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Transforming Arabic Language Learning to Improve Islamic Education

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Abstract:

Arabic is the main foundation in understanding the sources of Islamic teachings, but conventional Arabic language learning faces significant challenges in the form of low learning motivation, monotonous methods, and minimal technology integration. The urgency of transforming Arabic language learning has become an urgent need to improve the quality of Islamic education in the digital era. This study aims to analyze the transformation model of Arabic language learning and measure its impact on improving students' linguistic competence and Islamic understanding. The research used qualitative methods with a case study approach. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of learning documents at two Islamic educational institutions. Data analysis was carried out using triangulation and thematic coding techniques to identify effective transformation patterns. Data analysis using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana to explore the contribution of Arabic language learning to Islamic education. The results of the study show that the transformation of learning through the integration of digital technology, communicative-interactive methods, and contextual teaching and learning approaches resulted in significant improvements in students' Arabic language skills. The implementation of mobile-based learning applications and e-learning platforms increases motivation and enthusiasm for learning, as well as strengthens understanding of Islamic texts. Project-based learning models have proven to be most effective in developing productive skills by creating a more interactive and contextual learning environment. These findings position transformative Arabic language pedagogy as a vital and sustainable strategy in the ongoing development of Islamic education institutions in the digital age

Keywords: Learning Transformation; Arabic; Islamic Education; Digital Technology; Communicative Methods

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning in Indonesia has developed in three phases. (Siti Sanah, M. Abadul Hamid, Zulli Umri Siregar 2021) At the early stage, it specifically aims to meet the community's needs to worship and understand the teachings of Islam. This learning process is carried out in suraus, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools, which are established by kiais and use a conventional education system. In the second phase, people begin to realize that Arabic is important for communicating and understanding Islam. (Sofyan Sauri 2020) As a result, many Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs use communicative methods to teach Arabic. In the third phase, from elementary madrasahs to universities, Arabic language learning undergoes refinement and development dynamically.

The paradigm of Islamic boarding school education is changing due to Arabic language learning, which is a crucial component of the system. Arabic is not only used by Islamic scholars for communication but also as an epistemological tool for understanding the original sources of Islamic teachings, such as the Quran, Hadith, books of jurisprudence, tafsir, and other classical works. Understanding Islamic teachings comprehensively and substantively requires a good command of Arabic. The world of Islamic boarding schools is experiencing new dynamics as a result of this transformation. Islamic boarding schools now find themselves in a crossroads between maintaining the traditions of classical Islamic scholarship and utilizing modern technological innovations to improve learning efficiency.

Arabic language education must be able to adapt to various changes in society that occur due to technological, political and economic advances. Thomas Kuhn said in a research journal written by Nurdyanto et al that new problems must be faced with a different paradigm so that the efforts made can produce good results. (Nurdyanto et al. 2025) To achieve transformation in Arabic language education, teachers and policymakers must shift their perspective on social change related to the goals, materials, methods, media, and assessment of Arabic language learning. They must adopt a more revolutionary approach to education.

In terms of curriculum, various Islamic boarding schools have now developed curricula that include general knowledge and Islamic knowledge while maintaining the traditions and characteristics of Islamic boarding schools. These changes demonstrate that Islamic boarding schools have evolved to meet the demands of the times. They address complex modern situations and needs through various formulations and practices. Some try to take the middle path (Salaf-modern accommodation), maintaining good old traditions and incorporating better new traditions, while others return to traditional care (Salaf Islamic boarding schools).

Parsons argues that learning systems must take into account four systems of action in the effort to manage various social changes. The four action systems are adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency. Adaptation refers to a learning system's ability to adjust to its changing environment; goal attainment refers to its ability to achieve established objectives; and integration refers to its ability to acquire necessary information. From a structural-functional perspective, the Parsonsian paradigm offers a valuable framework for explaining how to manage change to achieve sustainability.

The transformation of Arabic language learning is essential to addressing the challenges of enhancing language skills in the contemporary era. Arabic language instruction that remains rooted in traditional methods tends to produce graduates who have mastered grammatical aspects but are weak in communicative practice, whether spoken or written. Therefore, a transformation toward a communicative, integrative, and technology-based approach serves as a strategic solution to comprehensively optimize

mastery of the four Arabic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This transformation encompasses not only changes in teaching methods and strategies but also innovations in media, performance-based assessment, and the creation of a language environment that supports authentic practice. Thus, the transformation of Arabic language learning is not merely a technical change, but rather a systematic and holistic effort to build functional and applicable Arabic language competence that meets the demands of the times.

The transformation of Arabic language teaching methodology shifting from conventional approaches to methods that are more interactive, communicative, and technology-based not only enhances learners' linguistic abilities but also strengthens their understanding of Islamic spiritual and moral values. Through learning innovations that integrate linguistic aspects with Islamic content, students can develop holistic competencies specifically, functional Arabic language skills alongside a comprehensive understanding of the religion thereby fostering a generation of Muslims capable of accessing, understanding, and practicing Islamic teachings more effectively within the context of modern life.

