



The Interaction Between Classroom Management and Arabic Teaching Approaches at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar Pekanbaru

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-31 Revised: 2026-06-12 Accepted: 2026-06-19 Keywords: classroom management, learning interaction, Arabic language, communicative approach, bi'ah lughawiyah, modern Islamic boarding school DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10946 Corresponding Author: Aidil Azza Mu'izzuddin aidilazzamuizzuddin@gmail.com Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau	<i>Despite growing attention to communicative language teaching, research on classroom interaction management in modern Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) remains scarce, as the unique dormitory-based language environment presents challenges distinct from regular school settings. This study aims to analyze classroom interaction management and Arabic language teaching approaches at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar Pekanbaru. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with data collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Research participants consisted of two Arabic language teachers and twelve students selected purposively. The findings indicate that: (1) teachers implement a phased interaction pattern moving from one-way explanation to two-way dialogue and multi-directional group interaction, progressively shifting toward student-centered learning; (2) the teaching approach is communicative, emphasizing direct practice through hiwār (dialogue), group discussions, and collaborative tasks; (3) major challenges include students' heterogeneous prior knowledge, dominance of the mother tongue, time constraints, and psychological barriers such as language anxiety. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical investigation of contextually adaptive interaction strategies within a pesantren, where Arabic is embedded in daily life through bi'ah lughawiyah. These findings contribute a contextually grounded model of communicative interaction management for Arabic language pedagogy in Islamic boarding school settings.</i>

1. Introduction

Arabic holds a pivotal role in Islamic education worldwide, serving not only as a medium of communication but also as the primary gateway to the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic scholarship (Allaithy & Zaki, 2025). In Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the effective teaching of Arabic is therefore inseparable from broader educational goals. Modern *pesantren*, which blend traditional and contemporary pedagogical systems, carry a particular responsibility to structure Arabic instruction in ways that are both systematic and contextually responsive.

The quality of Arabic language learning is shaped not only by curriculum content but equally by teachers' capacity to manage classroom interactions effectively (Almelhes, 2024). Classroom management encompasses the deliberate strategies teachers use to create and sustain an environment that is conducive, participatory, and communicative. In the absence of well-managed interactions, Arabic classrooms risk becoming passive spaces characterized by low engagement, limited practice opportunities, and diminished student confidence.

The *pesantren* context presents a distinctive set of pedagogical conditions. Students live in a twenty-four-hour educational environment that extends learning beyond the classroom into dormitory life, worship routines, and daily social interactions (Amaliyah, 2024). This environment holds considerable potential for fostering *bi'ah lughawiyyah* a language-rich immersion setting yet it also introduces unique challenges, particularly the wide diversity of students' prior Arabic knowledge and their psychological readiness to communicate in a second language.

Several studies have demonstrated that interaction patterns significantly influence the quality of language learning outcomes. Research by Irsad, Sutarni, and Putri (2024), Badash (2024), and Shawaqfeh et al. (2024) collectively affirm that dynamic, well-structured classroom interaction supports active participation, builds communicative confidence, and improves overall language proficiency. However, these studies largely address general foreign language learning contexts. Research specifically examining classroom interaction management in modern *pesantren* where Arabic functions simultaneously as a school subject and a daily-life language remains limited.

This gap is significant because the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which underpin much of the literature on language interaction, assume relatively homogeneous learner populations and standard institutional settings. The *pesantren* context, with its heterogeneous intake, dormitory-based language environment, and integration of religious and linguistic goals, calls for a contextually adapted model of interaction management.

Vygotsky's social interactionism (Alkhudiry, 2022), the CLT framework (Bai, 2024), student-centered learning theory (Khair, 2025), and Bandura's social cognitive theory (Hijriyah et al., 2024) together provide a conceptual foundation for understanding how phased, communicative interaction within a supportive bi'ah lughawiyyah can optimize Arabic language acquisition in this setting. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Classroom Interaction Management in Pesantren Arabic Teaching

Theoretical Foundations	Interaction Management Strategies	Communicative Approach (CLT)	Learning Outcomes
Vygotsky (ZPD, social interaction); Bandura (self-efficacy); CLT; Student-centered learning	Phased interaction: one-way → two-way → multi-directional	Hiwār, group discussion, bi'ah lughawiyyah, contextual tasks	Active participation, Arabic proficiency, communicative confidence

Based on this framework, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How do teachers manage classroom interactions in Arabic language instruction at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar Pekanbaru? (2) What teaching approaches do teachers employ? (3) What challenges do teachers face in implementing these approaches? The study aims to produce empirically grounded insights that contribute to the development of effective Arabic language pedagogy in modern Islamic boarding school contexts.

