

## Arabic Learning Strategies for Non-Pesantren Students A Case Study at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School Bandung

Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab bagi Siswa Non-Pesantren: Studi Kasus di Sekolah Islam Terpadu Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Kota Bandung

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### Article Info:

Received March 20, 2024

Accepted April 10, 2024

Revised March 27, 2024

Available online April 30, 2024

### ABSTRACT

This research examines Arabic learning strategies implemented for non-pesantren students at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School in Bandung. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews with Arabic teachers and students, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the school employs a multi-faceted strategy combining communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and technology integration to overcome challenges faced by students without traditional Islamic boarding school backgrounds. Key strategies include contextualized vocabulary instruction, structured speaking practice, multimedia resources, and differentiated instruction based on proficiency levels. The implementation of these strategies has resulted in improved student motivation, enhanced speaking confidence, and better comprehension of Arabic texts. This study contributes to understanding effective pedagogical approaches for teaching Arabic in integrated Islamic school contexts where students lack intensive religious education backgrounds. The findings suggest that adaptive, student-centered methodologies can successfully bridge the gap between secular educational backgrounds and Arabic language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Arabic learning strategies, non-pesantren students, integrated Islamic school, communicative approach, language pedagogy

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang diterapkan bagi siswa non-pesantren di Sekolah Islam Terpadu Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Bandung. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan guru bahasa Arab dan siswa, serta analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa

*sekolah menerapkan strategi multi-aspek yang menggabungkan pengajaran bahasa komunikatif, pembelajaran berbasis tugas, dan integrasi teknologi untuk mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi siswa tanpa latar belakang pondok pesantren tradisional. Strategi utama meliputi instruksi kosakata kontekstual, latihan berbicara terstruktur, sumber daya multimedia, dan instruksi berdiferensiasi berdasarkan tingkat kemahiran. Implementasi strategi ini menghasilkan peningkatan motivasi siswa, kepercayaan diri berbicara, dan pemahaman teks Arab yang lebih baik. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman pendekatan pedagogis efektif untuk mengajar bahasa Arab dalam konteks sekolah Islam terpadu di mana siswa tidak memiliki latar belakang pendidikan agama intensif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa metodologi adaptif dan berpusat pada siswa dapat berhasil menjembatani kesenjangan antara latar belakang pendidikan sekuler dan akuisisi bahasa Arab.*

**Kata-kata kunci:** *strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab, siswa non-pesantren, sekolah Islam terpadu, pendekatan komunikatif, pedagogi bahasa*

## A. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Arabic language in Indonesia has experienced significant transformation over the past two decades, particularly within integrated Islamic schools that serve diverse student populations. Unlike traditional pesantren environments where students are immersed in Arabic through daily religious activities and intensive language practice, integrated Islamic schools must accommodate learners who come primarily from secular educational backgrounds (Zulhannan, 2015) and (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). This presents unique pedagogical challenges that require innovative instructional strategies tailored to non-pesantren students' learning needs and prior knowledge frameworks.

Arabic language education in Indonesia has historically been dominated by grammar-translation methods inherited from classical Islamic educational traditions (Mustofa, 2017). However, contemporary research in second language acquisition emphasizes communicative competence and functional language use as essential goals of language instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The tension between traditional approaches and modern pedagogical theories creates a complex landscape for Arabic teachers in integrated Islamic schools, who must balance religious authenticity with educational effectiveness.

Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School in Bandung represents a significant case study for examining these pedagogical dynamics. Established in 2005, the school has developed comprehensive Arabic language programs serving students from grades one through twelve, the majority of whom have no prior exposure to Arabic beyond basic Islamic phrases (School Profile Document, 2024). The school's commitment to producing graduates with functional Arabic communication skills, alongside mastery of Indonesian, English, and religious knowledge, positions it as an exemplary model for integrated language education in Indonesia's modern Islamic school movement (Muhsyanur et al., 2022).

The challenges faced by non-pesantren students in learning Arabic are multifaceted and well-documented in language education literature. Hamid et al. (2008) identified motivational deficits, limited exposure to authentic language use, and disconnect between classroom instruction and real-world communication as primary obstacles. Additionally, students from secular educational backgrounds often lack the cultural and religious frameworks that facilitate Arabic vocabulary acquisition and text comprehension in pesantren settings (Asrori et al., 2016). These challenges necessitate deliberate instructional design that explicitly builds linguistic and cultural scaffolding.

