Cultivating Unity, Soft Skills, and Arabic Proficiency among Students: A Comprehensive Exploration of *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* Program

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ENGLISH ABSTRACT

This study aims to capture an Arabic language immersion program (*Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah*) by exploring the significance and meaning it holds for the students in-depth. The research focus extends beyond the impact of this activity on Arabic language proficiency alone, considering various related aspects as well. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research gathered data through deep interviews with several students, participant observations, and documentation. Findings revealed: 1) *Mukhayyam* serves as a vital annual program, aiming to introduce Arabic language and culture to new students through immersive learning experiences. Through careful planning, involving student committees and departments, the program ensures the quality of activities and materials. 2) The implementation of *Bi'ah Lughawiyah* in *Mukhayyam* emphasizes the importance of creating a language-immersive environment where participants are required to communicate solely in Arabic throughout the program. The strict adherence to language rules, consistent supervision, and involvement of proficient Arabic speakers contribute to its successful establishment, promoting effective language acquisition and communication skills among participants. 3) There is a multifaceted significance of *Mukhayyam* for students. Uncovering its role in fostering camaraderie, forming and strengthening familial bonds, facilitating self-expression for students, and improving students' soft skills. By providing a platform for meaningful interactions and fostering a familial atmosphere, *Mukhayyam* contributes significantly to students' holistic academic and non-academic development.

Keywords: Arabic Language Immersion Program, *Mukhayyam* al-Lughah al-Arabiyah, Students perspective

INDONESIAN ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi program imersi (Mukhayyam) bahasa Arab dengan signifikansi dan makna yang dimilikinya bagi para mahasiswa secara mendalam. Fokus penelitian tidak terbatas pada dampak kegiatan terhadap kemahiran bahasa Arab semata, tetapi mempertimbangkan berbagai aspek terkait lainnya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan dokumentasi. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan: 1) Mukhayyam memiliki peran penting sebagai program tahunan yang bertujuan untuk memperkenalkan bahasa Arab kepada mahasiswa baru melalui pengalaman pembelajaran yang mendalam. Melalui perencanaan yang cermat, melibatkan panitia mahasiswa dan program studi, program ini memastikan kualitas kegiatan dan materi pembelajaran. 2) Implementasi Bī'ah Lughawiyah dalam Mukhayyam menekankan pentingnya menciptakan lingkungan imersi bahasa di mana peserta diharuskan berkomunikasi hanya dalam bahasa Arab sepanjang program. Kepatuhan yang ketat terhadap aturan bahasa, pengawasan yang konsisten, dan keterlibatan pembicara bahasa Arab yang terampil berkontribusi pada keberhasilan program ini, mendorong pemerolehan bahasa yang efektif dan keterampilan komunikasi di antara peserta. 3) Terdapat signifikansi multi-faset dari Mukhayyam bagi mahasiswa. Mengungkap perannya dalam memupuk persahabatan, membentuk dan memperkuat ikatan keluarga, memfasilitasi ekspresi diri mahasiswa, dan meningkatkan keterampilan lunak mahasiswa. Dengan menyediakan platform untuk interaksi yang bermakna dan memupuk atmosfer kekeluargaan, Mukhayyam berkontribusi secara signifikan pada pengembangan akademik dan non-akademik mahasiswa secara holistik.

Kata kunci*: Program Imersi Bahasa Arab, Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah, Perspektif Mahasiswa*

Introduction

The learning environment constitutes a pivotal facet of any educational setting. A conducive environment plays an important role in enhancing the quality of education, as there exists a profound correlation between the learning milieu and the academic achievements of students (Zaid et al., 2019). A well-constructed language learning environment, complemented by proficient teaching and a linguistically enriching atmosphere, contributes significantly to desired learning outcomes, thereby elevating the overall educational quality (Arianti, 2019). The utilization of Arabic immersion programs has been extensively implemented in numerous boarding schools to enhance students' language acquisition, referred to as "*Bī'ah Lughawiyah*" in the Arabic language. Within a conducive setting designed to replicate a native speaker environment, students can attain linguistic fluency and cultivate an extensive vocabulary. Concurrently, behaviorism theory posits that a deliberately structured learning environment significantly enhances language proficiency (Budiarti & Wahyudi, 2021).

