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Developing Shawqi Dhayf-Based Worksheets for *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* to Improve Arabic Reading Skills of Novice Learners

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Abstract

Reading Arabic texts requires learners to connect grammatical knowledge with meaning, yet *naḥw* is still often taught as a body of rules to be memorised. *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, the standard beginners' text, offers neither exercises (*tadrībāt*) nor evaluation tasks, so its rules rarely reach the point of application to connected text. This study develops student worksheets for *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* grounded in Shawqi Dhayf's simplification of *naḥw*, aiming to strengthen reading skills among beginner learners. The development followed the Borg and Gall procedure and was implemented with 30 first-grade students through expert validation, a small-group trial, and a single-group pre-test and post-test design analysed with descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test. The worksheets arrange graded syntactic exercises along a pathway from identifying grammatical elements to comprehending whole texts, positioning grammar as a means of reading rather than an end in itself. For teachers, this offers a practical way to convert rule-centred lessons into scaffolded reading practice; for material developers, it shows how a classical grammatical text can be reworked into comprehension-oriented materials. Wider adoption still depends on evidence from designs with control groups and extended follow-up.

Abstrak

Membaca teks Arab menuntut pembelajar menghubungkan pengetahuan tata bahasa dengan makna, namun *naḥw* masih sering diajarkan sebagai kumpulan kaidah untuk dihafal. *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, kitab dasar yang lazim dipakai, tidak menyediakan latihan (*tadrībāt*) maupun tugas evaluasi, sehingga kaidahnya jarang sampai pada tahap penerapan terhadap teks utuh. Penelitian ini mengembangkan lembar kerja siswa untuk *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* yang berlandaskan penyederhanaan *naḥw* menurut Shawqi Dhayf, dengan tujuan memperkuat keterampilan membaca pada pembelajar pemula. Pengembangan mengikuti prosedur Borg dan Gall dan dilaksanakan pada 30 siswa kelas satu melalui validasi ahli, uji coba kelompok kecil, serta desain pra-tes dan pasca-tes satu kelompok yang dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif dan uji t sampel berpasangan. Lembar kerja ini menata latihan sintaksis bertingkat dalam satu alur, dari mengenali unsur gramatikal hingga memahami teks utuh, sehingga tata bahasa berfungsi sebagai sarana membaca, bukan tujuan akhir. Bagi guru, rancangan ini menawarkan cara praktis mengubah pembelajaran berbasis kaidah menjadi latihan membaca yang berjenjang; bagi pengembang bahan ajar, rancangan ini menunjukkan bagaimana kitab tata bahasa klasik dapat diolah menjadi bahan berorientasi pemahaman. Adopsi yang lebih luas tetap bergantung pada bukti dari desain yang menyertakan kelompok pembanding dan pengukuran lanjutan.

الملخص

تتطلب قراءة النصوص العربية ربط المعرفة النحوية بالمعنى، غير أن النحو لا يزال يدرس في كثير من الأحيان مجموعة من القواعد تحفظ. ولا يقدم متن الآجرومية، وهو النص الأساسي للمبتدئين، تدريبات ولا مهام تقويمية، ولذلك قل أن تصل قواعده إلى مرحلة التطبيق على نص متصل. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تطوير أوراق عمل للطلاب في متن الآجرومية قائمة على تيسير النحو عند شوقي ضيف، بهدف تعزيز مهارة القراءة لدى المتعلمين المبتدئين. وقد اتبعت الدراسة إجراءات البحث والتطوير عند بورغ وغال، وطبقت على ثلاثين طالبا من الصف الأول من خلال التحكيم من الخبراء، وتجربة مجموعة صغيرة، وتصميم اختبار قبلي وبعدي لمجموعة واحدة حلل بالإحصاء الوصفي واختبار ت للعينات المزدوجة. وتنظم أوراق العمل تدريبات نحوية متدرجة في مسار واحد ينتقل من تحديد العناصر

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النحوية إلى فهم النصوص الكاملة، بحيث يصبح النحو وسيلة للقراءة لا غاية في ذاته. ويقدم هذا التصميم للمعلمين سبيلا عمليا لتحويل الدروس القائمة على القواعد إلى تدريب قرائي متدرج، وللمطورين نموذجا لكيفية إعادة صياغة متن نحوي تراثي في صورة مواد موجهة إلى الفهم. غير أن التوسع في تطبيقها يظل مرهونا بأدلة من تصاميم تتضمن مجموعة ضابطة ومتابعة ممتدة.