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This design was selected because the study aims to generate an in-depth understanding of how interaction management operates in Arabic language classrooms and how the dynamics of communicative teaching unfold in a pesantren setting. Descriptive qualitative research focuses on depicting phenomena systematically and accurately based on field data (Moleong, 2018), making it well-suited for capturing the complexity of teacher-student interaction and the contextual factors shaping it.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar in Pekanbaru, Riau, a leading modern Islamic boarding school that implements structured Arabic language instruction across all levels. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they possessed direct and active experience with Arabic language teaching and learning. The sample consisted of two Arabic language teachers serving as primary informants, and twelve students from different class levels serving as supporting informants.

Although the sample size is relatively small, it is consistent with qualitative research norms in which depth of insight takes precedence over statistical representativeness (Creswell, 2014). Data saturation was assessed iteratively; by the conclusion of data collection, no substantively new themes emerged from additional interviews or observations, indicating sufficient saturation for the scope of this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, participatory observation was conducted across eight Arabic language classroom sessions over a four-week period, using a structured observation guide that focused on interaction frequency, turn-taking patterns, language use, and classroom management strategies. Sessions were observed in their entirety, with field notes recorded immediately following each session. Second, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the two teachers and in small groups with the twelve students.

Each teacher interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Student interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes each and were conducted in Indonesian to minimize the language barrier. Interview protocols focused on interaction strategies, teaching approaches, challenges encountered, and students' perceptions of the learning environment. Third, documentation was collected in the form of lesson plans, classroom photographs, and any written materials used during observed sessions.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Teachers and students were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their identities. Participant names appearing in this report are replaced with pseudonyms or initials (AM, MF, AR, NR). Ethical approval was granted by the relevant institutional authority at Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University of Riau.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the qualitative model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising three iterative stages. In the data reduction stage, field notes and interview transcripts were reviewed and coded thematically. Initial open coding generated 47 codes, which were subsequently grouped into 12 subcategories and then consolidated into three overarching themes corresponding to the research questions. In the data presentation stage, themes were organized into descriptive narratives supported by participant quotations.

In the conclusion-drawing stage, findings were verified through triangulation across observation, interview, and documentation data sources. Trustworthiness was further strengthened through methodological triangulation and member-checking, in which key findings were reviewed with the teacher participants for accuracy.

3. Result

The findings are organized according to the three research questions: (1) classroom management interaction patterns, (2) Arabic teaching approaches, and (3) challenges in implementation. Table 1 provides a thematic overview before each theme is elaborated in detail.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Findings

Theme	Key Patterns	Data Sources
1. Classroom Interaction Management	Phased pattern: one-way → two-way → multi-directional; group seating; icebreakers	Observation, teacher interview, student interview
2. Arabic Teaching Approaches	Communicative (CLT); contextual tasks; bi'ah lughawiyyah; hiwār, group work	Observation, teacher interview, student interview
3. Implementation Challenges	Ability heterogeneity; L1 dominance; time constraints; language anxiety	Teacher interview, student interview, field notes

Classroom Interaction Management Patterns

Observation data and teacher interviews revealed that Arabic teachers at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar implement a deliberate, phased approach to classroom interaction. Instruction consistently begins with teacher-directed one-way

communication for concept introduction, transitions into two-way question-and-answer exchanges, and culminates in multi-directional small-group activities.

Planning constitutes a critical preparatory stage. Teacher AM described the approach to lesson preparation as follows:

"Before starting to teach, I prepare a lesson plan and determine the methods that are appropriate for the material. I also arrange the students' seating so as to facilitate interaction, for example, by using a group arrangement. In addition, I prepare icebreakers to help the students get ready to learn." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

This planning orientation was corroborated by observation data, which consistently showed group seating configurations and the use of brief warm-up activities at the start of each session. The deliberate structuring of physical space and psychological readiness prior to instruction reflects a conscious strategy for facilitating participatory interaction from the outset.