Remarkably, the implementation of language immersion programs is not limited to the primary education level; it is also conducted at the tertiary level in universities (Aflisia & Harahap, 2019). For example, the Arabic Education Department at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo. Students actively carry out activities nuanced *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* either in weekly, monthly, or annual routine activities. These activities are driven by the student association with solid support from the department and teaching lecturers. There are some Arabic language immersive programs and activities, including *Yaum al-Lughah* or Language Day which is a weekly program, *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* as a monthly program, and *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* as an annual program. *Yaum al-Lughah* and *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*, in general, aim to familiarize the Arabic language for students. While *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah*, the goal is the same as the two previous activities and specifically carried out to provide the first introduction of Arabic for new students.

Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah is commonly referred to as *Mukhayyam* among students and stands as the most awaited event. Positioned not merely as an Arabic language learning initiative masquerading as a recreational excursion or a routine orientation program for incoming students, *Mukhayyam* has evolved into a distinctive and profoundly meaningful undertaking for the student body. As evident from the considerable participation rates, students express notable enthusiasm for engaging in this program. Even amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which mandated restrictions on outdoor activities involving large groups, students persisted in urging the student association to conduct the program. Notably, lectures were conducted online during that period across various regions in Indonesia (Anhusadar, 2020; Aswasulasikin, 2020; Jundi, 2020; Maulana & Hamidi, 2020). *Mukhayyam* holds significance not only for current students but also resonates meaningfully with certain alumni who actively contribute to and enliven this program. Hence, the author endeavors to explore the underlying dynamics of this phenomenon from a different perspective and seek to unravel the profound meaning embedded within *Mukhayyam*, a *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* program that holds a special place in students' hearts.

The word *bī'ah* (البيئة) itself means environment and (حالة) which means condition. *Lughawiyah* (اللغوية) is an adjective meaning language (Astuti, Setyawan, & Aji, 2020). Furthermore, in the dictionary al-Maurid, the word *bī'ah* means environment, milieu,

and ambiance (Baalbaki et al., 2006). Language is used as a means of communication both orally and in writing (Jundi & Kasan, 2021). As a means of communication, language has a vital role in human life. With language, humans can communicate by expressing ideas from their minds or receiving information from others (Rizqi, 2016). "*Bī'ah Lughawiyah*" can be equivalently expressed as a "language immersion program" in English, both referring to an intensive language learning experience (Shen et al., 2022). *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* or environment of language, is everything that can be heard, seen, and felt by learners in learning Arabic (Mabruroh, 2018a; al-Syafa'ah, 2016). *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* is a deliberate and unintentional environment created wherein that scope of a language is used by all elements to support Arabic language learning. In another opinion, *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* is an environment where every activity uses Arabic passively or actively (Hasibuan & Jundi, 2023b; Putri, 2013). The Arabic or *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* environment is classified into two types: the official Arabic language environment, where the environment is arranged in such a way with a teacher, and the learning is aimed at the target language. There is also an unofficial Arabic environment where the language is spoken spontaneously without direction, which may result in language acquisition (Mabruroh, 2018b; Rosyid & Baroroh, 2020). It is explained that the official environment is also called *bī'ah rasmiyyah* and the unofficial environment is called *bī'ah thabî'iyyah* (Taubah, 2017). In this study, the *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* in question belonged to the first type. In line with the previous opinion, *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* has two types: 1) formal environments such as classes with a teaching and learning process, and 2) artificial and informal or natural environments (Sa'diyah, 2018).

