

The Perspectives of Master's Students on the Importance of Ushul Nahwu in Learning Arabic as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Arabic Language Learning, Student Perspective, Ushul Nahwu

This study aims to explore students' perspectives on the relevance of learning ushul nahwu in the modern era. A descriptive qualitative approach was used with data collection methods through interviews and questionnaires involving all students who had taken the course. The results showed that most students considered ushul nahwu theoretically important, especially for prospective Arabic language teachers, but they felt the ushul nahwu material needed to be revised to be more relevant to modern needs. Although most students recognized the benefits of ushul nahwu in understanding Arabic grammar, only a small number felt that the course provided practical benefits in their Arabic language skills. Some students have difficulty understanding the concepts of ushul nahwu and applying them in Arabic language learning. The results indicate the need for a review of the ushul nahwu curriculum to better suit the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era, with an emphasis on practical aspects and relevance to the times.

Kata Kunci:

Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Perspektif Mahasiswa, Ushul Nahwu

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perspektif mahasiswa terhadap relevansi pembelajaran ushul nahwu di era modern. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dengan metode pengumpulan data melalui wawancara dan angket (kuesioner) yang melibatkan seluruh mahasiswa yang telah menempuh mata kuliah tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa menganggap ushul nahwu penting secara teoretis, terutama bagi calon guru bahasa Arab, namun mereka merasa materi ushul nahwu perlu direvisi agar lebih relevan dengan kebutuhan modern. Meskipun sebagian mahasiswa mengakui manfaat ushul nahwu dalam memahami tata bahasa Arab, namun hanya sebagian kecil yang merasa mata kuliah ini memberikan manfaat praktis dalam kemampuan berbahasa Arab mereka. Sebagian mahasiswa mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami konsep-konsep ushul nahwu dan mengaplikasikannya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Hasil penelitian mengindikasikan perlunya peninjauan ulang terhadap kurikulum ushul nahwu agar lebih sesuai dengan kebutuhan pembelajaran bahasa Arab di era modern, dengan penekanan pada aspek-aspek praktis dan relevansi dengan perkembangan zaman.

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1. Introduction

The origin of the science of nahwu, which is an important theory in understanding Arabic texts, can be traced through a discipline called Usul Nahwu. Usul Nahwu is the foundation of the development of the nahwu theory (Shohib and Fuadah, 2022). It deals with the method of establishing the principles of nahwu. Studying Usul Nahwi allows us to understand the struggle of the scholars in formulating the theory of nahwu (Ihwan, et.al, 2022). There are four main approaches used by scholars in establishing the principles of nahwu, namely Sima', Qiyas, Ijma', and Ishtishab. However, it should be noted that there are differences of opinion among scholars regarding the sources of Nahwu's theory. Some scholars may not recognize the concept of Ishtishab, as mentioned by Aditya and Sugiyono (2023).

Along with the times, ushul nahwu (basic principles of Arabic grammar) was later made one of the compulsory courses in the curriculum of Arabic language study programs in various universities and higher education institutions (Akmalia, et.al, 2021). This is done to ensure that prospective Arabic scholars and teachers have a deep understanding of the rules of Arabic grammar that have been systematized since the early days of Islam.

Research conducted by Nola and Yasmadi (2023) shows that every student, especially those studying Arabic, is very important to understand this science. By learning the science of ushul an-nahwi, one can understand the law or the basics of the science of nahwu itself. This finding confirms that a good mastery of ushul an-nahwi can provide a deeper understanding of the principles and foundations of Arabic grammar, thus enabling students to analyze and understand language phenomena more comprehensively.

However, as is known, the ushul Nahwu course is often considered a complicated subject for students (Febriyanti, et.al, 2021). Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers, it shows that some students consider ushul Nahwu material difficult to understand and require great effort to learn. This is due to several factors, such as:

- a. Concepts in ushul Nahwu that are abstract and complex, such as *qawa'id* (rules), *istitsna'at* (exceptions), and *qiyas* (analogy).
- b. The use of terminology and typical terms in ushul Nahwu that come from classical Arabic, make it difficult for students to understand.
- c. Lack of emphasis on applicative and practical aspects in learning ushul Nahwu, so students feel the material is less relevant to the needs of communicating in modern Arabic (Participant 4, personal communication, 2024).

