



Grammatical Examples and Intrinsic Motivation in Alfiah Learning at an Indonesian Pesantren

Siti Sulaikho^{1*}, M. Abdul Hamid², Abdul Wahab Rosyidi³

¹Arabic Departement, Universitas KH. A. Wahab Hasbullah, Indonesia

^{2,3}Arabic Departement, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Indonesia

*Email: ikho.zul@unwaha.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dampak tiga pola contoh gramatikal dalam pembelajaran Alfiah terhadap motivasi intrinsik 46 siswi kelas khusus 3A putri di Madrasah Muallimin Muallimat Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Tambakberas, Jombang. Tiga pola tersebut mencakup penggunaan kosakata yang sama pada berbagai bab nahwu, susunan leksiko-gramatikal sederhana yang relatif stabil, dan ayat Al-Qur'an yang tidak familiar karena tidak ditemukan dalam kitab fikih dan hadis yang sedang dipelajari siswi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain one-group pretest-posttest. Data dikumpulkan melalui Intrinsic Motivation Inventory yang disesuaikan dengan konteks pembelajaran Alfiah dan terdiri atas 30 butir setelah uji validitas dan reliabilitas. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif dan inferensial, kemudian ditafsirkan melalui Self-Determination Theory, formal operational stage, dan metalinguistic awareness. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motivasi intrinsik siswi menurun dari mean pretest 3,87 (SD = 0,42) menjadi mean posttest 3,31 (SD = 0,28). SD posttest yang lebih kecil menunjukkan bahwa respons motivasi siswi menjadi lebih homogen pada tingkat motivasi yang lebih rendah. Uji paired sample t-test menunjukkan penurunan signifikan, $t(45) = -11,84$, $p < 0,001$, dengan efek besar, $dz = -1,75$. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa contoh yang terlalu berulang, terlalu sederhana, dan kurang terhubung dengan pengalaman tekstual siswi dapat melemahkan minat, rasa tertantang, dan keterhubungan belajar.

Kata-kata kunci: Alfiah; Nahwu; Contoh Gramatikal; Motivasi Intrinsik; Self-Determination Theory

Abstract

This study examines how three patterns of grammatical examples in Alfiah instruction affect the intrinsic motivation of 46 female students in the special 3A class at Madrasah Muallimin Muallimat, Pesantren Bahrul Ulum, Tambakberas, Jombang. The three patterns include repeated vocabulary across nahwu chapters, stable simple lexico-grammatical arrangements, and unfamiliar Qur'anic verses that did not appear in the fiqh and hadith books studied by the students at the same time. This study used a quantitative one-group pretest-posttest design. Data were collected through an adapted 30-item Intrinsic Motivation Inventory after validity and reliability testing. The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially, then interpreted through Self-Determination Theory, formal operational stage, and metalinguistic awareness. The findings show that students' intrinsic motivation decreased from a pretest mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.42) to a posttest mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.28). The smaller posttest SD indicates that students' responses became more homogeneous around a lower motivation level, while the difference-score SD (0.32) shows that the magnitude of decline still varied across students. A paired sample t-test confirmed a significant



decline, $t(45) = -11.84, p < .001$, with a large effect size, $d_z = -1.75$. The findings indicate that overly repetitive, overly simple, and weakly contextualized examples may reduce interest, cognitive challenge, and learning relatedness in Alfiyah instruction

Keywords: Alfiyah; Arabic Grammar; Grammatical Examples; Intrinsic Motivation; Self-Determination Theory

INTRODUCTION

Nahwu learning in Indonesian Pesantrens occupies a central position because it provides students with a major pathway for reading, understanding, and interpreting Arabic Islamic texts. At an advanced level, Alfiyah Ibn Malik is not studied merely as a text to be memorized. It also functions as a conceptual tool for understanding word relations, syntactic functions, i‘rāb changes, and semantic precision. Since Alfiyah is dense, abstract, and metalinguistic, its instruction requires grammatical examples that can bridge grammatical rules and students’ understanding (Hamidah et al., 2024).

In Alfiyah classes, grammatical examples operate as pedagogical input. They help students focus on linguistic form, distinguish word functions, and connect grammatical rules with broader texts. However, the examples selected by teachers do not always produce the same motivational experience. Overly repetitive examples may support initial recognition, but they may also lead to boredom (Richards & Reppen, 2014). Overly simple examples may clarify basic structures, but they may reduce the sense of challenge for students who already have substantial nahwu experience (Xu & Li, 2022). Qur’anic examples may provide textual authority, but they may feel distant if they are not connected to the fiqh and hadith texts that students are studying at the same time.