It is not easy to create *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*. There needs to be consistency from all parties in an institution in order to create an environment that support the use of Arabic (Dalle & Jundi, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Fauzi, 2019). In the Arabic Education Department itself, one of the main problems is to maintain the use of Arabic in speaking through *Yaum al-Lughah, Bī'ah Lughawiyah,* and *Mukhayyam*. Because if one student starts to stop speaking Arabic, there will be a snowball effect and there will be more and more students who do not speak Arabic. For that, some factors support the development of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*, a pleasant and conducive environment that affects learners' mental and mental nature in learning (Humaidi, 2019). In contrast, the factors that hinder the development of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* are the competencies possessed by inadequate

learners, lack of educational facilities, lack of mastery of Arabic grammar, lack of vocabulary mastery, and self-distrust of learners who are afraid to make mistakes in speaking (Salsabila, 2019). In addition, the internal factors of students also hinder them from speaking Arabic fluently. Those factors include their cognitive competence, confidence, attitude towards learning and their views about the target language (Taubah, 2017). The more a learner's love for the language, the easier it will be to learn it. However, cultivating a love for what we learn is quite tricky if not based on personal will.

Various studies aimed at examining the Arabic-speaking environment or *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* in universities have been conducted. For instance, research entitled "Existence of *Bi'ah Lughawiyah* as an Arabic-language Media in Improving the Ability of Students of Arabic Education Study Program IAIN Curup". This research used a qualitative approach by discussing 1) the form and type of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* activities, namely Arabic speech, Arabic drama, Arabic poetry, and *muhâdatsah*, 2) the perception of the pros and cons of students to the *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* activities, 3) the existence of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* as a media to interact using Arabic (Aflisia & Harahap, 2019). The research entitled "Development of *Bi'ah Lughawiyyah* by the Student Association of Arabic Language Education Department at IAIN Pekalongan" revealed these findings 1) *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* development model based on the purpose of learning Arabic and curricular goals, 2) types of activities carried out both in the field of art and language, 3) learning models applied (Rosyid, 2020). Further research entitled "Synergy *Mukhayyam Araby* and *Bī'ah Arabiyyah* in Improving *Maharah Kalam* of Students of PBA IAIN Jember" showed the results: 1) supporting the activities of *Mukhoyyam Arabiy* to increase student *mahârah al-kalâm*, namely by maximizing *khitâbah*, *muhâwarah*, and *munâdzarah* training, 2) the strategy of establishing *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* is to limit certain areas as mandatory language and sanctioning offenders (Sa'diyah, 2018).

Considering these studies, researchers intend to develop a study on *Mukhayyam* from a broader and deeper point of view. Understanding *Mukhayyam* as a complex social phenomenon, not as a Arabic language immersive program. This new study is going to explore on how the relationship between students and the program, and its meaning for students. Aflisia and Harahap's research presented students' responses and perceptions of Bī'ah Lughawiyah activities but only within the learning scope. Then Sa'diyah's

research examined the same object but focused on increasing their speaking ability and did not discuss how students responded to the program yet, while this study intends to reveal students' motivation in participating in *Mukhayyam*. Rosyid's research views *Mukhayyam* from the student association perspective, which actively develops the *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* program in the institution. In comparison, this study looked at students as teenagers concerning each role in the *Mukhayyam* and all activities in the program.

Based on the previously discussed context, this research aims to analyze and clarify the *Mukhayyam* as a *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* program in the Arabic Education Department of IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo. The study attempted to answer these three problems: First, an investigation into the planning and implementation processes of the program. Second, an exploration of the application of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* within the program. Third, an investigation into the significance of *Mukhayyam* for students in the Arabic Education Department at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo.

Methods

This research used a qualitative approach (Rahardjo, 2011, 2023; Sugiyono, 2016). Qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). The chosen approach and methodology align with the study's objective, which is to provide a detailed description of the research subject, namely *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah*.

The participants in this research were students of the Arabic Education Department. They were selected considering their role in the program whose numbers can change according to the development of the study or so-called purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2016). The data collection methods used in this research were observation, interviews, and documentation (Jamshed, 2014). Deep interviews were conducted with nine students and these interviews were recorded (Rukajat, 2018). Participant observations were conducted over four sessions of the program's implementation, where the researcher directly engaged with all students involved in the activity, from the planning stage to the implementation of this program. The total number of participants ranged from 150 to 200 students, varying each year. This was undertaken to allow the researcher to share experiences with the students, ensuring that every aspect could be

observed in detail. Similarly, the documentation method was carried out by collecting documents related to the activities from the committee.