However, the challenge is that some students feel that Nahwu courses lack relevance in the Arabic language education curriculum in this modern era (Questioner, 2024). They consider that this material is no longer by the advancement of science and the needs of today's society. This poses a dilemma because one of the objectives of the Arabic language education study program of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia is to prepare graduates to continuously improve their academic quality and experience in line with the development of science and technology, especially in the context of the Arabic language and culture (Arabic, 2024).

Previous research has highlighted different views regarding the importance of the ushul nahwu course for students. Some consider it important because it can open students' minds to diverse opinions, while others argue that it can be confusing with many different opinions (Zulfa, et.al, 2021). Interestingly, the researcher found that the course is only taught to postgraduate students of Arabic language education study programs at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Imam Bonjol State Islamic University Padang, and at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Bandung.

This finding is interesting to note further because the basic principles of nahwu are crucial foundations in a deep understanding of Arabic grammar. When this course is not taught at the postgraduate level, it could indicate an assumption that students already have a sufficient understanding of the basic concepts of nahwu and that there is no need to study it specifically. However, there are concerns that this could result in a decreased emphasis on the theoretical and conceptual aspects of Arabic language learning, especially for those who want to become teachers and experts in this field.

Therefore, a thorough evaluation of the curriculum in the Arabic language education study program is needed, especially about how ushul nahwu is taught, how important it is, and the teaching methods. The question arises whether the decision to no longer teach it at the postgraduate level is appropriate, or whether adjustments need to be made in the way the material is delivered to better suit the context

and needs of students and the development of modern Arabic language learning. Thus, it is hoped that graduates of this study program can have a balance between a strong theoretical and practical understanding of Arabic language teaching.

This latest research will explore the perspectives of Arabic language education students regarding the relevance of ushul nahwu courses in the context of Arabic language education in this modern era, especially in the Arabic language education study program of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. This becomes a new focal point that distinguishes this research from previous studies. Therefore, the researcher decided to overcome this challenge by investigating students' perceptions of ushul nahwu courses. Hopefully, the results of this study can provide valuable input for policymakers in determining whether this course should be abolished or retained.

2. Method

This research utilized interviews and questionnaires as data collection methods, to obtain direct information from all fourth and fifth-semester postgraduate students in the Arabic Language Education study program at the Indonesian University of Education who had taken the Ushul Nahwu course. With a total of 9 postgraduate students in the Arabic Language Education study program. By involving all students, the researchers were able to obtain comprehensive data that reflected the diversity of perspectives from the entire studied population.

This research will adopt a descriptive approach with qualitative methods to investigate students' views on learning the Ushul Nahwu course. The choice of a descriptive qualitative approach is made because it provides an opportunity for researchers to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of students' views, experiences, and perceptions of the investigated topic (Yuliani, 2018). Thus, this research is expected to uncover the actual reality regarding students' views on learning Ushul Nahwu based on data obtained directly from participants.

In this research, two data collection techniques will be used, namely semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (surveys). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with several participants to gain in-depth insights into their views on learning Ushul Nahwu. Through these interviews, researchers can ask additional questions and explore the topic more deeply based on participants' responses. Additionally, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews will enrich the overall analysis and interpretation of the research findings (Edi, 2016).

Meanwhile, a questionnaire will be distributed to all participants to collect broader and more structured data. The questionnaire will contain statements with a dichotomous scale, which only requires participants to choose between two answer options, namely yes or no (Prihatiningsih, 2022). This aims to reveal students' views on the relevance of learning Ushul Nahwu in the modern era. The use of a questionnaire with a dichotomous scale will facilitate data collection in a simpler and more direct format. Thus, the qualitative data from the interviews and the structured data from the questionnaire will complement each other to provide a comprehensive picture of the research topic.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on data obtained through interviews and questionnaires, it was found that the majority of students had difficulty learning the subject of Ushul Nahwu. Some of the main findings are as follows:

Table 1. Instrument of the Research

Question	Answer	
	Ya	Tidak
1. I feel that the ushul nahwu material taught is relevant to the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era.	44.4% (4)	55,6% (5)
2. Understanding ushul nahwu helps me to understand Arabic grammar better.	55,6% (5)	44,4% (4)
3. Learning ushul nahwu provides practical benefits to my Arabic language skills.	33,3% (3)	66,7% (6)

