Journal of Arabic Language and Learning in Focus
e-ISSN: 2987-3347
Volume 2 Issue. 2, 2025, pp. 101-116
https://jurnal.isimupacitan.ac.id/index.php/alif.

Maharah Kalam in the Arabic Language Environment of Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Muhammad Miftah[1], Desti Widiani[2], Jiyanto[3]

[1] *State Islamic Institute of Kudus (IAIN Kudus), Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia.*
[2] *Raden Mas Said State Islamic University of Surakarta, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia.*
[3] *Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta (ISI Surakarta), Surakarta, Indonesia.*

e-mail:
muhammadmiftah@iainkudus.ac.id
destiwidi@yahoo.com
jiyantojiyanto89@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. This study aims to analyze *Maharah Kalam* as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence within the language environment of PondokPesantren Modern Islam (PPMI) Assalaam Surakarta. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Arabic teachers, language-program administrators, school administrators, and students. The data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source and technique triangulation employed to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The results indicate that *Maharah Kalam* develops through the integration of formal Arabic instruction, structured language programs, daily communication, peer interaction, and continuous habituation. Students' speaking competence was reflected in their ability to initiate conversations, respond spontaneously, express ideas, maintain interactions, and use Arabic in various daily contexts. The study also identified several challenges, including differences in students' Arabic proficiency, limited vocabulary, hesitation in speaking, and inconsistent Arabic use during informal interactions. The findings demonstrate that the language environment at PPMI Assalaam functions as a continuous communicative space that enables students to transform linguistic knowledge into practical speaking competence. Therefore, *Maharah Kalam* can be positioned as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence because it integrates linguistic knowledge, communicative practice, confidence, interaction, and the ability to use Arabic meaningfully in everyday life.

Keywords:*Maharah Kalam; Arabic Language Competence; Language Environment; Islamic Boarding School.*

https://doi.org/10.52640/alif.335

How to Cite Miftah, M., Widiani, D., &Jiyanto, J. (2025). Maharah Kalam as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence within the language environment of modern Islamic boarding schools. *Journal of Arabic Language and Learning in Focus*, 2(2), 101-116.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language competence in Islamic education is not merely associated with knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary but also with the ability to use the language meaningfully in authentic communication. Among the four major language skills, *Maharah Kalam* occupies a strategic position because speaking requires learners to mobilize linguistic knowledge directly and spontaneously in interaction. Contemporary research on second-language proficiency indicates that speaking competence involves multiple dimensions, including linguistic accuracy, fluency, strategic competence, and the ability to participate effectively in interaction (De Jong, 2023). Consequently, Arabic speaking proficiency can be viewed as an important indicator of

whether learners have transformed declarative knowledge of Arabic into functional communicative competence. This perspective positions *Maharah Kalam* not simply as another language skill but as a culminating form of competence through which vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension, and interactional ability converge.

The centrality of speaking competence becomes increasingly significant in educational environments where Arabic is expected to function as a language of everyday communication. Research in second-language acquisition demonstrates that language development is strongly connected to meaningful social interaction rather than solely to individual memorization or formal instruction (Li &Jeong, 2020). Similarly, learners' willingness to communicate is influenced by their perceived competence, emotional condition, motivation, confidence, and the communicative environment surrounding them (Zhou et al., 2023a). Therefore, the development of *Maharah Kalam* requires an environment that provides learners with continuous opportunities to listen to, produce, negotiate, and respond to Arabic expressions. Such an environment transforms Arabic from an academic subject into a living language that is practiced through social interaction.

The concept of a language environment is particularly relevant to modern Islamic boarding schools because the boarding-school system provides intensive opportunities for interaction beyond formal classroom hours. In such settings, Arabic can be embedded in daily routines, peer communication, religious activities, academic activities, dormitory life, and institutional programs. Recent studies in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools indicate that structured Arabic-language environments can support speaking development through language zones, monitoring, teacher modeling, peer interaction, and routine communicative practices (Fitri et al., 2026). Research at an Arabic language center within an Islamic boarding school likewise demonstrates that a linguistic environment is associated with the development of students' speaking abilities and provides a social context for sustained Arabic use (Harnika et al., 2024). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of *Maharah Kalam* development depends not only on instructional techniques but also on the ecological conditions in which learners use Arabic.

