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# Developing Arabic Speaking Skills through Interactive Learning Models

**Aang Saeful Milah[1], Edi Prawito[2], Ibtehal Mahmoud Aburezeq[3]**

*[1] Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin State Islamic University of Banten, Banten, Indonesia.*
*[2] Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Indonesia.*
*[3] Al Ain University, United Arab Emirates.*
e-mail:
aang.saefulmilah@uinbanten.ac.id
ediprawito7991@gmail.com
Ibtehal.Aburezeq@aau.ac.ae

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**ABSTRACT.** The development of Arabic speaking skills remains a major challenge for students in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), particularly due to limited opportunities for authentic communication and overreliance on traditional teaching methods. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of interactive learning models in improving Arabic speaking skills among students at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research involved 60 students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received instruction through interactive learning models, including role-play, group discussion, and language games, while the control group used conventional methods. Data were collected through speaking tests, observation, and interviews. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' speaking performance in the experimental group, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. Interactive learning also enhanced student motivation and confidence. However, challenges such as classroom management and varying student participation levels were identified. The study concludes that interactive learning models are effective in developing Arabic speaking skills when implemented systematically.

**Keywords:** *Arabic Speaking Skills, Interactive Learning, Pesantren Education, Language Teaching, Experimental Study* .

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning plays a crucial role in Islamic education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), where students are expected to develop linguistic competence to understand Islamic texts and communicate effectively in Arabic. As one of the principal languages used in Islamic scholarship, Arabic serves not only as a medium for accessing the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature but also as a means of communication in educational and social contexts. Consequently, Arabic language instruction in *pesantren* needs to extend beyond the mastery of grammatical structures and vocabulary to the development of integrated language skills, including listening (*maharah al-istima'*), speaking (*maharah al-kalam*), reading (*maharah al-qira'ah*), and writing (*maharah al-kitabah*). Among these skills, speaking is particularly important because it enables students to express ideas, exchange information, participate in discussions, and use Arabic in meaningful communicative situations. Nevertheless,

developing speaking proficiency remains a significant challenge for many Arabic language learners, especially when opportunities for authentic interaction and sustained oral practice are limited (Ahmed et al., 2022; Alqadasi et al., 2023a; Yaqin et al., 2026).

The development of maharah al-kalam requires more than the memorization of vocabulary and the understanding of grammatical rules. Speaking is a complex productive skill that involves the ability to organize ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatically acceptable utterances, pronounce words intelligibly, and respond to interlocutors in real time. Learners must also develop fluency, confidence, and the ability to negotiate meaning when communication becomes difficult. These demands make speaking different from receptive language skills, which primarily involve understanding spoken or written information. In communicative language teaching, successful language learning is therefore associated not only with linguistic knowledge but also with the ability to use language appropriately in particular social contexts. The importance of communicative competence, which extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include the socially appropriate use of language (Hicham et al., 2025; Yaqin et al., 2026; Yaseen & Alnakeeb, 2023). This perspective suggests that Arabic speaking instruction should provide learners with opportunities to practice language in situations that resemble actual communication rather than confining learning activities to theoretical explanations.

In many educational settings, Arabic instruction has traditionally placed considerable emphasis on grammatical analysis, vocabulary memorization, and translation. Although these approaches can contribute to students' understanding of Arabic structures and Islamic texts, their effectiveness in developing oral communication may be limited when they are not accompanied by sufficient speaking practice. Students may be able to identify grammatical patterns, translate sentences, or memorize expressions but still experience difficulty when required to formulate spontaneous responses or sustain conversations. Alqadasi et al., 2023b; Filatov, 2024 highlights the importance of developing communicative abilities through language instruction that connects linguistic knowledge with meaningful language use. Accordingly, the central challenge is not necessarily the elimination of grammar-based instruction but the establishment of a balanced pedagogical approach that integrates structural knowledge with communicative practice. In *pesantren*, this balance is particularly important because students need Arabic for both religious learning and interpersonal communication.

Several factors may contribute to students' difficulties in developing Arabic speaking proficiency. These include limited vocabulary, uncertainty about grammatical structures, insufficient opportunities for oral practice, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety about negative evaluations from teachers or peers. Such difficulties can interact with one another and reduce students' willingness to participate in classroom communication. A learner who possesses sufficient vocabulary may nevertheless remain silent because of anxiety, while another learner may understand grammatical rules but struggle to retrieve appropriate expressions during spontaneous conversation. Language anxiety is particularly relevant because speaking requires learners to perform publicly while processing linguistic information under time pressure. Horwitz et al. explain that foreign language anxiety can influence learners' experiences and performance in language classrooms. Similarly, willingness to communicate is affected by psychological and situational conditions that shape whether learners choose to participate in second-language interaction (Chahrazad & Kamel, 2022; Kirkpatrick et al., 2024; Zare et al., 2022). These perspectives indicate that effective Arabic speaking instruction should address both linguistic development and the learning environment in which oral communication takes place.

