

Learning obstacles of *al-Af'āl al-Mu`rabāt* among Madrasah Tsanawiyah students

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the learning obstacles experienced by eighth-grade students at a Madrasah Tsanawiyah in studying the topic of *al-Af'āl al-Mu`rabāt*. A qualitative approach was employed using the Didactical Design Research (DDR) method. Participants included 47 students and one Arabic teacher. Data were collected through tests and non-test instruments, including in-depth interviews. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's framework, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students experienced both ontogenic and epistemological obstacles. Ontogenic obstacles included psychological factors (such as low motivation and interest) and instrumental difficulties, with technical incomprehension being the primary challenge. These findings suggest the need for instructional solutions. The study recommends the development of a DDR-based learning design tailored to students' needs and informed by the identified learning obstacles.

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INTRODUCTION

Students' ability to determine the *i`rāb* (change of final *harakah*) in a word is still relatively low (Zuhriyah, 2020). This aligns with the initial observation researchers met at Madrasah Tsanawiyah about their understanding of *naḥwu* subjects, especially on *fi`il* material. The researcher observed 47 students by giving 15 questions divided into three chapters, namely the chapter of *al-aqsām al-af'āl* (a division of verbs), *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt* (verbs that change their final *harakah*), and *al-af'āl al-mabniyāt* (verbs that do not change their final *harakah*). The results were that the material on *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt* had the lowest average score of 1 on a scale of 1-5, compared to the other two materials with an average score of 2. Based on this, it can be seen that *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt* material has greater level of difficulty than other chapters. Therefore, the researcher chose the chapter of *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt* as the focus of study in this research.

The topic of *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt* concerns the change in the final harakat of a *fi`il* (verb) caused by the presence of another word (*`āmil*) that is located before the *fi`il* and affects the change in the final harakat of the word (Alfalah & Sopian, 2024). The difficulties experienced by students are categorized as learning obstacles (Hariyani et al., 2022; Sidik et al., 2021). Based on Brousseau's theory, Suryadi divided learning obstacles into three types, namely ontogenic obstacles, epistemological obstacles, and didactical obstacles (Suryadi, 2019).

Research on learning obstacles is not new, especially in the field of mathematics. Several researchers have examined this topic with different focuses, such as on the perimeter of a square, social arithmetic, chance, geometry, prisms, flat-sided spaces, and algebra. These studies reveal various kinds of learning obstacles experienced by students (Azzahra & Juandi, 2021; Azzahra & Herman, 2022; Bintara & Prabawanto, 2024; Gulvara et al., 2023; Hermawan et al., 2021; Maharani et al., 2022; Noto et al., 2020). Like other students, learning obstacles are also experienced by students with special needs. Meika revealed that students with disabilities experience epistemological obstacles when learning integer material (Meika et al., 2022). Previous research has discussed the importance of understanding the learning obstacles experienced by students in mathematics. This understanding can be used as a reference in designing new learning designs because learning obstacles can only be used in subjects that have specific concept structures and formulas, such as mathematics.

On the other hand, in the context of Arabic language learning, a number of researches have been conducted to examine the difficulties experienced by learners. However, most of these researches only focus on identifying learning difficulties, as seen in studies that discuss Arabic learning difficulties in Diniyah Takmiliah Awaliyah (DTA) students, seventh-grade MTs, second-grade SDIT students, and Islamic Education Study Program students (Ardila et al., 2023; Pawestri et al., 2020; Sahidin et al., 2024; Ulfah & Insaniyah, 2023). Different from these researches, Maimun and Maulani not only identified problems in Arabic language learning in class XII but also offered solutions to overcome them (Maimun & Maulani, 2022).

