

Transforming Dormitory-Based Arabic Language Learning to Develop Students' Communicative Competence at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School

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Article Information	Abstract
Article History: Submitted 01 May 2026 Received 03 July 2026 Publication Date 10 August 2026 Keywords: Arabic Language Learning, Bi'ah Lughawiyah, Communicative Competence Dormitory-Based Learning	<i>This study examines the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic language learning in developing students' communicative competence at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan. It explores the shift from classroom-centered instruction toward environment-based communicative learning through the implementation of bi'ah lughawiyah in dormitory settings. Previous studies have mainly viewed bi'ah lughawiyah as a supporting language environment or examined its impact on specific language skills, with limited attention to its role as an integrated pedagogical system. This study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through moderate participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving students, dormitory supervisors, and Arabic language teachers. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal a pedagogical transformation characterized by the integration of formal instruction, structured bi'ah lughawiyah, intensive social interaction, and the development of students' communicative competence through sustained input, meaningful interaction, and contextualized language use. The study's primary contribution is the Integrative Communicative Immersion Model, which extends previous research by conceptualizing dormitory-based Arabic learning as an integrated pedagogical system in which formal instruction, structured language environment, and sustained social interaction function as interconnected components of communicative language acquisition. This model provides a conceptual framework for designing and managing environment-based Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools.</i>

Introduction

Arabic language learning occupies a strategic position within the educational system of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, as it functions not only as a medium of communication but also as the principal instrument for understanding Islamic primary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic texts (*turāth*). Consequently, Arabic proficiency constitutes a fundamental competency for students (*santri*) in developing comprehensive Islamic literacy. In this regard, *pesantren* are expected to provide effective, adaptive, and contextually relevant Arabic language instruction in response to contemporary educational demands (Abidah & Rohman, 2025). Alongside the increasing demands of educational globalization and cross-cultural communication, the orientation of Arabic language learning in *pesantren* has shifted from merely fostering passive textual comprehension toward developing learners' ability to use Arabic actively in authentic communicative contexts. This shift indicates that the success of Arabic language learning is no longer measured solely by grammatical mastery, but also by learners' communicative competence in using the language effectively and appropriately (Zein & Nasution, 2025).

Despite this shift, Arabic language instruction in many *pesantren* remains dominated by traditional grammar-translation approaches that emphasize mastery of grammatical rules (*naḥw* and *ṣarf*) and text translation. Although this approach is effective in supporting students' comprehension of classical Islamic texts, it has significant limitations in developing communicative language skills, particularly speaking proficiency (*mahārah al-kalām*) (Muttaqin et al., 2024). Within this instructional model, learning tends to be teacher-centered, where teachers function as the primary source of knowledge and students act as passive recipients, resulting in limited opportunities for communicative practice. However, from the perspective of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language should be taught as a tool for communication through authentic social interaction rather than as an isolated linguistic system (Rahmatillah, 2019; Richards, 2006). Therefore, a transformation in Arabic language pedagogy is required, shifting from structurally oriented instruction toward communicative approaches that emphasize meaningful language use in real-life contexts.

One strategy that has increasingly emerged in the transformation of Arabic language learning in *pesantren* is the implementation of *bi'ah lughawiyah* (language environment). *Bi'ah lughawiyah* refers to a deliberately constructed linguistic environment designed to encourage active, consistent, and sustained use of Arabic in students' daily lives through language policies, structured language activities, and supportive communicative culture (Fitri & Izomi, 2026). From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, language environments play a crucial role in language development because they provide continuous linguistic input, opportunities for interaction, and meaningful language output (Luo, 2024; Masrizal, 2014). Thus, language learning extends beyond formal classroom instruction and becomes embedded in the social interactions and lived experiences of students within their environment.

Within the *pesantren* context, dormitories represent a particularly strategic setting for implementing language-environment-based learning because they provide an immersive language environment in which students may use Arabic intensively throughout their daily activities. As communal living spaces operating twenty-four hours a day, dormitories offer more natural, contextualized, and continuous opportunities for language learning compared to formal classroom settings. Previous studies indicate that intensive social interaction in boarding environments significantly contributes to the development of learners' communicative competence, particularly speaking ability (Asrofi & Supriatna, 2022). Accordingly, dormitories function not merely as residential facilities but as pedagogical spaces that facilitate language acquisition through social interaction and habitual language practice.