Keywords: Arabic grammar instruction; Arabic reading comprehension; instructional materials development; Islamic boarding school; student worksheets

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Introduction

Arabic as a means of communication between people is closely related to the discipline of Linguistics. This connection arises because linguistics is the science that studies language itself. In language learning, declarative knowledge of the linguistic system and the ability to use it in practice are complementary, since grammar describes language rather than replacing it (Wahba et al., 2022). One of the fundamental aspects of mastering Arabic is reading skills. Reading literature is the most important aspect because it is the basis for mastering other skills. According to research by Zurqoni and Retnawati (2020), reading is a receiving activity; however, to get a good and thorough understanding, humans must be active in processing reading texts into the main material.

In Arabic, reading comprehension rests on metalinguistic knowledge—phonological, morphological, and orthographic awareness—that learners build through the study of *ṣarf* (morphology) and *naḥw* (syntax) (Bin Sawad et al., 2022). *Naḥw* is the main foundation and tool for studying Islamic science. It is not wrong to say that *naḥw* is the heart of Arabic science. *Naḥw* analyses how words are arranged into sentences; when learners lack this analytical frame, mastery of Arabic grammar remains fragmented and error-prone (Ismail et al., 2022). The codification of Arabic grammar was shaped by contact with Greek logical traditions, although the extent of that influence remains debated (Fassberg, 2022). Because Standard Arabic is diglossic and its orthography is only partly vocalised, comprehension depends on the reader's spoken-language resources and metalinguistic knowledge rather than on decoding alone (Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2025).

One of the popular *naḥw* books among boarding school education in learning Arabic grammar is *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, by Ibn Ājurrūm (1998). *Ājurrūmīyah* was chosen because the context and content of the material are suitable for beginner-level students. The book does not provide feedback in the form of *tadrībāt* (exercises) or *ikhtibār* (tests) as a learning evaluation. Citing the theory of Gronlund (1985), evaluation in the form of tests is a systematic process of analyzing and interpreting knowledge information to the extent that students achieve learning objectives (Arifianto, 2021). Then, in practice, learning *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* focuses on memorizing rules without adequate application in reading skills. This indication causes a lack of contextual understanding of Arabic texts. To overcome this problem, a more interactive learning method is needed, one of which is the development of comprehension-based *tadrībāt* in reading practice.

When viewed from an ontological perspective, the concept of *naḥw* has sparked a debate that has given rise to two distinct perspectives: classical *naḥw* and modern *naḥw*. As al-Ghufaylī (2013) noted, *naḥw* is divided into four categories: a) a science derived from *kalām* using the *istiqrā'* method by examining structure without meaning, b) *naḥw* limited to *iʿrāb* and *ʿāmil*, c) *naḥw* that only discusses words and the relationships between words in a sentence, d) *naḥw* that only examines the relationships between words and sentences. Meanwhile, in modern *naḥw*, there are two concepts: the science of syntax and, secondly, *naḥw* as the science of grammar (Muhyiddin, 2009). This means that the focus of *naḥw* lies in the language as it is, not in what lies behind the language, as was the case with classical scholars. In other words, *naḥw* functions in accordance

with linguistic reality and examines the science of Arabic *kalam* abstractly, outside the reality of the Arabic language.

The theory of Shawqi Dhayf, an Arabic linguist, emphasizes the importance of interactive and contextual approaches in Arabic language learning. His perspective on language learning does not focus only on grammatical rules but also on their application across the language skills, including reading comprehension (Alhawary, 2023). Dhayf's conception of *naḥw* is set out in his book *Tajdīd al-naḥwī*, where it is developed from the theory of *naḥw* advanced by Ibn Madha. He proposes six reforms: (a) condensing the *naḥw* material (*tansīq abwāb al-naḥw*); (b) removing the discussion of *iʿrāb taqdīrī* and *iʿrāb maḥallī*; (c) *al-iʿrāb li-ṣiḥḥat al-nuṭq*, that is, using *iʿrāb* to support correct pronunciation rather than preserving analyses that usage does not require; (d) *waḍʿ ḍawābiṭ wa taʿrīfāt daqīqah*, setting more precise definitions and constraints for the rules; (e) *ḥadhf zawāʾid kathīrah*, removing redundant *naḥw* material that serves no function, such as *ism al-ālāt*, *taṣghīr*, and *fiʿl al-taʿajjub*; and (f) *ziyādat iḍāfāt li-baʿḍ al-abwāb*, the addition of particular discussions to certain chapters, accompanied by rules of *makhraj*. As is known, a *fiʿl muḍāriʿ* followed by *nūn al-tawkīd* is *mabnī ʿalá al-fatḥah* and carries a final *fatḥah*, just as it does when preceded by *ʿāmil al-nawāṣib*, although the two cases differ in grammatical status (al-Ghalāyīnī, 1903).

