

## Teaching Arabic Using the Language Immersion Method at University: Approaches and Implementation

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### ABSTRACT

Teaching Arabic in Indonesia often challenges fostering practical language skills, particularly at Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and universities. The Language Immersion method, which involves intensively using the target language in natural situations, offers an appealing alternative to enhance Arabic proficiency. While several studies have discussed this method, there remains a gap in its systematic application in academic settings. This study aims to explore the approach and implementation of the Language Immersion method in Arabic teaching at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember. It employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research locus is the Arabic Language Education Program at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, with lecturers and students as subjects. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using data reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques. The findings reveal that the language immersion method significantly improves Arabic students' speaking, reading, and listening skills. Through discussions, role-playing, and presentations, students learn contextually. However, challenges such as lecturer consistency, limited resources, and the need for Arabic-speaking environments outside the classroom must be addressed for optimal results.

Keywords: Arabic Teaching, Language Immersion, UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember

## ABSTRAK

Pengajaran bahasa Arab di Indonesia seringkali menghadapi tantangan dalam menciptakan keterampilan bahasa yang efektif, terutama di tingkat pesantren dan perguruan tinggi. Metode Language Immersion, yang melibatkan penggunaan bahasa target secara intensif dalam situasi alami, menjadi alternatif yang menarik untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Arab. Meskipun sejumlah penelitian telah membahas metode ini, masih terdapat gap dalam penerapannya secara sistematis di lingkungan akademik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pendekatan dan implementasi metode Language Immersion dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab di UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Lokus penelitian dilakukan di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember dengan subjek dosen dan mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas, serta dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa metode *language immersion* secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara, membaca, dan mendengarkan mahasiswa Bahasa Arab. Melalui diskusi, bermain peran, dan presentasi, mahasiswa belajar secara kontekstual. Namun, tantangan seperti konsistensi dosen, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan kurangnya lingkungan berbahasa di luar kelas perlu diatasi untuk hasil yang lebih optimal.

Kata Kunci: Pengajaran Bahasa Arab, Language Immersion, UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching Arabic in Islamic universities is central in equipping students to understand Islamic texts deeply (Huda et al., 2020; Ahmad, 2022). However, the traditional approach that dominates is often lacking in providing practical language experiences, which results in students' active communication skills not developing optimally (Zaini & Abdullah, 2021). The language immersion method offers a solution by creating an environment where Arabic is used intensively in various contexts, both formal and informal (Mansur, 2020). The implementation of this method is still limited, even though language immersion has been proven effective in significantly improving language skills in previous studies (Ali, 2019; Yusuf

& Fikri, 2021). Improving Arabic language skills is crucial amid globalization, which demands cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication abilities, especially for graduates of Islamic universities (Rahman & Zulfikar, 2020). Therefore, this study becomes relevant in exploring the implementation of the language immersion method to enhance the quality of Arabic language learning.

The language immersion approach in Arabic, known as *al-Inghimas al-Lughawi*, has been widely discussed as an effective method for enhancing language competence naturally. According to Alkhresheh (2020), language immersion enables students to use the target language in various everyday contexts directly, accelerating the process of language acquisition (Alkhresheh, 2020). Another study by Hamad (2021) demonstrates that this method is particularly effective in improving speaking skills, especially when applied intensively in an environment that consistently supports language use (Hamad, 2021). However, previous research has also highlighted challenges in implementing language immersion, such as the limited number of instructors proficient in this method and logistical constraints within academic settings (Smith & White, 2022). Further research is needed to explore how this approach can be adapted to Islamic educational contexts, particularly in teaching Arabic, which is often more textual (Abdullah, 2019; Ashari et al., 2023). This study addresses these gaps by exploring how language immersion can be effectively implemented in Arabic teaching and evaluating its impact on students' active language skills.