Motivation is therefore crucial in nahwu learning because abstract grammatical rules require sustained attention, perseverance, and mental engagement. In Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation develops when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in learning activities (Deci & Ryan, 2008; R. Ryan & Deci, 2000b, 2000a, 2020). These three psychological needs are highly relevant for understanding students’ experience in Alfiyah learning. Students need to feel capable when dealing with difficult rules, to understand why they learn, and to perceive a meaningful connection between





teacher-provided examples, the texts they study, and their ability to read classical Islamic texts.

Recent educational research shows that Self-Determination Theory remains a strong framework for explaining the quality of students' motivation in classrooms. Baldwin emphasizes that support for autonomy, competence, and relatedness contributes to learning engagement (Oga-Baldwin, 2015). Baldwin also found that educational interventions based on basic psychological needs are associated with academic motivation (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). In second language learning, autonomous motivation supports achievement and persistence (Oga-Baldwin, 2024). These findings are important because nahwu learning in Pesantrens requires not only cognitive ability but also motivation that keeps students engaged in a long and intensive learning process.

Studies on Arabic grammar instruction indicate that nahwu often poses challenges because of its complex rules and the need for pedagogical approaches that fit learners' needs (Almelhes, 2024; Wahba et al., 2022). Studies on Arabic learning motivation have also highlighted the role of intrinsic factors, self-confidence, and teacher support. Yet most existing studies still discuss motivation at a general level, such as learning difficulties, teaching strategies, or students' perceptions. Research that specifically connects teachers' grammatical example patterns with changes in students' intrinsic motivation in Alfiyah learning remains limited.

This gap provides the basis for the present article. Research on grammatical examples usually treats examples as tools for understanding rules, while research on motivation often treats motivation as a general psychological condition (Abrutyn & Zhang, 2024). This article connects the two by viewing grammatical examples as pedagogical input that can shape intrinsic motivation. The study focuses on three example patterns: repeated vocabulary across nahwu chapters, relatively stable simple lexico-grammatical arrangements, and Qur'anic verses that were unfamiliar to the students.

The research context is the special female 3A class at Madrasah Muallimin Muallimat, Bahrul Ulum Pesantren, Tambakberas, Jombang. The students were 16 to 17 years old, had studied nahwu for at least three years at the junior madrasah level, and were



taking Alfiyah for ten lesson hours per week. At this age, students begin to develop stronger abstract thinking, pattern comparison, and metalinguistic awareness. Therefore, highly stable example patterns may help understanding, but they may also reduce students' sense of challenge and learning relatedness.

Based on this background, this article aims to reveal the impact of three grammatical example patterns used by the teacher in Alfiyah instruction on students' intrinsic motivation. It also explains how formal operational stage and metalinguistic awareness shape students' responses to teacher-provided examples. The novelty of this article lies in reading intrinsic motivation through a micro-pedagogical practice, namely the patterns of grammatical examples in Alfiyah learning.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-Determination Theory is the main theoretical framework of this study. It explains the quality of human motivation through the degree of autonomy and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs. Intrinsic motivation emerges when individuals engage in an activity because the activity is interesting, meaningful, and internally satisfying. Ryan and Deci identify autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the three basic psychological needs. Autonomy refers to the experience of having personal reasons for learning. Competence refers to the sense of being able to understand and master learning tasks. Relatedness refers to the sense of connection with teachers, materials, classroom environment, and learning meaning (R. M. Ryan et al., 2022).

These three needs are directly relevant to nahwu learning. Nahwu requires precision, abstraction, and patience in reading changes in word function. Students cannot rely only on memorizing rules. They need to feel that the rules are understandable, that the examples make sense, and that the learning process is connected to their ability to read Arabic texts. If teacher-provided examples help students feel competent, intrinsic motivation may become stronger. However, if the examples are monotonous, too simple, or too distant from students' textual experience, motivation may decline because learning loses challenge and relatedness (Gagné et al., 2022).