From a pragmatic perspective, *naḥw* is valid when it solves actual problems of use, which is why reform movements have sought to simplify grammatical description and align it with learners' needs (Suleiman, 1996). This situation gave rise to educational linguistics. Educational linguistics is a branch of applied linguistics that specifically analyzes, describes, and explains language learning and teaching practices based on linguistic theories derived from micro-linguistics, such as semantics, syntax, and morphology, and macro-linguistics, such as the history of language, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics—as well as psychology, sociology, and educational theories. It develops theories and practices of language learning from a reading-linguistic perspective. This concept is incorporated into pedagogical grammar, which explains descriptive (scientific) language through direct rules containing clear, conceptual elements relevant to Arabic learners as a second language (Luthfi, 2020).

Thus, Shawqi Dhayf's theory regarding the development of modern grammar textbooks is highly relevant to the tension between rule-centered and usage-oriented approaches to teaching grammar. His proposed reforms aim to reduce unnecessary or less functional material, clarify definitions, prioritize meaningful pronunciation and usage, and structure grammatical concepts according to the practical needs of Arabic learners in Indonesia, especially beginners. These principles are operationalized through a sequence of exercises that progresses from basic vocabulary and sentence introduction to grammatical identification, vocalization (*shakl*), translation, and comprehension of short texts. Thus, the development of exercises in the *Ājurrūmīyah* textbook serves not only as a theoretical framework but also as a design principle for selecting, sequencing, and contextualizing these exercises.

Studies related to the development of *tadrībāt*, *mahārah qirāʾah* (reading skill), and Shawqi Dhayf include research on reading assessment, which conceptualises higher-order thinking in reading as the integration of analysis, evaluation, and creation during text processing (Afflerbach et al., 2015). Starting from the analysis level: distinguishing word forms, describing, and connecting. The evaluation level starts with checking or determining errors, criticizing, refuting, and concluding. Finally, the creation level produces forms of reading exercises by formulating, reconstructing, and producing results.

Surdyanto and Kurniawan (2020) developed a critical reading module that integrated content and language learning and reorganised reading tasks around comprehension, interpretation, and response. Previous studies likewise demonstrate the importance of systematic Arabic teaching-material development. Junelsya et al. (2026), for example, developed QIRAMA, a website-based medium for Arabic reading skills that combined reading materials, audio, visuals, and interactive exercises through the Hannafin and Peck model, and was judged highly feasible by media, material, and language experts. Similarly, Sanah et al. (2025) analysed a

seventh-grade Arabic textbook through a multimodal lens and found that text, image, and layout rarely worked together, concluding that materials need stronger alignment between verbal and visual modes to support comprehension.

Almsbhieen et al. (2023) showed that active-learning strategies—modelling, guided practice, and peer feedback—improved the oral reading skills of low-achieving Arabic-speaking students. Zulhannan et al. (2025) evaluated the Al-Arabiyah Baina Yadaik textbook as a model of communicative Arabic teaching, emphasising the integration of linguistic, communicative, and cultural competencies in beginner-level materials. Wahba et al. (2022) similarly argue that grammar instruction should integrate theory, practice, and research rather than present rules in isolation. These studies demonstrate the relevance of systematic material development, graded grammatical instruction, and reading-oriented practice.

However, the existing literature has not adequately addressed the development of Ājurrūmīyah-based worksheets that integrate these principles of grammatical simplification into tiered exercises focused on developing reading skills for beginner students at Islamic boarding schools. Previous research has tended to focus on the development of Arabic teaching materials in general without explicitly linking the theoretical implications of Shawqi Dhayf's *naḥw* reform to the design of reading exercises. Given the central place of *mahārah qirāʾah* in Islamic learning, it is important to identify the Arabic language tools that support it and to understand how reading test items should be constructed. Consistent with Oktarina et al. (2022), reading skills are central to developing materials that help students understand texts and achieve the learning objectives.

Method

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach from Borg and Gall's (1983) theory, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Teaching materials carry the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners need in order to reach predetermined competency standards (Patoni & Ramayulis, 2004, p. 124). The development began by designing the module structure—cover, introduction, content, exercises, and conclusions—following a systematic development procedure (Surdyanto & Kurniawan, 2020). The implementation stage employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design involving 30 Grade 1 students. Before the intervention, the students completed a reading pre-test (O_1) to establish their initial proficiency. The same group then received learning activities using the developed *naḥw* student worksheet, which incorporated graded *tadrībāt* to support Arabic reading comprehension (X), followed by a post-test (O_2) to measure changes in reading performance. The pre-test and post-test scores were subsequently compared using a paired-samples t-test to determine whether students' reading performance improved significantly following the implementation of the worksheet. To protect the students' privacy, individual names are replaced with codes (S01–S30) throughout this article.

