



The Transformation of Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Boarding Schools: Theoretical and Communicative Perspectives

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Abstract :

This research is motivated by the low effectiveness of Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools which is still dominated by theoretical approaches and lack of integration with real-life contexts. This condition causes students' weak communicative skills even though they have a fairly good mastery of the rules. This research aims to analyze the problems of Arabic language learning and formulate more contextual and innovative solutions. The method used is a qualitative approach with the type of library research, supported by interview data and literature studies that are analyzed through the stages of condensation, reduction, display, and data verification. The results of the study show that learning is still oriented to qawa'id, minimal communicative practices, and limited innovation of teacher methods and competencies. In conclusion, a transformational learning based on communicative, contextual, and student-centered learning is needed. This research contributes to the development of the study of Arabic language education by emphasizing the integration of theory and practice and the importance of improving teacher competence in creating effective and relevant learning.

INTRODUCTION

This research is very important for the wider community because Arabic is the language used in the Qur'an and hadith, which is the basis of the teachings of Islam (Baharin et al., 2025; Sapitri et al., 2025). Mastering Arabic not only helps to understand religious texts, but also deepens understanding of the philosophy of life of Muslims (Ghani et al., 2025; Howell et al., 2025; Manshur et al., 2023). Although many Islamic educational institutions teach Arabic, there are still many individuals who find it difficult to apply this understanding in their daily lives (Aditya et al., 2025; Alsaied, 2024; Shaalan, 2023). This can have an impact on the limited teaching of Islamic teachings in depth to the younger generation. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to improving the effectiveness of Arabic language learning in Indonesia, which in turn will affect the quality of Islamic religious understanding in the community.

In Indonesian society, the teaching of Arabic in Islamic educational institutions, especially in Islamic boarding schools, still faces many obstacles. One of

them is a teaching method that emphasizes more on memorization than understanding meaning (Dahou et al., 2025; ElSabagh et al., 2025). In addition, many Islamic boarding schools still implement a traditional education system that is unable to keep up with the times. This limited mastery of the Arabic language hinders a broader understanding of religion, which should be able to affect the daily lives of Muslims in a more positive way (Ilyas et al., 2024; Mukmin et al., 2025; Syafei et al., 2024). Therefore, this research focuses on efforts to find solutions to the problem of ineffective Arabic language teaching in Indonesia.

The phenomenon that occurs in the field is that the teaching of Arabic is limited to a theoretical level that has nothing to do with real life. Many Islamic boarding schools teach Arabic in conventional methods, such as focusing on teaching *nahwu* and *sharaf* without providing the practical context needed for daily life (Essam et al., 2024; Kamal, 2025; Umam et al., 2024). This has led to many students, despite mastering Arabic in an academic context, not being able to apply this knowledge in their lives, especially in interacting with religious texts such as the Qur'an and hadith which require a deeper understanding (Listanto et al., 2025).

Previous research on Arabic teaching in Indonesia has shown that despite some improvements in the curriculum, the methods used still tend to be conventional and ineffective in addressing today's learning needs. Muhammad (2024) in his research on the future of Islamic boarding schools stated that Arabic teaching in Islamic boarding schools focuses more on memorization without prioritizing understanding of deep meaning (Jamil, 2024). In addition, Abbas (2025) criticized that many Arabic language teaching has not included aspects of socio-cultural life in learning (Mohammed et al., 2025). This research aims to fill the existing gaps, by proposing Arabic language learning methods that are more applicable and relevant to the needs of today's society.

The novelty in this study lies in the proposal of an Arabic teaching method that integrates language learning with daily life as well as social and cultural aspects. This approach is expected to make Arabic teaching more relevant to the needs of the times and make it easier for students to understand religious texts more practically. Thus, this research makes an important contribution in overcoming the weaknesses that exist in previous research, such as limitations in the application of Arabic theories in real-life contexts.

The problem that is to be solved in this study is how to improve the teaching of Arabic in Islamic boarding schools so that it can deepen the understanding of Islam among students. This research focuses on the development of more applicative and contextual Arabic learning methods, which not only teach theoretical aspects but also help students apply Arabic in their daily lives. Thus, the contribution of this research is to provide an alternative method of teaching Arabic that is more effective and relevant to the needs of Muslims in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design with a library research approach. The selection of this design was based on the aim of exploring various existing references to the teaching of Arabic, both theoretical and practical. Using existing literature, this study will analyze various Arabic teaching methods that have been applied in Islamic boarding schools and other Islamic educational institutions, as well as look for gaps or shortcomings in the teaching.

