels of language competence (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, the improvement in *maharah al-kalam* observed in this study may also reflect the synergistic relationship between supportive classroom interaction and students' increased willingness to communicate in Arabic.

Furthermore, the present findings support the growing body of research emphasizing the importance of creating emotionally supportive and student-centered learning environments in foreign language education. Recent educational studies have highlighted that positive classroom emotions enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and oral participation, whereas negative emotions often inhibit communicative performance (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In elementary school settings, where learners are still developing both linguistic competence and self-confidence, instructional approaches that intentionally foster positive emotions become particularly valuable. The Suggestopedia method addresses these needs by integrating relaxation, imagination, music, and positive suggestion into meaningful communicative activities. Therefore, its effectiveness extends beyond improving speaking performance alone, as it also contributes to learners' emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, and long-term willingness to use Arabic in authentic communication contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that relaxation and imagination within the Suggestopedia method are effective in improving the *maharah al-kalam* of elementary school students. The application of this method produced significantly better Arabic speaking ability compared to conventional instruction, as evidenced by improvements across all assessed aspects: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and ability to convey ideas. This effectiveness indicates that success in language learning is influenced not only by content mastery, but also by students' psychological state during the learning process. Relaxation helps reduce anxiety and build self-confidence, while imagination encourages students to use Arabic in more meaningful and communicative contexts. Therefore, the Suggestopedia method can serve as a viable alternative approach for Arabic language learning that more effectively develops students' speaking skills through the creation of a comfortable, active, and student-experience-centered learning environment.

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