



The Problematic Nature of Nahwu Learning: A Literature Review on the Use of the *Bandongan* (Pegon Arabic) Method

Grafda Kaiki Benatasya Ali¹, Muhammad Afthon Ulin Nuha²

Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung¹²

kaikibenatasya@gmail.com¹, afthon@uinsatu.ac.id²

Abstract

Nahwu learning in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) environments often employs the *bandongan* method, a one-way teaching model where the instructor reads, translates, and explains the classical book, while the students note the meaning using *Pegon Arabic* script. Although this method has become a deeply rooted tradition, its effectiveness in achieving a comprehensive understanding of Nahwu remains debated. This study aims to analyze the challenges and effectiveness of using *makna gandul* (Pegon Arabic script notes) in Nahwu learning through a literature review. The method used is a library study, examining relevant theories, pedagogical methods, and previous research findings. The review results indicate that the *bandongan* method has several weaknesses, such as a passive learning process, limited mastery of the Pegon script, local language barriers, and difficulty in understanding the text holistically. However, this method still has advantages, especially in helping students directly identify sentence structures. With the passage of time, adaptations such as the addition of discussion sessions are beginning to increase the communicative nature of this method. Thus, the effectiveness of the *bandongan* method is highly dependent on context, student readiness, and the accompanying pedagogical innovations.

Kata Kunci / Keywords : Nahwu Learning, Pegon Arabic Script, *Bandongan* Method

Introduction

There are approximately more than 3,000 languages in the world. Among these, over 100 languages are spoken by one million people. Furthermore, 17 languages are found to be used by more than 50 million people globally, including Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, German, and Italian. Arabic is one of these 17 languages. Arabic is used as a means of communication by 89% of the population in Africa and Asia, and by more than 200 million non-Arab Muslims¹. This indicates that Arabic is a popular language on the world stage.

For the Indonesian society itself, Arabic is not a foreign language. Because Arabic is highly synonymous with the teachings of Islam, this makes Arabic popular among the majority Muslim population of Indonesia. However, in reality, Arabic is not just a language of religion; it is a multidimensional language used by scholars to produce great works in various fields of knowledge such as history, philosophy, mathematics, physics, literature, and others²

Learning a foreign language like Arabic feels more difficult because the acquisition of this language occurs through "compulsion" rather than "naturally," as we learn our mother tongue or native language. This "compulsion" requires learners to be in a new atmosphere across various aspects that they have not acquired from their family. Therefore, this difficult learning process necessitates an appropriate methodology from an instructor, because the instructor and the teaching methodology are crucial factors in a learner's understanding.

To study Arabic *taam* (perfectly/completely), it is necessary to understand several other auxiliary disciplines, such as *Ilmu Nahwu* (Syntax), *Ilmu Shorof* (Morphology), and *Ilmu Balaghoh* (Rhetoric).³ These sciences play a crucial role in Arabic learning. The majority of constraints faced by Arabic learners lie in reading Arabic texts. To be able to read Arabic-language texts properly and accurately, the learner must determine the *shakl* (vowels/diacritics: *fathah*, *kasroh*, *dhomah* or *sukun*). In this regard, the learner needs the ability to determine the

¹ "إيسري مصطفى, Metode Dan Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, (Malang: UIN Maliki Press, 2012), h. 68," *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–28.

² Acep Hermawa, *Metodologi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab*, PT Remaja Rosdakarya Bandung, 2011.