The location of this research is Islamic boarding schools that have an Arabic language teaching curriculum. The selection of this location aims to obtain relevant and representative data regarding the teaching of Arabic in Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren is an ideal place for this research because they have long taught Arabic as part of Islamic religious education, and have a diversity in teaching methods that can provide valuable insights for this research.

Data in this study will be collected through literature studies and interviews. Literature studies are carried out by collecting various literature related to the teaching of Arabic in Islamic boarding schools and other Islamic educational institutions. Interviews will be conducted with teachers and students at the pesantren to delve deeper into the experiences and challenges faced in teaching Arabic. The validity of the data will be checked using the triangulation technique, which is comparing data obtained from various sources, both literature and interviews. In addition, the validity of the data will also be checked through the member-checking technique, which is by asking for confirmation from the source to ensure that the data collected truly reflects the reality in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative Results

Dominance of Theoretical Approaches in Arabic Language Learning

The findings of this study show that Arabic language learning in pesantren is still dominated by a theoretical approach through the teaching of qawa'id (nahwu and sharaf) and memorization methods, which has an impact on students' low communicative ability (Abdulghani, 2025; Hidayati & Gufron, 2024). These results are in line with previous studies that have confirmed that traditional grammar-translation-based approaches tend to result in mastery of cognitive aspects, but are weak in the development of practical language skills (Jindamai, 2025). A number of studies in language education have also shown that the dominance of theory without practice leads to an imbalance between linguistic knowledge and communicative skills, resulting in students being less able to actively use language in real contexts (Kaldarova et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2025).

On the other hand, these findings also confirm a view in the modern language learning literature that emphasizes the importance of a communicative approach (al-madkhal al-ittishali) in improving maharah lughawiyah (Qibtiyah, 2024). This approach places language as a means of communication, not just an object of study, so that students are encouraged to be active in the practice of speaking (maharah al-kalam) and listening (maharah al-istima') (Nisa et al., 2024; Zubair, 2026). However, in contrast to this ideal concept, this study found that the implementation of communicative approaches in Islamic boarding schools is still very limited. This difference shows that there is a gap between the theory of language education that is developing globally and the learning practices that occur in the field, especially in traditional Islamic educational institutions.

Furthermore, the results of this study also reinforce previous findings that an overly cognitive focus on learning orientations will hinder the development of 21st century skills, such as communication and collaboration (Chairani & Fitriani, 2024; Rahmi et al., 2024). In the context of Arabic, this has an impact on students' inability to understand religious texts contextually, because language understanding depends not only on mastering rules, but also on the ability to interpret and use language in real-world situations (Hanandeh et al., 2024; Korayem

et al., 2024). Thus, the compatibility of these findings with the literature shows that the problems that occur are systemic and require a comprehensive update approach.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study strengthens the concept that effective language learning must integrate linguistic and communicative aspects in a balanced manner. These findings support a competency-based language learning theory that emphasizes the importance of mastering practical skills as a learning endpoint. In addition, this research also contributes to the development of the study of Arabic language education by showing that the dominance of theoretical approaches is still the main challenge in achieving communicative and contextual learning, especially in the pesantren environment.

Practically, these findings have important implications for the development of Arabic learning strategies in Islamic boarding schools. It is necessary to transform the learning method from teacher-centered to student-centered by emphasizing the practice of using language through activities such as *hiwar* (conversation), discussion, and simulation (Bourahouat et al., 2024; Chairani & Fitriani, 2024). In addition, increasing teachers' competence in applying communicative methods and the use of interactive learning media is a strategic step to improve the quality of learning. Thus, learning Arabic not only produces students who understand the rules, but also are able to use the language actively and relevantly in daily life and in understanding religious texts more deeply.

Limitations of Integrating Arabic Language Learning with Real-Life Contexts

The findings of this study show that learning Arabic has not been optimally integrated with the real life context of students, so the material taught tends to be abstract and difficult to apply (Kamal, 2025; Zakiyah & Aditia, 2025). These results are in line with the literature that states that non-contextual language learning will hinder the development of students' communicative competence. Traditional approaches that focus on aspects of language structure without relating them to real situations cause students to understand language only at a symbolic, not functional, level (Almelhes, 2024; Rosyidah et al., 2025). Thus, the compatibility between these findings and previous research strengthens the argument that the context of language use is an important element in effective language learning.

