



Mapping Arabic Language Learning Methods: A Study of Madrasah Aliyah Pekanbaru

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited research on the implementation of Arabic language teaching methods in *Madrasah Aliyah* within the local context of Pekanbaru, Indonesia. A gap rarely explored despite its significance for Islamic education quality improvement. The research aims to map and analyze the variety of Arabic language teaching methods practiced in these institutions and identify the challenges teachers face in applying them. Using a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected from two schools (Al-Munawwarah and Al-Ikhwan Madrasah Aliyah) involving six Arabic language teachers selected through purposive sampling based on teaching experience and subject relevance. Data were obtained through classroom observations and in-depth interviews and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. Findings reveal the application of an eclectic approach integrating the *mubasyarah* (direct), *sam'iyah syafawiyah* (audio-oral), *qira'ah* (reading), and *qawā'id wa tarjamah* (grammar-translation) methods within communicative and contextual learning frameworks. Digital media and gamification enhanced student engagement, though time constraints, differing abilities, and limited facilities remained significant barriers. Theoretically, this study contributes to the refinement of the eclectic pedagogy model for Arabic language instruction by contextualizing it within Indonesian *madrasah* settings. Practically, it provides strategic insights for policymakers and educators to develop adaptive, digital-integrated, and culturally responsive teaching frameworks that can enhance learning outcomes and motivation in Arabic education. In conclusion, strengthening teacher capacity and extending practice-based activities are crucial for sustainable improvement in Arabic learning at *Madrasah Aliyah*, contributing to the broader goal of advancing Islamic education quality in the digital era.

Keywords: Arabic language learning, communicative approach, Madrasah Aliyah, qualitative research, educational innovation

Introduction

Language serves as a fundamental tool for humans to communicate ideas and transmit culture, playing a vital role in civilizational advancement. Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an and Hadith the two principal sources of Islamic knowledge holds a central place in Islamic education. Mastery of Arabic is not only crucial for understanding Islamic texts such as *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and *aqidah*, but also as a medium for preserving and developing Islamic intellectual traditions (Aulia & Anggraeni, 2023; Lasawali, 2021). Historically, Arabic was the language of science, literature, and philosophy, contributing to the flourishing of Islamic civilization during the Abbasid Caliphate (Ashrafi, 2023; Furoidah, 2020).

In Indonesia, Arabic is a compulsory subject in *madrasah* curricula, including at the *Aliyah* level, as mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation (KMA 184/2019). The policy emphasizes balanced mastery of the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing while promoting communicative and functional learning (Ridwan et al., 2024). Pekanbaru, with its strong Islamic education base, provides an important locus for examining how Arabic language instruction adapts to contemporary educational challenges. Despite this, several schools still rely heavily on traditional grammar-translation methods, which can limit student engagement and communicative ability (Shiddiq et al., 2024; Sya'roni, 2020).

Prior studies have shown that learning effectiveness is strongly influenced by the appropriateness of teaching methods and program management (Antonov et al., 2024; Hafeez & Hasbi, 2023). Innovative practices such as digital integration, gamification, and the use of communicative environments are proven to improve motivation and participation in Arabic learning (Aldereza Lidiya Mazyuna & Mad'ali Mad'ali, 2025; Almelhes, 2024). However, most existing research focuses on general or pesantren contexts rather than *madrasah Aliyah* environments. Studies in Pekanbaru are particularly scarce, despite the region's rapid educational development and cultural diversity.

From the literature, it is evident that although many studies have examined Arabic teaching methods in pesantren and higher education, there is still a lack of contextual research on how these methods are applied at the *madrasah Aliyah* level in urban Islamic schools like Pekanbaru. Additionally, previous studies have not fully explored the integration of traditional (*qawā'id wa tarjamah*) and modern methods (communicative, direct, gamification) within a single adaptive framework. Therefore, this study fills the gap by systematically mapping the teaching methods used in *Madrasah Aliyah* Pekanbaru, identifying challenges faced by teachers, and evaluating how these methods align with students' socio-cultural and cognitive contexts.