One pedagogical approach that may address these challenges is interactive learning. Interactive learning refers to an instructional orientation that emphasizes active participation, reciprocal communication, collaborative meaning-making, and engagement between learners, teachers, and learning materials. Rather than positioning students solely as recipients of information, this approach encourages them to participate in activities that require them to

interpret information, formulate responses, exchange ideas, and construct understanding through interaction. In language education, interaction is particularly important because learners need opportunities to produce language, receive responses, notice communication problems, and modify their utterances when necessary. Brown and Lee discuss the importance of interaction and communicative activities in language teaching, emphasizing the role of meaningful participation in developing learners' communicative abilities. Through interactive learning, speaking practice can become an integral part of the learning process rather than an occasional activity conducted after grammatical explanations (B. Brown et al., 2023; Crosthwaite et al., 2022; Hur et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2026; Le et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2024).

Interactive learning can be implemented through various instructional techniques, including role-playing, paired conversations, group discussions, information-gap activities, simulations, question-and-answer sessions, storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving. Each technique offers different opportunities for students to practice speaking. Role-playing allows learners to adopt particular social roles and use Arabic expressions relevant to specific situations, such as introducing themselves, asking for directions, discussing daily activities, or conducting simple transactions. Paired conversations provide opportunities for repeated practice in a relatively low-pressure environment, while group discussions encourage learners to express opinions, justify arguments, and respond to different perspectives. Simulations recreate communicative situations that require learners to use language purposefully, whereas collaborative tasks encourage students to negotiate meaning and support one another in completing shared objectives. These activities can be adapted to students' proficiency levels and integrated with the religious, social, and academic contexts familiar to *pesantren* learners.

The theoretical relevance of interactive learning can also be explained through sociocultural perspectives on language development. Vygotsky emphasizes the role of social interaction and guided participation in learning, suggesting that learners can accomplish tasks through assistance that may initially be beyond their independent capabilities (Alzahrani, 2025; Rapanta, 2023). Applied to Arabic speaking instruction, this perspective highlights the importance of interaction with teachers and peers who can provide linguistic models, corrective feedback, vocabulary support, and opportunities for guided practice. More proficient students may help less proficient classmates formulate sentences, understand unfamiliar expressions, or maintain conversations. Teachers, meanwhile, can structure tasks that gradually move learners from supported performance toward greater communicative independence. Such scaffolding is particularly valuable in *pesantren* environments, where students may possess different levels of Arabic proficiency despite participating in the same instructional program.

Interaction also provides opportunities for learners to connect language input with language production. When students participate in conversations, they encounter expressions used by others, compare those expressions with their existing knowledge, and attempt to formulate their own utterances. Communication difficulties may encourage them to request clarification, repeat information, or reformulate sentences. These processes can help learners recognize gaps in their linguistic knowledge and develop strategies for overcoming them. Gass and Mackey discuss the significance of interaction in second-language acquisition, particularly the relationship between interactional processes and language development. From this perspective, speaking activities should not be evaluated solely by whether students produce grammatically perfect sentences (Dong, 2025; Rong & Révész, 2025; Shahini, 2025; Sippel & Martin, 2024; Sun et al., 2025a). They should also be assessed in terms of their capacity to communicate meaning, respond appropriately, maintain interaction, and improve their language use through feedback and repeated practice.

Previous research on language learning provides several relevant directions for understanding the potential contribution of interactive learning to speaking proficiency. The first direction concerns communicative and interaction-oriented language instruction. This body of

scholarship emphasizes the importance of using language for meaningful purposes and creating opportunities for learners to participate in communication rather than focusing exclusively on linguistic forms. Richards and Brown and Lee provide pedagogical perspectives that support the integration of communicative activities into language teaching. The second direction concerns the relationship between interaction and language acquisition (Lo, 2025; Zou et al., 2025). Research discussed by Gass and Mackey highlights how interaction can support language development by enabling learners to negotiate meaning and respond to communication problems. The third direction concerns affective factors, particularly anxiety and willingness to communicate (Barrot, 2025; Zou et al., 2025). Horwitz et al. provide conceptual foundations for understanding why learners' emotional experiences and perceptions of the communication environment may influence their participation (Sun et al., 2025b). Together, these perspectives suggest that speaking development depends on the interaction between instructional design, opportunities for language use, and learners' psychological readiness to communicate.

Research on foreign language learning has also highlighted the potential of interactive activities to increase student engagement and encourage more active participation in speaking practice. Activities that require learners to communicate with peers can distribute speaking opportunities more widely than teacher-dominated classroom practices. Instead of listening to a single explanation or responding only when called upon, students can practice simultaneously in pairs or small groups. This arrangement may increase the amount of time each learner spends using the target language. Furthermore, interactive activities can provide a supportive environment in which students become more accustomed to expressing themselves, making mistakes, and learning from feedback. F. Brown et al., (2025) discuss issues related to language learning, motivation, and the conditions that influence learners' engagement and performance. However, the benefits of interaction should not be assumed to occur automatically. Poorly structured activities may allow more proficient students to dominate discussions, encourage excessive use of the students' first language, or produce conversations that do not meaningfully develop Arabic proficiency. Effective implementation therefore requires clear objectives, appropriate task design, balanced participation, and systematic assessment.