4. Mastery of ushul nahwu is important for me as a prospective Arabic teacher.	77,8% (7)	22,2% (2)
5. I feel that the ushul nahwu material needs to be revised to be more in line with the times.	88,9% (8)	11,1% (1)
6. I am more interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic than ushul nahwu.	55,6% (5)	44,4% (4)
7. In my opinion, the time allocated to studying ushul nahwu is too much compared to the benefits.	66,7% (6)	33,3% (3)
8. I feel happy when studying ushul nahwu because it gives me a deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language.	55,6% (5)	44,4% (4)
9. I find it difficult to understand the concepts of ushul nahwu and apply them in Arabic language learning.	55,6% (5)	44,4% (4)
10. I think that the ushul nahwu course needs to be maintained in the curriculum of Arabic language education in the modern era.	44,4% (4)	55,6% (5)

Based on the results of students' perspectives on the first statement, (about the relevance of ushul nahwu to the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era). The results show that 5 students with a percentage (55.6%) consider ushul nahwu material irrelevant to the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era. This can be explained by Relevance Theory which states that humans tend to choose the most relevant information and ignore irrelevant ones in communication (Anisa and Farisi, 2023). They may consider that the material does not provide new contributions or significant added value in modern Arabic language learning, so it is considered to lack sufficient cognitive effects for participants.

Meanwhile, 44.4% of participants who chose the "Yes" option considered the ushul nahwu material still relevant. This view can be explained by the Theory of Constructivism, which emphasizes that learning is an active process in which individuals construct their knowledge through experience and interaction with the surrounding environment (Arini and Umami, 2019). For those who agree, learning ushul nahwu allows for in-depth exploration, analysis, and discussion of Arabic grammatical concepts. With a deep understanding of ushul nahwu, they can build Arabic knowledge and skills in a systematic and structured way, which is still considered relevant in the context of Arabic language learning in the modern era. Thus, it can be interpreted that most participants (55.6%) stated that the understanding of ushul nahwu is no longer relevant to the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era.

In the second statement, about (understanding ushul nahwu in understanding Arabic). The results showed that 5 students with a percentage of 55.6% chose the "Yes" option where which can be explained by Constructivism Theory. This theory emphasizes that learning is an active process in which individuals construct their knowledge through experience and interaction with the surrounding environment (Arini and Umami, 2019). Where in learning ushul nahwu students learn Sima', Qiyas, Ijma', and Ishtishab which help them in understanding Arabic texts.

Meanwhile, 44.4% of participants who chose the "No" option may have experienced difficulties in building their understanding of Arabic grammar through ushul nahwu. This could be due to several factors, such as ineffective learning methods, lack of motivation or interest, or difficulty in understanding complex concepts in ushul nahwu. They have an inadequate schema or structure of knowledge about Arabic grammar, making it difficult for them to understand ushul nahwu. Thus, it can be interpreted that most participants (55.6%) stated that understanding ushul nahwu helps in understanding Arabic.

The third statement, about (the practical benefits of learning ushul nahwu on Arabic language skills). The results showed that 6 students with a percentage of 66.7% considered that learning ushul nahwu did not provide practical benefits in their Arabic language skills. This can be explained by Relevance Theory which states that humans tend to choose the most relevant information in communication (Anisa and Farisi, 2023). They felt that learning ushul nahwu did not provide significant cognitive effects or clear contributions to the practical improvement of their Arabic language skills. In addition, they focus more on oral and written communication skills in Arabic, thus considering ushul nahwu less relevant to fulfill those practical needs directly.

Meanwhile, 33.3% of participants who chose the "Yes" option considered that learning ushul nahwu provided practical benefits in their Arabic language skills. This can be explained by the Theory of Constructivism, which emphasizes that learning is an active process where individuals construct their knowledge through experience and interaction with the surrounding environment (Arini and Umami, 2019). For participants who chose the "Yes" option, learning ushul nahwu allows them to build a deep understanding of Arabic grammar concepts actively through a process of exploration, analysis, and discussion. By understanding ushul nahwu, they can build their Arabic knowledge and skills in a systematic and structured way, which ultimately provides practical benefits in their Arabic language skills. Thus, it can be interpreted that most participants (66.7%) stated that there were no practical benefits of learning ushul nahwu on their Arabic language skills.

The fourth statement is about (the importance of mastering ushul nahwu for prospective Arabic teachers). The results showed that there were 7 students with a percentage of 77.8% considering mastery of ushul nahwu important for them as prospective Arabic teachers. This can be explained by Relevance Theory which states that humans tend to choose the most relevant information in communication (Anisa and Farisi, 2023). They feel that mastery of ushul nahwu is very relevant to their future profession, as it is an important foundation for understanding Arabic grammar in depth. Although complex, they consider the effort required to be worth the benefits to be gained in their profession.