Although numerous studies have examined the implementation of *bi'ah lughawiyah*, most previous research has primarily focused on program implementation or the impact of language environments on specific language skills. For instance, Abidah & Chebaiki (2024) investigated the effectiveness of *bi'ah lughawiyah* in improving students' Arabic communication skills, while Wahyuni et al. (2025) examined the contribution of language environments to students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, Nafisah (2025) explored the implementation of language programs in supporting Arabic communication habits among students. Nevertheless, these studies have not sufficiently addressed how the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic

language learning occurs, particularly regarding the dynamics of pedagogical transformation, patterns of social interaction, and students' lived experiences within dormitory-based language environments.

Addressing this gap, the present study offers novelty by examining the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic language learning comprehensively, not only in terms of program implementation but also regarding shifts in instructional paradigms, the practical enactment of learning within dormitory environments, and their contribution to the development of students' communicative competence. This focus is significant because dormitory-based Arabic learning transformation reflects a shift from classroom-centered instruction toward environment-based communicative learning, an area that remains underexplored in the context of Indonesian pesantren.

Unlike previous studies, which predominantly conceptualize *bi'ah lughawiyah* as a supporting language environment or focus on evaluating its impact on language skills, the present study proposes a broader pedagogical perspective by examining how dormitory-based Arabic language learning operates as an integrated instructional system. The study contributes theoretically by developing the Integrative Communicative Immersion Model, which conceptualizes communicative competence as the outcome of the systematic interaction among formal classroom instruction, structured *bi'ah lughawiyah* programs, and sustained social interaction within the dormitory environment. In this way, the study extends previous research by shifting the analytical focus from isolated language programs or environmental factors toward an integrated pedagogical framework that explains how these components function synergistically in facilitating Arabic language acquisition within Islamic boarding schools.

Based on this background, the present study aims to: (1) describe the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic language learning at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan; (2) analyze the practices of Arabic language learning within the dormitory environment; and (3) examine the role of the dormitory environment in shaping students' communicative competence. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Arabic language learning scholarship, particularly in the domain of environment-based instruction, and practically to the enhancement of *bi'ah lughawiyah* programs in Islamic boarding schools.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore comprehensively the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic language learning in shaping students' communicative competence. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to investigate the phenomenon in its natural setting and to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and social interactions related to Arabic language learning within the dormitory environment (Creswell, 2021). Specifically, the case study design was utilized because the research focused on an in-depth examination of a bounded system, namely, the Arabic dormitory program at a single Islamic boarding school, allowing for contextual and holistic analysis of the learning transformation process (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at the Arabic Dormitory of Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected because it implements a structured dormitory-based Arabic language program through the application of *bi'ah lughawiyah*, making it a relevant setting for examining environment-based Arabic language learning transformation.

Research participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and relevance to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002). The participants consisted of 12 students (*santri*) residing in the Arabic dormitory, who served as the primary subjects experiencing the learning process, 3 dormitory supervisors (*musyrif*) who were responsible for managing and supervising the implementation of language programs, and 2 Arabic language teachers who contributed to the integration of formal classroom instruction with dormitory-based language practices. This participant composition enabled the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives on the transformation of Arabic language learning within the dormitory setting. Participant recruitment was continued until data saturation was reached, indicated by the recurrence of similar themes and the absence of substantially new information during data collection.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques. First, moderate participant observation was employed to directly observe the implementation of Arabic language learning practices, language interactions, and the enactment of *bi'ah*

lughawiyah within the dormitory. In moderate participant observation, the researcher participates in the setting while maintaining an observational role to minimize disruption to natural activities (Spradley, 2011). Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding the transformation of Arabic language learning, dormitory language practices, and the development of communicative competence. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for probing and elaborating on participants' responses while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Kvale, 2007). Third, document analysis was used to collect supporting data from institutional documents, including dormitory regulations, language policy guidelines, schedules of language activities, and documentation of language programs. Document analysis served as supplementary evidence to enrich and triangulate the observational and interview data (Bowen, 2009).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al., (1994), which consists of three concurrent stages. The first stage was data condensation, involving the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documents. The second stage was data display, in which the condensed data were organized into descriptive narratives, thematic matrices, and analytical categories to facilitate interpretation. The final stage was conclusion drawing and verification, through which patterns, meanings, and relationships were identified, interpreted, and continuously verified throughout the analysis process to ensure analytical rigor.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied several validation strategies based on qualitative research standards proposed by Lincoln & Guba (2013). First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participant groups, including students, dormitory supervisors, and teachers. Second, method triangulation was applied by cross-checking findings derived from observation, interviews, and documentation. Third, member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to selected participants for confirmation and verification, ensuring the accuracy and credibility of the researcher's interpretations.