In this study, intrinsic motivation is examined through the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory. This instrument is useful because it captures several dimensions of learning experience, including interest or enjoyment, perceived competence, effort or importance, value or usefulness, perceived choice, and pressure or tension (Evans et al., 2024). In this research context, the IMI was used to measure changes in students' motivation before and after their exposure to specific example patterns in Alfiyah learning. Motivation is therefore not treated as a fixed personal trait but as a response to concrete pedagogical experience.

Grammatical examples in Alfiyah learning are understood as pedagogical input. This input is not merely an illustration of rules; it directs students' attention to form, function, and meaning. The first pattern is the use of the same vocabulary across different nahwu chapters. Examples such as ضرب، نصر، قام، علي، عمرو، زيد، and جاء show that the teacher used stable vocabulary. This strategy may help students focus on changes in grammatical function, but excessive repetition may reduce novelty and challenge.

The second pattern is the use of relatively stable simple lexico-grammatical arrangements. Examples such as كان زيد، رأيت زيدا، مررت بزید، زيد قائم، إن زيدا قائم clearly show the relationship between form and function (Sulaikho et al., 2026). These patterns help students recognize basic structures, but they may lose motivational value if they are not developed into longer and more contextual structures. The third pattern is the use of Qur'anic verses unfamiliar to the students. Qur'anic verses hold authority in the Arabic grammatical tradition, but from the perspective of relatedness they require contextual introduction so that they do not appear only as material for i'rāb practice.

This study also uses formal operational stage and metalinguistic awareness as supporting frameworks. Piaget associates adolescence with the development of abstract thinking, the ability to compare possibilities, and reasoning about relationships among elements (Piaget, 1972). Students aged 16 to 17 can evaluate examples not merely as memorized forms but as patterns that can be compared and developed. Edwards explains that metalinguistic awareness enables learners to treat language as an object of analysis (Edwards & Kirkpatrick, 1999). In Alfiyah learning, this awareness makes students sensitive to word function, i'rāb changes, and the limitations of overly repetitive examples.



The analytical framework of this study connects pedagogical input, basic psychological needs, and cognitive development. Repeated vocabulary is analyzed in relation to competence and interest. Simple lexico-grammatical arrangements are analyzed in relation to competence, cognitive challenge, and perceived value. Unfamiliar Qur'anic verses are analyzed in relation to relatedness and intertextual connection. Through this framework, declining intrinsic motivation is understood as a pedagogical phenomenon related to how examples are selected, repeated, and developed in Alfiah instruction.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The design was chosen because the study aimed to measure changes in students' intrinsic motivation before and after their exposure to three patterns of grammatical examples in Alfiah learning. These patterns included repeated vocabulary across nahwu chapters, relatively stable simple lexico-grammatical arrangements, and Qur'anic verses that were unfamiliar because they did not appear in the fiqh and hadith books studied by the students during the same period.

The research was conducted in the special female 3A class at Madrasah Muallimin Muallimat, Bahrul Ulum Pesantren, Tambakberas, Jombang. The respondents were 46 female students from classes 3-A1 and 3-A2. They were 16 to 17 years old, had studied nahwu for at least three years at the junior madrasah level, and continued nahwu learning in the special 2A class before entering the special 3A class. In this class, Alfiah-based nahwu instruction was held for ten lesson hours per week.

The data consisted of students' intrinsic motivation scores before and after the instruction. The main data source was students' responses to the motivation questionnaire. The instrument was an Intrinsic Motivation Inventory adapted to the context of Alfiah-based nahwu learning. The initial instrument consisted of 45 items. After validity and reliability testing, the final instrument contained 30 items. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, from the lowest score indicating disagreement to the highest score indicating agreement. The mean score for each respondent was calculated by dividing the total score by 30, corresponding to the number of final items.



Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher identified the three grammatical example patterns used by the teacher in Alfiyah instruction. Second, the pretest questionnaire was administered to measure students' initial intrinsic motivation. Third, the learning process took place with the teacher's example patterns as the focus of the study. Fourth, the posttest questionnaire was administered to measure students' intrinsic motivation after exposure to the example patterns. Fifth, students' responses were coded, checked, and processed to obtain total and mean intrinsic motivation scores.

The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive analysis included the number of respondents, mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and direction of score change. Inferential analysis began with the Shapiro-Wilk normality test on difference scores because the number of respondents was below 50. If the difference scores were normally distributed, the pretest and posttest scores were compared using a paired sample t-test. If the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was to be used. The significance level was set at 0.05. The magnitude of change was interpreted using Cohen's *d*. The statistical results were then interpreted through Self-Determination Theory, formal operational stage, and metalinguistic awareness.

DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that students' intrinsic motivation decreased after they participated in Alfiyah learning with the three grammatical example patterns used by the teacher. The pretest mean was 3.87 on a scale of 1 to 5, while the posttest mean decreased to 3.31. The mean difference of -0.55 indicates a clear decline. Of the 46 students, 44 showed lower scores and 2 showed higher scores. This pattern suggests that the change in motivation was not sporadic but appeared among almost all respondents.

Table 1

Changes in Students' Intrinsic Motivation Scores

Condition	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	46	3.87	0.42	2.93	4.67
Posttest	46	3.31	0.28	2.80	3.83
Difference	46	-0.55	0.32	-1.13	0.30



The SD values in Table 1 were calculated from each student's mean score, not from individual item scores. The pretest SD of 0.42 indicates that students entered the class with relatively varied levels of intrinsic motivation. The smaller posttest SD of 0.28 shows that their responses became more concentrated around the lower posttest mean. In pedagogical terms, the decline was not only an average decrease but also a convergence of motivation at a lower level. The SD of the difference scores, 0.32, indicates that the magnitude of decrease was not identical for every student. Most students declined, but some declined more sharply than others. This pattern supports the interpretation that the three example patterns produced a broadly shared motivational effect while still being mediated by individual differences.

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test on the difference scores produced a value of 0.968 with a significance level of 0.234. Since the value was above 0.05, the difference scores were treated as normally distributed. The pretest and posttest scores were therefore analyzed using a paired sample t-test. The test showed $t(45) = -11.84$ with $p < .001$. Cohen's d_z was -1.75, indicating a large effect size.

Table 2
Paired Difference Test Results

Aspect	Value
Shapiro-Wilk normality test	0.968
Normality significance	0.234
Difference test	Paired sample t-test
t	-11.84
df	45
Significance	< .001
Cohen's d_z	-1.75

These findings need to be interpreted carefully. The decline in motivation does not mean that Alfiah learning failed entirely, because the posttest score remained above the midpoint of the scale. However, the decrease from 3.87 to 3.31 shows that the quality of students' intrinsic motivation weakened after exposure to the teacher's example patterns. Within Self-Determination Theory, this decline can be understood as a disturbance in the balance among autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

The first pattern, repeated vocabulary, had an ambivalent impact on competence. Vocabulary such as ضرب, نصر, قام, علي, عمرو, عمر, زيد, and جاء helped students understand the rules because familiar words reduced the semantic load. When زيد appeared as a fā'il in جاء زيد, as a maf'ūl bih in رأيت زيدا, as a majrūr in مررت بزيد, as a muḥtada' in زيد قائم, as the ism of إن زيدا قائم, and as the ism of كان زيد قائما, students could observe changing functions through the same word. This strategy supported their initial sense of competence.

However, highly stable repetition may reduce novelty. For students who had studied nahwu for several years, vocabulary that repeatedly revolved around classical examples could feel too easy and insufficiently challenging. In Self-Determination Theory, competence does not only mean feeling capable; it also means experiencing growth. If examples remain limited to the same vocabulary, students may recognize the pattern but may not feel that their ability is moving toward broader textual reading. This explains why repeated vocabulary may support initial comprehension yet weaken intrinsic motivation when it is not followed by variation.

The second pattern, simple lexico-grammatical arrangement, also showed two sides. Examples such as إن زيدا قائم, زيد قائم, مررت بزيد, رأيت زيدا, جاء زيد, and كان زيد قائما directly displayed the relationship between form and function. جاء زيد shows the relationship between fi'l and fā'il. رأيت زيدا shows the relationship among a verb, an implicit subject, and a maf'ūl bih. مررت بزيد shows the relationship between a verb and a jar-majrūr construction. زيد قائم shows the relationship between muḥtada' and khabar. إن زيدا قائم shows the effect of إن, while كان زيد قائما shows the effect of كان. This clarity is important because Alfiah rules are often delivered through dense poetic formulation.

Nevertheless, clarity alone is not enough to sustain intrinsic motivation. Students also need interest, perceived value, and cognitive challenge. The classical texts they read do not always use structures as simple as جاء زيد or زيد قائم. They often contain idāfah, na't, pronouns, embedded clauses, fronting and postponement, and interclausal relations. If examples remain at the minimal level, students may understand the rules in short examples but may not feel prepared to apply them to longer texts. The gap between classroom examples and actual texts can weaken students' perceived value of learning.