Within a modern Islamic boarding school, the language environment can therefore be understood as an integrated system involving institutional policy, linguistic rules, role modeling, peer interaction, communicative routines, and opportunities for authentic language production. The environment becomes particularly meaningful when Arabic is used not only during scheduled language lessons but also in naturally occurring social situations. Research on Arabic practice in Indonesian boarding schools shows that bilingual policies and the linguistic landscape can shape students' habits of speaking Arabic in everyday interactions (Maf'udah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the existence of an Arabic-speaking environment does not automatically guarantee high speaking proficiency because learners may still experience interference, limited vocabulary, anxiety, and inconsistent language use. Recent research on Indonesian Islamic boarding schools identifies phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic interference as factors that can negatively influence Arabic communication (Solehudin&Arisandi, 2024). Thus, a productive language environment needs to be deliberately designed to encourage meaningful communication while simultaneously addressing linguistic and affective barriers.

One important dimension of *Maharah Kalam* is fluency, which refers not simply to speaking rapidly but to the ability to produce language smoothly, coherently, and appropriately during communication. Research on second-language speaking demonstrates that fluency develops through repeated opportunities to perform oral tasks and through conditions that allow learners to process and produce language efficiently (Tavakoli et al., 2020). Task repetition, for example, can contribute to fluency development, although its effects depend on how repetition is structured and implemented (Lambert et al., 2021). In an Arabic-speaking context, this principle is particularly relevant because students need repeated opportunities to transform memorized linguistic forms into spontaneous expressions. Consequently, the language environment of a

modern pesantren can function as a natural space for repeated speaking practice that progressively strengthens fluency.

Vocabulary is another fundamental component of Arabic speaking competence because learners cannot communicate effectively when they lack sufficient lexical resources. Empirical evidence in second-language research indicates that vocabulary size and depth significantly contribute to overall speaking proficiency, particularly in fluency and lexical-resource dimensions (Uchihara&Clenton, 2023). In an immersive boarding-school environment, vocabulary acquisition can occur through classroom learning as well as repeated exposure to words and expressions during daily interaction. This provides learners with opportunities to move vocabulary from receptive knowledge toward productive use. Therefore, the language environment at PPMI Assalaam can potentially serve as an extended lexical space in which students continuously encounter, practice, and reuse Arabic expressions across different communicative situations.

The development of *Maharah Kalam* is also closely associated with learners' willingness to communicate. A learner may possess adequate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but remain reluctant to speak because of anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, or fear of negative evaluation. Studies of second-language communication demonstrate that language competence and foreign-language anxiety interact in shaping learners' willingness to communicate (Zhou et al., 2023a). Positive emotional experiences, communication confidence, and motivation have likewise been shown to influence willingness to communicate in a second language (Jin & Lee, 2022). This indicates that the success of an Arabic-speaking environment should not be measured solely by the existence of language rules but also by the extent to which students feel confident and willing to use Arabic in authentic interactions.

The issue becomes particularly important because language policies in boarding schools can create both opportunities and challenges for Arabic communication. Strict language regulations may encourage consistent practice, but excessive correction or fear of sanctions can potentially discourage spontaneous communication if students become overly concerned about making errors. Recent research on Arabic-speaking environments emphasizes the importance of balancing linguistic discipline with teacher modeling, peer interaction, monitoring, and supportive corrective practices (Fitri et al., 2026). Similarly, research on Arabic communication in modern Islamic boarding schools shows that language interference remains a challenge even when schools have established Arabic immersion programs (Saepurrohman et al., 2025). Accordingly, a modern language environment should be conceptualized not merely as a regulatory system but as a communicative ecosystem that encourages students to use Arabic confidently, accurately, and meaningfully.