The next stage is the data validation technique which is conducted through extended observation, triangulation, and member check (Sugiyono, 2016). The data collected from observations was analyzed using inferential and descriptive methods (Zuchd & Afifah, 2021). By doing so, this research aims to conclude and make broader generalizations based on observational data (Sartor, 2008). In addition, descriptive analysis will provide a detailed description of the characteristics and patterns that can be identified from the data (Sholikhah, 2016). On the other hand, the data collected from interviews will be recorded and then simplified by eliminating irrelevant information to the research focus. The simplified data will be summarized and analyzed thereafter (Ghombavani et. al, 2020). Considering that this study is qualitative, the data analysis method employed is the interactive analysis method, which has been initiated since the early stages of the research (Miles & Huberman, 2009). Furthermore, data from all methods will be compared, and a narrative will be constructed to conclude.

Planning *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* Program

As has been discussed in the background, *Mukhayyam* is an annual *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* program conducted by the Student Association of the Arabic Education Department of IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo. This program is held for approximately one-third at the beginning of odd semester lectures in a predetermined place, usually a tourist spot. This program is applied in the form of a language village where the students stay for a week and they have to speak and interact with others using Arabic. This program is begun at the beginning of the semester by considering the new students' activities. The purpose of this program is to introduce Arabic to new students who have different backgrounds. So through this program, it is expected that they can start to familiarize themselves with Arabic, which they will spend at least four years to study about it.

The environment affects the development of a person's language skills. As Abdul Wahid Wafi stated, language is not a personal product of the individual but is a communal social product, in which each individual grows and absorbs the rules of language in his community by learning or imitating (Wafi, 1917). As well as in learning

Arabic, where the environment has an essential role in constructing knowledge about the Arabic language itself, learners experience repeated language experiences. Therefore, creating a strong language environment will significantly affect their competence.

Based on information obtained by researchers, similar activities were also carried out by student organizations majoring in Arabic at other universities, such as PBA UIN Datokarama Palu and PBA IAIN Bone. The purpose and the implementation of the program may vary, but they do agree on one thing the name of the program is *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*. Some do it in a few days; some combine it with writing activities; some have limited participants and many more differences. One of the similar activities carried out by the department of PBA IAIN Jember where the main goal is to increase the speaking skill of students (Sa'diyah, 2018).

Mukhayyam is one of the Student Association's few annual grand events involving hundreds of students. In 2019, about 170 students participated in the program and it increased to 200 in 2021 (HMJ PBA 2019, 2019). Not only considered as a great event but also as the most awaited event by students. With that 'title' and the number of participants, the preparation must be good, which the committee has started earlier. First of all, is the meeting of the student association's board with the head of the department to convey the program plan and ask for advice, including in the preparation of *Mukhayyam* books/modules that are going to be used in the activities. The book is well-designed to ensure that the presented content is of proven quality, thereby avoiding errors in the use of sentence expressions (Dalle, 2019; Kadir, Hasibuan, & Jundi, 2023). The Student Association plays a pivotal role in initiating various activities within the departmental environment, aiming to enhance students' competence and proficiency in Arabic language skills (Laubaha et al., 2022; Rosyid, 2020).

Furthermore, the first meeting for the preparation is usually held two months ahead which is after the semester's final exam. The inaugural meeting was held to form a committee that the student association administrators only attended. After the preparation is ready, the committee will announce the program to all students. In this stage, the researcher observes the development and improvement in activity management and students' skills in addressing encountered challenges and making decisions based on past experiences in previous years' implementations. This includes

enhancing the quality of activity planning, communication, problem-solving, and collective creativity among students, as manifested from the planning stage of these activities.