This research offers a unique contribution by exploring the application of the language immersion method in language teaching, which has yet to be extensively studied within the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. The language immersion method is well-known for its effectiveness in enhancing language competence through direct experience and active use of the language. However, most previous studies have focused on grammatical or structural approaches (Mahmoud, 2022; Al-Mohannadi, 2021). Research conducted at several international universities has shown that language immersion can significantly improve comprehensive language skills, including a deeper understanding of the cultural context of the target language (Rahman & Zaki, 2020). Anderson's study (2023) also revealed that this approach effectively creates a more interactive and student-centered learning environment, which still needs to be implemented in many Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and Islamic universities in Indonesia. On the other hand, research in similar

settings has identified challenges such as the lack of teachers fully competent in language immersion (Hassan, 2021), highlighting it as an essential area for further investigation. Thus, this study offers a new contribution by examining how language immersion methods can be adapted to the context of Arabic language teaching and how to overcome existing challenges.

Research on teaching Arabic using the language immersion method is urgently needed in language education. The use of the immersion method can improve students' Arabic language skills. This method allows students to learn the language in a natural context, improving their communication skills (Hernandez, 2020). Research shows that students involved in immersion programs show improved language skills compared to traditional methods (Johnson & Swain, 2022). Applying this method is expected to overcome challenges in mastering the Arabic language, which students often consider difficult (Suharto, 2021). In addition, immersion supports cultural integration, which is essential in language learning (Lee, 2023). Therefore, this study is relevant and essential to improve the quality of Arabic Language Teaching in educational institutions.

This study aims to explore the implementation of the Language Immersion method in Language Teaching. The research questions were: "How can implementing the Language Immersion method improve students' Arabic language skills?" Specifically, the objectives of this study include: *first*, identifying the approaches used in teaching Arabic through the language immersion method. *Second*, analyze the effectiveness of language immersion methods in improving students' ability to speak, read, and listen. *Third*, explore the challenges and obstacles encountered during the implementation of this method and propose solutions to overcome obstacles that arise in the teaching process. In conclusion, this study is expected to provide new insights into more effective Arabic Language Teaching through the Language Immersion method.

## **METHOD**

The issue of teaching Arabic with the language immersion method at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddi Jember was chosen as the focus of study because of the need for Arabic language teaching that can provide a more contextual and authentic understanding to students (Al-Falah & Nurhayati, 2021; Hasan, 2022). This method improves language competence and provides opportunities for in-depth language experience (Mustofa & Rizky,

2023). This phenomenon is essential to explore because it can illustrate the effectiveness of immersion-based approaches in learning at the college level (Zulkarnaen, 2020; Rahmah & Yusron, 2023).

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore phenomena in a contextual environment in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sugiyono, 2020). The primary Data in this study include interviews with lecturers, direct observation of teaching activities, and documents related to learning Arabic in immersion classes (Wahyuni, 2021). The Data obtained aims to provide a detailed overview of how this approach is implemented and the challenges faced in the teaching process (Riyanto, 2022; Nuraini, 2023).

The data source consists of primary informants, such as lecturers and students participating in the language immersion program, and supporting documents, such as syllabuses and activity reports (Bakar, 2019). The data source selection technique uses purposive sampling to ensure the data obtained is relevant and in-depth (Suryanto, 2020). This process includes selection based on criteria of experience, direct involvement, and influence capacity in implementing the program (Fauziah, 2022).

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis (Suwandi, 2019; Rahmawati & Anwar, 2022). Interviews were conducted using systematically designed guidelines to explore perceptions and experiences about implementing the language immersion method (Nurdin, 2021). Observations focused on classroom activities, while documents were analyzed to provide a broader context related to academic policies and implementation (Wijaya, 2023).