Through these methodological procedures, the study sought to produce credible and contextually grounded findings regarding the transformation of dormitory-based Arabic language learning and its role in developing students' communicative competence.

Results and Discussion

1. Transformation of Dormitory-Based Arabic Language Learning

The findings indicate that Arabic language learning at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School has experienced a significant transformation from a classroom-centered instructional model toward a dormitory-based environment-oriented learning system. Based on field observations, Arabic learning is no longer confined to formal classroom sessions but extends into daily dormitory life through structured language activities and obligatory communicative practices. As one dormitory supervisor explained, “*Arabic is not only taught in class; it must become the students' daily language in the dormitory environment*” (Interview with Musyrif 1, 2026).

This transformation reflects a pedagogical shift from language learning as grammatical knowledge transmission toward language learning as contextual communicative practice. Previously, Arabic instruction relied heavily on grammar-translation methods emphasizing *naḥw*, *ṣarf*, and text interpretation. Consequently, linguistic knowledge acquired in class is continuously reinforced through everyday communicative activities, allowing students to transfer declarative knowledge into functional language use.

More importantly, the findings demonstrate that the dormitory does not merely provide additional opportunities to practice Arabic but creates a learning mechanism that systematically supports communicative competence development. Daily exposure to Arabic through structured programs such as *mufradāt yaumiyyah*, *muḥādathah*, mandatory language policies, and spontaneous peer interaction provides continuous linguistic input while simultaneously requiring students to produce meaningful language output. Through repeated interaction, learners negotiate meaning, receive immediate feedback from peers and dormitory

supervisors, and gradually develop greater fluency and confidence in authentic communicative situations. These learning processes reflect central principles of Second Language Acquisition, particularly the complementary roles of comprehensible input, meaningful interaction, and contextualized output in facilitating language development.

The transformation also redefines pedagogical roles within the learning environment. Teachers and dormitory supervisors no longer function solely as transmitters of linguistic knowledge but become facilitators, communicative mentors, and language models who scaffold students' participation in everyday communication. Likewise, students are positioned as active participants who construct communicative competence through sustained interaction rather than passive recipients of grammatical instruction. This learner-centered transformation is consistent with Communicative Language Teaching principles (Gabillon, 2020; Richards, 2006) and sociocultural perspectives that emphasize learning through social participation and mediated interaction.

Beyond describing a pedagogical shift, the present findings extend previous studies on bi'ah lughawiyah. Earlier research has generally portrayed the language environment as a supporting factor for Arabic learning or examined its influence on individual language skills. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that communicative competence emerges through the systematic integration of three interdependent pedagogical components: formal classroom instruction, structured dormitory-based language immersion, and sustained social interaction. These findings form the basis of the Integrative Communicative Immersion Model, which conceptualizes dormitory-based Arabic language learning as an integrated pedagogical system rather than a collection of isolated language activities. The model contributes theoretically by explaining the learning mechanism through which environmental immersion transforms classroom knowledge into communicative competence within the context of Islamic boarding schools.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the dormitory environment has evolved from functioning as a supplementary support system into a central pedagogical arena where communicative competence is continuously constructed

through the interaction of instructional practice, environmental exposure, and authentic social communication.

2. Implementation of Bi'ah Lughawiyah in the Dormitory Environment

The implementation of *bi'ah lughawiyah* in the dormitory is operationalized through a set of interconnected language programs designed to embed Arabic into students' everyday communicative practices. Rather than functioning as isolated activities, vocabulary enrichment, daily interaction, language policy, and environmental language exposure operate synergistically to create a comprehensive learning ecosystem that supports both language acquisition and communicative competence.

The first component is daily vocabulary enrichment (*mufradāt yaumiyyah*), which provides students with continuous lexical input before formal academic activities begin. Documentation of dormitory schedules confirms that vocabulary sessions are systematically conducted every morning and subsequently reinforced throughout the day during communicative activities (Dormitory Program Document, 2026). This continuous exposure supplies the lexical resources necessary for meaningful communication and reduces students' dependence on translation when expressing ideas. Consistent with (Silviani & Zain, 2026), regular vocabulary enrichment enhances communicative performance by expanding learners' active lexical repertoire. However, the present findings further indicate that vocabulary learning becomes pedagogically meaningful only when immediately connected to authentic language use within the dormitory environment.