Recent developments in language teaching methodology offer promising frameworks for addressing these challenges. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) have all demonstrated effectiveness in diverse educational contexts (Brown, 2007; Ellis, 2018). However, the application of these approaches to Arabic instruction in Indonesian Islamic schools remains underexplored, creating a research gap that this study addresses. Under-

standing how successful integrated Islamic schools adapt international pedagogical frameworks to local contexts can inform broader educational practice.

Technology integration has emerged as a critical factor in modern language education, offering opportunities to increase language exposure, provide individualized practice, and create authentic communication contexts (Golonka et al., 2014). For non-pesantren students with limited Arabic language environments outside the classroom, digital tools and multimedia resources may prove particularly valuable. However, technology adoption in Indonesian Islamic schools varies widely, and empirical evidence regarding effective implementation strategies remains limited (Nurdyansyah & Fahyuni, 2016).

Teacher professional development and pedagogical content knowledge represent additional critical factors in successful Arabic instruction. Research consistently demonstrates that teacher expertise in both language content and effective instructional strategies significantly impacts student learning outcomes (Shulman, 1987; Farrell, 2015). In the context of Arabic teaching in integrated Islamic schools, teachers must possess deep linguistic knowledge, understanding of Islamic content, and mastery of modern pedagogical approaches—a demanding combination that requires ongoing professional learning and institutional support (Muhsyanur, 2014).

This research investigates the specific strategies employed at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School Bandung to effectively teach Arabic to non-pesantren students. By examining classroom practices, teacher decision-making, curriculum design, and student learning experiences, this study aims to identify transferable insights for other integrated Islamic schools facing similar challenges. The findings contribute both to theoretical understanding of Arabic language pedagogy and to practical knowledge that can inform instructional improvement across Indonesia's growing integrated Islamic school sector.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation for effective Arabic language instruction to non-pesantren students draws from multiple interconnected domains of educational research. Second language acquisition theory provides essential insights into how learners develop proficiency in languages beyond their mother tongue. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input slightly above learners' current proficiency levels, a principle particularly relevant for students without immersive language environments. Similarly, Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis highlights the role of negotiated meaning-making in language development, suggesting that communicative activities requiring clarification and adjustment facilitate acquisition more effectively than passive exposure.

Sociocultural theory, stemming from Vygotsky's work, offers complementary perspectives emphasizing the social nature of language learning and the importance of scaffolded instruction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). The Zone of Proximal Development concept suggests that learners progress most effectively when provided support that enables them to accomplish tasks slightly beyond their independent capabilities. For non-pesantren students learning Arabic, this implies the necessity of carefully structured support systems including teacher guidance, peer collaboration, and resource accessibility. Indonesian researchers have found that Arabic instruction incorporating collaborative learning structures produces superior outcomes compared to teacher-centered transmission models (Hermawan, 2014; Effendy, 2017).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant paradigm in language education globally, emphasizing functional communication over grammatical accuracy alone (Richards, 2006). CLT principles align well with contemporary educational goals for Arabic in Indonesian integrated Islamic schools, where students need practical language skills for religious practice, Arabic text comprehension, and potential higher education or employment contexts. However, implementing CLT in Arabic education contexts presents unique challenges, as traditional Arabic pedagogy has emphasized classical texts and

grammatical analysis over spoken communication (Ryding, 2013). Research by Wahab (2016) demonstrates that Indonesian Arabic teachers often struggle to balance communicative goals with perceived needs for grammatical foundation and religious text access.

Technology-enhanced language learning represents a rapidly evolving field with significant implications for Arabic instruction in resource-limited contexts. Digital tools offer possibilities for increased language exposure through multimedia content, individualized practice via adaptive software, and authentic communication through online exchanges (Blake, 2013). Specific applications for Arabic learning include digital flashcard systems for vocabulary development, speech recognition tools for pronunciation practice, and access to authentic Arabic media content (Chun et al., 2016). However, effective technology integration requires more than mere tool adoption; it demands pedagogical frameworks that align digital resources with learning objectives and student needs (Hubbard & Levy, 2016). Indonesian research indicates that technology integration in Arabic instruction remains inconsistent, with substantial variation in teacher digital literacy and institutional support (Mujib & Rahmawati, 2018).