This study's data analysis stages include data reduction, presentation, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2020). The data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns and categories relevant to the research objectives (Aisyah, 2022). The data reduction process is carried out by filtering information that is considered necessary. In contrast, the presentation of data is carried out through thematic mapping that provides an idea of the relationship between categories (Mulyana, 2021). This analysis aims to obtain valid and meaningful findings and then formulate conclusions. The results of this study are expected to provide academic and practical contributions to the application of immersion methods in Arabic language teaching (Ramli, 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### 1. Teaching Arabic Through Language Immersion

Based on the results of observations in Arabic language teaching classes at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, the language immersion method is applied by involving students in daily conversation simulations. In an interview with Mr. Zaini, an Arabic lecturer, explained;

*"We tried to create an atmosphere like in an Arabic-speaking country. From the beginning, students are encouraged to use Arabic in various activities inside and outside the classroom. For example, they are invited to discuss everyday topics, simulate conversations in public places, such as in markets, and conduct academic presentations in Arabic. This helps them to be more confident and get used to the complex structure of language." (Zaini, Interview, October 9, 2024).*

The documentation shows several learning sessions that feature students speaking without using Indonesian during class. The following table summarizes the approaches used in the three different sessions:

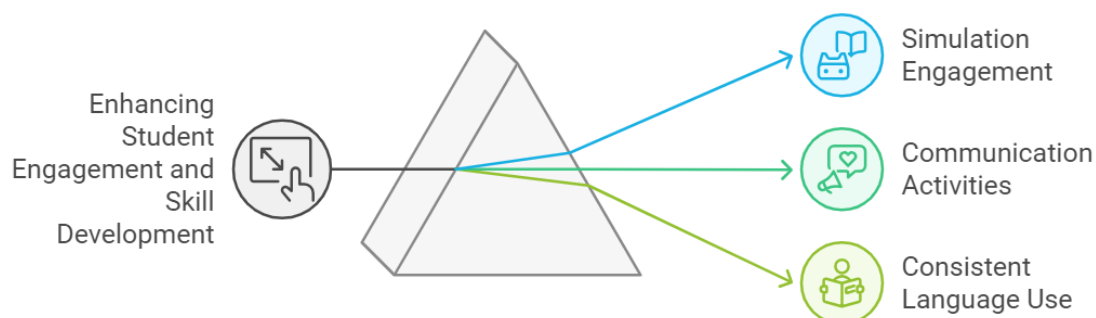
**Table 1.** Teaching Arabic Through Language Immersion

Session	Approach	Learning Activities	Description
1	Discussion	Discussion groups on religious topics	Students were divided into small groups and asked to discuss religious topics in Arabic, practicing thematic vocabulary and relevant grammar.
2	Roleplay	Simulating conversations in the market	In these sessions, students play the roles of buyers and sellers, using colloquial expressions often used in the market, and practicing fluency in speech and negotiation skills.
3	Presentation	Presentation of material in front of the class	Students are required to create and present material in Arabic in front of the class to improve confidence in

public speaking and rhetorical skills.

The data in the table shows the application of the language immersion method through three main approaches: discussion, role-playing, and presentation. Each session is designed to develop specific language skills, such as mastery of thematic vocabulary, fluency in speech, and rhetorical ability. Discussion activities focus on group collaboration, while role-playing helps hone practical communication skills in everyday contexts. On the other hand, presentations aim to increase self-confidence and the ability to speak formally. This approach has proven effective in creating contextual learning experiences, supporting integrative and natural mastery of Arabic.

**Figure 1.** Teaching Arabic Through Language Immersion



Based on the data obtained, it was explained, *first*, that students tend to be more actively engaged when involved in simulations of daily life; *second*, activities designed to encourage practical communication show a significant improvement in speaking skills; and *third*, the greatest challenge is maintaining the consistent use of Arabic outside the classroom environment, which requires additional supportive efforts from lecturers and peers.

## **2. Application of Language Immersion Method improves students ' Speaking, reading, and Listening skills.**

Observations show that the application of the language immersion method at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember has a positive impact on the ability to speak, read, and listen to students. Based on an interview with Mr. Haq, a lecturer in Arabic, stated,

*"The impact has been very positive, especially in terms of speaking and understanding the cultural context. Students who attend this program are more confident when speaking in Arabic. They are also more sensitive to Arabic culture because their activities are designed to simulate real-life situations, such as*

*conversations in markets, group discussions, and formal presentations.*"(Haq, Interview, October 9, 2024).