The second component involves daily *muḥādathah*, which transforms lexical knowledge into communicative practice. Through guided conversations with peers and dormitory supervisors, students repeatedly use newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful contexts, allowing them to develop fluency while negotiating meaning during interaction. As one student explained, "*Muhadatsah* helps us become more confident because we practice Arabic directly every day" (Interview with Student B, 2026). While this finding supports Yanmin & Yi, (2019) Output Hypothesis, the present study demonstrates that language production is most effective when systematically linked to prior vocabulary input and followed by immediate

communicative feedback from peers and supervisors. Thus, output functions not merely as language practice but as a mechanism for consolidating linguistic knowledge through authentic interaction.

The third component is the implementation of a language policy that regulates Arabic use within designated times and spaces in the dormitory. Observational data indicate that students who violate the policy receive corrective sanctions ranging from verbal reminders to educational tasks (Field Observation, 2026). Consistent with Spolsky (2004), institutional language policies shape linguistic behavior by establishing shared communicative norms. Nevertheless, the present findings suggest that the effectiveness of language policy does not primarily derive from disciplinary enforcement. Rather, it lies in its ability to normalize Arabic as the default medium of daily communication, thereby increasing the frequency and consistency of authentic language use across different social situations.

The fourth component consists of environmental language exposure through posters, vocabulary boards, labeled objects, and Arabic expressions displayed throughout the dormitory. These visual resources provide continuous incidental input that reinforces vocabulary retention and contextual language awareness (Muttaqin et.al., 2024). More importantly, environmental exposure complements structured learning by maintaining students' engagement with Arabic beyond scheduled instructional sessions. Consequently, language learning extends from formal activities into spontaneous interactions embedded in everyday life.

Taken together, these four components function as an integrated pedagogical system rather than independent instructional strategies. Vocabulary enrichment supplies linguistic input, *muhādathah* transforms input into meaningful output, language policy sustains consistent language use across communicative contexts, and environmental exposure reinforces language through continuous contextual stimulation. Their interaction creates a recursive learning cycle in which students repeatedly receive linguistic input, participate in authentic communication, obtain corrective feedback, and reuse language in subsequent interactions. This process facilitates not only the acquisition of linguistic forms but also the gradual development of communicative competence.

This integrated mechanism represents the principal analytical contribution of the present study. Whereas previous studies have generally examined vocabulary programs, language policy, or *bi'ah lughawiyah* as separate pedagogical elements, the present findings demonstrate that their educational value emerges from their systematic integration within the dormitory environment. Accordingly, *bi'ah lughawiyah* should be understood not merely as a supportive language environment or hidden curriculum (Yunus et. al., 2026), but as a dynamic pedagogical system in which structured input, authentic interaction, institutional regulation, and environmental reinforcement operate interdependently to facilitate Arabic communicative acquisition.

3. The Role of Dormitory Social Interaction in Developing Communicative Competence

The study found that intensive dormitory social interaction plays a pivotal role in developing students' communicative competence. Arabic is used not only during structured language programs but also in spontaneous daily interactions such as during meals, cleaning activities, peer discussions, and informal conversations. Field observations revealed that students frequently negotiated meaning and corrected one another during communication, creating dynamic peer-mediated learning opportunities (Field Observation, 2026).

Peer interaction emerged as one of the most influential factors in communicative competence development. One student explained, "We learn Arabic faster because we have to use it when talking with friends every day" (Interview with Student C, 2026). This finding supports Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which posits that second language acquisition is facilitated through negotiation of meaning during communicative interaction (Masrizal, 2014).

Moreover, musyrif-student interaction contributes substantially to language development. Musyrif provide real-time correction, feedback, and communicative scaffolding during student interaction. This pedagogical mediation reflects Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of more competent interlocutors in facilitating learner development within the Zone of Proximal Development.

The dormitory environment also provides sustained exposure to comprehensible input through continuous Arabic interaction, supporting Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Luo, 2024). Accordingly, students acquire Arabic not solely through formal learning but through naturalistic exposure embedded in daily social practice. These findings corroborate Asrofi & Supriatna' (2022) conclusion that intensive boarding-school interaction significantly enhances Arabic speaking proficiency.

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Learning Transformation

The success of dormitory-based Arabic learning transformation is supported by several institutional and sociocultural factors. First, strong institutional commitment from pesantren leadership provides legitimacy and sustainability for language-environment implementation. Administrative support is reflected in formal regulations, program funding, and supervisory allocation.

Second, active involvement of musyrif strengthens implementation through supervision, motivation, and corrective feedback. One student noted, "Musyrif always reminds us of when we forget to use Arabic" (Interview with Student D, 2026). This finding confirms previous studies highlighting supervisory involvement as a critical factor in language environment success (Hamid et al., 2024).