In addition, these findings also confirm a view in communicative language learning theory that emphasizes the importance of language use in authentic situations. In the approach of *al-madkhal al-ittishali*, language is understood as a tool of social interaction, so learning must involve real practices such as *hiwar* (conversation), *munaqasyah* (discussion), and simulation (Kurniawan & Fikriansyah, 2025). However, contrary to these principles, this study found that these practices are still minimally applied in the field. This difference shows that there is a gap between the ideal concept in literature and the real implementation in educational institutions, especially in the learning of Arabic in Islamic boarding schools.

Furthermore, the results of this study are also in line with previous findings that highlight the importance of contextual learning in improving students' understanding and skills (Iqbal et al., 2025; Nashfati, 2025). Learning that is not associated with everyday experience tends to make it difficult for students to transfer knowledge to new situations. In the context of Arabic, this has an impact on the low ability of students to understand the text of the Qur'an and hadith in depth,

because they are not used to associating the structure of language with contextual meaning. Therefore, these findings reinforce the view that the integration of social and cultural contexts in language learning is an urgent need.

In terms of theoretical implications, this research contributes to the development of language learning theory by emphasizing that the success of learning is not only determined by mastery of language structure, but also by the ability to relate language to the context of its use. These findings support a constructivist approach that emphasizes that knowledge is built through social experiences and interactions. In addition, this study also enriches the study of Arabic language education by showing that the lack of context integration is one of the main factors of low communicative competence of students.

Limitations of Teacher Method and Competency Innovation in Arabic Language Learning

The findings of this study show that the limited innovation of learning methods and teacher competence are the main factors in the low effectiveness of Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools. These results are in line with various literature that affirms that the quality of learning is highly determined by teacher competence, especially in mastering pedagogic strategies that are innovative and adaptive to the development of the times (Fitrianto, 2024; Nazhifah & Syafe'i, 2025). Previous research has also shown that the dominance of traditional methods such as *qawa'id wa tarjamah* tends to hinder students' development of communicative skills, as they focus more on the analysis of language structure than on the active use of language (Ummah & Albshkar, 2025). Thus, these findings reinforce the conclusion in the literature that without method innovation and teacher competency improvement, language learning will be difficult to achieve the expected communicative goals.

However, this study also shows an important difference with some previous studies that emphasized the curriculum factor as the main cause of low learning quality. In the context of this study, the teacher's competency factor is actually a more dominant variable, especially in terms of the ability to implement a communicative approach (*al-madkhal al-ittishali*) and utilize learning technology (Mujahidin et al., 2025; Nufus & Azis, 2025). Although the curriculum has encouraged more interactive and student-centered learning, the limitations of teacher training and professional development have led to its implementation not being optimal (Abid & Sain, 2025). This difference shows that curriculum reform alone is not enough, but must be accompanied by increasing the capacity of teachers as the main implementers of the learning process.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study strengthens the theory that teachers are key actors in the successful implementation of educational innovation. These findings support a constructivist and student-centered learning perspective that emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators in creating interactive and meaningful learning environments (Khairanis, 2024; Sauri & Sanusi, 2024). In addition, this research also contributes to the development of the study of Arabic language education by emphasizing that the integration of pedagogic, professional, and technological competencies is an important prerequisite in creating effective learning. Thus, this research expands the understanding that learning method innovation cannot be separated from the readiness and competence of teachers themselves.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that Arabic language learning remains dominated by theoretical approaches, with minimal integration into real-life contexts and limited innovation in teaching methods and competencies. It underscores that mastery of qawa'id (nahwu and sharaf) alone is insufficient; effective learning must balance linguistic knowledge with communicative skills (maharah lughawiyah), as without contextual and interactive practices, students perceive language merely as a symbolic system rather than a tool for communication and deeper religious understanding. The study makes a significant contribution by providing an integrative analysis of pedagogy, context, and teacher competence, confirming and extending competency-based and communicative approaches within Islamic educational institutions like pesantren, and highlighting the critical synergy between methods, curriculum, and teacher quality. Nonetheless, it has limitations: it relies on qualitative literature review without empirical measurement of effectiveness, focuses solely on pesantren limiting generalizability, and does not deeply capture students' perspectives on their learning experiences. Future research should adopt mixed methods, broaden institutional contexts, and explore communicative and technology-based Arabic learning models to create a more comprehensive, adaptive, and sustainable framework for language education.

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