Consistent with prior research, this research goes beyond merely identifying students' learning difficulties by striving to offer a more comprehensive contribution through the implementation of the learning obstacle framework within the scope of Arabic language education. This approach is grounded in the understanding that, within Arabic language instruction, the study of *nahwu* is regarded as one of the most fundamental areas of knowledge. It contains rules about the determination of the final *harakah* whether *fathah*, *kasrah*, *ḍammah*, or *sukūn*, which serves to indicate the position of words in a sentence and serves as a learning tool to avoid mistakes in the language (Saleh & Kara, 2022; Mohammed, 2024; Taufik, 2020; Ulum & Nuriyah, 2023). In essence, each *harakah* located at the end of a word has its meaning and function, which can change due to the letters that affect it, such as the letters *jar*, *naṣab*, *jazm* (Al-Badri, 2023; Hajib et al., 2020; Hamad, 2022). This change is called *i`rāb*, the change of *harakah* can occur to *isim* or *fi`il* (Asrofi & Lestanti, 2021).

Based on this foundation, analyzing the learning obstacles experienced by students is very important, especially for Arabic language teachers. The identification of these obstacles is closely related to the mastery of pedagogical competence, especially in designing an effective learning process that is responsive to student needs (Nurbayan et al., 2024). By understanding learning constraints since the planning stage, teachers can develop more targeted learning strategies to support the achievement of learning objectives and the successful implementation of the curriculum (Hanifa & Yusra, 2023). Departing from this urgency, the research focused on answering questions regarding the forms of learning obstacles of Madrasah Tsanawiyah students on *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt* material. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to identify the learning obstacles that arise in the material of *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the qualitative approach and applies the DDR method to the research design. The qualitative approach is used because this research aims to describe the phenomena that occur. According to Bogan and Biklen, one of the characteristics of qualitative methods is descriptive (Asrofi & Lestanti, 2021). Meanwhile, the DDR method is a learning design that consists of three stages: didactical situation analysis, metapedadidactic analysis, and retrospective analysis (Setianingrum et al., 2023). This research only focuses on learning obstacle analysis, especially in the initial stage, namely didactical situation analysis in DDR. Data sources were determined by purposive sampling, with criteria based on Table 1. Since all students studied the material in the

previous semester, this material is a continuous material for Arabic language learning. All participant data is presented anonymously, in accordance with the agreement between the researcher and the participants.

Table 1. Participant Criteria

The material	<i>al-af`al al-mu`rabāt</i>
The number of students who have studied the material in the previous semester	47 people
The number of students who have never studied the material	0
<i>Nahwu</i> subject teacher	1 person
Textbook used	<i>al-muyassar fi`ilmi an-nabwi</i>

Data collection techniques in this study used test and non-test instruments in the form of in-depth interviews (Koly et al., 2023). The researcher used the test to explore the phenomena experienced by the subject and became an intermediary in obtaining data as a reference in the interview. The test instrument consists of 10 multiple-choice questions that are adjusted to the basic competencies, question indicators, cognitive levels, and materials. The cognitive level in this research refers to Bloom's taxonomy theory. Bloom's taxonomy is a classification system of cognitive thinking skills, which is divided into six levels from C1 to C6 (Dallasheh, 2024; Nafiati, 2021). According to Sudjana as cited in Lestari (2022), the ratio of questions in each category is 3:4:3 with details, easy questions (C1 & C2) 30%, medium questions (C3 & C4) 40%, and difficult questions (C5 & C6) 30%. The data analysis technique refers to the theory proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Fadli, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

At the data collection stage, researchers gave 47 students 10 multiple-choice questions, each with four answer options. After students worked on the questions, seven class intervals were obtained by dividing values, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Interval Class Acquisition

Interval	Frequency	Percentage	
66	68	8	17.02%
69	71	4	8.51%
72	74	10	21.28%
75	77	7	14.89%
78	80	9	19.15%
81	83	6	12.77%
84	86	3	6.38%

The researcher then interviewed one representative from each class interval. The interview consisted of nine questions that represented one type of learning obstacle. The interview indicators used by the researcher are presented in Table 3. In the interview with the subject teacher, the researcher asked for his response to the student's scores and interview results. The following are the interview results that describe each of the obstacles (ontogenic, epistemological, and didactic) felt by students.

