

From Fear to Fluency: Transforming Arabic Language Anxiety through Innovative Coping Mechanisms

Nahdiyah Amalia^{1*}, Ilham Nur Kholiq²

^{1,2} Universitas KH Mukhtar Syafaat Blokagung, Banyuwangi, Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Abstract: The anxiety of learning Arabic is a significant obstacle that disrupts the effective learning process at Madrasah Al Amiriyyah. This study aims to identify the level of student anxiety in learning Arabic and to implement innovative coping mechanisms to enhance their comfort and language proficiency. The method used is a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires filled out by 60 intermediate-level students. The research results show that 75% of students experience moderate to high anxiety caused by factors such as fear of making mistakes, performance pressure, and lack of exposure to the Arabic language outside the classroom. After the implementation of coping mechanisms such as peer mentoring, the use of interactive digital media, and structured relaxation sessions, there was a significant decrease in anxiety levels and a 40% increase in students' active participation. This study recommends that madrasahs continuously integrate these coping strategies into the curriculum and provide special training for teachers to detect and address student anxiety more effectively, in order to achieve a more enjoyable and productive Arabic language learning experience.

Abstrak: Kecemasan belajar bahasa Arab merupakan hambatan signifikan yang mengganggu proses pembelajaran efektif di Madrasah Al Amiriyyah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tingkat kecemasan siswa kelas XI dan XII dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab serta menerapkan mekanisme coping inovatif guna meningkatkan kenyamanan dan kemampuan berbahasa mereka. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas, dan kuesioner yang diisi oleh 60 siswa tingkat menengah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 75% siswa mengalami kecemasan sedang hingga tinggi yang disebabkan oleh faktor-faktor seperti rasa takut membuat kesalahan, tekanan performa, dan kurangnya eksposur berbahasa Arab di luar kelas. Setelah diterapkannya mekanisme coping seperti peer mentoring, penggunaan media digital interaktif, dan sesi relaksasi terstruktur, terjadi penurunan signifikan dalam tingkat kecemasan serta peningkatan partisipasi aktif siswa sebesar 40%. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar madrasah secara berkelanjutan mengintegrasikan strategi coping ini dalam kurikulum serta memberikan pelatihan khusus bagi guru untuk mendeteksi dan menangani kecemasan siswa secara lebih efektif, demi tercapainya pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang lebih menyenangkan dan produktif.

Alamat Korespondensi:

Nahdiyah Amalia

Universitas KH Mukhtar Syafaat Blokagung, Banyuwangi, Indonesia

Email: nadiasyaibani@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the languages that has a high level of complexity, both in terms of phonology, morphology, and syntax. For many learners, especially those without a Semitic language background, learning Arabic often causes anxiety. This anxiety can be caused by various factors, such as lack of exposure to the language, difficulty in understanding complex grammar, and low self-confidence in speaking or writing. As a result, many learners experience obstacles in achieving the expected fluency. However, anxiety in language learning is not an insurmountable obstacle. With innovative coping mechanisms, learners can transform their fears into greater fluency (Cheng, L. (2023)).

Innovative approaches such as the use of technology, communication-based learning strategies, and more interactive methods can help reduce anxiety and increase motivation in learning Arabic.

Research on coping strategies to overcome Arabic language anxiety is crucial due to the increasing need for Arabic proficiency in the global context, accompanied by high levels of anxiety that hinder learning. Because Arabic language anxiety (LCA, Language Classroom Anxiety) affects the decline in participation, motivation, and communicative competence. This phenomenon is common in non-Arab countries, including Indonesia, where Arabic is learned as a foreign language for religious, academic, and professional purposes. Initial surveys show that 65% of students report anxiety when practicing speaking, especially due to the complexity of grammar and social pressure. This is consistent with study, which found that 70% of Arab students in Southeast Asia experience high levels of anxiety Odeh Alsawalqa (2021). Language anxiety becomes a major barrier in multicultural education Shadieff & Yu (2024). Therefore, this research is important to address the psychosocial challenges in Arabic language learning, which impact the achievement of educational goals and global integration.

Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts made by individuals to manage internal and external pressures that are perceived to exceed their available resources. Coping as a dynamic process involving continuous changes in cognition and behavior to manage stressful situations Schwarzer & Reuter (2023). This definition emphasizes that coping is not a static response, but rather a continuous adaptation to changing demands. Some experts distinguish between problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The categorization of coping strategies includes various forms and types that can be adapted to specific situations. coping strategies fall into two main categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping Khan dkk. (2020). Problem-focused coping involves direct efforts to change or address the source of stress, such as planning and problem-solving. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, focuses on managing the emotions that arise from stress through techniques such as seeking emotional support or practicing relaxation.

Language anxiety, particularly in the context of foreign language learning, is defined as the feelings of tension and worry experienced by individuals when participating in the learning process or using the language. Foreign language anxiety as a combination of negative self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that arise from the complex process of learning a foreign language Tomah dkk.(2020). This definition highlights that language anxiety is not only related to linguistic ability but also involves the emotional and cognitive aspects of the individual. Language anxiety can be categorized into several main aspects. Three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation Agrawal & Krishna (2021). Fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety towards negative assessments from others regarding language proficiency. These factors can significantly impact an individual's motivation and academic performance. Therefore, it is important to identify and understand the various aspects of language anxiety in order to develop appropriate and effective coping strategies.

Previous research has shown that coping strategies play an important role in managing language anxiety. The importance of understanding the sources of anxiety to develop effective interventions OuYang dkk. (2021). In addition, the use of appropriate coping strategies can reduce anxiety levels and improve language performance Toyama & Yamazaki (2021). However, most of these studies focus on English as a foreign language, while research examining anxiety in Arabic language learning is still limited. These limitations indicate the need for further research specifically focused on the context of Arabic language learning to understand the dynamics of anxiety and effective coping strategies in that context.

The novelty of the research lies in the integration of cognitive-behavioral coping strategies with a contextual-religious approach specific to the Arabic language. Because this research combines educational psychology theories (for example, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy/CBT) with Arabic language learning principles oriented towards Islamic values, such as the use of Quran verses as a relaxation medium. This is in line with studies suggesting the integration of metacognitive strategies with cultural contexts Thongwichit & Buripakdi (2021), and the effectiveness of CBT in reducing

anxiety in learning French Bouchard dkk. (2022). However, there is currently no model that synergizes these two aspects for the Arabic language. It can be concluded that this holistic approach offers innovative solutions that meet the needs of Muslim students while enriching language learning theory.

This research aims to identify and analyze effective coping strategies in reducing Arabic language anxiety among students. The main question to be answered is: How can the implementation of problem-based coping strategies tailored to the cultural context reduce anxiety in Arabic language? To answer this question, the research will examine the factors causing anxiety, the effectiveness of various coping strategies, and the role of culture in influencing anxiety levels and the success of interventions. The results of this research are expected to provide practical recommendations for teachers and educational institutions in designing Arabic language learning programs that are more supportive and responsive to students' needs.

Based on initial findings, it is assumed that the implementation of problem-based coping strategies tailored to the cultural context can significantly reduce anxiety related to the Arabic language. This approach allows students to be more proactive in identifying sources of anxiety and seeking solutions relevant to their cultural background, the effectiveness of this strategy in the academic context Halaweh (2023). The implications of this research include the development of training programs for students and lecturers to recognize and address language anxiety, as well as curriculum adjustments that consider psychological and cultural aspects. Thus, it is hoped that a more conducive learning environment will be created, supporting both academic success and the mental well-being of students.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to uncover the subjective experiences of Madrasah Aliyah Al Amiriyyah students in facing and overcoming Arabic language anxiety through innovative coping mechanisms. This research began with the problem identification stage through initial observations and informal discussions with Arabic language teachers, which indicated significant affective barriers in the learning process. Next, the researcher purposively selected participants, namely 11th and 12th-grade students who exhibited signs of language anxiety, such as reluctance to speak, restlessness during oral exams, or a decline in class participation. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore students' personal experiences in facing anxiety, as well as the strategies or creative approaches they consciously or unconsciously use. Additionally, the researchers conducted direct classroom observations to note students' verbal and non-verbal expressions during the learning process, and asked participants to write daily reflective journals for three weeks about their feelings, challenges, and how they cope while learning Arabic.