In planning the Arabic language learning activities in *Mukhayyam*, the main agenda in the program is learning about Arabic vocabulary (*mufradât*) and basic sentences/expressions ('*ibârah*) that are often used in everyday life. Considering that vocabulary is a pivotal element in introducing a second language to language learners (Jundi, 2023; Nabila & Jundi, 2023), mirroring the pivotal role that the environment plays in the development of human language (Jenita, 2021). Based on the purpose of the program, the material taught must be basic and uncomplicated to familiarize new students with listening and interacting using Arabic. Learning activities are structured by dividing new students into small groups, each guided by 3 to 5 mentors (*musyrif/musyrifah*) chosen from the senior student body by the core board committee. This approach reflects the recognition of the substantial benefits associated with small-group learning, emphasizing its role in promoting active student engagement and fostering enhanced interactions within the learning context (Cummins, 2016). The intentional formation of these small groups, led by experienced mentors, aims to create a conducive environment for collaborative learning and meaningful interactions, thereby enriching the overall educational experience for new students.

Implementing *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* in *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah*

Mukhayyam is a language village program with the concept of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*. Therefore, the main rule in this program is that all participants and committees must speak Arabic during the program without exception. At all times and places, students should always use Arabic. Based on researchers' observations through participatory observations conducted during 2019th and 2021st *Mukhayyam*, all participants of *Mukhayyam*, both new and senior students are highly respected and instilled this commitment. A strong commitment and positive attitude towards the Arabic language are prerequisites for creating *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* itself (Effendy, 2005).

Aligned with the program's objective of introducing the Arabic language as a means of communication to students through the *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* approach, it is evident that *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* serves several overarching purposes. There are three

purposes of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah*: First, to foster a positive tradition in learning Arabic, as well as utilizing the language in oral or written form. Second, it gives more opportunities for the students to practice using Arabic. Third, foster creativity and Arabic learning activities to implement the theory they have learned (Rizqi, 2016). Another opinion is that the purpose of creating an Arabic-speaking environment is to improve the skills of learners and teachers in Arabic, both spoken and written, so that the course of Arabic learning becomes more dynamic, effective, and meaningful. Therefore, the effort to create *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* should be supported by all stakeholders related to the environment (Hidayat, 2012).

More important, the environment affects the development of a person's language skills. As Abdul Wahid Wafi stated, language is not a personal product of the individual but is a communal social product, in which each individual grows and absorbs the rules of language in his community by learning or imitating (Wafi, 1917). As well as in learning Arabic, where the environment has an essential role in constructing knowledge about the Arabic language itself, learners experience repeated language experiences. Therefore, creating a strong language environment will significantly affect their competence.

The main rule in this program is that all participants and committees must speak Arabic during the program without exception. This kind of rule is quite effectively applied because of selecting the right location. The committee chose a recreation site and booked the entire lodgings specifically for the program. So that all activities and interactions are limited only in the area, creating invisible barriers between participants and the rest of the visitors. The principle of togetherness and active participation of all parties also tends to be easier to apply (Wahab, 2008). Even if there are times when students have to leave the site, the interaction between fellow participants must still use Arabic, although sometimes it is necessary to use alternative sign language to make communication easier.

Participants must speak Arabic in almost every place. The everyday activities occur around the main hall/tent, mosque, lodging, and learning spots or around the courtyard or garden around the inn. Although the program takes place in a beach tourist destination that is quite spacious and allows students to explore every corner, mentors are always there, and the members of the language section constantly patrol to ensure

the participants always obey the language rules. Their role as tutors for participants, assisting them to use the Arabic language throughout the program, has a significant impact (Jundi & Ali, 2023). Even participants' lodging deliberately placed some mentors to control the language. Participants also inevitably always have to speak Arabic, even in the restroom or toilet. *Musyrif* and *musyrifah,* as students' mentors are in charge of guiding learning and ensuring that their group members speak Arabic. At the same time, the language section monitors the committees, mentors, and new student participants. Supervision is indeed imperative in constructing proficient linguistic competence (Hidayat, 2012; Jundi & Hasibuan, 2023; Taubah, 2017). New student who are caught violating will get a penalty/punishment on the spot. Firm disciplinary measures are implemented to uphold the established linguistic environment (Hasibuan & Jundi, 2023; Ripollés et al., 2014; Steel et al., 2016; Wächter et al., 2009). Those who have repeatedly violated on that day will get a penalty at night at the evaluation in front of all participants.