³ Farid Qomaruddin and Muhammad A'inul Haq, "Intervensi Fonetik Bahasa Arab Dan Bahasa Indonesia (Studi Kontrasif Bahasa Arab Dan Indonesia Pada Tataran Pelafalan Kata)," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 2, no. 1 (2022): 71–83.

position/function of the word within the sentence, which can be found in the study of *Ilmu Nahwu*⁴

Ilmu Nahwu is the science that studies the rules for arranging words in Arabic to form a complete sentence.⁵ Furthermore, this science also discusses how to determine the last vowel/diacritic of a word, which is better known as *i'rab*. *Ilmu Nahwu* was codified by Imam Abu Aswad al-Du'aly upon the instruction of Imam Ali bin Abi Thalib when he served as the Caliph. The history of the emergence of *Ilmu Nahwu* mentions that Caliph Ali, along with prominent figures in Arabic language and the Qur'an, gradually compiled the initial theories of *Ilmu Nahwu*, which became the precursor to the science. Subsequently, *Ilmu Nahwu* developed into a complete science that examines Arabic grammar and serves as a supporting element for anyone studying *Fusha* Arabic, whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs⁶

Ilmu Nahwu is a complex discipline, containing abundant and detailed rules. These include the changes in word endings, or *i'rab*, and the function of a word within a sentence, which has a considerable number of classifications. *Ilmu Nahwu* also contains many specialized terminologies found exclusively in Arabic learning, such as *fa'il* (subject), *fi'il* (verb), *maf'ul bih* (object), *mubtada'* (subject/topic), and *khavar* (predicate/comment). These terms are not sufficient to merely memorize; they require comprehensive understanding from the learner. Because with perfect understanding, the learner will be easily able to analyze and construct accurate Arabic sentences.

A learner's understanding relies heavily on how the instructor provides the explanation. As previously mentioned, the instructor's methodology has a significant influence. In the teaching of *Ilmu Nahwu*, there are several methodologies frequently used by instructors, such as the deductive or *al-qiyasiyyah* method. This method begins with the presentation of general rules, followed by examples demonstrating their application in sentences. In addition to the deductive method, there is the inductive or *al-istiqrā'iyyah* method, which is the reverse of the former; it involves presenting examples first, followed by the presentation of the general rules.

⁴ Hamka Ilyas, "Al-Nakirah Wa Al-Ma'Rifah," *Shaut Al-'Arabiyah* III, no. 2 (2015): 7–15.

⁵ Farid Qomaruddin, "Penggunaan Media Mapping Nahwu Terhadap Efektifitas Pengajaran Nahwu," *JALIE; Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (2019): 396–411.

⁶ Rini Rini, "Ushul Al-Nahwi Al-Arabi : Kajian Tentang Landasan Ilmu Nahwu," *Arabiyatuna : Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 1 (2019): 145, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v3i1.773>.

The deductive and inductive methods are commonly used at various educational levels. The situation is different in *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), where the majority of Nahwu instruction utilizes classic, distinctive *pesantren* methods, such as the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods. The *sorogan* method is where learners read the Arabic text in front of the instructor to be corrected directly. In contrast, the *bandongan* method is where the instructor reads the Arabic text, usually a *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic book), while the students listen and take notes. Overall, the *bandongan* method is more widely used by *pondok pesantren*. This *bandongan* method requires learners to be able to use *makna gandul*, often referred to as *Pegon Arabic* script.

However, there are still several opinions regarding the limited effectiveness of the *Bandongan* Method. Some people also believe that the use of this method is too convoluted in terms of its articulation and the process of translating it word-by-word⁷. Furthermore, the implementation of this method becomes problematic when the student is someone who neither understands nor can use the Pegon Arabic script.

The teaching of *Ilmu Nahwu* requires an appropriate methodology so that learners can properly receive the material presented. Thus, the question arises whether the *bandongan* method is still considered effective in Nahwu learning, given that several problems have been identified within this methodology. However, most previous studies tend to discuss the *Bandongan* method from a practical or pedagogical perspective, without specifically examining its impact on Nahwu comprehension through the use of *makna gandul* (Pegon Arabic script). This study fills that gap by focusing on how Pegon-based interlinear translation influences students' grammatical understanding in Nahwu learning. This makes it an interesting topic to study within the linguistic discourse concerning Arabic language instruction. Therefore, the author has chosen the title "THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF NAHWU LEARNING: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE USE OF THE *BANDONGAN* METHOD," with the aim of conducting a literature-based study on the challenges and effectiveness of using the *bandongan* method in *Ilmu Nahwu* instruction.