Additional Data show that Seventy-five percent of students have improved oral exam scores after one semester of language immersion-based learning (documentation, 2024). The following table illustrates the impact of language immersion methods on Arabic language teaching:

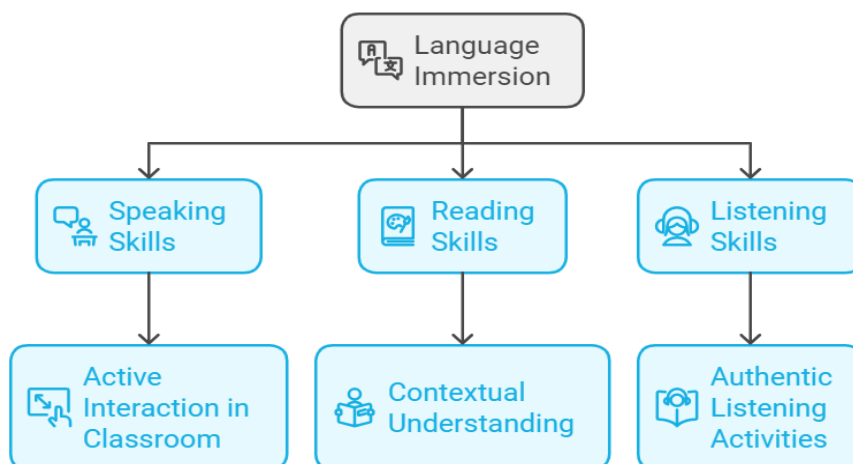
**Table 2.** Achievements in the application of Language Immersion methods

<b>Categories of Findings</b>	<b>Description of Findings</b>	<b>Supporting Quote (Interview)</b>
<b>Improved Speaking</b>	Students are more active in class discussions and can use new vocabulary contextually.	"Before, I rarely spoke, but now I feel more confident," said Ruhana, one of the students.
<b>Increased Reading</b>	Students can understand Arabic texts better through materials focusing on everyday life's culture and context.	"We were invited to read texts related to real life; it made us understand more," said Mrs. Muzayyidah, lecturer.
<b>Improved Listening</b>	Students find it easier to understand Arabic conversations thanks to exercises with audio recordings and live conversations.	"The practice of listening makes me faster to catch the intent of the interlocutor," said Hasanah, a student.

The data indicates that the application of the language immersion method at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember has a significant impact on students' ability to speak, read, and listen. Interviews with lecturers emphasized that participation in immersion-based activities encourages students to be more active and contextual in using the Arabic language. The increase in value seen in the aspect of language skills supports the effectiveness of this method as a means of continuous teaching.



**Figure 2.** The Implementation of the Language Immersion Method in Enhancing Speaking, Reading, and Listening Skills



Based on the data above, the *first* improvement in speaking skills is due to active interaction in the classroom. *Second*, the enhancement of reading skills comes from the contextual understanding gained through materials based on Arab culture. *Third*, the improvement in listening skills is attributed to using authentic listening activities in Arabic. These conclusions show that language immersion serves as an effective method for comprehensively developing students' language skills at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember.

### 3. Challenges and Obstacles in the Implementation of the Language Immersion

#### Method

Based on the results of observations at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, the application of Language Immersion method in teaching Arabic faces several complex challenges. In an interview with Mrs. Nisa, one of the lecturers revealed,

*"Students have difficulties because the Arabic language environment has not been optimally formed, and not all lecturers consistently use Arabic during the learning process."* (Nisa, Interview, October 9, 2024).