The third pattern was the use of unfamiliar Qur'anic verses. In this study, unfamiliar does not mean the verses were theologically foreign. It means that the verses were not found in the fiqh and hadith books studied by the students during the same period. Qur'anic verses have an important role in nahwu learning because they serve as authoritative syāhid. QS. Yusuf 12:4 presents narration and dialogue. QS. Al-An'am 6:59 presents nominal structure, negation, and exception. QS. Al-Hashr 59:21 presents a conditional structure with *لو*. QS. Az-Zumar 39:21 presents a sequence of verbs describing a natural process.

Pedagogically, these verses expand the examples from teacher-made sentences to richer texts. Motivationally, however, this potential does not work automatically. Relatedness in learning refers not only to the social relationship between students and teacher, but also to the connection among material, learning experience, and the textual world familiar to students. If the verses are not introduced through meaning and context, students may see them only as material for i'rāb practice. They may not understand why the verses were selected or how they connect to other texts. In this situation, textual authority remains strong, but pedagogical relatedness becomes weak.

Formal operational stage and metalinguistic awareness help explain why motivation declined among these respondents. At the age of 16 to 17, students can think abstractly, compare patterns, and evaluate whether examples are sufficient. They do not simply accept *زيد* as an example; they can notice that the word is used too frequently. They can also sense when i'rāb analysis is not connected to textual meaning. Thus, the decline in motivation was not only caused by the difficulty of nahwu. It also indicates that the pedagogical input had not sufficiently followed students' cognitive development and language awareness.

These findings show that grammatical examples are not neutral. They are part of the motivational design of the classroom. The teacher's choice of words, sentence arrangements, and texts can influence how students experience learning. Examples that are too easy may make students feel competent but not always interested. Examples that are distant from students' textual experience may feel authoritative but not necessarily connected. Therefore, teachers need to evaluate examples not only for grammatical accuracy but also for their impact on interest, challenge, and learning relatedness.



Based on the findings, Alfiah learning requires controlled exemplification developed in stages. The first stage is stabilization, which uses familiar vocabulary to introduce basic functions. The second stage is transformation, which compares examples such as *إن زيد قائم*, *زيدًا قائم*, and *كان زيد قائمًا* to show changes caused by ‘āmil. The third stage is substitution, where some vocabulary items are changed so students can see that rules do not apply only to classical examples. The fourth stage is textual expansion, where Qur’anic verses or excerpts from classical texts are used with an introduction to meaning and context.

Such a staged design can help balance competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence is supported because students still receive clear examples. Autonomy is supported because students see possible variations rather than a single fixed pattern. Relatedness is supported because textual examples are connected to their reading experience. The answer to the research problem can therefore be stated clearly. The three teacher-provided example patterns had an ambivalent impact on students’ intrinsic motivation. They supported learning by providing stability, structural clarity, and textual authority. However, when they were too stable, too simple, and weakly connected to textual experience, they were associated with a decline in intrinsic motivation.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the three patterns of grammatical examples used by the teacher in Alfiah learning had an ambivalent impact on students’ intrinsic motivation. The smaller posttest SD also shows that the decline was accompanied by more homogeneous motivational responses, which strengthens the interpretation that the instructional experience affected the class as a group rather than only a few isolated students. Repeated vocabulary, simple lexico-grammatical arrangements, and unfamiliar Qur’anic verses helped students recognize grammatical rules because the examples were stable, clear, and textually authoritative. However, the findings also show a significant decline in intrinsic motivation after students experienced these patterns. This decline indicates that examples that are overly repetitive, overly simple, and weakly connected to students’ textual experience may reduce interest, challenge, and relatedness in nahwu learning.



Therefore, Alfiah learning needs to position grammatical examples as part of motivational design, not merely as tools for explaining rules. Teachers may still use classical and stable examples at the initial stage, but they need to continue with vocabulary variation, structural expansion, transformational examples, and Qur'anic or classical-text examples introduced through meaning and context. This staged model is important because students aged 16 to 17 have more mature formal reasoning and metalinguistic awareness. They need examples that are not only recognizable but also challenging, meaningful, and relevant to their experience of reading Arabic texts.

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