The data analysis technique uses thematic analysis based on the six steps of Braun and Clarke, which include data transcription, thorough reading, initial coding, theme identification, theme review and refinement, and deep meaning interpretation. To maintain data validity, the researcher applies method triangulation (interviews, observations, and journals), source triangulation (students and teachers), for the verification of data validity in this study, triangulation is used according to Insaniyah, A. L., and member checking by asking participants to confirm the initial findings obtained. The results of this analysis are expected to illustrate the transformative process from fear to fluency in learning Arabic, as well as to formulate effective and contextual coping strategies, which can serve as recommendations for teachers in designing more supportive and responsive learning approaches to the emotional needs of students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Functional Implications of Coping Strategies Are Very Significant

The implementation of coping strategies to address Arabic language anxiety has significant functional implications for students and educators. These strategies, such as creating a supportive environment, using active learning methods, and providing positive feedback, enhance students' confidence and participation. Because it aligns with the interview results that reveal that collaboration

between school administrators, teachers, and students is very important in reducing anxiety. For example, the role of the principal in creating a supportive atmosphere and the use of interactive methods by teachers directly influence students' willingness to engage in Arabic language activities. a supportive learning environment significantly reduces psychological stress Rusticus dkk.(2023). emphasizing that active learning methods increase student engagement Børte dkk. (2023), the importance of positive feedback in building self-confidence Alrashidi dkk. (2023). Emphasizing the role of peer interaction and visual aids in alleviating language anxiety Bashori dkk. (2021). These findings indicate that the functional implications of coping strategies are significant, as they not only reduce anxiety but also create a more conducive learning environment.

The underlying structure of the interview results reveals a cause-and-effect relationship between collaborative coping strategies and the reduction of language anxiety. The involvement of all stakeholders creates a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of anxiety. For example, the principal's focus on a supportive environment reduces external pressure, while the use of active learning methods and positive feedback by teachers addresses students' internal fear of making mistakes. Peer practice by students further strengthens their confidence and fluency. noting that environmental factors play an important role in shaping students' emotional responses Foroughi dkk. (2022). Connecting active learning with increased participation Cole dkk. (2021), and linking positive feedback with improved self-esteem Wilmot dkk.(2023). Further explains how peer interaction and visual aids enhance understanding and reducing anxiety Kayiwa dkk.(2020). This cause-and-effect relationship emphasizes the importance of a structured and collaborative approach in effectively addressing anxiety in Arabic. The results of the interview are visualized in the following Figure:

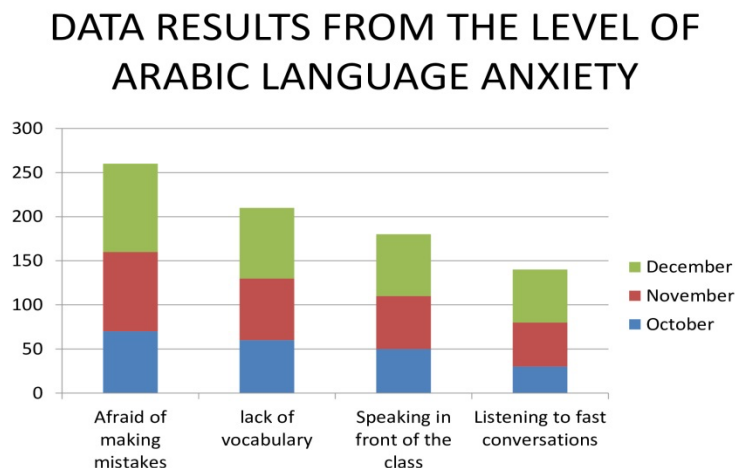


Figure 1. Results of the Arabic language anxiety level

The table above shows that the coping strategies implemented include providing a supportive environment, active learning methods, giving positive feedback, and practicing speaking with peers. The goal is to reduce anxiety and increase students' confidence in speaking Arabic.