This study aims to: Map the Arabic language learning methods implemented in *Madrasah Aliyah* Pekanbaru. Identify challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing these methods. The novelty of this research lies in two aspects: Local contextual novelty providing an in-depth examination of Arabic learning in Pekanbaru, a region rarely studied yet significant in Islamic education networks in

Sumatra. Methodological novelty integrating an *eclectic-communicative framework* that combines traditional and digital-based approaches in real classroom settings.

This study adopts an eclectic pedagogical framework that synthesizes several key approaches in Arabic language education. The *mubasyarah* (direct) and *sam'iyyah syafawiyah* (audio-oral) methods emphasize active communication and repetition; the *qawā'id wa tarjamah* (grammar-translation) method supports linguistic structure mastery; and the communicative-contextual approach situates language use within real-life interactions. The integration of these methods, supported by digital and gamified tools, forms the theoretical lens for analyzing how teachers in *Madrasah Aliyah* adapt pedagogy to students' diverse learning needs.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at comprehensively understanding the Arabic language teaching methods used in *Madrasah Aliyah* in Pekanbaru. This design was selected to allow in-depth exploration of teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom interactions, and contextual challenges, following the interpretive paradigm typical of educational ethnography (Fauziyah et al., 2023; Sarah Audry Lubis & Mavianti, 2024).

The research was conducted at two *Madrasah Aliyah* in Pekanbaru Al-Munawwarah and Al-Ikhwan selected because both schools represent well established Islamic institutions that integrate traditional and modern teaching approaches. A total of six Arabic language teachers participated in the study (three from each school). Of these, four were female and two were male, all holding at least a bachelor's degree in Arabic language education and having 3–15 years of teaching experience. The inclusion of teachers with different experience levels aimed to capture diverse pedagogical perspectives and practices.

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling. The decisive criteria included: Teachers actively teaching Arabic at *Madrasah Aliyah* level for at least three years. Willingness to participate in classroom observations and interviews. Proven experience integrating at least two or more teaching methods (traditional and communicative).

This approach ensured information-rich cases, allowing data saturation to be achieved after the sixth participant when no new themes emerged during analysis.

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period (June–August 2025) using three complementary techniques: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation review. Each teacher was observed twice, resulting in a total of twelve observation sessions. Each session lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Observation focused on teaching strategies, interaction patterns, language use, and instructional media. Researchers used a structured observation checklist and field notes to record teacher activities, student responses, and classroom atmosphere. Observations were conducted non-participatively to minimize disruption.

After each observation, teachers participated in semi-structured interviews lasting 30–45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim. Guiding themes included: The rationale for selecting particular Arabic teaching methods. Perceived effectiveness of each method. Challenges encountered in classroom implementation. Strategies for improving student engagement and motivation. Interview questions were derived from the research objectives and refined after the first two sessions to ensure clarity and depth.

Supporting data were obtained from lesson plans, curriculum documents, and school profiles to triangulate the findings from interviews and observations. Data were analyzed using the (Huberman & Miles, 1994) interactive model, consisting of: Data Reduction – selecting and coding relevant information related to the two main research questions. Data Display – organizing themes and subthemes in tables and matrices. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – interpreting recurring patterns and linking them to theoretical frameworks (communicative and eclectic approaches).

Themes were generated inductively, guided by the two research questions: (1) What Arabic teaching methods are implemented in *Madrasah Aliyah* Pekanbaru? (2) What challenges do teachers face in applying these methods?

To ensure research credibility and reliability, several validation techniques were applied: Triangulation of methods (observation, interview, and document analysis) to verify consistency of findings. Member checking, where participants reviewed summarized interpretations for accuracy. Peer debriefing, conducted with two fellow Arabic education researchers to discuss emerging themes and analytical consistency. Thick description was maintained to enhance transferability of results.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to standard ethical protocols in educational studies. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their data. Teachers' names and schools were anonymized using coded identifiers (e.g., T1A, T2B). The study also obtained formal permission from the Office of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Pekanbaru, prior to data collection. All audio and written data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

Results

This section presents the empirical results derived from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted in two *Madrasah Aliyah* in Pekanbaru: Al-Munawwarah and Al-Ikhwan. Findings are organized into four main themes: (1) Application of teaching methods, (2) Student engagement strategies, (3) Use of learning media, and (4) Challenges and constraints in implementation.