Data were systematically collected through R&D stages that included observation, interviews, documentation, expert validation, reading tests, and student responses. The qualitative data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model (Miles et al., 2018). Observations and documentation were conducted to identify students' difficulties in learning *naḥw* and reading Arabic texts, while interviews with teachers and students were used to identify learning needs and learning problems. Next, expert validation was conducted to assess the developed worksheets in terms of content, exercises, evaluation, language, and presentation before implementation (Richey & Klein, 2005). To obtain quantitative data, 30 students in a single class took a pre-reading test (O_1) to measure their initial proficiency, then participated in instruction using the *naḥw*-based worksheets (X), followed by a post-test (O_2) to measure changes in reading proficiency. The same testing procedure was applied before and after the intervention, while the paired scores were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test. The quality of the products and instruments was ensured through expert evaluation and revisions before field implementation.

The expert validation instrument used a five-point rating scale to assess the quality of the developed *naḥw* student worksheet across content, exercises, assessment, language, and presentation. Each item was rated from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good), while the aggregate percentage of the maximum possible score was used to determine the overall validity category. The scoring criteria and validity thresholds are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Scoring Criteria for Item Ratings and Validity Categories

Scale	Score	Category
Item rating	1	Very poor
Item rating	2	Poor
Item rating	3	Fair
Item rating	4	Good
Item rating	5	Very good
Aggregate (%)	80–100	Very valid
Aggregate (%)	56–79	Valid
Aggregate (%)	40–55	Less valid
Aggregate (%)	0–39	Not valid

As shown in Table 1, item ratings ranged from 1 to 5, whereas the aggregate percentage was classified into four validity categories: very valid (80–100%), valid (56–79%), less valid (40–55%), and not valid (0–39%). The scores obtained from the expert validation questionnaire were averaged and converted into percentages of the maximum possible score. These percentages were then interpreted using the specified categories to determine whether the worksheet met the validity criteria before classroom implementation.

In the instrument development process, a questionnaire was used to evaluate the worksheets against learning objectives and product components, including content, exercises, assessment, language, and presentation. The content of the instrument was reviewed by relevant experts before implementation, and the worksheets were then revised based on their recommendations. The expert review procedure was a key factor in ensuring content validity during the product development process. Following DeVellis (2017), reliability is an empirical characteristic of measurement that concerns the consistency of scores, including internal consistency when an instrument consists of multiple items designed to measure a common construct. Inferential analysis, by contrast, is based on pairs of pre-test and post-test scores. The items were developed through a systematic process of defining learning objectives, preparing test specifications and blueprints, drafting items, and reviewing them against the specifications before small-scale trials (Al Lawati, 2023).

The effectiveness of the developed worksheet was analyzed using a paired-samples t-test appropriate for a one-group pre-test–post-test design. Fieldwork ran from 13 May to 2 August 2025: classroom observation on 13 May, teacher and student interviews on 15 May, a pre-test on 12 June, the learning and drill phase from 18 June to 20 July, and the post-test and follow-up interviews on 25 July and 2 August.

The mean difference was calculated from the difference between each student's post-test and pre-test scores, and the *t*-value was then determined by comparing the mean difference with its standard error; with $n = 30$ students, the degrees of freedom were $df = n - 1 = 29$, and a significant *t*-value indicated a significant change in students' reading achievement following the intervention. To support the validity of the findings, extended observation, source triangulation, and method triangulation were employed. The students were aware that they were participating in lessons using the developed workbook and therefore were not blinded to the intervention.

Results

Analysis of Problems and Needs of Teaching Materials

The preliminary needs analysis was conducted through classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students at Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Sunan Ampel, Prambon, Nganjuk. The analysis focused on learning objectives, instructional materials, teaching methods, students' difficulties in learning *naḥw*, and the types of exercises needed to support Arabic reading comprehension. The results revealed several challenges related to students' limited vocabulary, difficulties understanding grammatical concepts, and insufficient opportunities to practise reading through graded exercises. Table 2 summarises the problems identified during the observation and interview stages.