Table 3. Interview Indicators (Koly et al., 2023; Sidik et al., 2021)

No	Learning Obstacle	Indicator
1	Ontogenic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological: Students feel hesitant and afraid of being wrong when answering questions. • Instrumental: Students do not understand the concept of changing the <i>harakat</i> or final letter when a word is entered by <i>`amil</i>. • Conceptual: The material on <i>al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt</i> is considered inappropriate to be taught at the 7th-grade level and has nothing to do with the material on various kinds of <i>fi`il</i>.
2	Epistemological	Students have difficulty when working on problems that use new vocabulary.
3	Didactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students experience a lack of understanding of the material because of the method or media used by the teacher. • The instructions given by the teacher are difficult to understand.

Ontogenic Obstacles

According to Brousseau, ontogenic obstacles consist of three types, namely psychological, instrumental, and conceptual (Fauzi & Suryadi, 2020). The researcher found that seven students experienced ontogenic obstacles, especially in the psychological aspect.

Researcher: "Do you feel hesitation and afraid of being wrong when answering questions?"

Respondent 1: "Yes, often."

Researcher: "Do you know what causes it?"

Respondent 1: "It means I lack confidence."

These answers show that students often feel hesitant and lack confidence when answering questions. This was evident when the researcher guided students to work on problems that were considered difficult, as well as asking similar questions. Students were able to answer correctly without error. This finding shows that low self-confidence can be an obstacle for a person in carrying out daily activities, one of which is at school (Syahdah & Irvani, 2023). Some students feel confused about number 7, which tested the difference between *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* and *al-jāzimah*.

Researcher: "Which question did you find difficult?"

Respondent 2: "Number 7"

Researcher: "Which part was difficult?"

Respondent 2: "I don't understand"

Researcher: "What did you not understand, is it the *harakah* or the difference?"

Respondent 2: "The difference"

Researcher: "Let's see, do you find what is different between the two in terms of writing?"

Respondent 2: "If *مُ* is *majzūm*, if *لُنْ* is *manṣūb*, the sign is that"

Researcher: "But you have answered correctly. Did you have any hesitation when you answered the question?"

Respondent 2: "Yes, I was hesitant"

Researcher: "Then, what confused you in question no. 7?"

Respondent 2: "I was confused about whether *مُ* is *manṣūb* or *majzūm*."

Based on this answer, the student was hesitant in determining which one belongs to the category of *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* and *al-jāzimah*. Although the answer chosen by the student was correct, the in-depth interview revealed that the student experienced hesitation in answering it. The results of both interviews are in line with the theory of psychological ontogenic obstacles, which includes students' unpreparedness in terms of motivation and interest in the subject matter being studied (Hendriyanto et al., 2024).

In addition to the interview results, the researcher also found student answers that indicated hesitation, as shown in Figure 1, 2, and 3