In Arabic language education, the need for interactive instruction is particularly relevant because learners may encounter substantial differences between their classroom knowledge and their ability to communicate spontaneously. Arabic has a rich grammatical system, diverse lexical resources, and distinctions between formal Arabic and various spoken varieties. In *pesantren*, instruction may prioritize Modern Standard Arabic or expressions associated with religious learning, depending on the curriculum and institutional objectives. Students therefore need opportunities to transform their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar into communicative performance appropriate to their learning context. Interactive activities can provide a structured bridge between understanding language and using it. For example, students can practice introducing themselves, explaining daily routines, discussing educational experiences, describing Islamic values, or presenting the content of texts they have studied. Such activities connect Arabic speaking practice with the linguistic and cultural resources already available within *pesantren* education.

*Pesantren* also possess distinctive educational characteristics that may influence the implementation of interactive learning. Their learning environments often combine formal classroom instruction with religious activities, peer relationships, communal routines, and institutional expectations regarding language use. These characteristics may create opportunities for Arabic practice beyond scheduled lessons, particularly when students are encouraged to communicate in Arabic in everyday interactions. At the same time, the effectiveness of such opportunities may depend on students' proficiency, teachers' instructional strategies, the availability of appropriate learning materials, and the consistency of language-use policies. Students who have limited vocabulary or low confidence may find it difficult to participate in

Arabic conversations without sufficient guidance. Consequently, the effectiveness of interactive learning needs to be examined within the institutional and social conditions in which it is implemented, rather than being understood solely as a teaching technique independent of its educational context.

PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten provides a relevant setting for examining these issues. As an Islamic boarding school in which Arabic learning forms part of students' educational experiences, the institution offers a context for investigating how interactive instructional practices may contribute to the development of speaking proficiency. Nevertheless, the existence of Arabic language instruction does not necessarily guarantee that students can communicate effectively. The extent to which learners can express ideas, respond to questions, maintain conversations, and use Arabic with confidence may depend on the nature of classroom activities and the opportunities available for meaningful practice. Understanding these conditions requires an investigation of how interactive learning is implemented, how students participate in the activities, and how their speaking abilities develop in relation to the instructional process. Examining the experience of a specific *pesantren* can also provide context-sensitive insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with introducing interactive pedagogies into Islamic educational institutions.

Although previous scholarship has established the theoretical importance of interaction, communicative competence, and affective factors in language learning, several issues remain relevant for further investigation. First, research on interactive language instruction encompasses different approaches, educational levels, languages, and instructional settings. Findings from general foreign language classrooms cannot automatically be transferred to Arabic learning in *pesantren* because the linguistic objectives, institutional environments, and opportunities for communication may differ. Second, studies that focus on speaking outcomes need to distinguish between general student engagement and demonstrable improvements in oral performance. Increased participation may be an important intermediate outcome, but it does not necessarily establish that students have improved their fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, or interactional competence. Third, the influence of interactive learning may depend on how activities are designed and implemented, including the teacher's role, the distribution of speaking opportunities, the use of feedback, and the relationship between classroom activities and students' everyday language experiences.

These issues identify the research gap addressed by the present study. Specifically, there is a need for context-sensitive empirical investigation into the implementation and effectiveness of interactive learning models for developing Arabic speaking skills in Indonesian *pesantren*, particularly at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. The study seeks to connect the broader pedagogical arguments supporting interaction with an examination of oral language learning in a particular Islamic boarding school environment. Rather than treating interactive learning as a general instructional recommendation, the research focuses on its application to students' speaking development and the factors that may support or constrain its effectiveness. This focus is important because the relationship between interactive instruction and speaking proficiency may be shaped by the characteristics of the learners, the structure of classroom activities, the teacher's instructional decisions, and the opportunities available for practicing Arabic inside and outside the classroom.

The novelty of this study lies in its context-specific examination of interactive learning for Arabic speaking development at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. Its contribution is not based on claiming that interactive learning has never been studied before, but on examining how interaction-oriented instruction operates within the particular educational environment of an Indonesian *pesantren*. The study brings together three interconnected concerns: the implementation of interactive learning activities, the development of students' Arabic speaking abilities, and the contextual factors that influence the learning process. This focus can provide a

more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which interactive activities may support oral communication in Islamic boarding school education. To substantiate this novelty more fully, the analysis should be situated alongside empirical studies conducted in Indonesian *pesantren* and Arabic language programs, especially studies examining speaking proficiency, communicative activities, and learner participation. Such comparison is necessary to establish precisely which aspects of the present study extend, complement, or differ from previous findings.

The present study is also significant because it can provide practical implications for Arabic language teachers, *pesantren* administrators, and curriculum developers. For teachers, the findings may offer insights into selecting and organizing speaking activities that correspond to students' proficiency levels and communicative needs. For *pesantren* administrators, the study may inform the development of learning environments that provide consistent opportunities for Arabic communication. For curriculum developers, the findings may support efforts to integrate linguistic knowledge, communicative practice, and appropriate assessment into Arabic language programs. The study may also contribute to broader discussions concerning the development of Arabic language education in Islamic institutions, particularly the importance of aligning instructional methods with the communicative competencies expected of students.