Table 2 Problems Identified from Observation and Interviews

No	Aspect	Description
O1	Learning objectives	Students' mastery of understanding Arabic grammar in the *Ājurrūmīyah* book to improve Islamic reading from the Qur'an and *al-Ḥadīth*, and *kitab turāth*, etc.
O2	Learning materials	The *naḥw* material is taken from the *Ājurrūmīyah* book and its translation, which does not provide simple examples in everyday life questions as evaluation material. Because *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* is categorized as a classic book.
O3	Teaching method	The method of teaching *naḥw* is by demonstration, followed by a question-and-answer session and an end-of-semester *tamrīnāt*.
I1	Lack of interest in learning *naḥw*	Because the majority of students come from formal education, where Arabic language learning is not available.
I2	The teaching materials used are not supported by vocabulary, such as examples in everyday life.	Minimal knowledge of Arabic *mufradāt* and a lack of practice in introducing simple examples in everyday life.
I3	Students have difficulty learning *naḥw*	The concept of the *Ājurrūmīyah* book: all vocabulary is written in Arabic. While for the beginner level, there needs to be second-language assistance.
I4	Teachers have difficulty providing examples in *naḥw*	This is due to the limited duration of learning. So, no suitable examples are found in learning.
I5	Causes of difficulty in learning *naḥw*	Due to the lack of students in recording vocabulary, the reading mastery process is lacking.
I6	Causes of students' lack of interest in reading Arabic literature	The concept of mastery of *naḥw* is still lacking, and students are surprised by Arabic texts without *shakl*.
I7	Causes of teachers not giving reading questions	Lack of references in developing reading-based books and *naḥw* problems
I8	Appropriate test for *naḥw* comprehension	Introduction of *naḥw* theory with simple examples, assisted by two languages, considering the different backgrounds of students.
I9	*Tadrībāt* is suitable for evaluating reading skills	Evaluation tests can test students' understanding starting from *mufradāt*, *naḥw*, and short reading texts, then long reading texts in Arabic.

As shown in Table 2, the identified problems concerned both instructional practices and students' learning needs. The existing use of *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* provided a foundation for learning *naḥw*, but the materials were not sufficiently supplemented with contextual examples, vocabulary support, and graded exercises that connected grammatical knowledge with reading comprehension. The interviews also highlighted students' diverse educational backgrounds and difficulties reading Arabic texts without vowel markings. These findings provided the basis for developing a *naḥw* worksheet that incorporates the approach associated with Shawqi Dhayf, accessible examples, bilingual support, and progressively structured *tadrībāt*. The exercises were designed to move from basic vocabulary and grammatical understanding to short and longer Arabic reading texts, addressing the needs identified during the preliminary analysis.

Based on the recapitulation table of observations and interviews conducted together, it can be seen that the teacher relies on a limited range of methods and references in teaching Arabic, which makes learning monotonous and boring. Students, in turn, lack interest and enthusiasm because they come from different educational backgrounds and experience culture shock when presented with original Arabic materials without appropriate supplementary textbooks.

The interview data indicated that a method and curriculum suited to students' needs were required if their understanding of Arabic was to improve in both listening (*istimāʿ*) and reading (*qirāʾah*), which in turn supports their mastery of writing. The needs identified at this stage therefore served as the basis for developing materials designed around the requirements of teachers and students, and for selecting the *naḥw* content to be included in the module.

Furthermore, based on the results of the interviews above, a lack of sufficient vocabulary in the *Ājurrūmīyah* textbook makes the process of reading Arabic texts more difficult. This issue also underscores that vocabulary knowledge, grammatical awareness, and comprehension are interrelated components. Worksheets containing enrichment questions on *naḥw* and basic vocabulary will be more easily accessible, particularly for beginners studying the *Ājurrūmīyah* text to learn *naḥw*.

Tadrībāt Design from Shawqi Dhayf's Perspective

Following the preliminary needs analysis, the worksheet was designed to address students' difficulties in understanding *naḥw* and applying grammatical knowledge to Arabic reading. The design incorporated selected principles associated with Shawqi Dhayf's approach, particularly the selection of relevant grammatical content and its presentation through accessible explanations, contextual examples, and structured exercises. The worksheet consists of several components, including a cover, foreword, table of contents, *naḥw* materials, and references. Table 3 summarises these components and their intended purposes.

Table 3 *Tadrībāt* Book Design from Shawqi Dhayf's Perspective

No	Teaching Material	Material Purpose
1	Book Cover	The cover of this teaching material features a clean layout that reflects the subject matter. The title is written in Arabic prominently with bold typography to ensure clarity.
2	Foreword	Aims to give the reader an initial scheme of the overall content of the book, and the purpose of this book is explained.
3	Table of Contents	The table of contents lists the *naḥw* units together with their learning objectives. The competencies were developed according to the standards set in *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, while the indicators and objectives follow Bloom's taxonomy and package *naḥw* material and *tadrībāt* from Shawqi Dhayf's perspective.
4	Contents of *naḥw*	Word Division: *fiʿl*, *ism*, and *ḥarf*. *Iʿrāb al-marfūʿāt*: *fāʿil*, *mafʿūl* not accompanied by *fāʿil*, *mubtadaʾ* and *khabar*, *ʿāmil* that enters the *mubtadaʾ* and *khabar*, *awāmil al-manṣūbāt*, *asmāʾ tawābiʿ*: *naʿt*, *ʿatf*, *badal*, *tawkīd*. *Mufradāt*. The questions here are under the objectives achieved, namely, reading skills.
5	References	References contain materials for the overall development of the book.