Meanwhile, 22.2% of participants who chose the "No" option considered that mastery of ushul nahwu was not very important for them as prospective Arabic language teachers, and they found difficulties in learning this material so they considered it less relevant to their future profession. However, from this statement, it was found that most participants (77.8%) stated the importance of mastering ushul nahwu for prospective Arabic teachers.

The fifth statement, about (ushul nahwu material that needs to be revised to be more in line with the times). The results showed that there were 8 students with a percentage of 88.9% agreeing that the ushul nahwu material needs to be revised to be more in line with the times, while 11.1% disagreed with the statement. In the context of education, progressive education theory emphasizes the importance of adapting curriculum and teaching methods to the times and the needs of society. This theory argues that education should be dynamic and adaptive, not static and rigid (Khasanah et al., 2022). Therefore, learning materials, including ushul nahwu, need to be revised and adjusted to the context and needs of the current era.

The survey results show that most respondents agree that the need to revise the ushul nahwu material can be due to the awareness that the material needs to be adjusted to the times so that it remains relevant and can meet the needs of today's society. However, there are still a small number who disagree, perhaps because they consider that the current ushul nahwu material is still quite relevant and does not need to be revised. Of course, in determining whether a material needs to be revised or not, it is necessary to consider various factors, such as the needs of the community, the development of related science, and the effectiveness of the material in achieving learning objectives (Iqbaluddin and Aisa, 2020). Thus, it can be interpreted that most participants (88.9%) agreed that the ushul nahwu materials need to be revised to be more in line with the times.

The sixth statement is about (interest in learning the practical aspects of Arabic rather than ushul nahwu). The results showed that 5 students with a percentage of 55.6% were more interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic than ushul nahwu, while 44.4% of respondents were not. In the context of language learning, this result is in line with communicative theory, where the theory emphasizes the importance of the ability to communicate effectively in the target language. This theory argues that the main purpose of learning a language is to be able to use it in real communication, both oral and written (Rifa'i, 2021). Therefore, more respondents are interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as these aspects enable them to use the language functionally in daily life.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that ushul nahwu also has an important role in Arabic language learning, especially to understand the correct structure and grammar (Ratnasari and Putra, 2023). In designing the Arabic language learning curriculum, it is necessary to consider the balance between practical and theoretical aspects, adjusted to the needs and interests of learners. Thus, the results of this question show that most participants (55.6%) stated that they were more interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic than ushul nahwu.

The seventh statement, about (the allocation of time used to study ushul nahwu is too much compared to the benefits). The results showed that 6 students with a percentage of 66.7% felt that the time allocated to study ushul nahwu was too much compared to the benefits, while 33.3% of respondents did not feel so. To explain this result, we can use some relevant theories in language learning. One of them is motivation theory which states that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affect the success in learning a language (Urfatullaila et al., 2022). Respondents who felt that the time for ushul nahwu was too much meant that they had low intrinsic motivation in learning the theoretical aspects of the language, so they considered the time allocated was not balanced with the benefits.

However, it should be remembered that ushul nahwu provides a strong foundation for understanding the structure and grammar of Arabic. In designing the Arabic language learning curriculum, it is necessary to find a balance between theoretical aspects such as ushul nahwu, and practical aspects such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills (Abror, 2020). This balance can be achieved by allocating proportional time and integrating ushul nahwu in a more practical and relevant learning context. Thus, the results of this question show that most participants (66.7%) felt that the time allocated to learning ushul nahwu was too much compared to the benefits.

The eighth statement is about (students' feelings when studying ushul nahwu because it provides a deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language). The results showed that 5 students with a percentage of 55.6% felt happy when studying ushul nahwu because it provided a deep understanding of the structure of Arabic, while 44.4% of respondents did not feel this way. This is in line with the learning style theory which states that each individual has a different learning style (Wahyuni, 2017). Respondents who feel happy studying ushul nahwu may have a learning style that is more inclined to the theoretical and analytical aspects. They enjoy studying language structure and grammar in depth.

However, it is important to remember that each individual has different learning styles and preferences. In designing an Arabic learning curriculum, it is necessary to consider the balance between theoretical aspects such as ushul nahwu, and practical aspects such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills. Thus, the needs and interests of all learners can be met, both those who enjoy the theoretical aspects and those who are more interested in the practical aspects. Thus, the results of this question show that most participants (55.6%) feel happy when learning ushul nahwu because it provides a deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language.