Based on this background, the present study aims to investigate the impact of interactive learning models on students' Arabic speaking skills at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. It also seeks to identify the instructional and contextual factors that influence the implementation and effectiveness of interactive learning. In particular, the study examines how interactive activities provide opportunities for students to practice Arabic, how these activities relate to aspects of speaking proficiency, and what challenges may emerge during the learning process. By addressing these objectives, the research is expected to contribute to a more contextually grounded understanding of interactive learning in Arabic language education. Ultimately, the study positions interactive learning not merely as a collection of classroom techniques but as a pedagogical approach whose effectiveness depends on the quality of interaction, the appropriateness of instructional design, and the educational environment in which students learn to communicate in Arabic.

## METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test control group approach to examine the effectiveness of an interactive learning model in improving students' Arabic speaking skills. The participants consisted of 60 students from PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten who were divided into two groups: an experimental group comprising 30 students who received interactive learning instruction and a control group comprising 30 students who were taught using traditional methods. Several research instruments were utilized in this study, including a speaking test to measure fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, an observation checklist to evaluate student engagement and participation, and semi-structured interviews to explore students' perceptions of the learning process.

The research was conducted over eight weeks through several stages. First, a pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial speaking ability before the treatment. Next, the experimental group participated in interactive learning activities such as role-play, group discussions, and language games, while the control group received conventional teaching methods. After the treatment period, a post-test was conducted to measure students' improvement in speaking performance. In addition, interviews were carried out to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions regarding the implemented learning model. Quantitative data were analyzed using paired and independent sample t-tests to identify statistical significance, whereas qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Improvement in Students' Arabic Speaking Skills

The results indicate a positive difference in the development of Arabic speaking skills between students who participated in interactive learning and those who received conventional instruction. The experimental group achieved a mean pre-test score of 62.3 and a mean post-test score of 81.5, representing an increase of 19.2 points. In comparison, the control group improved from a mean pre-test score of 63.1 to a mean post-test score of 70.2, representing an increase of 7.1 points. These descriptive findings suggest that the improvement observed in the experimental group was greater than that observed in the control group.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Arabic Speaking Test Scores**

| Group | Pre-test Mean | Post-test Mean | Mean Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 62.3 | 81.5 | 19.2 |
| Control | 63.1 | 70.2 | 7.1 |
| Difference in improvement | | | 12.1 |

***Source:*** *Study data. Standard deviations, sample sizes, and individual scores were not provided in the available results.*

The descriptive comparison reveals that the experimental group achieved an improvement 12.1 points greater than that of the control group. This difference provides an initial indication that interactive learning may offer advantages over conventional instruction in developing Arabic speaking skills. However, the difference in mean improvement should not automatically be interpreted as statistically significant. Statistical significance requires an appropriate inferential test using the sample sizes, variability of scores, and individual student results. Consequently, the findings presented here establish a descriptive pattern rather than definitive evidence of a causal effect. The initial mean scores also indicate that the two groups began with relatively similar average speaking performance, with a difference of only 0.8 points between the experimental and control groups. Nevertheless, similarity in mean scores does not establish statistical equivalence between groups. Baseline comparability should be assessed using the available individual scores and an appropriate statistical procedure. If the groups were not randomly assigned, differences in student characteristics, prior Arabic proficiency, learning motivation, or previous exposure to speaking activities should also be considered when interpreting the results.

From a pedagogical perspective, the improvement in the experimental group may be associated with the increased opportunities for students to produce Arabic during classroom activities. Interactive learning requires learners to formulate utterances, respond to questions, negotiate meaning, and communicate information to their peers. These processes can help bridge the gap between declarative knowledge of Arabic grammar and the ability to use Arabic in actual communication. Richards emphasizes the importance of communicative language teaching in connecting language knowledge with meaningful use (Torani et al., 2019). Similarly, Brown and Lee discuss the importance of interactive activities in supporting language learning and classroom communication (F. Brown et al., 2025). The findings are also consistent with the interaction-oriented perspective discussed by Gass and Mackey, according to which interaction can support second-language development through opportunities to negotiate meaning and respond to communication difficulties (Chen & Lee, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). When students encounter difficulties expressing an idea, they may seek vocabulary assistance, reformulate a sentence, or clarify their intended meaning. These processes provide opportunities to recognize linguistic limitations and develop strategies for more effective communication.

Nevertheless, the present findings should be interpreted in relation to the specific instructional conditions at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. The observed improvement may

reflect not only the interactive learning model itself but also the frequency of speaking practice, teacher feedback, peer support, and the amount of time students spent using Arabic. Therefore, the most defensible interpretation is that the observed pattern supports the pedagogical potential of interactive learning, while further statistical analysis and documentation of the instructional process are required to establish the strength of the evidence.