In this context, PPMI Assalaam Surakarta represents an important setting for examining how a modern Islamic boarding school constructs an environment that positions *Maharah Kalam* as a central manifestation of Arabic competence. The institutional context of a modern pesantren provides opportunities to investigate the relationship between formal Arabic instruction and informal language practices occurring in students' daily lives. Previous studies have examined Arabic language programs, linguistic environments, language interference, and speaking development in various Indonesian pesantren, but further research is needed to understand how these elements collectively construct speaking competence within a specific modern boarding-school ecosystem. Recent research has demonstrated that Arabic programs such as language days, muhadharah, and structured communication activities can provide mechanisms for measuring and strengthening students' ability to use Arabic in different contexts and functions. However, the positioning of *Maharah Kalam* as the culmination of Arabic competence requires attention to the interaction between institutional policy, daily language practices, communicative opportunities, and students' actual speaking experiences.

Based on this research gap, the present study investigates *Maharah Kalam* as the Pinnacle of Arabic Language Competence within the Language Environment of Modern Islamic Boarding Schools at PondokPesantren Modern Islam (PPMI) Assalaam Surakarta. The study focuses on how the Arabic language environment is constructed, maintained, and experienced by students in their everyday communication. It also examines how institutional language programs, peer interaction, linguistic discipline, and communicative practices contribute to the development of speaking competence. The study is expected to contribute conceptually by positioning *Maharah Kalam* within a broader ecological understanding of language learning, in which competence emerges through continuous interaction between learners, language, and their social environment. Practically, the findings are expected to provide an empirical basis for strengthening Arabic language policies and communicative programs in modern Islamic boarding schools so that Arabic is not merely learned as a subject but lived as a functional language.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate *Maharah Kalam* as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence within the language environment of PondokPesantren Modern Islam (PPMI) Assalaam Surakarta, because a case study enables researchers to examine language practices, interactions, and institutional programs within their natural setting (Creswell &Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation, involving Arabic language teachers, language-section administrators, and students selected purposively based on their involvement in the implementation of the Arabic language environment. The observation focused on students' daily Arabic communication, muhadatsah, language programs, classroom and dormitory interactions, and institutional practices supporting the development of speaking competence, while interviews explored participants' experiences, strategies, challenges, and perceptions of *Maharah Kalam*. This approach is consistent with previous qualitative studies demonstrating that observation, interviews, and documentation can reveal the relationship between Arabic language environments, linguistic interaction, and students' speaking development in Islamic boarding schools (Rahmi et al., 2024). Data were analyzed interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with source and technique triangulation used to strengthen the credibility of the findings and to identify how the language environment at PPMI Assalaam contributes to the development of students' *Maharah Kalam* as an integrated manifestation of Arabic communicative competence (Miles et al., 2020; Yin, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Arabic as a Daily Communication Environment

The findings indicate that Arabic at PPMI Assalaam Surakarta is positioned not merely as an academic subject but as an integral component of students' daily life within the boarding-school environment. Classroom learning is complemented by Arabic communication in dormitories, common areas, organizational activities, and other pesantren routines, creating continuous opportunities for students to listen to and produce Arabic expressions. This condition is supported by the institution's bilingual orientation, in which Arabic and English are emphasized as languages used in students' daily conversations. The observation showed that students were accustomed to using short Arabic expressions when greeting peers, asking questions, requesting assistance, giving instructions, and responding to conversations, although the intensity of Arabic use differed according to students' proficiency levels. One Arabic teacher explained, "Bahasa Arab tidak hanya digunakan di dalam kelas, tetapi juga diarahkan untuk

menjadi bagian dari kehidupan sehari-hari santri. Dengan demikian, mereka terbiasa mendengar dan berbicara bahasa Arab secara langsung dalam berbagai aktivitas" (Interview with Arabic teacher, IT-01, 2026).

The observation further revealed that the language environment operated through repeated interaction rather than through formal instruction alone. Students who interacted frequently with peers who had stronger Arabic proficiency tended to demonstrate greater confidence in initiating conversations and responding spontaneously. In several observed interactions, students did not wait for formal classroom instructions before using Arabic but employed it naturally for routine communication, particularly when interacting with language-oriented peers and during organized language activities. An administrator responsible for student language development stated, "Kami berupaya menjadikan bahasa Arab sebagai kebiasaan, bukan sekadar tugas pelajaran. Santri didorong untuk berani menggunakan bahasa Arab meskipun pada awalnya masih sering melakukan kesalahan" (Interview with language-section administrator, IT-02, 2026). This pattern indicates that the language environment functions as a continuous communicative space in which students gradually move from controlled language production toward more spontaneous oral communication.