The use of mandatory language is consistently applied, as it aligns with the principles of creating a standardized and sustainable *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* or language immersion (Bucknam, 2021; Neveu et al., 2022; Serafini et al., 2020; Xiong & Feng, 2020). Except at night after Isha's prayer, the language rules are usually loosened for easier interaction between students. At 4 a.m., all participants perform morning prayers in Mushola, and at the same time, the use of Arabic is also started. Until 6 or 7 o'clock breakfast will be distributed and all students will have breakfast together in the same place. Again, students still have to speak Arabic. This rule has become the committee's attention to improve the quality of *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* (Sa'diyah, 2020; Taufiq, 2020; Wahab, 2008). For example, if a student wants to take food or add side dishes or is in line to take drinking water, then they will inevitably use Arabic. The phrases often used in activities are already provided on the module and are primarily in the early pages, like expressions related to food, mosque, or restroom. So, participants only need to practice using it. Learning begins with a briefing after breakfast until half past 12 and until 1 p.m. To get lunch, students have to memorize vocabulary and expressions based on the target of the day to the mentors.

Another requirement to form a *Bī'ah Lughawiyah* is to invite figures who can speak Arabic well (Effendy, 2005; Oensyar et al., 2023; Zurqoni et al., 2020). This is the

committee's primary concern, where senior students with good Arabic skills are aimed to be always close to new participants. The selection of mentors, the language committee, and the determination of participant's lodging consider this. They have to teach, and guide all the activities in the mosque and evening activities, become masters of ceremony, and make announcements in Arabic to make the new students accustomed to listening and speaking in Arabic.

Meaning of *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* for Students

The researcher aims to investigate and deeply analyze students' perceptions of this activity, uncovering how they attribute meaning to it, comprehending students' perspectives on the activity, analyzing their motivations for participating, and exploring the significance of this activity from the students' standpoint. Such exploration is paramount to comprehending how similar activities can be beneficial to students, both academically and non-academically. *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* has a profound meaning for the students of the Arabic Education Department, which are:

Welcome Symbols for New Students

Mukhayyam, as the initial student association initiative for newcomers is designed to serve as a warm introduction. It seems as though the senior students are conveying, 'Behold, we are the Arabic Education Department students. Embrace our family with open arms!' In *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah*, the values of the department are gradually imparted through various activities for all students. The researcher asserts that *Mukhayyam* plays a critical role in fostering a sense of unity among all students within the Arabic Education Department.

Fostering active student engagement in extracurricular activities not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also yields the additional benefits of nurturing a profound sense of ownership, camaraderie, emotional, and social well-being (Goh et al., 2022; Malette & Ismailzai, 2020; Phan & Ngu, 2020). Through meticulously planned activities designed to intensify interpersonal interactions among students, a cohesive bond is cultivated within the educational community, contributing to both academic and holistic development (Díaz-Iso et al., 2020; Sasson et al., 2022). Furthermore, participation in extracurricular activities fosters leadership skills, resilience, and

adaptability, equipping students with invaluable qualities that are essential for success in their future endeavors.

Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah by the Student Association of the Arabic Education Department is indeed different from the other welcoming student events. When others welcome their new students with revelry and sometimes even resort to hazing activities, *Mukhayyam* focuses on imparting learning and knowledge to its new students. It also gives an enjoyable and unforgettable first impression instead of traumatic feelings. Not infrequently, new students expect badly about this program before knowing the truth. Most of them are worried about what will happen to themselves during the *Mukhayyam* activities, such as fear of hazing and bullying like new student activities in general (McCarthy, 2015). Nevertheless, the opposite is what happened.