**2. Statistical Testing and Interpretation of the Results**

To strengthen the empirical contribution of this study, the descriptive results should be supplemented with tests of statistical assumptions, inferential comparisons, and effect-size estimates. These analyses are important because a difference between group means does not, by itself, indicate whether the difference is unlikely to have occurred by chance or whether it represents a practically meaningful improvement.

First, the normality of the speaking scores should be examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test, supported by graphical inspection where appropriate. Normality should be assessed for the relevant distributions or model residuals, rather than inferred solely from the mean scores. Second, the homogeneity of variances between the experimental and control groups should be evaluated using Levene's test when the selected analysis requires this assumption. A non-significant result in either test does not prove that the assumption is perfectly satisfied; it indicates that the test did not detect sufficient evidence of a violation at the selected significance level.

Third, the principal research hypothesis should be examined using an inferential method appropriate to the study design. If the research compares pre-test and post-test scores in two independent groups, a group-by-time analysis, such as a mixed-design analysis of variance, may be appropriate when its assumptions are satisfied. Alternatively, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), using post-test scores as the dependent variable and pre-test scores as a covariate, may be suitable for comparing post-test outcomes while adjusting for baseline differences. The choice should be determined by the actual design, assignment procedures, sample characteristics, and analytical assumptions. If a simpler comparison of gain scores is justified, the difference in gains can be tested directly using an appropriate independent-samples procedure.

**Table 2. Statistical Analysis Required to Evaluate the Research Hypothesis**

| Analysis | Information to Report | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Normality test | Shapiro–Wilk statistic and p-value for relevant scores or residuals | Assess compatibility with the normality assumption |
| Homogeneity test | Levene's statistic and p-value | Assess equality of group variances where required |
| Baseline comparison | Test statistic, p-value, and confidence interval | Examine initial group comparability |
| Main inferential test | Test statistic, degrees of freedom, and exact p-value | Evaluate the difference associated with the intervention |
| Effect size | Cohen's *d*, Hedges' *g*, or an appropriate model-specific measure | Estimate the magnitude of the observed difference |
| Confidence interval | Lower and upper limits, usually at 95% confidence | Show the precision and plausible range of the estimated effect |

*Note: Numerical results must be entered after analysis of the original student-level data. They cannot be derived reliably from group means alone.*

The analysis should report the test statistic, degrees of freedom where applicable, exact p-value, confidence interval, and effect size. For example, Cohen's *d* or Hedges' *g* may be reported for a suitable standardized mean comparison, while partial eta squared may be appropriate for certain analysis-of-variance models. Effect sizes are particularly valuable because statistical significance does not necessarily indicate educational importance. A small effect may be

statistically significant in a large sample, whereas a potentially meaningful effect may fail to reach statistical significance in a small sample. The current descriptive results establish that the experimental group improved by 19.2 points and the control group by 7.1 points. However, the available information is insufficient to calculate a valid p-value, confidence interval, or standardized effect size. These values must be obtained from the original dataset. Accordingly, the study should avoid describing the difference as statistically significant until the appropriate inferential analysis has been completed. This analytical framework would enable the study to distinguish descriptive improvement from statistically supported group differences and educationally meaningful effects. It would also improve transparency by allowing readers to evaluate the strength, precision, and limitations of the empirical evidence.

**3. Enhancement of Fluency and Pronunciation**

The reported findings indicate that students in the experimental group demonstrated improvements in fluency and pronunciation following participation in interactive speaking activities. Role-playing, paired conversations, and group discussions provide repeated opportunities for students to formulate utterances and practice speaking in different communicative situations. These activities may help learners become more familiar with common sentence patterns, retrieve vocabulary more efficiently, and develop greater continuity in oral expression.

Fluency refers to the ability to produce speech with an appropriate degree of continuity, manageable hesitation, and effective delivery of meaning. Pronunciation concerns the intelligibility of spoken language, including the articulation of individual sounds, word stress where relevant, rhythm, and other phonological features. Although these constructs are related, they should not be treated as identical. A student may speak fluently while making pronunciation errors, or pronounce individual words accurately while experiencing difficulty maintaining a conversation.

In the context of Arabic language learning, pronunciation instruction may include the articulation of sounds that are unfamiliar to learners, appropriate production of long and short vowels, and intelligible pronunciation of words and phrases. Interactive activities provide opportunities to practice these features in meaningful utterances rather than in isolated repetition alone. For example, students may rehearse a dialogue, perform it before their peers, receive feedback, and repeat the task with improved pronunciation and greater fluency.

The findings can be interpreted through communicative language teaching, which emphasizes the development of language use in meaningful contexts (Filatov, 2024). Repeated speaking opportunities may help learners move from heavily planned utterances toward more spontaneous communication. However, repetition alone does not guarantee improvement. Tasks need to be sufficiently varied to encourage flexible language use, while feedback should address errors that interfere with intelligibility without unnecessarily interrupting communication.

For PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten, a practical implication is that fluency and pronunciation should be assessed separately using explicit criteria. Fluency can be evaluated through continuity of speech, the appropriateness of pauses, and the ability to sustain an utterance. Pronunciation can be evaluated through sound articulation, intelligibility, and the appropriate production of relevant Arabic phonological features. If the original study did not measure these dimensions separately, claims concerning their improvement should be presented as observations rather than independently verified statistical outcomes.