In the ninth statement is about (students' feelings in understanding the concepts of ushul nahwu and applying them in Arabic language learning). The results showed that 5 students with a percentage of 55.6% felt difficulties in understanding the concepts of ushul nahwu and applying them in Arabic language learning, while 44.4% of respondents did not experience difficulties. This is explained in the Meaningful Learning Theory developed by David Ausubel. He emphasized the importance of connecting new material with existing knowledge in learners' cognitive structures (Lahay et al., 2023). Respondents who find it difficult to understand ushul nahwu concepts have difficulty connecting these concepts with their pre-existing knowledge, making the process of understanding and application difficult.

To overcome difficulties in understanding and applying ushul nahwu concepts, some strategies that can be considered are:

- a. Provide relevant and contextualized examples to help learners connect the concepts with their prior knowledge.
- b. Using various teaching methods and learning media to accommodate learners' various learning styles.
- c. Providing sufficient scaffolding or support to learners, such as additional explanations, gradual practice, or constructive feedback.

By considering relevant learning theories and implementing appropriate strategies, it is expected that learners can better understand and apply ushul nahwu concepts in Arabic language learning. Thus, the results of this question show that most participants (55.6%) find it difficult to understand ushul nahwu concepts and apply them in Arabic language learning.

The tenth statement is about (whether or not to maintain the ushul nahwu course in the Arabic language education curriculum in the modern era.). The results showed that 5 students with a percentage of 55.6% disagreed that ushul nahwu courses need to be maintained in the Arabic language education curriculum in the modern era, while 44.4% of respondents agreed to maintain it. Experiential learning theory explains the importance of learning through direct experience and practice (Yulianti et al., 2023).

Respondents who do not agree to maintain the ushul nahwu course may be more interested in learning aspects of Arabic that are more practical and can be applied directly in real experiences.

On the other hand, respondents who agreed to retain the ushul nahwu course considered some meaningful learning theories that emphasize the importance of providing meaning and relevance in the learning process. Respondents who agreed to retain ushul nahwu found that understanding language structures in depth provides meaning and relevance in learning Arabic as a whole. However, the results of this question showed that most of the participants (55.6%) agreed with the removal of ushul nahwu courses in the Arabic language education curriculum in the modern era.

From the available data, there are some interesting findings. The majority of students consider that the ushul nahwu material is less relevant to the needs of modern Arabic language learning. This resulted in two opinions emerging: first if they want to maintain the material, it needs to be revised to make it more in line with the times. While the second opinion is that most students argue that the ushul nahwu course does not need to be maintained in the Arabic language education curriculum in the modern era.

In addition, students also stated that this course provides benefits for them. They admit that an understanding of ushul nahwu helps them understand Arabic grammar better. They also realized the importance of mastering ushul nahwu for prospective Arabic teachers. In addition, they expressed excitement in learning ushul nahwu because it provides a deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language.

However, only 33.3% of the students felt that learning ushul nahwu provided practical benefits to their Arabic language skills. They are more interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic than ushul nahwu. Therefore, most students have difficulties in understanding ushul nahwu concepts and applying them in Arabic language learning. They also consider that the time allocation given to study ushul nahwu is too much when compared to the benefits gained.

4. Conclusion

This study explores students' perspectives on ushul nahwu course learning in the modern era. The results showed that most students realised the importance of ushul nahwu theoretically, especially for prospective Arabic language teachers. However, they feel that ushul nahwu materials need to be revised to be more relevant to the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era. Although most students recognised the benefits of ushul nahwu in understanding Arabic grammar, only a minority felt the course provided practical benefits in their Arabic language skills. The majority of students are more interested in learning the practical aspects of Arabic and feel that the time allocated to ushul nahwu is too much compared to its benefits.

Other findings show that some students have difficulty in understanding the concept of ushul nahwu and applying it in Arabic language learning. However, they still feel happy to learn ushul nahwu because it provides a deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language. Overall, the results of this study indicate the need for a review of the ushul nahwu curriculum to better suit the needs of Arabic language learning in the modern era. The curriculum needs to emphasise practical aspects and relevance to the times, while still maintaining the theoretical values that are important in learning ushul nahwu. Despite using a combination of interviews and questionnaires, the data collection method is still limited to self-reports from participants. For future research, it is recommended to consider using other methods such as classroom observation or document analysis to obtain more comprehensive data.

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