All six participating teachers implemented a multi-method or eclectic approach, combining traditional and modern techniques. Five of six teachers consistently used the *mubasyarah* (direct) and *sam'iyah syafawiyah* (audio-oral) methods in every lesson. Four teachers integrated *qawā'id wa tarjamah* (grammar-translation) to reinforce linguistic structure and reading comprehension. Three teachers occasionally applied project-based or gamified activities to improve student participation.

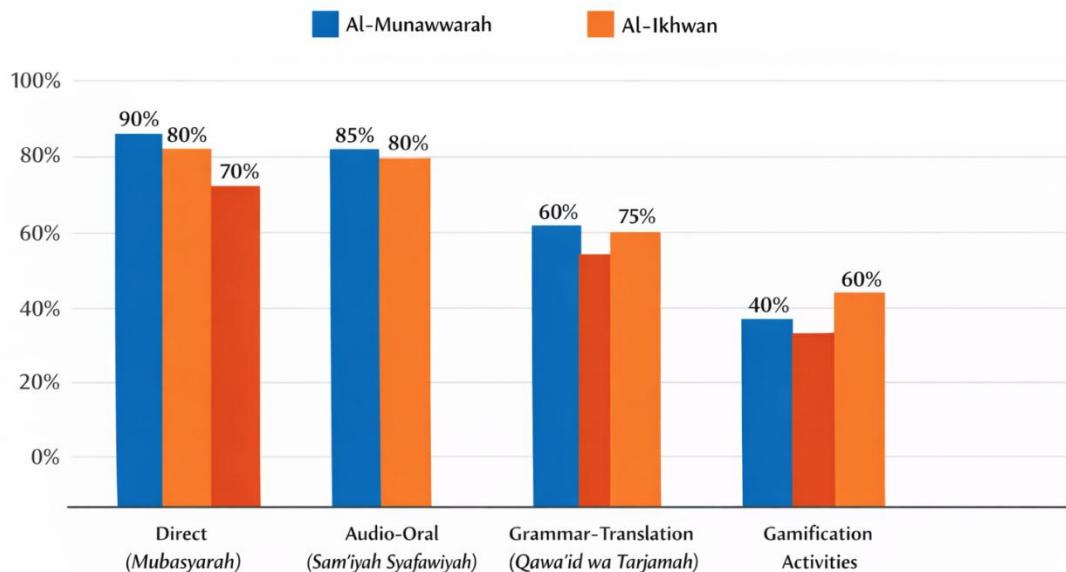


Figure 1. Distribution of Arabic Teaching Methods Applied at two Madrasah Aliyah in Pekanbaru

Teachers at Al-Munawwarah tended to emphasize *direct conversation* and oral repetition at the beginning of class, while Al-Ikhwan teachers integrated grammar translation and reading comprehension more intensively. Observation notes indicated that lessons typically began with Arabic greetings (*ta'aruf*), followed by vocabulary drills, short dialogues, and reading tasks from textbooks.

Most teachers reported moderate to high student enthusiasm when lessons involved interactive and competitive activities, such as “chain whisper” games or digital vocabulary quizzes. In 9 of 12 observed sessions, student participation increased significantly when teachers introduced multimedia elements. However, engagement declined in sessions dominated by teacher-centered explanations. A student from Al-Ikhwan explained:

“When we watch Arabic videos or play vocabulary games, it feels more fun and easier to remember.” (Student SR, 2025)

Conversely, less confident students preferred written exercises, indicating varying learning preferences that teachers must accommodate.

Both schools made partial use of digital and visual media. All teachers used PowerPoint slides and short video clips, while only two employed mobile-assisted activities such as Kahoot or Quizizz. Teachers at Al-Munawwarah had better access to projectors and speakers, while Al-Ikhwan often relied on shared devices and improvised tools. Field notes showed that technical limitations, such as unstable Wi-Fi and overlapping class schedules for device use, affected the continuity of digital learning integration.