The phased interaction pattern was further elaborated by the teacher:

"I usually start with a greeting, ask the students how they are doing in simple Arabic, and then connect the previous lesson to today's material so the students are better prepared. After that, I begin engaging the students in conversation, asking and answering questions, and interacting with them. Once they understand the concept, I divide them into groups and have them practice hiwār." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

Observation records confirmed this progression across all eight observed sessions. One-way interaction was used exclusively in the opening phase for explaining new vocabulary or grammatical structures, lasting approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Two-way interaction through directed questioning and paired response exercises occupied roughly 20 minutes of each session. Multi-directional group hiwār practice constituted the final 15 to 20 minutes. This pattern produced a consistent and observable shift toward greater student talk time as each session progressed.

Students articulated a positive response to this interaction structure. A second-year student reported:

"The teacher often encourages us to discuss and practice conversation. Sometimes we are divided into groups, and each group has to present the results of our discussion in Arabic. We feel more motivated to learn because we're not just listening to explanations." (MF, Second-Year Student, Interview, March 16, 2026)

Across all twelve student interviews, ten participants expressed greater motivation and comfort when learning involved group discussion and hiwār compared to sessions dominated by teacher explanation. This pattern of student

response provides convergent evidence that the phased interaction model fostered engagement beyond what passive lecture formats would generate.

Arabic Language Teaching Approaches

Classroom observation and interview data consistently identified a communicative orientation as the predominant teaching approach. This was evident across multiple dimensions: the type of activities selected, the language used during instruction, and the way feedback was delivered.

Regarding communicative practice, Teacher AM described the teaching practice as follows:

"I use two-way communication. I often ask questions and have students answer in Arabic, even if the questions are simple. I also give students the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, I use the hiwār method so that students get used to having direct conversations in Arabic." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

The use of open-ended questions and the hiwār method was directly observed in all eight sessions. Teachers consistently redirected student responses rather than providing immediate corrections, prompting students to self-repair or seek peer assistance before teacher intervention. This feedback strategy reflects a communicative ethos in which accuracy is pursued through meaningful exchange rather than isolated drilling.

Alongside communicative techniques, teachers invested in building bi'ah lughawiyyah at the classroom level. Teacher AM noted:

"I always start class with Arabic phrases such as greetings, questions about well-being, and simple instructions. Over time, the students have begun to get used to responding in Arabic as well. Although their responses are sometimes still mixed with Indonesian, their progress is already evident." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

Observation data confirmed that all eight sessions opened with a minimum of five minutes of Arabic-only interaction. By the fourth week of observation, several students who had initially responded in Indonesian had begun producing short Arabic phrases in response to the teacher's opening routines, indicating incremental acquisition of classroom language patterns.

A contextual approach linking classroom content to daily pesantren life was also evident. A third-year student described the impact of this strategy:

"I'm happy because the teacher doesn't just teach us grammar rules, but also has us practice speaking right away. We're asked to have conversations about daily life at the boarding school, such as our schedule, meals, and prayers. So we feel that Arabic is truly useful in our daily lives." (AR, Third-Year Student, Interviewed March 16, 2026)

The integration of pesantren routines as material for Arabic practice was present in five of the eight observed sessions. Topics such as daily schedules, dormitory rules, and religious activities served as authentic communicative contexts that reduced the artificiality often associated with textbook dialogues and provided students with immediately applicable language.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite the overall effectiveness of the interaction management strategies and communicative approaches described above, teachers and students identified a set of recurring challenges that constrained full implementation.

The most prominent challenge was the heterogeneity of students' prior Arabic knowledge. Teacher AM explained:

"The biggest challenge I face is the wide range of abilities among the students. Some students already have a strong foundation in Arabic because they previously studied at a madrasah, while others are truly starting from scratch. When I teach using a single method, there are inevitably those who can follow along quickly and those who are still falling behind. This forces me to be more creative in choosing my teaching strategies." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

Observation data supported this assessment. During multi-directional group activities, pairs of students with stronger Arabic backgrounds completed tasks significantly faster and with greater accuracy than students from non-Islamic school backgrounds, who frequently sought assistance or reverted to Indonesian. This ability gap was consistently present across all eight observed sessions.