⁷ Siti Lum'atul Mawaddah, "Problematisasi Pembelajaran Nahwu Menggunakan Metode Klasik Arab Pegon Di Era Modern," *Maharaat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (2022): 102–19, <https://doi.org/10.18196/mht.v4i2.12976>.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method in the form of a literature review, which is a study that examines data through written sources. It focuses on analyzing the use of *makna gandul* (Pegon Arabic script) in Arabic language learning. A literature review or library study is a data collection technique involving a thorough examination of books, literature, notes, and reports that are related to the problem being solved⁸

The research data consists of various ideas, theories, and previous research findings discussing Nahwu pedagogy, classical *kitab kuning* reading methods, and the practice of translating *makna gandul*. Data collection was carried out by searching and reading relevant literature, and then selecting the sources deemed most pertinent and supportive of the research focus. Subsequently, the data was analyzed by tracing the core issues, comparing the authors' opinions, and then drawing conclusions from the emerging patterns to see how *makna gandul* influences the Nahwu learning process. The selected studies were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to the effectiveness and challenges of the Bandongan method in Nahwu instruction.

Findings and Discussion

Nahwu Science and its Learning Methods

Nahwu (Arabic Grammar), etymologically, originates from the Arabic word نَحْو (nahw), which means "example" or "model." In its contextual usage, Nahwu is defined as طريق (tariq) or جهة (jihah), which means "path" or "direction." This implies a method or a way to achieve a specific goal: the ability to pronounce sentences correctly. An example of this usage is found in the sentence: نَحَوْتُ نَحْوَهُ (naḥawtu naḥwahu), meaning "I followed his (correct) way of stepping/moving."⁹

The scope of Nahwu (Arabic Grammar) comprises the Noun (اسم - *Ism*), the Verb (فعل - *Fi'l*), and the Particle (حرف - *Harf*). When

⁸ Hasyim Asy et al., "Keistimewaan Bahasa Arab Sebagai Bahasa Al-Qur'an" 1, no. 01 (2016): 21–28.

⁹ Imam al-qusyairi, *Nahwu Qulub* (Wali Pustaka, 2019).

all of these elements are combined, a complete and understandable sentence is formed (جملة مفيدة - *Jumlatun Mufidah*). The original goal of learning the science of Nahwu is to safeguard the tongue from errors in pronouncing Arabic words, and to properly and perfectly understand the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith.

The science of Nahwu originated from the concern over potential errors in the use of the Arabic language, both in writing and in pronunciation. Therefore, the science of Nahwu fundamentally assists Arabic speakers—whether native or non-native—in avoiding these mistakes in usage. This is why the study of the Arabic language is always identified with the science of Nahwu.

In studying Nahwu, Arabic language learners can begin by understanding its fundamental concepts, such as *Kalam* (utterance/sentence), *Ism* (Noun), *Fi'l* (Verb), and *I'rab* (inflection/grammatical ending). With these basic concepts, Arabic learners will be able to easily understand and proceed to the subsequent chapters in Nahwu. These fundamental concepts of Nahwu can be found and studied from various sources, ranging from online media to classic texts such as *Jurumiyah* and *Imrithi*.

In addition to understanding the fundamental concepts of Nahwu and selecting the appropriate learning materials, the teaching method also has a significant impact on formal Arabic language learning. A suitable teaching method can increase the students' interest, motivation, and even their activeness in the learning process. One crucial thing to avoid in the teaching and learning process is a non-communicative situation between the teacher and the students. If students cannot understand what the teacher is conveying, there is a high probability that they will not be able to master the material being taught¹⁰

In the context of Nahwu instruction, several commonly used methods exist, such as the *Qiyasiyyah* Method (Deductive), the *Istiqra'iyah* Method (Inductive), and the Classical/Traditional Method. In practice, the classical or traditional method is widely utilized by Arabic language students, especially those within a *pesantren* (Islamic