Meaning of Friendship for Students

For students, *Mukhayyam* plays a crucial role in fostering *Friendship* among them. While regular lecture days bring all students together in the lecture hall, genuine interactions are not easily forged. In contrast, *Mukhayyam* provides an environment where students seamlessly mingle, cross paths, and engage in more intense interactions. They do things together in daily activities such as eating, preparing for prayers, learning, cooking, cleaning, and more. It is noteworthy that all students must share meals in the same space, gradually breaking down invisible barriers among them. This type of communal activity gradually dismantles unfamiliarity among students, fostering connections that may not have previously existed (Dasgupta et al., 2022; Gray et al., 2020; Snijders et al., 2020).

This implies that through extracurricular activities like this, there is an elevation in the intensity of interaction among students, fostering stronger camaraderie and ultimately enhancing a sense of a family bond among them (Munir & Zaheer, 2021; Stuart et al., 2011). This program fosters a sense of community, facilitating student engagement beyond the traditional academic setting (Buckley & Lee, 2021; Pharaswal & Latif, 2023). The collective experiences cultivated through these activities serve as the cornerstone for fostering deeper relationships akin to familial bonds. This

interconnectedness not only encompasses students within the same cohort but also bridges the divides between various classes and year levels.

Mukhayyam acts as a dynamic platform, facilitating meaningful interactions between younger and older students, and contributing to the continuous formation of shared memories and experiences. As students return from *Mukhayyam*, this heightened sense of camaraderie permeates their daily interactions, eliminating the need for awkward greetings and cultivating an environment where mutual assistance and collaboration, particularly in academic endeavors such as assignments, flow seamlessly.

Engaging students in activities beyond traditional lecture settings, yet intricately linked to the educational process, is instrumental in elevating their academic and social capital to the standards demanded by higher education (Malette & Ismailzai, 2020). Extracurricular activities play a key role in fostering interpersonal communication and cultivating teamwork competency among students (Shcheglova, 2019; Zhang, 2023). *Mukhayyam*, functioning as an extracurricular initiative, further exemplifies this concept by providing students with many opportunities for interaction. It serves as a platform not only for enhancing social capital but also for imparting valuable skills in event management and promoting effective coordination with peers (Shcheglova, 2019; Wisetya & Ismara, 2018). Through participation in *Mukhayyam*, students not only broaden their network but also acquire practical knowledge in organizing and collaborating with others, contributing significantly to their overall educational and social development.

Forming and Strengthening Student Family Bond

Family is a deeply cherished core value within the Department of Arabic Education, ingrained since its early establishment and consistently upheld by both internal lecturers and students. This familial ethos is reflected in the way seniors are regarded as older siblings, juniors as younger, and lecturers as parental figures. This kind of relationship positively impacts educational quality by fostering responsibility, mutual sharing, and development (Jia-wei, 2010). This value manifests in various aspects, evidenced by minimal academic issues between students and internal department lecturers. During student association events, participation is enthusiastic and grounded in a sense of familial camaraderie rather than hierarchical distinctions

(Igbal et al., 2023). Student involvement in activities leads to increased psychological well-being, including personal growth, positive relationships, and purpose in life (Kilgo et al., 2016).

This program subtly cultivates this family value, acknowledged by students as an integral, albeit unspoken, goal. It serves as the heart of *Mukhayyam*, complementing the language immersion aspect. Initiatives like shared meals contribute to a sense of family, fostering mutual harmony through intense interactions during daily activities. The family bond within the Arabic department is supported by students from other majors who appreciate the unique familial atmosphere they may not find elsewhere.

Meaning of Self-Expression as a Senior

Indeed, the dynamics between adolescent tendencies and the egos of seniors are perceptible during *Mukhayyam*, without implying a negative connotation. Whether consciously or unconsciously, a sense of pride exists among some seniors, asserting their status as senior students and as elder siblings for the newcomers. This can be discerned through their actions and behaviors. Certain seniors project their seniority towards new female students in specific instances, tending to be more visible, authoritative, attentive, and mindful of their appearance. Some deliberately engage in specific actions or behaviors to attract attention. Nevertheless, such dynamics are common among students. Our participants affirms the accuracy of these observations, attributing them to the nature of seniors, although not pervasive. Importantly, this is not the primary motivation for students participating in the program.