Code-switching and time constraints constituted a second cluster of challenges. Teacher AM observed:

"Another issue I often encounter is that students still frequently switch to Indonesian when they have trouble expressing themselves in Arabic. Especially during group discussions, they tend to switch to Indonesian more easily. In addition, class time is very limited, so not all language skills can be fully developed in a single session." (AM, Arabic Teacher, Interview, March 15, 2026)

During group hiwār activities, Indonesian was used by the majority of student dyads for negotiation of meaning, with Arabic reserved primarily for the performance phase of the task. Limited session duration typically 45 minutes

further compressed the time available for extended communicative practice.

A third challenge involved psychological factors, particularly language anxiety and fear of public error. A first-year student articulated this experience:

"I really want to be able to speak Arabic fluently, but sometimes I'm afraid of making mistakes in front of my friends. When the teacher asks me a question directly, I often get nervous and forget the vocabulary I've learned. But when practicing in small groups, I'm braver because I'm not too embarrassed if I make a mistake." (NR, First-Year Student, Interview, March 16, 2026)

This pattern was corroborated across eight of the twelve student interviews, where participants independently identified the smaller group format as a less anxiety-inducing environment for Arabic production. Observation records also noted that student response latency the time between a teacher question and a student answer was consistently shorter during small-group practice than during whole-class question-and-answer sequences, consistent with reduced performance anxiety in smaller audiences.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate how classroom interaction management and communicative teaching operate within the unique educational ecology of a modern pesantren. This discussion situates the findings within existing theory and research, highlights points of convergence and divergence, examines the contextual distinctiveness of the pesantren setting, and articulates the theoretical contributions of the study.

Phased Interaction and Student-Centered Learning

The phased interaction pattern documented in this study progressing from one-way introduction to two-way dialogue to multi-directional group practice aligns broadly with the student-centered learning framework (Khair, 2025) and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Alkhudiry, 2022). The gradual shift from teacher-dominant to student-dominant communication reflects pedagogical scaffolding: teachers provide conceptual input before releasing cognitive responsibility to students for communicative practice.

This pattern contrasts with the findings of Firdausiyah et al. (2025), who reported that elementary school teachers in Indonesian contexts tend to maintain one-sided interaction throughout lessons. The difference may reflect the more advanced pedagogical preparation of pesantren teachers or the communicative affordances of the boarding school environment, which normalizes Arabic use beyond the classroom.

Badash's (2024) framework for teacher-student interaction in foreign language classrooms posited that effective interaction requires a balance between teacher talk and student talk. The present findings add nuance to this claim: rather than a static balance, the phased model suggests that effective interaction is dynamically calibrated, with teacher talk predominating early in a session and student talk expanding as the session progresses. This temporal dimension of interaction balance has not been explicitly theorized in previous pesantren-focused research and represents a contribution to understanding how communicative interaction is structured in this context.

Communicative Approach and Bi'ah Lughawiyyah

The communicative orientation of teaching at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar supports the central claims of CLT (Bai, 2024; Effendy, 2009), demonstrating that language can be taught as a functional instrument of real communication rather than a decontextualized rule system. This finding is notable given the criticism that CLT implementation in Asian contexts frequently remains superficial, retaining communicative terminology while preserving teacher-centered practice (Taufiq, Putri, & Asmawati, 2022).

The evidence from this study suggests that the pesantren context may be particularly conducive to substantive CLT implementation, because the institutional mandate to use Arabic in daily life provides an authentic communicative demand that reinforces classroom practice.

The incremental development of bi'ah lughawiyyah documented here extends the findings of Ramadhan and Luthfi (2020), who reported that consistent Arabic-medium instruction at the institutional level is a key predictor of student proficiency. The present study demonstrates that even at the micro-level of individual classroom routines opening greetings, simple instructions, and recurrent expressions meaningful language environment effects can accumulate over time.

This suggests that bi'ah lughawiyyah should be understood not only as an institutional policy but as a set of daily pedagogical practices that individual teachers can cultivate incrementally. However, the study also reveals a limitation of this micro-level approach: without coordinated institutional reinforcement beyond the classroom, the language environment remains partial and inconsistent.