Third, the establishment of strict language regulations and an emerging dormitory language culture reinforces collective commitment to Arabic use. Over time, Arabic becomes normalized as the expected communicative medium within the dormitory.

However, several inhibiting factors remain. Inconsistent Arabic use outside supervised contexts weakens immersion quality. Some students revert to their native language during informal situations, reducing exposure intensity. Additionally, differences in student motivation and language readiness affect participation levels. As one musyrif stated, "Some students are highly motivated, but others still struggle with confidence and consistency" (Interview with Musyrif 2, 2026). This finding aligns with Nabilla (2023) argument that learner motivation significantly influences second language acquisition outcomes.

Finally, limited supervisory capacity relative to student population reduces

monitoring effectiveness and creates challenges in maintaining policy consistency.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study extends previous studies on *bi'ah lughawiyah* by demonstrating that communicative competence develops not through environmental exposure alone but through the systematic interaction of formal instruction, structured language immersion, institutional language policy, and sustained social interaction. The proposed Integrative Communicative Immersion Model is grounded in the empirical finding that these four components operate interdependently to transform classroom learning into authentic communicative practice within the dormitory environment. Unlike previous studies, which generally conceptualized *bi'ah lughawiyah* as a supporting language environment or examined individual language programs, the proposed model explains the pedagogical mechanism through which these interconnected components function as an integrated learning system facilitating communicative language acquisition in Islamic boarding schools.

From a practical perspective, the proposed model offers a framework for designing Arabic language learning that integrates classroom instruction with dormitory-based language activities. The findings suggest that effective communicative learning requires coordination among vocabulary enrichment, conversation practice, language policy, environmental language exposure, and the active involvement of dormitory supervisors. This integrated approach provides practical guidance for Islamic boarding schools seeking to strengthen students' communicative competence through environment-based Arabic language learning.

To illustrate the conceptual contribution of this study, the proposed Integrative Communicative Immersion Model is presented in Figure 1.

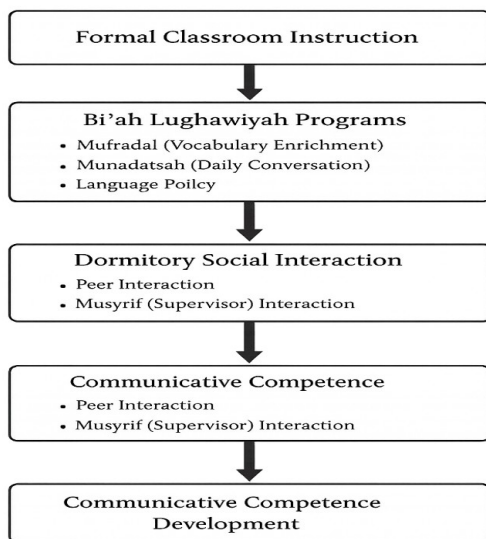


Figure 1. Integrative Communicative Immersion Model of Dormitory-Based Arabic Language Learning

Figure 1 illustrates the Integrative Communicative Immersion Model derived from the findings of this study. The model demonstrates that communicative competence is not developed through classroom instruction alone but through the continuous interaction among formal instruction, structured *bi'ah lughawiyah*, and authentic social interaction within the dormitory. Institutional commitment, active language supervision, and consistent language policies function as enabling conditions that sustain the integration of these pedagogical components. Unlike previous conceptualizations that primarily regard *bi'ah lughawiyah* as a supportive language environment, this model explains the pedagogical mechanism through which environmental immersion systematically transforms linguistic knowledge into communicative competence.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Arabic language learning at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School has transformed from a classroom-centered model into a dormitory-based communicative learning system. Through the implementation of *bi'ah lughawiyah* supported by structured language programs, language policies, and intensive social interaction, the dormitory functions as a primary pedagogical

environment for developing students' communicative competence. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by proposing an Integrative Communicative Immersion Model, which conceptualizes dormitory-based Arabic learning as the integration of formal instruction, environmental exposure, and structured social interaction in facilitating communicative language acquisition.

Based on these findings, Islamic boarding schools are encouraged to strengthen dormitory-based Arabic programs through more consistent language policy enforcement, enhanced supervisory training for *musyrif*, and improved environmental language support systems. Future studies may examine the applicability of this model in different pesantren contexts or employ quantitative approaches to measure its effectiveness in improving specific dimensions of Arabic communicative competence.

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