As outlined in Table 3, the worksheet combines introductory sections, systematically organised *naḥw* materials, and exercises intended to support reading skills. The grammatical content is based on selected topics from *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, while the learning objectives and indicators guide the development of the exercises. The design also incorporates *mufradāt* and examples drawn from everyday contexts to help students connect grammatical concepts with language use. Figure 1 presents selected pages of the developed worksheet, illustrating how these design principles are implemented in the learning materials and exercises.



Figure 1 Selected Pages of the Developed Worksheet

Figure 1 illustrates four aspects of the worksheet design: the cover, the curriculum table, the bilingual presentation of learning materials, and the exercise pages. The cover, shown at the top left, displays the title *Kurrāsat tadrībāt li-Kitāb Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, the school's name, and fields for the student's name and registration number. The curriculum table, at the top right, organises the *naḥw* topics developed from Shawqi Dhayf's perspective. The material page, at the bottom left, presents explanations in Arabic and Indonesian, accompanied by everyday examples to support vocabulary learning. Its content follows the principle of selecting grammatical concepts relevant to students' learning levels while omitting less essential material. The exercise page, at the bottom right, contains *tadrībāt* for each chapter, addressing *shakl* (diacritics), *mufradāt* (vocabulary), grammatical structures, and translation between Indonesian and Arabic. These exercises are organised to help students progress from recognising vocabulary and grammatical forms to applying their understanding in reading-related tasks.

Results of Validation and Revision from Teaching Material Experts

The developed worksheet was evaluated by subject-matter and instructional-design experts to assess its suitability before classroom implementation. The evaluation covered six components: content design, *naḥw* materials, *tadrībāt*, worksheet design, worksheet format, and material characteristics. The experts assessed each component using the rating criteria presented in Table 1, and the resulting percentages were interpreted according to the established validity categories. Table 4 presents the validation scores for each component and the corresponding experts.

Table 4 Expert Validation Results by Component

Component	Validators	Expert 1 (%)	Expert 2 (%)
Content design	Miftahul Huda; Afton Ulin Nuha	76.36	63.64
Naḥw material	Miftahul Huda; Afton Ulin Nuha	96.42	82.14
Tadrībāt	Miftahul Huda; Afton Ulin Nuha	91.66	75.00
Worksheet design	Syamsul Ma'arif; Khoirul Anam	78.57	71.42
Worksheet format	Syamsul Ma'arif; Khoirul Anam	84.77	77.50
Material characteristics	Syamsul Ma'arif; Khoirul Anam	85.00	75.00

As shown in Table 4, the expert evaluations yielded different scores across the six components. For content design, the two experts assigned scores of 76.36% and 63.64%, respectively, producing a mean of 70.00%, which falls within the valid category. The *naḥw* materials received scores of 96.42% and 82.14%, with a mean of 89.28%, while *tadrībāt* received scores of 91.66% and 75.00%, with a mean of 83.33%. Both components fell within the very valid category. The three instructional-design components were evaluated separately by two additional experts. Worksheet design received scores of 78.57% and 71.42%, worksheet format received 84.77% and 77.50%, and material characteristics received 85.00% and 75.00%. These results provided a basis for identifying the components that required revision before the worksheet was implemented with students.

Regarding the *naḥw* materials, the experts recommended simplifying the language and reducing dependence on the terminology and explanations commonly found in classical texts. These revisions were intended to make the grammatical concepts more accessible to beginning learners while retaining the content needed to support Arabic reading comprehension.

For *tadrībāt*, the validation results indicated that the exercises were suitable for use, although several aspects required revision. The experts recommended improving composition and spelling, refining Arabic word choices, and addressing inconsistencies in the provision of *shakl* (diacritical marks). The exercises were designed to align grammatical practice with *mahārah qirāʾah* (reading skills).

The instructional-design experts also identified revisions to improve the worksheet's presentation and usability. For worksheet design, the recommendations included revising the cover, colour scheme, image placement, and tables. The worksheet format and material characteristics were also evaluated in terms of their suitability for teachers and students and their potential to facilitate independent learning. These recommendations were incorporated into the revision process before the worksheet proceeded to classroom trials.

Following expert validation and revision, the worksheet was tested in a small class to examine its acceptability under actual learning conditions. The trial involved 10 students and focused on their responses to the developed materials. The student-response results showed a mean acceptance rate of 95.75%, with individual results ranging from 92.5% to 97.5% and a total of 383 positive item responses out of 400. These results indicated a high level of student acceptance of the worksheet and supported proceeding to the larger classroom implementation.

After the small-class trial, the worksheet was implemented with 30 Grade 1 students to examine changes in Arabic reading performance. Students completed the same reading assessment before and after the intervention, allowing their scores to be compared using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples *t*-test. Table 5 presents the pre-test and post-test means, standard deviations, and mean gain, while Figure 2 illustrates the score changes for individual students.