Challenges: Heterogeneity, Code-Switching, and Anxiety

The challenge of students' heterogeneous prior knowledge challenges a foundational assumption of CLT, which implicitly presupposes learners capable of engaging in communicative tasks with minimal scaffolding from the outset (Bai, 2024). The gap between students from madrasah backgrounds and those from public schools at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar suggests that undifferentiated communicative instruction will systematically disadvantage the latter group. This

finding calls for an integration of differentiated instruction principles into the CLT framework as applied in pesantren, in which communicative tasks are tiered according to students' zones of proximal development as articulated by Vygotsky (Alkhudiry, 2022).

The code-switching observed in this study differs meaningfully from the teacher-directed strategic code-switching documented by Taufiq, Putri, and Asmawati (2022) in EFL classrooms. In the present context, student code-switching was largely spontaneous and compensatory, reflecting gaps in lexical and syntactic competence rather than deliberate pedagogical strategy. This distinction is theoretically significant: while strategic code-switching may be a productive tool in the teacher's repertoire, spontaneous student code-switching signals the boundary of communicative competence and should inform task design by ensuring that activities are calibrated to students' current linguistic capacity.

The language anxiety documented among first-year students is consistent with Bandura's social cognitive theory as applied by Hijriyah et al. (2024), which holds that low self-efficacy beliefs amplify performance anxiety in evaluative contexts. The finding that small-group formats significantly reduced anxiety and increased Arabic production has practical implications for classroom design: embedding more small-group and paired *hiwār* activities earlier in the curriculum sequence, rather than reserving them for advanced classes, could lower affective filters and accelerate proficiency development for anxious learners.

Critically, the study did not document any teacher practices specifically designed to explicitly address or reframe language anxiety, suggesting that systematic anxiety management remains an underdeveloped dimension of communicative Arabic teaching in this context.

Theoretical Contribution and Contextual Uniqueness

This study contributes a contextually grounded elaboration of communicative interaction management for Arabic language pedagogy in modern pesantren. The theoretical contribution can be articulated in three propositions. First, effective communicative interaction in pesantren is temporally phased rather than statically balanced, with scaffolded progression from teacher-directed to student-led activity within each lesson. Second, *bi'ah lughawiyyah* functions simultaneously at the institutional level (dormitory language policies) and the micro-pedagogical level (classroom routines), and both levels must be activated for maximum impact. Third, the CLT assumption of learner homogeneity must be modified in pesantren contexts to accommodate differentiated instruction, particularly for students entering with minimal prior Arabic exposure.

These propositions extend existing CLT theory by specifying the conditions under which communicative approaches are most and least effective in contexts that are simultaneously formal educational settings and immersive language environments. They also dialogue productively with international research on CLT implementation in non-Western contexts (Littlewood, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), affirming that contextual adaptation is not a deviation from CLT principles but a necessary condition for their authentic realization.

5. Conclusion

This study examined classroom interaction management and communicative Arabic teaching at Pondok Modern Al-Kautsar Pekanbaru through qualitative observation, interviews, and documentation. Three main conclusions can be drawn.

First, Arabic teachers implement a temporally phased interaction model that moves progressively from teacher-directed one-way explanation toward multi-directional student-centered group practice. This model functions as a form of communicative scaffolding that systematically increases student talk time and participatory engagement across the arc of each lesson.

Second, the teaching approach is fundamentally communicative, integrating *hiwār*-based practice, contextual tasks rooted in *pesantren* daily life, and incremental classroom-level *bi'ah lughawiyyah* development. The use of authentic communicative contexts drawn from students' boarding school experience reduces artificiality and strengthens students' perception of Arabic as a functionally relevant language.

Third, implementation is constrained by the heterogeneity of students' prior knowledge, spontaneous code-switching driven by linguistic gaps, limited instructional time, and language anxiety particularly among early-level students. Addressing these challenges requires an adaptive approach combining differentiated instruction, small-group task design that lowers affective barriers, and coordinated institutional reinforcement of the language environment beyond the classroom.

This study is limited by its single-site scope and the relatively small participant sample. Future research is recommended to examine interaction management across multiple *pesantren* using comparative designs, and to test the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions such as differentiated *hiwār* protocols or structured anxiety-reduction strategies through classroom action research designs.

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