Across both schools, three major obstacles were identified: Limited instructional time (40 minutes per session) cited by all six teachers as the main hindrance to full communicative practice. Student heterogeneity four teachers noted large differences in vocabulary mastery and motivation, particularly among students from non-religious junior high schools. Facility constraints — both schools had only one shared multimedia room, resulting in restricted digital media use.

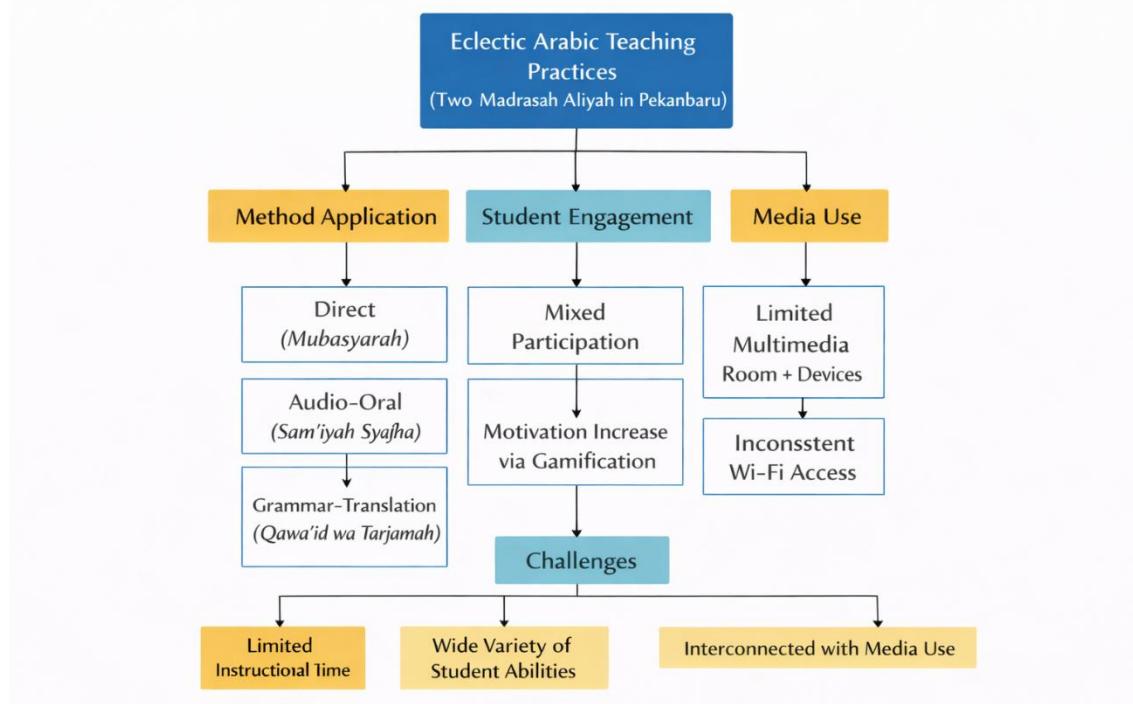


Figure 2. Thematic Coding Map of Teaching Methods and challenges

Teachers reported compensating for these challenges through peer-learning techniques and assigning short home-based practice tasks. Despite limitations, most teachers expressed strong motivation to improve their teaching practices through workshops or online training.

Discussion

The findings confirm that the eclectic combination of methods direct, audio-oral, grammar-translation, and communicative supports holistic skill development in Arabic learning. This hybrid approach aligns with the *Eclectic Pedagogy Theory* (Hafid et al., 2023), which advocates adapting methods to learners' linguistic and cultural contexts. In this study, the multi-method strategy was effective because it allowed teachers to balance linguistic accuracy (through grammar instruction) with communicative fluency (through interactive activities). The findings also echo the results of (Azhar et al., 2022; Maryani et al., 2024), emphasizing that communicative exposure is key to improving *muhādatsah* (speaking) competence.