### C. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study design to investigate Arabic learning strategies at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School Bandung. Case study methodology is particularly appropriate for examining complex educational phenomena within their natural contexts, allowing for rich description and deep understanding of implemented practices (Yin, 2018). The research focused on middle school Arabic instruction (grades 7-9) where students face intensified language demands but typically lack pesantren educational backgrounds. Data collection occurred over four months during the 2024 academic year, encompassing regular instructional periods and special Arabic language activities.

Multiple data sources ensured triangulation and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Classroom observations documented instructional strategies, student engagement patterns, and teacher-student interactions across twelve different class sessions representing various proficiency levels and instructional contexts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four Arabic teachers, the Arabic department coordinator, and twelve purposively selected students representing diverse proficiency levels and learning experiences. Document analysis examined curriculum materials, lesson plans, assessment instruments, and student work samples. This methodological approach aligns with recommendations from Creswell and Poth (2018) regarding comprehensive case study investigation, while the specific techniques for language classroom research follow principles outlined by Dörnyei (2007) and Mackey and Gass (2016).

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures, with iterative coding identifying recurring patterns, strategies, and themes across data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial open coding generated preliminary categories from observation notes, interview transcripts, and document content. Subsequent focused coding refined these categories into coherent themes representing distinct strategic approaches employed at the school. The analysis process incorporated constant comparison techniques to identify similarities and differences across classrooms, teacher approaches, and student experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Research credibility was enhanced through member checking with teacher participants and prolonged engagement with the research site (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Arabic instruction at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School Bandung revealed a sophisticated, multi-dimensional approach to teaching Arabic to students without pesantren backgrounds. Rather than relying on single methodological frameworks, teachers employed flexible, context-responsive strategies addressing the specific challenges these learners face. Three primary strategic domains emerged from the data:



foundational language building through structured progression, communicative competence development through authentic tasks, and motivation enhancement through culturally relevant engagement. These strategies operated synergistically, creating a comprehensive learning environment that acknowledged students' secular educational backgrounds while systematically building Arabic proficiency.

### **Foundational Language Building Through Structured Progression**

The school's approach to foundational Arabic instruction demonstrated careful attention to building linguistic scaffolding for students lacking informal Arabic exposure. Teachers implemented a systematic vocabulary development program organized around thematic units relevant to students' daily lives and religious practices. Rather than introducing vocabulary through decontextualized word lists, instruction embedded new terms within meaningful communicative contexts. For example, the unit on family (al-usrah) integrated vocabulary teaching with functional dialogues about family members, activities, and relationships. This approach aligns with research emphasizing the importance of contextual vocabulary acquisition for long-term retention and functional use (Nation, 2013).

Grammatical instruction followed an inductive, discovery-oriented model that contrasted sharply with traditional deductive grammar-translation approaches. Teachers presented grammar patterns through authentic examples and guided students to identify underlying rules through structured exploration. One observed lesson on verb conjugation began with students analyzing sentence patterns from a simple Arabic text, identifying similarities and differences, before the teacher explicitly articulated the grammatical principle. This method reflects current understanding that inductive grammar instruction, when properly scaffolded, promotes deeper understanding and better transfer to novel contexts than traditional rule-memorization approaches (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Phonological instruction received particular emphasis, recognizing that Arabic sound system differences from Indonesian create pronunciation challenges for non-pesantren students. Teachers employed multimedia resources including native speaker audio recordings, pronunciation videos, and speech analysis software to provide models and feedback. Classroom observations revealed consistent attention to pronunciation during vocabulary introduction, with teachers explicitly highlighting sounds that differ between Arabic and Indonesian such as the emphatic consonants and guttural sounds. Students engaged in choral repetition, pair pronunciation practice, and individual recording activities for self-assessment. This multi-modal approach to pronunciation instruction demonstrates alignment with research on effective phonological teaching in foreign language contexts (Thomson & Derwing, 2015).