**4. Increased Motivation, Confidence, and Reduced Speaking Anxiety**

The study also reports that students felt more comfortable speaking Arabic in front of their peers during interactive learning activities. This finding suggests that a supportive instructional environment may contribute to students' willingness to participate in oral communication. In

conventional teacher-dominated activities, learners may have relatively few opportunities to speak, and speaking in front of the entire class can create pressure for students who are uncertain about their linguistic abilities. Pair work and small-group activities can distribute speaking opportunities more widely and provide a gradual transition toward public speaking.

Foreign language anxiety is a relevant theoretical construct for understanding this process. Horwitz et al. explain that anxiety in language classrooms can influence learners' experiences of communication, evaluation, and language performance (Zare et al., 2022). MacIntyre et al. further demonstrate the relevance of psychological and situational factors in explaining learners' willingness to communicate in a second language (Dirk & Nett, 2022; Ishida & Sekiyama, 2024; Maheshwari et al., 2023). These perspectives suggest that speaking proficiency is influenced not only by linguistic knowledge but also by students' perceptions of their ability to communicate and the social environment in which communication occurs.

Interactive learning may support confidence when teachers establish clear expectations, normalize mistakes as part of learning, and provide constructive feedback. For example, students can begin with rehearsed dialogues in pairs before progressing to less structured discussions. Such gradual progression can allow learners to develop familiarity with speaking tasks before performing in front of a larger audience. Peer support may also help students recognize that communication difficulties are common and can be addressed through practice.

Motivation, confidence, and anxiety, however, represent distinct concepts. Motivation concerns the reasons, goals, and effort associated with learning. Confidence concerns learners' perceived ability to perform a task, while anxiety refers to feelings of tension or apprehension associated with language use. These concepts may interact, but an improvement in one does not automatically establish an improvement in the others. Therefore, claims that interactive learning reduced anxiety should be supported by interview evidence, classroom observations, or a suitable anxiety measure. If the study only recorded students' general impressions, the conclusion should be limited to perceived comfort or reported confidence.

The theoretical contribution of this finding lies in highlighting the relationship between instructional organization and learners' affective experiences. Interactive learning should not be understood simply as increasing the number of speaking activities. Its value may also depend on whether those activities create a psychologically supportive environment in which learners can practice, make mistakes, receive feedback, and gradually assume greater responsibility for communication.

**5. Active Participation, Collaboration, and Peer Learning**

The implementation of group-based activities encouraged students to participate more actively in the learning process. Rather than relying exclusively on teacher explanations, students were required to formulate responses, exchange information, and cooperate with classmates to complete communicative tasks. This pattern is consistent with constructivist and sociocultural perspectives that emphasize the role of active participation and social interaction in learning (Chu et al., 2025; Kaliisa et al., 2022; Rapanta, 2023; Tan et al., 2022).

Collaborative learning can support speaking development through the distribution of communicative responsibilities among group members. In a structured task, each student may be assigned a role, such as asking questions, providing explanations, summarizing a discussion, or reporting the group's conclusions. Such arrangements can increase individual accountability and reduce the likelihood that a small number of proficient students dominate the activity. Students can also learn from the language used by their peers, compare alternative expressions, and seek assistance when they encounter difficulties.

Nevertheless, collaboration does not necessarily result in equal participation. Some students may remain passive, use their first language excessively, or depend on more proficient classmates

to complete the task. These possibilities indicate that the effectiveness of collaborative learning depends on instructional design and classroom management. Teachers need to establish clear task objectives, allocate roles, monitor group interaction, and assess individual contributions in addition to group performance. At PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten, collaborative activities could be connected to familiar educational themes, including daily routines, Islamic values, school activities, and the interpretation of age-appropriate Arabic texts. For instance, students could work in small groups to summarize a short Arabic passage, identify its main ideas, and present the summary orally. Such tasks integrate comprehension with speaking practice and encourage students to use Arabic for a meaningful academic purpose. The findings therefore suggest that peer collaboration may be a useful component of Arabic speaking instruction, provided that interaction is purposeful, participation is distributed, and language development remains the primary instructional objective. This interpretation extends beyond the general observation that students become more active by identifying the pedagogical conditions needed to translate participation into meaningful speaking practice.

**6. Challenges in Implementing Interactive Learning**

Despite the positive descriptive findings, the implementation of interactive learning presents several challenges. The study identifies uneven student participation, classroom management difficulties, and limited instructional time as important concerns. These challenges indicate that interactive learning requires deliberate planning rather than simply replacing lectures with group activities. Uneven participation may occur because students differ in vocabulary knowledge, confidence, motivation, and previous speaking experience. More proficient students may dominate conversations, while less proficient learners may avoid speaking because they fear making mistakes. To address this issue, teachers can assign rotating roles, use structured speaking turns, provide sentence starters, and require each student to contribute an identifiable part of the task. Group composition should also be considered carefully so that peer assistance is encouraged without creating excessive dependence on a single student.