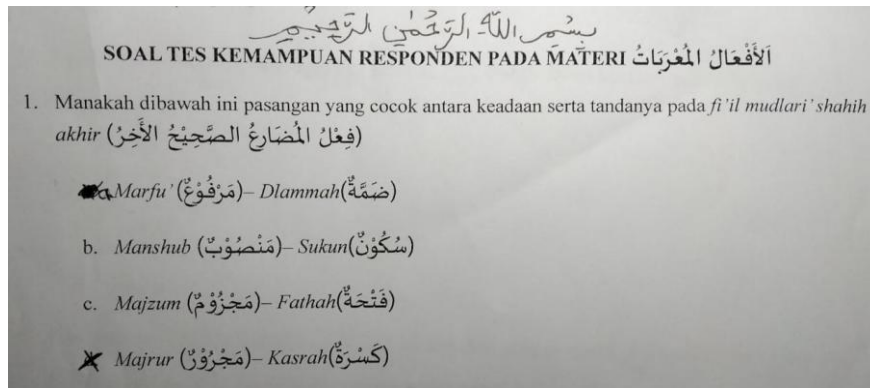


Figure 1. Student's Answer for Question Number 1

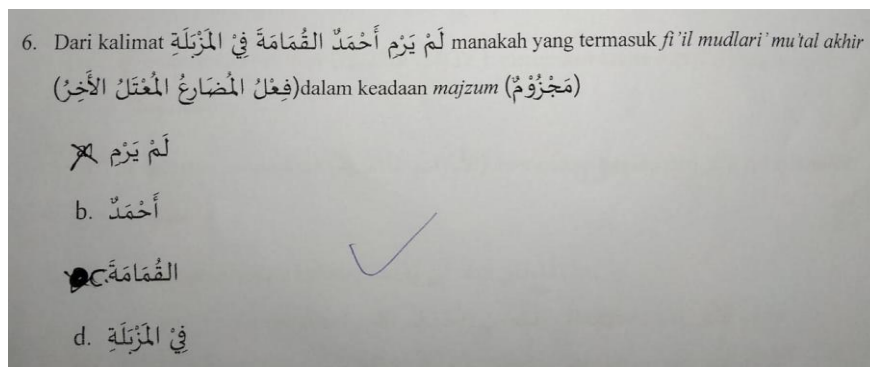


Figure 2: Student's Answer for Question Number 6

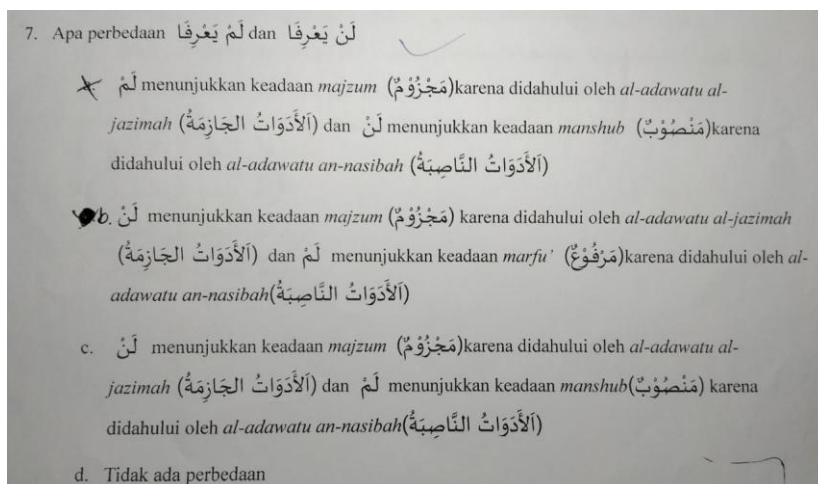


Figure 3: Student's Answer for Question Number 7

Figure 1, 2, and 3 indicate that students experienced hesitation when selecting answers for questions 1, 6, and 7. This hesitation is visible through the presence of scribbled markings on the answer sheets, which suggest that students were unsure about their initial choices. These hesitations arose in the context of questions about understanding the final *harakah* marks on *fi`il muḍāri` ṣaḥīḥ akhir*, analyzing *fi`il muḍāri` mu`tal akhir*, and examining the differences between *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* and *al-jāzimah*.

When the researcher interviewed the subject teacher, he revealed that students often find it difficult from the beginning of the lesson. In fact, according to him, there are actually no really incapable students. This affects the students' mindset, so they find it difficult every time they receive new material.

Researcher: "How do you respond to the results of interviews with students that show the existence of psychological ontogenic obstacles?"

Respondent: "They like to think it's difficult first, even though in the end they can do it too; there is nothing they cannot do. I once told the children that you actually judged 'I can't, I don't want to try' at the beginning. So after being told like that, thankfully, yesterday's scores improved from the previous year."

The results of interviews and student responses indicate that students experience psychological ontogenic obstacles. Hesitation, confusion, and lack of self-confidence are obstacles that exist in students. The interview results that indicated the existence of instrumental ontogenic obstacles were also found in four students. Here is one of the interview excerpts.

Researcher: "Do you not understand the concept of changes the *harakah* or the final letter when it is entered by *`āmil* (*al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* and *al-jāzimah*)?"

Respondent: "Yes, I don't understand."

Researcher: "Tell me the characteristics of the final letter in *fi`il marfū`*, *manṣūb*, and *majzūm*?"

Respondent: "The *marfū`* mark is *sukūn*, the *majzūm* marks is *fathah*; the *manṣūb* mark is *sukūn*."

These answers indicate that students experience instrumental ontogenic learning obstacles. This obstacle is related to students' lack of understanding of the basics that are key to the material (Islamiyah et al., 2023). In the interview, the student did not know the basic concept of the material *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt*, namely the change in the final *harakat*, which should be if *marfū`* is marked with *ḍammah*, *manṣūb* with *fathah*, and *majzūm* with *sukūn* (Zakaria, 2023).