Assessment practices in foundational instruction employed formative approaches emphasizing growth and skill development over summative evaluation. Teachers utilized ongoing informal assessments including observation checklists, quick vocabulary checks, and pronunciation rubrics to monitor student progress and adjust instruction. Formal assessments incorporated multiple modalities—written, oral, listening, and reading—recognizing that Arabic proficiency encompasses diverse skill domains. Students maintained portfolios documenting their learning journey, including recorded speaking samples, written compositions, and reflective journals. This comprehensive assessment approach reflects contemporary language assessment principles emphasizing authenticity, multiple measures, and learning-oriented feedback (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

## Average Vocabulary Acquisition Rates

Progressive development from Grade 7 to Grade 9



45

words/month  
Grade 7

62

words/month  
Grade 8

78

words/month  
Grade 9

**Figure 1.** Average vocabulary acquisition rates across grade levels showing progressive development from Grade 7 to Grade 9, with Grade 7 students averaging 45 new words per month, Grade 8 students 62 words per month, and Grade 9 students 78 words per month.

### Communicative Competence Development Through Authentic Tasks

The second major strategic domain focused on developing functional communication abilities through authentic language tasks. Teachers designed activities requiring students to use Arabic for genuine communicative purposes rather than merely demonstrating grammatical knowledge. Observed activities included information gap exercises where students exchanged information to complete tasks, role-plays simulating real-world situations such as shopping or asking for directions, and collaborative projects requiring sustained Arabic interaction. This task-based approach reflects Ellis's (2018) framework for Task-Based Language Teaching, which emphasizes meaning-focused language use as the driver of acquisition.

Integration of Arabic across the curriculum represented a distinctive feature of the school's communicative strategy. Religious studies, Islamic history, and Quranic studies classes incorporated Arabic language elements, providing students with authentic contexts for language application. For instance, Islamic history lessons included reading and discussing brief Arabic texts about historical events, with teachers scaffolding comprehension through strategic questioning and vocabulary support. This Content and Language Inte-

grated Learning (CLIL) approach capitalizes on the natural connection between Arabic and Islamic content, while research demonstrates that content-based language instruction enhances both subject matter understanding and language proficiency (Coyle et al., 2010).

Technology tools substantially expanded opportunities for authentic Arabic communication beyond classroom walls. The school implemented a structured program of online language exchanges connecting students with Arabic-speaking peers in Middle Eastern countries. Monthly video conferences provided opportunities for informal conversation, cultural exchange, and collaborative projects. Teachers also integrated social media platforms, with supervised class accounts engaging Arabic-language content and communities. Students reported that these authentic interactions significantly increased their motivation and confidence in using Arabic communicatively. This finding aligns with research demonstrating the motivational and learning benefits of telecollaboration in language education (O'Dowd, 2018).

Speaking activities received systematic attention through graduated progression from controlled to free production. Initial speaking practice occurred in highly structured formats with substantial scaffolding—sentence completion exercises, guided dialogues with provided frameworks, and choral response activities. As students developed confidence and skill, instruction transitioned to less structured formats including information gap activities, spontaneous dialogues about familiar topics, and eventually presentations and discussions on varied subjects. Teachers employed specific strategies to reduce speaking anxiety, including establishing supportive classroom norms, using pair and small group formats before whole-class speaking, and providing thinking time before oral responses. These practices reflect research on reducing foreign language anxiety and promoting willingness to communicate (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

### **Motivation Enhancement Through Culturally Relevant Engagement**

The third strategic domain addressed the critical challenge of maintaining student motivation for Arabic learning among adolescents without intrinsic Islamic educational orientations. Teachers deliberately connected Arabic instruction to students' personal interests, contemporary youth culture, and future aspirations. One observed unit explored Arabic influence on Indonesian vocabulary, with students investigating etymologies of familiar Indonesian words derived from Arabic. This activity generated considerable enthusiasm as students discovered unexpected linguistic connections, simultaneously building metalinguistic awareness and cultural appreciation. Such culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrates the principle that connecting academic content to students' lives and identities enhances engagement and learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Islamic cultural content provided rich material for meaningful language learning while simultaneously addressing religious education goals. Teachers incorporated Arabic poetry, traditional stories, contemporary Arabic films and music, and discussions of Islamic holiday traditions. These cultural explorations provided comprehensible input through engaging content while exposing students to authentic language use. Importantly, teachers framed cultural content accessibly, avoiding assumptions of religious knowledge or practice that might exclude students from less observant families. Interviews revealed that students particularly appreciated learning about cultural practices in Arabic-speaking countries, with several expressing interest in future travel to the Middle East. This integration of language and culture reflects contemporary understanding that effective language education encompasses cultural competence alongside linguistic proficiency (Byram, 1997).