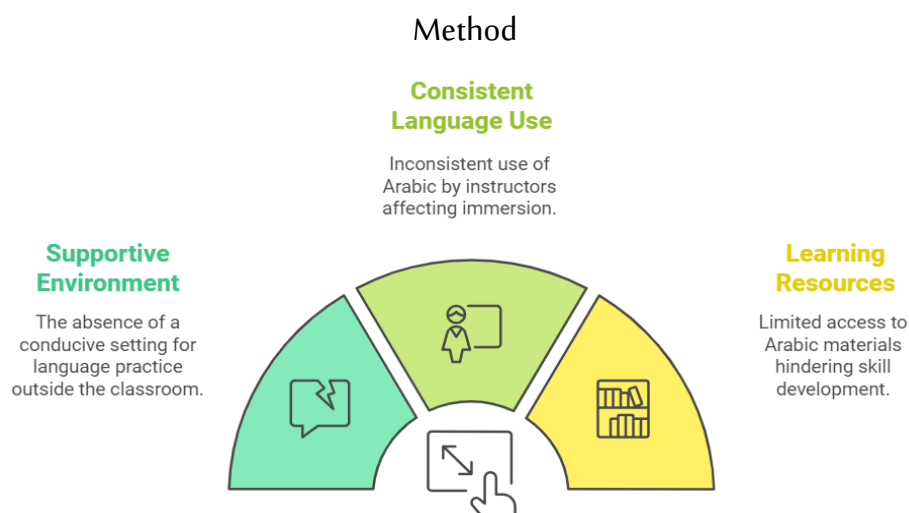
Interviews with several students also revealed that the need for access to learning media, such as books and audio materials in Arabic, made it difficult for them to improve their language skills. The following is a qualitative table that exposes the main challenges and obstacles from different perspectives:

**Table 3.** Challenges and Obstacles of the Language Immersion Method

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Solution</b>
<b>Challenges &amp; Obstacles</b>		
<b>Language environment outside the classroom</b>	Students find it challenging to practice Arabic because of the lack of language interaction outside the classroom.	Campuses can create Arabic-speaking zones in canteens, libraries, and dormitories. Student exchange programs to Arabic-speaking countries can also be expanded.
<b>Consistent use of Arabic</b>	Not all lecturers and teachers consistently use Arabic during the teaching-learning process.	Special training is held for lecturers to improve consistency in the use of the Arabic language, and regular monitoring is conducted to ensure the use of the Arabic language during learning.
<b>Availability of learning resources</b>	Books, digital media, and Arabic audio sources still need to be improved.	More Arabic learning materials, including books, videos, and digital materials such as podcasts, are necessary. Cooperation with Arab publishers or institutions is essential.
<b>Extracurricular motivation and support</b>	Supporting activities such as language clubs or discussion communities in Arabic still need to be more active.	Establishment of a more active Arabic language club with the support of the campus. Regular activities such as debates, plays, or presentations in Arabic will increase student motivation.

From the observations and interviews, it can be seen that the main challenge of applying the Language Immersion method lies in the lack of a supportive language environment outside the classroom. Students find it difficult to find situations that require them to use Arabic. In addition, not all teachers use Arabic consistently in class, so the learning atmosphere does not fully support in-depth learning. Limited learning resources, such as audio materials and books, are also obstacles that slow the development of students' language skills.

**Figure 3.** Challenges and Obstacles of the Language Immersion



From the qualitative data collected above, several conclusions can be drawn: *First*, the lack of a supportive environment for practicing language outside the classroom is the biggest challenge in implementing the Language Immersion method, making it difficult for students to practice their language skills consistently. *Second*, the inconsistency in the use of Arabic by instructors in class hinders the creation of a learning atmosphere that fully supports immersion, which ideally requires constant use of the target language. *Third*, the limited learning resources, such as Arabic audio materials and books, result in students needing more access to extend their learning outside the classroom, causing their language skills to develop more slowly.

## Discussion

The language immersion method approach in learning Arabic at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember proved effective in improving the ability to speak, read, and listen to students. The Data shows that this method utilizes a variety of activities, such as group discussions, role-playing, and presentations, designed to resemble real Arabic-speaking

situations. The observations showed that Seventy-five percent of students experienced a significant improvement in their oral exam scores after one semester using this method. However, the challenges faced include the need for more consistency in using Arabic by lecturers, limited access to learning resources, and the lack of supporting environments outside the classroom (Zaini, 2024; Haq, 2024; Nisa, 2024). Nevertheless, the success of this method indicates a great potential for applying language immersion as a language teaching strategy centered on contextual experience.