¹⁰ Hendrawan. Agus F., "PENGARUH METODE PENGAJARAN GURU TERHADAP HASIL BELAJAR KOGNITIF SISWA JURUSAN OTOMOTIF PADA MATA PELAJARAN MOTOR BENSIN DI SMK NEGERI 3 YOGYAKARTA" (Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2012).

boarding school) environment.¹¹ One classical method that is still frequently encountered today is the *Bandongan* Method. In this approach, a teacher reads aloud and then translates the content of a classical text, while the students diligently write down the meaning and the teacher's explanations. In the *Bandongan* Method, students typically write the meaning of the text using *makna gandul* (hanging/interlinear meaning) with the Pegon Arabic script, which is adapted to their respective regions, such as Java and Sunda.

The *Bandongan* Teaching Method Utilizing Pegon Arabic Script

The *Bandongan* Method is a teaching approach where an *ustadz* (teacher) or instructor reads, translates, and explains the content of the classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) directly to the students, who are listening attentively. The students then listen while noting important sections and recording the translation onto their books, a process known as *maknani* (annotating meaning). In translating the texts sentence by sentence, the instructors use a local language, such as Javanese or Sundanese. Subsequently, the students write the meaning of the translation directly underneath the corresponding Arabic sentences in an angled fashion (more commonly known as *makna gandul* or "hanging meaning") and using the Pegon script.

Makna Gandul is a term used for the method of writing the translated meaning or explanation of a text (generally classical Arabic texts) directly underneath the original text, utilizing the Pegon Arabic script. Through the use of this *Makna Gandul* method, students are able to understand the meaning and translation of every sentence. Meanwhile, Pegon script is an integral part of *Makna Gandul*. Pegon script consists of Arabic letters that have been modified to write Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese languages, where the Arabic or *hijaiyyah* letters are used to represent the sounds of those local languages.

Pegon script is divided into two categories¹², vowel Pegon letters and consonant Pegon letters. The vowel Pegon letters function to provide the correct pronunciation for the Pegon script. Since this script is generally written *gundulan* (unpointed, meaning without short

¹¹ Farid Qomaruddin and Wahyudin Wahyudin, "تطبيق الطريقة الاستقرائية على مهارة قراءة طلاب", "البرنامج الإعدادي بجامعة عبد الله فقيه الإسلامية غريسك", *EL-IBTIKAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 10, no. 2 (2021): 172–87.

¹² Mawaddah, "Problematisasi Pembelajaran Nahwu Menggunakan Metode Klasik Arab Pegon Di Era Modern."

vowel marks/diacritics), these vowel Pegon letters are needed so that the sentences written in Pegon script can be read correctly.

Table 1: Vowel Pegon Script

A	I	U	E	É	O	
ا	ي	و	يـ	ـ	وـ	اـ

The table above is a list of Pegon characters classified as Pegon vowel letters. The vowel letter Alif (ا) with a *fathah* diacritic is used for the sound of the letter 'A'. Wawu (و) with a *sukun* diacritic preceded by a letter with a *dhammah* diacritic is used for the sound of the letter 'U'. Additionally, a Wawu with a *sukun* preceded by a letter with a *fathah* is used for the sound of the letter 'O'. As for Ya' (ي), a *Ya' sukun* preceded by a letter with a *kasrah* diacritic is used to represent the letter 'I'. For the vowel 'E' (schwa/pepet sound), it is written without any auxiliary letter or sometimes a special mark, such as a wavy line (~), is used.

The consonant letters of Pegon Arabic are Hijaiyyah letters that correspond to the same sound, such as 'T' corresponding to the letter (ت), 'B' corresponding Ba (ب), and so on. For example, the word "Laba" is written using the letters Lam, Alif, Ba, and Alif, thus becoming (لابا). The word "Kita" is written using the letters Kaaf, Ya', Ta', and Alif, thus becoming (كيتا). However, there are several sounds in the Indonesian language (and local languages) that cannot be directly represented using standard Hijaiyyah letters, such as the sounds 'nya', 'ca', the letter 'G', and others. The following table provides the list of Pegon consonant letters.