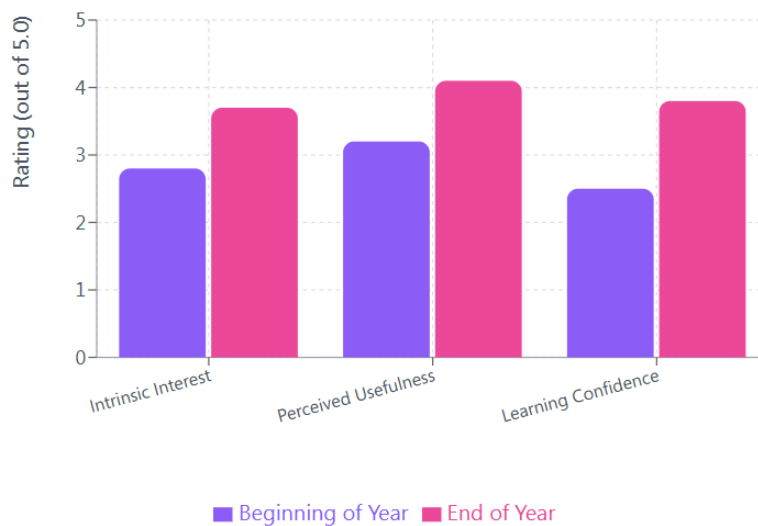
Achievement recognition systems celebrated student progress and created positive learning communities. The school implemented multiple recognition structures including monthly "Arabic Star" awards for outstanding effort and improvement, classroom displays showcasing student work, and schoolwide Arabic performance events where students

demonstrated their skills. Teachers emphasized individual growth rather than competitive comparison, recognizing that students entered with vastly different prior knowledge and learning rates. Students interviewed consistently mentioned these recognition systems as motivating factors, particularly appreciating acknowledgment of effort and improvement rather than only absolute achievement levels. This approach aligns with self-determination theory's emphasis on autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs driving intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Differentiated instruction addressed the heterogeneous proficiency levels characteristic of non-pesantren student populations. Teachers employed flexible grouping strategies, organizing students by proficiency for specific activities while maintaining heterogeneous groups for others. Instructional materials included multilevel texts on common topics, allowing all students to engage with similar content at appropriate difficulty levels. Extension activities provided enrichment for advanced students while additional support structures assisted struggling learners. Teachers described using ongoing formative assessment to continually adjust grouping and instructional approaches. This differentiation reflects principles of Universal Design for Learning, which emphasizes providing multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement to accommodate learner variability (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

## Student Motivation Indicators

Improvement from beginning to end of academic year



Intrinsic Interest	Perceived Usefulness	Learning Confidence
Initial: 2.8/5.0	Initial: 3.2/5.0	Initial: 2.5/5.0
End Year: 3.7/5.0	End Year: 4.1/5.0	End Year: 3.8/5.0
Improvement: +0.9	Improvement: +0.9	Improvement: +1.3

**Figure 2.** Student motivation indicators measured across three dimensions (Intrinsic Interest, Perceived Usefulness, and Learning Confidence) showing improvement from beginning to end of academic year. Initial measurements averaged 2.8/5.0 for Intrinsic Interest,



3.2/5.0 for Perceived Usefulness, and 2.5/5.0 for Learning Confidence, while end-year measurements showed 3.7/5.0, 4.1/5.0, and 3.8/5.0 respectively.

## E. CONCLUSION

This investigation of Arabic learning strategies at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah Integrated Islamic School Bandung demonstrates that non-pesantren students can achieve substantial Arabic proficiency through carefully designed, theoretically grounded instructional approaches. The school's success stems from integrating foundational language building through structured progression, communicative competence development through authentic tasks, and motivation enhancement through culturally relevant engagement into a coherent pedagogical framework. These strategies effectively address the unique challenges non-pesantren students face, including limited prior Arabic exposure, absence of immersive language environments, and potentially lower intrinsic motivation for Arabic learning. The findings suggest that integrated Islamic schools can successfully teach Arabic by adapting international language teaching methodologies to their specific contexts while maintaining authentic connection to Arabic's role in Islamic tradition and practice. Future research should examine long-term outcomes of these approaches and investigate their transferability to other educational contexts, contributing to the growing knowledge base supporting effective Arabic instruction in diverse twenty-first century educational settings.

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