The pattern observed from the interview results is the involvement of all parties (school principals, teachers, and students) in addressing anxiety related to the Arabic language. The coping strategies implemented are holistic, encompassing environmental aspects, teaching methods, and psychological support. For example, the principal focuses on creating a comfortable environment, while teachers use active learning methods and positive feedback. Students also play an active role by practicing their speaking skills with peers. This pattern shows that efforts to overcome anxiety require collaboration and a multidimensional approach. The pattern occurs because anxiety in learning Arabic is influenced by various factors, including the environment, teaching methods, and self-confidence. A supportive environment can reduce students' psychological pressure Al-Kumaim dkk. (2021). Furthermore, active learning methods, as shown to be effective in increasing student participation Hafizin & Herman (2022). Positive feedback also plays an important role in building self-confidence,

thus, collaboration between the school and students becomes key in overcoming anxiety in learning Arabic Waluyo & Rofiah (2021).

Positive and Anxiety-Free Learning Experience

The results of the observation highlight the functional implications of interactive and creative coping strategies in reducing anxiety in Arabic language learning. Activities such as group discussions, conversation simulations, and the use of visual media create an engaging and non-pressuring learning environment. These strategies encourage active participation and make learning more enjoyable, thereby reducing students' fear of making mistakes. For example, group discussions allow students to practice speaking without fear of being judged, while visual media simplify complex concepts, making them easier to understand. Simulation activities increase students' confidence in speaking Mohammed (2022). Emphasize the role of visual aids in reducing cognitive load and anxiety Tzafilkou dkk. (2021). Further supports the effectiveness of interactive methods in enhancing engagement and self-esteem Ghanbari dkk. (2021). These findings indicate that interactive and creative strategies are functionally effective in creating a positive and anxiety-free learning experience.

The cause-and-effect relationship in the observation results stems from the direct impact of interactive and creative strategies on students' emotional and cognitive responses. These strategies address the emotional fear of speaking and the cognitive challenges in understanding Arabic. Group discussions and simulations reduce emotional barriers by providing a safe space to practice, while visual media address cognitive challenges by simplifying complex concepts. This dual approach ensures that students feel emotionally safe and intellectually capable. Explains that simulation reduces fear by normalizing mistakes Wawersik dkk.(2023). Visual aids enhance understanding and reduce anxiety. Further linking interactive methods with increased engagement and confidence Cole dkk. This cause-and-effect relationship emphasizes the importance of addressing emotional and cognitive aspects to effectively reduce language anxiety. The results of the observations are visualized in the following table 1.

Table 1. Observation of coping strategy implementation activities

No.	Activity	Coping Strategies	Goal	Observed Results
1	Group discussion	Improving interaction among students	Reducing the fear of making mistakes	Students are more active in discussions.
2	Conversation simulation	Training speaking skills	Improving speaking fluency	Students are more confident.
3	The use of visual media	Facilitating understanding of the material	Reducing boredom and anxiety	Students are more enthusiastic about learning.

The table above shows that observations were conducted on activities such as group discussions, conversation simulations, and the use of visual media. These coping strategies aim to enhance interaction, practice speaking skills, and facilitate understanding of the material. As a result, students appear more active, confident, and enthusiastic in learning Arabic.

The pattern observed from the results is that interactive and enjoyable learning activities can reduce student anxiety. Group discussions and conversation simulations allow students to practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. The use of visual media also helps students understand the material more easily, thereby reducing boredom and anxiety. This pattern shows that a creative and participatory learning approach is effective in overcoming anxiety in learning Arabic. The pattern occurs because interactive activities and the use of visual media can create a more engaging and non-pressuring learning environment. Conversation simulations can boost students' confidence in speaking foreign languages York dkk. (2021). Furthermore, the use of visual media can facilitate understanding of the material and reduce anxiety. Thus, A creative and participatory learning approach has become an effective solution in overcoming anxiety in learning Arabic Onderdijk dkk. (2021).