The success of language immersion can be traced back to language learning principles emphasizing active interaction and context-based learning. Students involved in the simulation of everyday life can integrate learning with hands-on practice, thus encouraging the natural internalization of language (Ellis, 2019). On the other hand, the challenges faced reflect the need for reinforcement in the learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom. Lecturers' inconsistent use of Arabic is likely due to the need for more specific training or clear implementation guidelines (Gass & Mackey, 2020). In addition, limited access to learning materials highlights the need for institutional investment in providing supportive digital and physical resources (Al-Qahtani, 2022).

The consequence of these challenges is the slow development of students' skills, which are less consistently supported by their learning environment. Lack of exposure to Arabic outside the classroom can reduce students' motivation to apply the language they have learned (Krashen, 2021). In addition, the inconsistency of teachers in using Arabic creates gaps in total immersion, which can limit the effectiveness of such methods (Lightbown & Spada, 2019). As a result, although classroom learning is doing well, the results achieved outside the academic environment tend to be insignificant, reducing the student's full achievement potential in language acquisition.

The findings align with previous studies showing the effectiveness of language immersion methods in improving foreign language skills but also highlight the importance of a supportive environment. Research by Gass and Mackey (2020) shows that immersion-based learning is effective when supported by consistent use of the target language in the learning environment. In contrast, the findings at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember show different challenges compared to the Al-Qahtani study (2022), which identified the role of technology as a critical supporter of immersion learning. At UIN, access to technological resources still

needs to be improved, contrasting the results with previous research based on environments with adequate technological access.

Several strategic steps can be taken to optimize the application of the language immersion method. First, institutions must provide unique training for lecturers to improve the consistency of using Arabic in the learning process (Ellis, 2019). Second, campuses can create Arabic-speaking zones in strategic areas such as canteens or libraries to support language practice outside the classroom (Gass & Mackey, 2020). Third, investment in learning materials, whether in books, videos, or digital resources, is needed to expand student access (Al-Qahtani, 2022). In addition, student exchange programs to Arabic-speaking countries or the establishment of Arabic-speaking discussion clubs can be a solution to increase student motivation and engagement. This policy is expected to strengthen the effectiveness of the language immersion method as the primary approach to learning Arabic.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the implementation of the language immersion method in Arabic language learning at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember has had a significant impact on improving students' skills, particularly in speaking, reading, and listening. This approach allows students to actively engage through activities that simulate real-life situations, such as group discussions, role-playing, and presentations. According to observational data, Seventy-five percent of students improved their oral exam scores significantly after one semester of language immersion-based learning. The activities are designed to develop context-based skills and provide profound and relevant learning experiences that align with real-world situations, fostering a more natural mastery of the language. While the results are promising, some challenges still need to be addressed, including the consistency of Arabic usage by instructors, the availability of learning resources, and the limited language environment outside the classroom.

Conceptually, this research contributes significantly to developing effective language teaching methods through language immersion. The approach underscores the importance of active interaction and contextual learning in mastering a foreign language, as supported by language learning theories by Ellis (2019) and Gass & Mackey (2020). Practically, this study also offers insights for educational institutions to develop immersion-based teaching policies,

including creating supportive learning environments and integrating technology as a supporting tool. This study adds to the empirical evidence on the effectiveness of language immersion in Arabic learning, which has previously been more commonly applied to other foreign languages, such as English or French. Thus, these findings are relevant for strengthening the literature and teaching practices focusing on contextual and integrative language experiences.

However, this study also has limitations that can serve as recommendations for future research. One major limitation is the challenge of creating an optimal language environment outside the classroom, which affects the consistency of students' language practice. This study has also yet to thoroughly explore the impact of technology as part of language immersion despite its significant potential to support digital-based learning. Furthermore, the challenge of instructors' consistent Arabic use highlights the need for further training and more structured guidelines for implementing the language immersion method. Future studies are recommended to expand the research scope by including variables such as access to technology, the role of language support communities, and cross-cultural approaches to enrich students' learning experiences. The language immersion method can be optimized by addressing these recommendations as a sustainable and effective language teaching approach.

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