Table 2: Pegon Consonant Script

Abjad Pegon						
ح	چ	ج	ث	ت	ب	ا
ḥā'	ca	jīm	ṣa'	tā'	bā'	'alif
س	ز	ر	ڙ	ذ	د	خ
sīn	zāi	rā'	dha	zāl	dāl	khā'
ع	ظ	ڙ	ط	ض	ص	ش
'ain	zā'	tha	ṭā'	ḍād	ṣād	syīn
پ	ک	ق	ف	غ	غ	غ
qaf	kāf	qāf	pa	fā'	nga	ḡain
ي	ه	و	ي	ن	م	ل
yā'	hā'	wāu	nyā	nūn	mīm	lām

The Effectiveness of the *Bandongan* Method in Teaching Nahwu

As the author has found from several pieces of literature, an instructor must not only know and understand the material to be delivered, but the appropriate method will greatly assist in achieving the goals of the teaching and learning process. A teacher must be cautious in determining the method to be used and must weigh several factors, such as the students' level and readiness. This is because every academic level naturally has a different mental response, and thus their way of reacting to the material will differ. However, one thing that must be avoided is a passive or non-communicative teaching method, where communication in the classroom occurs only in one direction. With this type of learning, students tend not to understand what is being conveyed by the instructor.

The *Bandongan* Method, which is frequently encountered in pesantren, is a one-way or monologic teaching model. As explained previously, the instructor reads, translates, and explains the material, while the students listen and directly annotate the explanation and meaning using the Pegon Arabic script. Therefore, this method is often considered less effective in teaching Nahwu (Arabic Grammar) due to its passive and non-communicative learning model. In contrast, Nahwu instruction requires not only theoretical foundation but also discussion and practical application from the students so that they can fully comprehend what has been studied.

Here, the author identifies several weaknesses of the *Bandongan* Method using Pegon Arabic script in Nahwu instruction, including:

1. As explained above, this method has the drawback of a lack of communication between the instructor and the students. This reduces the students' creativity because they are essentially just listening. Consequently, they tend to find it difficult to analyze the structure of a sentence on their own.
2. Limited Mastery of the Pegon Arabic Script,
Learning to use the Pegon Arabic script certainly does not take just one or two weeks. The large variation in the Pegon Arabic characters confuses students who were previously completely unfamiliar with this script. As a result, they cannot focus on the core learning objective, which is Nahwu (Arabic Grammar). Instead, they become overly focused on writing the meaning using the Pegon Arabic script.
3. Limited Mastery of the Javanese Language
As we know, the meaning (*makna*) is provided using Pegon script written in either Javanese or Sundanese. However, not all students understand and comprehend this due to their different linguistic backgrounds.
4. Difficulty in Comprehending the Text as a Whole
The word-by-word translation combined with the occasional presence of unfamiliar Javanese language causes students difficulty in comprehending the text as a whole. Consequently, students are unable to fully understand the Nahwu lesson presented by the instructor.

However, overall, the *Bandongan* Method in Nahwu instruction also possesses advantages that are equally important for students. Through the *Bandongan* Method, students immediately learn the grammatical position (*tarkiib*) of every word in the sentence. As time progresses, many institutions have begun to develop and adapt this *Bandongan* Method. Instructors are starting to introduce a question-and-answer session after the lesson concludes. With this adaptation, students can ask questions or request broader explanations about the lesson from the instructor. The instruction, which was initially one-way or non-communicative, now has the potential to become a more communicative learning process.

Conclusion

The teaching method plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of the learning process itself. In the instruction of Nahwu (Arabic Grammar), several methods are utilized, one of the most famous and widely used in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) being the *Bandongan* Method using Pegon Arabic script. The *Bandongan* Method is a teaching approach where an *ustadz* (teacher) or instructor reads, translates, and explains the content of the classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) directly to the students, who are listening attentively. The students then listen while noting important sections and recording the translation onto their books, a process known as *maknani* (annotating meaning).

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