Classroom management is another concern because simultaneous group conversations can make it difficult for teachers to monitor accuracy, participation, and task completion. Teachers can address this challenge by establishing clear behavioral expectations, defining the permitted use of Arabic and other languages, and providing written or visual instructions before activities begin. Time limits and explicit task outcomes can help maintain focus (Huang & Lajoie, 2023; Kovari, 2025). Teachers should also circulate among groups, record recurring language difficulties, and provide feedback at appropriate points rather than attempting to correct every error immediately.

Limited instructional time may restrict the amount of speaking practice available to each student. A possible solution is to integrate short interactive tasks into regular lessons rather than reserving all speaking practice for separate sessions. For example, a lesson can begin with a brief question-and-answer activity, proceed to structured pair work, and conclude with a short oral report. Repeated use of such routines may provide regular opportunities for communication while preserving time for vocabulary development, grammar instruction, and reading comprehension. These challenges demonstrate that interactive learning is not inherently effective under all conditions. Its potential depends on the alignment between instructional objectives, student readiness, classroom organization, and assessment procedures. Teacher preparation is therefore essential, particularly in developing the ability to design suitable tasks, monitor group dynamics, and provide feedback that supports both communicative fluency and linguistic accuracy.

**7. Operational Definitions of the Key Concepts**

To improve conceptual clarity and research replicability, the main constructs in this study should be defined operationally. The following definitions provide a framework that should be

aligned with the instruments and procedures actually used in the research. Interactive learning model refers to the instructional approach implemented through structured activities that require students to communicate, collaborate, and actively use Arabic. Its observable indicators may include the frequency and type of speaking activities, opportunities for student interaction, teacher facilitation, peer collaboration, and the provision of feedback.

Arabic speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*) refers to students' ability to communicate meaning orally in Arabic. If measured using an analytic speaking rubric, the assessment may include fluency, pronunciation and intelligibility, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and task fulfillment or interactional appropriateness. Each dimension should have explicit performance descriptors and a consistent scoring procedure. Fluency refers to the continuity and pace of oral production, including the ability to sustain speech without excessive or disruptive hesitation. Pronunciation refers to the intelligibility and appropriate articulation of Arabic sounds and words.

These dimensions should be scored separately if the study intends to draw specific conclusions about their improvement. Learning motivation refers to students' willingness to engage in Arabic learning activities and the effort they devote to completing them. Speaking confidence refers to students' perceived ability to express themselves orally in Arabic. Speaking anxiety refers to feelings of tension or apprehension associated with speaking Arabic in instructional or social situations. These affective constructs should be measured using appropriate instruments or documented qualitative evidence rather than inferred exclusively from speaking test scores. Defining these concepts explicitly will help readers understand the relationship between the intervention, the learning process, and the outcomes. It will also clarify which claims are supported by quantitative test results, which are supported by observations or interviews, and which remain theoretical interpretations.

## 8. An Operational Model for Interactive Arabic Speaking Instruction in Pesantren

Based on the descriptive findings and the theoretical perspectives discussed above, an operational model can be proposed for Arabic speaking instruction at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. The model consists of five interconnected stages: preparation, modeling, guided interaction, communicative performance, and evaluation with reflection. This model is a pedagogical recommendation derived from the discussion, not a separately tested intervention unless it was implemented and evaluated as part of the original study. *Stage 1: Preparation and diagnostic assessment.* Teachers identify students' initial speaking abilities, relevant vocabulary, and learning needs. A short oral task can be used to assess students' ability to introduce themselves, answer questions, or describe a familiar topic. The results inform the selection of learning objectives, vocabulary, sentence patterns, and task complexity.

*Stage 2: Modeling and linguistic scaffolding.* Teachers introduce useful expressions, demonstrate pronunciation, and provide a short model dialogue or oral presentation. Students identify key expressions and practice them before engaging in more independent communication. When religious texts are included, teachers should provide appropriate context and clarify unfamiliar vocabulary before asking students to explain or discuss the content in Arabic. *Stage 3: Guided interactive practice.* Students participate in pair work, role-playing, information-gap tasks, or small-group discussions. Each task should have a clear communicative purpose and defined roles. For example, students can interview one another about daily activities, discuss a familiar educational topic, or exchange information required to complete a task. Teachers monitor participation, provide assistance when necessary, and record recurring errors for subsequent feedback.

*Stage 4: Communicative performance.* Students perform a dialogue, deliver a short presentation, summarize an Arabic passage, or participate in a structured discussion. Activities should progress from familiar and rehearsed tasks toward more spontaneous communication. This stage allows students to apply vocabulary and grammatical knowledge while developing their ability to express

meaning before an audience.

*Stage 5: Assessment, feedback, and reflection.* Teachers assess individual speaking performance using transparent criteria, provide constructive feedback, and encourage students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Students may repeat the task after receiving feedback to demonstrate how their performance has developed. Periodic assessments can help teachers adjust the complexity of subsequent activities. Classroom management should be integrated throughout these stages. Teachers can establish rules for turn-taking, allocate roles, use visible time limits, and require individual contributions from group members. A simple participation record can help identify students who need additional support. Assessment should balance communicative effectiveness with linguistic accuracy so that learners are encouraged to communicate meaningfully without neglecting the correct use of Arabic.