Three students also experienced conceptual obstacles in addition to psychological and instrumental ontogenic obstacles. These obstacles arose due to a mismatch between the level of complexity of the material and student readiness. Conceptual obstacles are included in the category of ontogenic obstacles because they are related to learning designs that are not aligned with students' level of understanding (Syahdah & Irvani, 2023).

Researcher: "Do you think the material on *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt* is not appropriate to be taught in grade eight because it is not appropriate or not related to the previous material on the kinds of *fi`il*?"

Respondent 1: "Yes, it's too difficult. The names like to be mixed up."

Respondent 2: "It's too hard. There are many terms that I don't understand."

Respondent 3: "It was quite hard."

Based on these answers, these three students are indicated to experience conceptual ontogenic obstacles because they feel that the material is not in accordance with their abilities at the time of grade 7. Ideally, the material on the kinds of *fi`il* is related to the material on *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt* because students cannot be directly taught material on *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt* before being

introduced to various kinds of *fi`il*. Suppose they find difficulty with the material, it means that case, there is an indication of the problem that they have not understood the concept of the previous material on various kinds of *fi`il*. This is different from the other four students, who stated that they did not experience difficulties related to the sequence of material and its placement in grade 7. Therefore, although this finding does not represent all students (3 out of 7), it is still an indication of significant conceptual obstacles.

Epistemological Obstacles

In addition to difficulties originating from within students, epistemological obstacles are also seen when students face new vocabulary that appears in the problem. A total of six students admitted to having difficulty when understanding the problem because of the vocabulary or terms that they had not previously recognized. Here are some of the interviews.

Researcher: “Have you ever had difficulty working on questions using *mufradāt*, *kalimah*, or *jumlah* for example different from those in the book or those used by the teacher?”

Respondent 1: “Yes, I have.”

Researcher: “Tell me or show me the question!”

Respondent 1: “Question number 5, there is vocabulary that I don't know, which is *يُنَكِّي*.”

Apart from vocabulary, some students also had difficulty understanding new terms that appeared in the questions. One of them was seen in an interview with a student who had difficulty in question number 8 with the context of the question determining the exception of the relationship between *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* and *fi`il* in *manṣūb*.

Researcher: “Which question do you find difficult?”

Respondent 2: “Question 8.”

Researcher: “Why do you find it difficult to answer question 8?”

Respondent 2: “Because I didn't know what it meant, I was confused when I read the question.”

Researcher: “If this question is changed to what is the relationship between *al-adawāt al-jāzimah* and *fi`il* in a state of *majzūm*, would it be understandable?”

Respondent 2: “I'm still confused.”

Researcher: “Do you know what *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* is?”

Respondent 2: “I don't know.”

Researcher: “Well, *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* is the letters that cause the *fi`il*, to become a *manṣūb* form, such as *أَنْ, لَنْ, إِذَنْ, كَيْ*.”

Respondent 2: “Oh that, yes I know.”

Researcher: “So, in your opinion, does *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* play a role in causing *fi`il* to become *manṣūb*?”

Respondent 2: (Just nods his head)

Researcher: “Is *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* the reason the *fi`il* becomes *naṣab*?”

Respondent 2: “Yes, it is.”

Researcher: “Is *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* a sign of a *fi`il* becoming *naṣab*?”

Respondent 2: “No.”

Researcher: “Is *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah* part of the *fi`il* that becomes *naṣab*? It means that a *fi`il* is said to be *manṣūb* if there is *al-adawāt an-nāṣibah*, correct?”

Respondent 2: “Yes.”

Researcher: “So, in your opinion, the correct answer to the question is?”

Respondent 2: “C.”

Researcher: “After the explanation, do you understand the meaning of the question?”

Respondent 2: “Yes, I understand.”

From the results of the in-depth interview, it appears that the student actually had no difficulty understanding the concept tested, but he did not know the meaning of the terms used. It is evident that when the researcher explained and guided students in answering the questions, the results were that students could figure out the correct answer. This is an indication of epistemological obstacles, namely limited understanding due to lack of context or prior knowledge owned by students (Mahmud et al., 2023).