Regarding the learning aspect during *Mukhayyam*, new students receive guidance and companionship from mentors (*musyrif/musyrifah*). These mentors are selected by the committee for their proficiency in Arabic, aiming to assist younger students. As senior members entrusted with the role of mentors, they take great pride in the responsibility placed upon them. Naturally, this trust comes with significant responsibilities. Through this entrusted responsibility, they also take benefits, notably by directly applying and utilizing the knowledge gained from relevant teaching methodology courses such as microteaching course in instructing the target language (Reddy, 2019; Yasin & Jundi, 2020). Pedagogical practice plays a particularly important role in the formation of future teachers (Kim, 2021; Oproescu, 2018). However, this

doesn't lead those mentors to feel superior to other committee members. Instead, they feel a profound sense of responsibility and consistently strive to utilize Arabic.

Improving Students Soft Skills

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, *Mukhayyam* provides significant meaning and significance for students in terms of their soft skills. Based on the implementation of *Mukhayyam* observed over several years, researchers have observed some important soft skills among students. Those skills encompass communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and creativity.

Communication and collaboration skills, crucial in the 21st century, encompass articulating ideas clearly, listening empathetically, working with others, appreciating individual contributions, fostering academic success, and preparing students for real-world challenges (Fitriani et al., 2023; Osterman, 1993; Slavin, 1995; Spies & Xu, 2018). On the other hand, creativity skill involves generating new ideas and innovative solutions across diverse fields, enabling students to adapt to changes and contribute to innovation in the evolving job market (Bruno & Canina, 2019; Craft, 2003; Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019; Runco, 2008; Siregar et al., 2023). While Problem-solving skills involve effectively identifying, analyzing, and creatively resolving problems, essential for both academic contexts and real-life situations (Franestian et al., 2020; Lee, 2018; Rabie-Ahmed & Mohamed, 2022; Rahman, 2019).

The development and improvement in students' activity management and skills in facing challenges as well as making decisions based on past experiences in the implementation of previous years. This includes several important aspects such as enhancing the quality of activity planning. The themes and forms of activities planned by students are constantly updated with fresher and more varied forms through students' creativity. In addition to basic Arabic language learning for students, *Mukhayyam* also includes various fun activities planned collectively by students through meetings. Certainly, this also impacts their skills in communication and negotiation. Furthermore, problem-solving skills in students are also greatly trained through this activity. A complex activity involving so many participants will certainly face various obstacles and problems that may never have been considered before. In such situations, students discuss and seek problem solutions together.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be drawn several conclusions. Firstly, the preparation for *Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* program is started two months prior to the event. This involves forming the committee, selecting the location, fundraising, designing program plans, developing *Mukhayyam* handbooks/modules, and arranging for equipment and transportation. This program is a linguistic immersion program resembling Arabic villages held for a week at the beginning of the odd semester. Participants consist of students from the Arabic Education Department. The program's objective is to acquaint new students with Arabic through daily learning of essential vocabulary (*mufradât*) and expressions (*'ibârah*).

Secondly, implementation of the linguistic immersion is enforced through mandatory Arabic language regulations during the program. These regulations apply to new student participants and all senior committees. The requirement to use Arabic extends from dawn prayers until the evening activities and return to their accommodations. Successful enforcement is facilitated by the guidance of mentors and the language section in monitoring participants' language usage. The strategic location, distant from other tourist attractions, aids in maintaining interaction and communication exclusively in Arabic among students. Even during competitions and games, Arabic is predominantly used, occasionally interspersed with Indonesian.

Thirdly, for students in the Arabic Education Department, the program is not merely an annual program, it is an experience meant to be embraced and remembered long after its completion. It serves as a training ground to apply Arabic language skills. Moreover, it holds significant meaning for students, acting as a symbol of welcome for new students in the department. It fosters camaraderie among students, building and reinforcing bonds and a familial atmosphere that spans generations. It serves as a means for senior students to express themselves to new students and offers a week-long holiday filled with learning and practicing Arabic with friends. Furthermore, activities like this can help hone students' soft skills, evident from the development of student's abilities to handle and manage events involving numerous participants, as seen from the execution of the activity each year.

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