The model can also incorporate digital media where suitable devices and institutional resources are available. Teachers may use audio recordings of Arabic dialogues, digital flashcards, short instructional videos, or student-recorded oral presentations. Students can record a short dialogue, listen to their own pronunciation, and revise their performance before submitting the final recording. Digital tools should serve clearly defined learning objectives and should not replace direct interaction with teachers and peers. In settings where internet access or devices are limited, printed dialogue cards, teacher-recorded audio, and offline recordings provide practical alternatives.

Evaluation of *maharah al-kalam* may also include oral recitation or the reading aloud of selected Arabic and Islamic texts when these activities align with the curriculum. Such assessment should distinguish between accurate reading or recitation and spontaneous speaking. Reading a prepared text primarily demonstrates decoding, pronunciation, and oral delivery, whereas spontaneous speaking additionally requires learners to formulate and organize their own utterances. If Qur'anic recitation is included, its assessment should follow the relevant standards of tajwid and should not be treated as interchangeable with a general Arabic speaking test.

A balanced evaluation framework may therefore include prepared dialogue performance, spontaneous question-and-answer tasks, oral summaries of short Arabic passages, and individual presentations. The rubric should specify the criteria and scoring weights in advance, and assessors should use consistent performance descriptors. Where feasible, a second trained assessor or a review of recorded performances can be used to examine scoring consistency. This operational model contributes to the practical relevance of the study by connecting its descriptive findings with instructional decisions that teachers can implement and evaluate. Its effectiveness, however, should be tested through systematic classroom implementation and subsequent assessment rather than assumed from the current group means alone.

## 9. Pedagogical Implications and Theoretical Contribution

The findings suggest that interactive learning deserves consideration as a component of Arabic language instruction in pesantren, particularly when the objective is to develop students' ability to use Arabic in meaningful communication. Its potential contribution lies in connecting language knowledge with opportunities for oral production, peer interaction, and constructive feedback. At the same time, the challenges identified in this study indicate that interactive learning should complement, rather than automatically replace, explicit instruction in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and reading.

The theoretical contribution of the study is its contextual interpretation of interactive language learning through three interconnected dimensions: communicative practice, social collaboration, and affective support. Communicative practice provides opportunities for students to use Arabic purposefully; collaboration offers access to peer assistance and shared meaning-making; and affective support may encourage participation among students who are hesitant to

speak. These dimensions provide a framework for understanding how interactive instruction can be organized in an Islamic boarding school environment.

The findings also suggest that future evaluations should move beyond overall speaking scores and examine which dimensions of performance improve most consistently. Research could investigate whether gains in fluency are accompanied by gains in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence. It could also explore whether students with lower initial proficiency benefit differently from those who already possess stronger Arabic skills. Such analyses would provide more precise evidence regarding the conditions under which interactive learning is most useful.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of interactive learning models to support Arabic speaking skills among students at PONPES Al-Fathaniyah Banten. The descriptive results indicate that the experimental group's mean speaking score increased from 62.3 in the pre-test to 81.5 in the post-test, representing an improvement of 19.2 points. The control group's mean score increased from 63.1 to 70.2, representing an improvement of 7.1 points. The difference in mean improvement was therefore 12.1 points in favor of the experimental group. These results provide an encouraging descriptive indication of the potential value of interactive learning, although statistical significance and effect magnitude cannot be established without further analysis of the original dataset. The reported findings also indicate potential improvements in fluency, pronunciation, participation, and students' perceived comfort when speaking Arabic. Interactive activities such as role-playing, paired conversations, and group discussions can create opportunities for students to use Arabic actively, receive feedback, and learn collaboratively. These processes are consistent with communicative and sociocultural perspectives that emphasize meaningful language use and social interaction. Nevertheless, claims concerning reduced anxiety or improvements in individual speaking dimensions should be supported by appropriate measurements or clearly documented qualitative evidence.

The study identifies uneven participation, classroom management difficulties, and limited instructional time as challenges that may influence the implementation of interactive learning. Addressing these challenges requires structured task design, clearly defined student roles, systematic feedback, and assessment criteria that balance communicative effectiveness with linguistic accuracy. The proposed five-stage instructional model preparation, modeling, guided interaction, communicative performance, and evaluation offers a practical framework for organizing Arabic speaking activities in pesantren. Digital media and oral reading activities may complement this model when they are aligned with the learning objectives and assessed according to their distinct purposes. The study contributes a context-specific perspective on interactive Arabic language instruction in an Indonesian pesantren. Its principal implication is that interactive learning should be understood not merely as the use of group activities but as a structured pedagogical process that connects linguistic knowledge, meaningful communication, collaborative participation, and formative assessment. Future research should use adequately documented statistical procedures, examine longer-term speaking development, and investigate the contribution of individual instructional components. Further studies may also evaluate the integration of digital media and compare the effectiveness of different interactive techniques across pesantren with different student characteristics and educational environments.

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