Table 5 Pre-test and Post-test Reading Scores (n = 30)

Measure	M	SD
Pre-test	69.43	7.42
Post-test	85.90	7.29
Gain	16.47	—

As presented in Table 5, the mean reading score increased from 69.43 (SD = 7.42) before the intervention to 85.90 (SD = 7.29) afterward, yielding a mean gain of 16.47 points. The paired-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $t(29) = 17.05$, $p < .001$, with a very large within-group effect size (Cohen's $d_z = 3.11$). These results indicate that students achieved higher reading scores after participating in instruction using the developed worksheet. Because the study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, the improvement should be interpreted as a change observed following the intervention rather than definitive evidence that the worksheet alone caused the improvement.

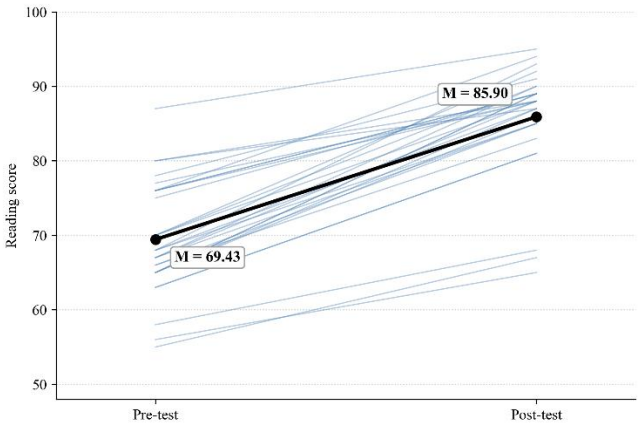


Figure 2 Individual Pre-test and Post-test Scores (n = 30)

Note. M = mean score; each thin line connects one student's pre-test and post-test results (n = 30).

Discussion

Validation and Learner Response

Expert judgement and learner response point in the same direction. The validators rated the worksheets feasible, and the students who used them during the small-group trial accepted them without difficulty. What matters here is less the magnitude of the ratings than the pattern behind them: the validators' reservations concerned presentation, layout, and the making of tables rather than the sequence of the exercises themselves. In that respect the worksheets achieved their central design intention, namely a progression that beginners can follow without losing sight of the text they are reading.

Reading Gains and Their Interpretation

Reading gains are consistent with that judgement. The mean score rose from the pre-test to the post-test, and the effect size within the group was very large, which suggests that improvement was spread across the class rather than confined to a few learners, although a single group cannot separate such a gain from maturation or test familiarity (Shadish et al., 2002). Two features of the design plausibly account for this. First, every exercise required learners to use a rule to settle a question about a sentence or a short passage, so grammatical knowledge was practised in the act of comprehending rather than in isolation. Second, the vocabulary in the items was deliberately familiar, which lightened the burden of lexical decoding and allowed attention to fall on structure and meaning.

Designing a Bridge from Rules to Comprehension

The design of these exercises does not focus on the use of *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah*, but rather on transforming grammatical rules into structured syntactic exercises that directly support comprehension of reading passages. The purpose of these worksheets is to guide students in applying *naḥw* as a strategy for understanding sentence structure and meaning. These exercises progress systematically, starting with identifying linguistic elements and syntactic functions, analyzing relationships between elements, modifying and constructing sentences, applying rules in context, and ultimately understanding the text. This worksheet is designed using Shawqi Dhayf's approach, integrating simplified *naḥw*, the *Ājurrūmīyah* structure, and tiered syntactic exercises into a coherent learning pathway from grammatical knowledge to reading comprehension, particularly for beginner Islamic boarding school students. Additionally, the inclusion of vocabulary instruction in these questions is made easier by using familiar vocabulary, since direct vocabulary instruction is a critical component of reading instruction (Wanzek, 2014), and well-designed resources also support students' self-directed use of learning materials (Shen et al., 2023). The design also answers a curricular demand, since at the primary level language skills need to be taught in ways that make learning targets more rational and systematic in the assignment of tasks (Mohamed, 2023). Lexical competence is likewise a precondition for comprehension among non-native speakers, and materials that leave vocabulary implicit ask learners to use grammatical knowledge they cannot yet attach to words (Ramadan, 2023).

Converging and Diverging Evidence

The present findings are consistent with earlier R&D studies on Arabic teaching materials. Junelsya et al. (2026) designed a website-based medium for Arabic reading skills and found it highly feasible on expert validation, while Setiadi et al. (2026) developed culturally grounded Arabic materials intended to support reading skills and critical thinking, testing them with 30 students in a pre-test and post-test design; in both cases expert validation and field testing served as complementary evidence of feasibility and instructional value, as they do here. Llmia et al. (2023) likewise emphasize that Arabic teaching materials must be evaluated against the learning outcomes set by the curriculum, which is the basis on which the present worksheets align *naḥw*-based exercises with the specific goal of improving reading skills. The present study extends these findings by integrating graded *tadrībāt* into a structured pathway from grammatical identification to text comprehension, so that its contribution lies not only in providing validated teaching material but also in connecting syntactic practice directly with reading development.