Based on the interviews with the two students, it can be concluded that limited vocabulary mastery can affect the understanding of the concept of changing the form of *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt*. This is in line with the theory put forward by Milton and Masrai, which states that an increase in vocabulary knowledge tends to be a benefit to success in language skills (Milton & Masrai, 2020). is essential when delivering a material. If teaching only focuses on the vocabulary in the textbook, students tend to get confused when they encounter new vocabulary, even though they understand the grammatical concepts.

The subject teacher recognizes that there are always students who find it difficult to understand new terms. The following is the researcher's interview with the subject teacher.

Respondent: "In working on questions for the MTs level with many other subjects, students often feel they understand in class, but when they face new terms in the questions, they become confused. Except for students who have had an educational background in Madrasah Diniyah for 3-6 years before, they are usually familiar with these terms. Meanwhile, students from public elementary schools who have not studied Arabic before will have more difficulty. Then it is true that sometimes students tend to only memorize the vocabulary in the book, including when explaining the *jam`u taksīr*."

Based on this statement, students' educational backgrounds before entering MTs apparently influence the extent of their understanding of Arabic.

Didactical Obstacles

In addition to ontogenetic and epistemological obstacles, one of the seven students interviewed admitted to experiencing didactic obstacles, as in the following interview.

Researcher: "Do you find it difficult to understand the material with the methods or media used by the teacher when teaching about *al-af`āl al-mu`rabāt*?"

Respondent: "A little bit."

Researcher: "Were the instructions from the teacher when delivering the material easy to understand?"

Respondent: "I don't understand."

The subject teacher also said that the limited media in the classroom affected the learning process. The following is an excerpt from his interview.

Respondent: "The disadvantage may be the lack of learning media in the classroom so that teaching methods become less varied. There used to be a multimedia room, but its use was limited. For Arabic lessons themselves, there has not been a language laboratory since long ago."

Based on the student and teacher interviews, didactical obstacles were found. These obstacles arise from didactical strategies or interventions used by teachers in teaching material (Hoyos et al., 2023). Students' difficulty in understanding the material through the methods or media used is an indicator of the didactical obstacles experienced by students (Koly et al., 2023; Sidik et al., 2021). This is because technology in this era makes the teaching and learning process easier for students to understand compared to using conventional methods (Radza, 2023). However, the results of interviews with students and teachers are only a finding because one versus 7 students cannot represent other answers.

This research provides implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research provides a classification of students' learning obstacles in learning Arabic, which is considered better than just mentioning the barriers in general without any grouping. Practically, the results of this study can be used as a teacher pedagogy that is used as a reference in making innovative lesson plans to improve learning quality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it is known that students experience obstacles in learning Arabic, especially in the material *al-af'āl al-mu`rabāt*, which is divided into ontogenic obstacles and epistemological obstacles. The ontogenic obstacles include (1) psychological ontogeny, namely, students' hesitation in answering questions, as seen from the multiple answers in one question accompanied by scribbles. (2) Ontogenic instrumental, namely students' lack of understanding of the basic concept of changes in *harakah* when entered by certain *`āmil*.

Meanwhile, epistemological obstacles arise due to limited context at the beginning of the material. Students have difficulty understanding new terms or vocabulary that they have never learned before. This shows that limited vocabulary dramatically affects students' understanding. In Arabic language learning, mastery of *mufradāt* (vocabulary) is an important aspect of understanding the material. This is also supported by the statement of the subject teacher, who said that students often feel unfamiliar with new terms due to the many other subjects they study.

With the discovery of these learning obstacles, a solution is needed to be able to overcome the learning obstacles that students experience. Therefore, this study recommends the need to create a DDR-based learning design that is customized based on the needs and refers to the existing learning obstacles as an effort to overcome these problems. For suggestions for future researchers, it is necessary to study the gradation of knowledge taught to students based on the existing curriculum. This departs from the statements of students who feel that there is a mismatch of material at the 7th-grade level in Arabic language subjects.

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