This gap is critical because an understanding of lived experience and the process of meaning-making in technology adoption is essential for developing learning transformation models that are not only technically effective but also existentially meaningful and aligned with pesantren values. (Nurcholis et al. 2020)

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of Arabic language learning transformation within the context of modern Islamic boarding schools through a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenological studies enable an in-depth exploration of the meaning structures underlying the experiences of educational actors as they navigate shifts in learning paradigms.

This study, employing a phenomenological approach, is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Arabic language learning strategies that integrate local wisdom with global technological innovation. (Mutammam et al. 2024) while also serving as an important reference for other Islamic boarding school in facing similar challenges of digital transformation.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using phenomenology and case study methods, conducted at the Al Mawaddah Islamic Boarding School in Blitar Regency. Qualitative research was selected to generate in-depth descriptive data regarding the transformation of Arabic language learning in enhancing the language skills of Islamic boarding school students. The sampling technique used purposive sampling and snowball sampling to select the most experienced informants in handling learning policies in the two Islamic boarding schools. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with caregivers and the deputy head of curriculum, direct observation of the learning process, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students and educators, and official documentation comprising internal policies, curricula, and instructional materials. Secondary data includes annual reports, accreditation data, and teaching materials as supplementary information.

Secondary data includes annual reports, accreditation data, and teaching materials as supplementary information. First, flexible and open-ended in-depth interviews are conducted to gather information from the Islamic boarding school leadership, administrators, Arabic language teachers, the language department, staff, students, and alumni. Secondly, direct observation of the environment, activities, and

Arabic language learning processes at both Islamic boarding schools was conducted to obtain a realistic picture of the phenomenon under study. Third, documentation involves analyzing official documents such as internal policies, curricula, annual reports, and accreditation data that serve as supporting evidence for the validity of the research data.(Mundir 2013)

Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three concurrent activity flows: data reduction (focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes), data display (organizing information into matrices, graphs, or charts to facilitate drawing conclusions), and conclusion drawing or verification.(Ahmad and Muslimah 2021) Data validity is ensured through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To establish credibility, the researcher employed prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, triangulation of sources and techniques (interviews, observation, and documentation), and member checking by presenting preliminary findings to informants for verification as well as an audit trail, maintaining comprehensive records and documentation throughout the research process to ensure transparency and data traceability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stephen Krashen provides a deeper understanding of the second language learning process. In his theory, Krashen explains that the process of acquisition occurs naturally and unconsciously. An example is how someone learns their first language. Because a person's environment helps them learn to communicate.¹

Furthermore, he emphasized that comprehensible language input is crucial in language learning. In traditional Islamic boarding schools, the focus of language input is on classical texts such as the yellow book whereas in modern Islamic boarding schools, the focus is on active communication. Both parties can include input that is appropriate to the learning context with the new method. In terms of implementation, this aims to enhance students' understanding of Arabic in a way that meets their needs, whether through classical texts or the use of the language in everyday communication.

Innovation in learning has shifted the learning process toward an IT and communication-based approach, rather than conventional methods such as translation or vocabulary memorization. With the introduction of digital media, learning has become more interactive, flexible, and contextual. This enables students and teachers to interact in real-time through various means, such as online discussion forums, video conferencing, and the use of social media for language practice.² Arabic language learning is increasingly relevant to the characteristics of the digital generation, as this shift transforms the learning paradigm toward a more cooperative and participatory approach.³

The use of technology in Arabic language learning presents a number of complex challenges. While technology is convenient and accessible, there are several issues involved. These include infrastructure limitations particularly in remote areas and a lack of sufficient digital literacy among some teachers. Not all teachers possess the pedagogical and technological skills required to utilize digital tools in the teaching and learning process. Due to a lack of training and guidance on the use of information and

¹ Nurlaila, N. (2021). Konsep Pemerolehan Bahasa dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa. *Fitrah: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan*, 12(1), 47–64

² Kurniati, D. (2022). Penggunaan Media Sosial Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Dengan Model Blended Learning. *Ta'limi| Journal Of Arabic Education And Arabic Studies*, 1(2), 119–138.

³ Akhsan, A., & Muhammadiyah, A. (2020). Model belajar dan pembelajaran bahasa arab generasi milenial. *Lahjah Arabiyah: Jurnal Bahasa Arab Dan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 1(2), 105–119.

communication technology (ICT)-based learning media, some teachers still employ traditional methods. Furthermore, the digital gap or digital divide between urban and rural schools is a major issue hindering the equitable quality of Arabic language learning through technology.