Not all evidence, however, points in the same direction. Brimo et al. (2017) found that syntactic knowledge directly accounted for significant variance in reading comprehension among adolescents, which is consistent with the premise underlying these worksheets. By contrast, Susoy and Tanyer (2019) reported that depth of vocabulary knowledge predicted L2 reading comprehension best once vocabulary size and syntactic knowledge were controlled, and Layes et al. (2025) found that, for Arabic-speaking children in grades four and five, orthographic awareness was a stronger predictor of reading comprehension than morphological awareness, even after reading fluency and working memory were taken into account. Read together, and bearing in mind that these are correlational rather than instructional studies, the evidence suggests that syntax is one contributor among several rather than a sufficient condition for comprehension. This qualifies the present results: because the worksheets combine graded syntactic exercises with familiar vocabulary and contextualised texts, the improvement observed here cannot be attributed to grammatical practice alone.

Scaffolding in Classroom Practice

To assess students' understanding of grammatical structures in the worksheets, a scaffolding approach was employed, in which each formative assessment was based on contexts relevant to students' lives. This method proved effective in improving text comprehension accuracy, with an average score of over 90% for each student. Word recognition in Arabic as a foreign language is constrained by unfamiliar graphemes and phonemes, and the absence of short vowels slows reading and affects comprehension (Hansen, 2010). The value of structured grammar instruction in *pesantren* settings is likewise supported by Kamila et al. (2024),

who found that the *bandongan* method supported initial ability to translate *mubtadaʾ–khabar* structures but that over a third of their 26 students still misidentified these structures, concluding that syntactic training should be integrated into such practice. The present study answers that call by treating grammar as a route into reading rather than as an end in itself, and by measuring comprehension rather than rule mastery. From a syntactic perspective, studying *naḥw* is a crucial foundation for reading texts and even for translating them. This is because metalinguistic knowledge—particularly morphological and orthographic awareness—is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension in Arabic (Bin Sawad et al., 2022). Therefore, workbooks containing *naḥw* exercises can serve as a valuable aid in understanding Arabic texts. Nisa and Mutholib (2024) further highlight the relevance of structured instructional support in the teaching of *qawāʿid* (grammar rules). This synthesis expands on these findings by incorporating specific perspectives on *naḥw* reform into the design of a tiered training program for the development of reading skills.

Synthesis: From Rules to Meaning

Overall, these studies indicate that effective Arabic instructional materials must integrate linguistic elements, student needs, targeted competencies, and reading-oriented exercises, rather than presenting grammatical rules in isolation. Based on this foundation, *naḥw* rules derived from *Matn al-Ājurrūmīyah* are integrated with various types of exercises in a contextual and graded manner. Thus, the *naḥw* worksheets developed position grammatical exercises as scaffolding to build reading skills, particularly for beginner students in the Islamic boarding school context.

Conclusion

What this study adds is not a new grammatical theory but an ordering of practice. The worksheets take the simplification principles that Shawqi Dhayf advanced at the level of theory and turn them into classroom tasks, arranging them so that learners first recognise syntactic elements, then manipulate sentence structure, and only then confront connected text. Grammar becomes the instrument through which a sentence is resolved, not a subject studied for its own sake. Expert validation, the responses of learners during the trial, and the direction of change in reading performance all point the same way: for beginners, a graded syntactic pathway is a workable route into reading comprehension.

Three limitations qualify that conclusion. The design used a single group without a comparison condition, so maturation, test familiarity, and prior learning cannot be excluded as alternative explanations for the observed improvement. The sample was one class of 30 students in a single institution, which limits transfer to other settings. No delayed measurement was taken, so whether the improvement persists after instruction ends remains unknown.

Future work should therefore test the same sequence against a comparison group, across several institutions and ability levels, and with follow-up measurement to examine retention. Independent reading measures would strengthen the evidence beyond teacher-made tests. It would also be worth establishing whether the vocabulary support built into the exercises contributes to the gains independently of the grammatical practice, since the two were delivered together here.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

The authors used ChatGPT to help create a diagram based on the collected data. The authors then used Grammarly to correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and readability; to refine academic writing style and clarity; to assist with the translation process; and to organize ideas and improve the manuscript's structure. Claude was used to identify potential gaps in references, questions, and directions for further scientific consideration based on previous research. The authors limited their use of AI solely to supporting the writing and refinement process; it does not replace intellectual contributions, critical thinking, scientific judgment, or the authors' responsibility for the research. All AI-assisted results have been carefully reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors. The authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of this manuscript.

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