Methodological emphasis differed across institutions. Al-Munawwarah teachers demonstrated more interactive and oral-based instruction, while Al-Ikhwan teachers showed text-based and structural emphasis. This difference can be attributed to resource availability and teachers' educational backgrounds. Despite these variations, both contexts demonstrated alignment with KMA 184/2019 curriculum goals promoting communicative competence.

Students' feedback confirmed that interactive methods fostered greater motivation and retention. Enjoyment, relevance, and the sense of accomplishment were critical drivers of engagement, consistent with the motivational learning framework proposed by (Almelhes, 2024). However, less confident students indicated anxiety during oral activities, suggesting that differentiated instruction and peer collaboration remain necessary.

This study contributes to Arabic pedagogy by contextualizing eclectic teaching within Islamic secondary education an area underexplored in Indonesian scholarship. It extends theory by showing that the success of eclectic pedagogy depends not only on combining methods but also on how local socio cultural factors shape pedagogical adaptation.

At the policy level, findings suggest several actionable recommendations: Scheduling reform to extend Arabic practice sessions beyond 40 minutes. Increased digital infrastructure to support multimedia-based learning. Teacher professional development programs emphasizing communicative pedagogy and technology integration.

Such initiatives could enhance student-centered learning and align national curriculum goals with real classroom needs.

This study is limited by its small sample size (two schools, six teachers) and localized qualitative scope, restricting generalization. Future research should adopt mixed-method designs to examine correlations between teaching methods and measurable student outcomes. Classroom-based interventions, such as controlled comparisons of communicative versus grammar-based instruction, would also deepen understanding of method effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study mapped the application of Arabic language teaching methods at two *Madrasah Aliyah* in Pekanbaru Al-Munawwarah and Al-Ikhwan using a descriptive qualitative design. Findings revealed that teachers adopted an eclectic, multi method approach combining *mubasyarah* (direct), *sam'iyah syafawiyah* (audio-oral), *qira'ah* (reading), and *qawā'id wa tarjamah* (grammar-translation) within a communicative and contextual learning framework. The use of digital media and gamified activities enhanced student engagement, though teaching remained constrained by limited instructional time, varied student abilities, and inadequate facilities.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the understanding of eclectic pedagogy in Islamic secondary education, demonstrating how flexibility in combining traditional and communicative approaches aligns with students' socio-cultural realities. It also expands Arabic language teaching theory by contextualizing pedagogical practices within Indonesian *madrasah* culture. Practically, the results highlight that effective Arabic instruction depends not only on method selection but also on teacher adaptability, classroom resources, and institutional support systems.

This study was limited by its small sample size (two schools, six teachers) and its qualitative scope, which focused on in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization. The context is also localized to Pekanbaru, which may not represent all *madrasah Aliyah* in Indonesia.

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations are proposed: For School Administrators, extend Arabic class duration or increase weekly contact hours to allow more communicative practice. Provide adequate digital equipment (e.g., projectors, internet access) and schedule shared resources efficiently. For Teachers, continue adopting eclectic approaches while enhancing interactive learning through digital tools, gamification, and peer collaboration. Engage in continuous professional development on communicative Arabic pedagogy. For Curriculum Developers, integrate blended-learning components and allocate more emphasis on oral communication and authentic language use within the national Arabic curriculum. For Policymakers, support teacher training in digital pedagogy and communicative methodology through targeted programs at provincial and national levels, ensuring alignment with KMA 184/2019 objectives.

Future studies should employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine how these teaching methods influence measurable learning outcomes, such as language proficiency or student motivation. Further research could also explore the implementation of the eclectic model in rural or pesantren-based schools to assess its adaptability across diverse educational contexts.

Although the study is context-specific, the results provide valuable insight into the adaptability of eclectic Arabic pedagogy for other Islamic secondary schools in Indonesia and comparable regions. The study's unique contribution lies in its local

contextual and methodological integration bridging traditional Arabic instruction with modern, communicative, and technology-enhanced learning in *madrasah Aliyah* settings.

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