Although technology can boost student interest and engagement, digital devices can also cause distractions. Students can lose focus while studying due to notifications from various apps, online games, and social media.⁴ Therefore, the teacher's role is crucial in creating engaging and structured lessons so that students remain focused and do not lose their way. Teachers must devise learning strategies that not only focus on the subject matter but also consider psychological aspects and how students manage their time while learning in the digital world.⁵ Technology must genuinely help students learn Arabic, but a balance between discipline and freedom in learning must be maintained.

Based on observations and in-depth interviews at the Al Mawaddah and Darul Hikmah Islamic boarding schools, it was found that both institutions have undergone a significant transformation from traditional methods to a communicative approach aligned with Stephen Krashen's language acquisition theory. An interview the Deputy Head of Curriculum at PP Al Mawaddah, revealed that Arabic language instruction no longer focuses solely on grammar but prioritizes the students' active communication skills in daily life. These findings are reinforced by observations showing that both Islamic boarding schools foster a conducive language environment, where students are required to use Arabic in daily activities such as dormitory conversations, group discussions, and class presentations. Results from a focus group discussion (FGD) with 15 senior students indicate that 87% felt more confident communicating in Arabic following the implementation of this method. Curriculum documentation shows that the time allocated for communication practice increased from 30% to 60% of total instructional hours, incorporating weekly public speaking sessions, daily conversation practice, and Arabic-language drama as tools for contextual learning.

The research findings indicate that both Islamic boarding schools have integrated digital technology into Arabic language instruction, albeit with varying levels of implementation and different challenges. At PP Darul Hikmah, based on document analysis and direct observation, instruction utilizes learning applications such as Duolingo Arabic and Arabic Learning Apps, as well as an internal e-learning platform developed specifically for the students. According to the language department coordinator, technology makes it easier for students to access learning materials at any time, particularly for listening and pronunciation practice using audio from native speakers. In addition, social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups are utilized to share materials, assignments, and conversation practice. However, this study also reveals a number of significant challenges regarding their implementation.

Interviews with eight Arabic language teachers from the two Islamic boarding schools revealed that 62.5% of the teachers experienced difficulties in operating instructional technology due to limited training. Observation results indicate that unstable internet access, particularly during peak learning hours, hinders the effectiveness of using digital applications. Furthermore, results from the focus group discussions with Islamic boarding school students revealed distractions caused by social

⁴ Marsuki, N. R., Saifullah, M., & Nurdin, N. (2025). Dampak Sosial Media Terhadap Pembelajaran dan Interaksi Siswa. *Dharma Acariya Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Budaya*, 3(1), 26–44

⁵ Frictarani, A., Hayati, A., Hoirunisa, I., & Rosdalina, G. M. (2023). Strategi pendidikan untuk sukses di era teknologi 5.0. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Dan Teknologi Informasi (JIPTI)*, 4(1), 56–68

media notifications that disrupted their study focus, with 45% of the students admitting to frequently losing concentration while using digital devices for learning.

Analysis

An analysis of data triangulated from interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that the transformation of Arabic language instruction at both Islamic boarding schools successfully enhanced the students' language skills comprehensively. Accreditation data and annual reports show an increase in the average Arabic language exam score from 72 to 85 over the past three years at PP Al Mawaddah, while PP Darul Hikmah recorded an increase from 75 to 88 during the same period. Interviews with 12 alumni currently pursuing further studies in the Middle East indicate that they feel better prepared to communicate in Arabic compared to alumni from Islamic boarding schools that still employ conventional methods. The head of the Al Mawaddah Islamic Boarding School emphasized that "this transformation is not merely a change in method, but a paradigm shift from learning Arabic (learning about the Arabic language) to learning through Arabic (learning via the Arabic language). However, research findings also indicate that the success of this transformation depends heavily on the commitment of *pesantren* leadership, the pedagogical competence of teachers, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and the consistent implementation of a language environment. A cross-site comparison reveals that PP Darul Hikmah, possessing superior technological infrastructure, can integrate digital learning more effectively, whereas PP Al Mawaddah excels in implementing traditional communicative methods such as public speaking and conversation due to a boarding culture that places greater emphasis on enforcing language discipline.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of Arabic language instruction at Al Mawaddah Islamic Boarding School through a communicative approach and technology integration has proven effective in enhancing students' language skills, as evidenced by an increase in average exam scores from the 72–75 range to 85–88 and the readiness of alumni to communicate in the Middle East. The success of the transformation is marked by a paradigm shift from grammar-focused instruction to active communication, the consistent implementation of a language environment, and the utilization of digital technology as a medium for contextual learning. However, the effectiveness of the transformation depends heavily on five key factors: the commitment of Islamic boarding school leadership, the pedagogical competence and digital literacy of teachers, the availability of technological infrastructure, the consistent enforcement of language discipline, and the ability to manage digital distractions. Cross-site studies indicate that Islamic boarding schools with adequate technological infrastructure excel in digital learning, whereas those with a strong culture of language discipline perform better using traditional communicative methods; consequently, a hybrid approach balancing technological innovation with the wisdom of conventional methods is required to achieve optimal results.

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