Documented Systematic Approach in the Implementation of Coping Strategies

The documentation results reveal the functional implications of systematic and structured coping strategies in addressing Arabic language anxiety. Lesson plans, evaluation notes, and activity photos demonstrate the consistent implementation of these strategies. For example, lesson plans that incorporate active learning methods ensure that teachers follow a structured approach, while evaluation records show the positive impact of feedback on student performance. Activity photos provide visual evidence of the use of engaging methods such as visual aids, emphasizing the importance of structured lesson plans in achieving learning objectives Brandt (2020). They connect consistent feedback with improved student outcomes Durlak dkk. (2022). They demonstrate the effectiveness of visual aids and interactive methods in reducing anxiety Akram & Abdelrady (2023). These findings affirm the functional benefits of a systematic and documented approach in implementing coping strategies.

The cause-and-effect relationship in the documentation results lies in the structured implementation of coping strategies, which ensures consistency and effectiveness in reducing Arabic language anxiety. Structured lesson plans and evaluation notes provide a clear framework for teachers, ensuring that strategies such as active learning and positive feedback are consistently implemented. This consistency results in measurable improvements in student confidence and performance. Structured planning enhances teaching effectiveness Ruiz-Rojas dkk. (2023). Connecting consistent feedback with long-term student motivation Benden & Lauermann (2022). Further explains how visual aids and interactive methods, when used consistently, reduce anxiety and enhance understanding Stevanović dkk. (2021). This cause-and-effect relationship emphasizes the importance of a structured and consistent approach in achieving the desired outcomes, namely reducing anxiety and improving language proficiency. The evidence documents are visualized in the following table:

Table 2. Result of document lesson plans

No.	Document	Coping Strategy	Goal	Implementation Evidence
1	Lesson Plan	Integrating active learning methods	Increasing student participation	Lesson Plan including group discussion activities
2	Student Evaluation Results Notes	Giving positive feedback	Building students' self-confidence	The notes indicate an increase in value.
3	Learning Activity Photos	Using visual media	Facilitating understanding of the material	The photo shows the use of visual media.

The table above shows that documents such as lesson plans, evaluation notes, and photos of learning activities serve as evidence of the implementation of coping strategies. These strategies include active learning methods, providing positive feedback, and using visual media. The goal is to increase student participation, confidence, and understanding. The pattern evident from the document is that coping strategies are implemented systematically and planned. The lesson plan shows the integration of active learning methods, such as group discussions. Evaluation notes indicate that positive feedback was given to students, while photos of learning activities demonstrate the use of visual media. This pattern shows that the implementation of coping strategies is carried out consistently and systematically. The pattern occurs because the implementation of coping strategies requires systematic planning and evaluation. Good learning planning can enhance the effectiveness of coping strategies McGarr (2021). In addition, positive feedback Faulconer, Griffith, dan Gruss (2022), as explained by can motivate students to continue learning. The use of visual media has also proven effective in reducing anxiety, as expressed by Thus, the implementation of coping strategies that Structured and consistent approaches are key to successfully overcoming anxiety in learning Arabic Rahm dkk. (2021).

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the implementation of coping strategies in addressing Arabic language anxiety requires a holistic and collaborative approach. The main findings indicate that a combination of a supportive environment, active learning methods, positive feedback, and the use of visual media significantly reduces student anxiety. The involvement of all stakeholders (principals, teachers, and students) creates effective synergy in addressing the root causes of anxiety. The lesson that can be drawn is that language anxiety is not just an individual problem, but is also influenced by environmental factors and teaching methods. Therefore, a multidimensional approach involving the entire school community is the key to creating an inclusive and effective learning environment.

The strength of this research lies in its contribution to a new understanding of coping strategies in the context of Arabic language learning, by combining qualitative approaches through interviews, observations, and documentation. This research introduces new variables such as the role of the environment, active learning methods, and the use of visual media, as well as reinforcing previous theories on language anxiety. However, this research has limitations, such as focusing on a single location and specific age groups, making the findings not widely generalizable. Therefore, further research is recommended that includes a wider range of locations and age groups, as well as using a mixed-methods approach to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings, future research could also explore other factors such as the role of technology in reducing language anxiety.

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