Maharah Kalam **as the Most Visible Form of Arabic Competence**

The second finding concerns the position of *Maharah Kalam* as the most visible manifestation of students' Arabic competence. Students may demonstrate knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, but their ability to communicate orally determines whether that knowledge can be activated in actual interaction. During observations, students with stronger speaking abilities were able to combine vocabulary and grammatical structures into relatively spontaneous utterances, whereas students with lower proficiency tended to rely on memorized expressions, Indonesian insertions, or short responses. A senior Arabic teacher explained, "Ketika santri sudah memahami materi, tetapi belum berani berbicara, kemampuan berbahasanya belum terlihat secara utuh. Kemampuan tersebut baru tampak ketika mereka mampu menjelaskan, bertanya, dan merespons menggunakan bahasa Arab" (Interview with Arabic teacher, IT-03, 2026). The finding therefore places *Maharah Kalam* at the center of the students' practical language competence because speaking makes their accumulated linguistic knowledge observable through real communication.

The observed speaking practices also demonstrated different levels of oral competence among students. At the initial level, students commonly relied on familiar expressions and simple sentence patterns, while more advanced students were able to maintain conversations, elaborate answers, ask follow-up questions, and adjust their expressions according to the communication situation. Students who were frequently involved in Arabic-speaking activities appeared more willing to initiate conversations rather than merely respond to questions posed by teachers or peers. One student stated, "Awalnya saya takut salah ketika berbicara bahasa Arab. Namun, karena teman-teman juga menggunakan bahasa Arab dalam percakapan sehari-hari, lama-kelamaan saya menjadi lebih berani mencoba dan tidak terlalu khawatir melakukan kesalahan" (Interview with student, IS-01, 2026). This finding suggests that the development of *Maharah Kalam* at PPMI Assalaam is closely associated with the frequency and continuity of students' participation in actual communicative situations.

Language Programs as a Mechanism for Strengthening Speaking Competence

The third finding shows that the development of *Maharah Kalam* is supported by structured language programs that provide students with opportunities to practice oral Arabic. These activities create situations in which students are required to produce Arabic rather than merely recognize or memorize linguistic forms. The observation identified activities involving conversation practice, speeches, discussions, presentations, and other forms of oral performance as spaces where students practiced expressing ideas before peers. PPMI Assalaam also publicly

identifies Arabic proficiency as an important component of student development, including recognition of students who achieve strong performance in Arabic and other foreign languages. A language-program coordinator explained, "Kegiatan kebahasaan dirancang agar santri memiliki ruang dan kesempatan untuk mempraktikkan kemampuan berbicara secara langsung. Hal ini karena keterampilan berbicara tidak cukup hanya dipelajari melalui buku atau kegiatan pembelajaran di dalam kelas, tetapi juga perlu dilatih melalui praktik komunikasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari" (Interview with language coordinator, IT-04, 2026).

The results indicate that these activities contribute to the gradual transformation of passive linguistic knowledge into productive competence. During observation, students who participated in speaking activities repeatedly were able to extend their utterances more effectively and showed greater readiness to respond without prolonged preparation. The activities also created opportunities for peer correction, vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation practice, and adaptation of expressions to different communicative contexts. A student participant described this process by saying, "Melalui kegiatan berbicara, kita dituntut untuk mencari kosakata yang tepat dan menyusun kalimat sendiri sehingga pembelajaran tidak hanya berfokus pada kegiatan menghafal" (Interview with student, IS-02, 2026). The evidence demonstrates that structured language activities function as a bridge between formal Arabic instruction and spontaneous communication in the broader pesantren environment.

Interaction, Habituation, and Confidence in Speaking

Another important finding is the role of habituation in shaping students' confidence to communicate in Arabic. The observation showed that students who regularly encountered Arabic in their surroundings were more likely to respond using Arabic even when their linguistic production was not completely accurate. This habituation was particularly evident in routine interactions, where students used Arabic for simple communicative purposes without treating each utterance as a formal language exercise. One teacher noted, "Yang paling penting pada tahap awal adalah membangun keberanian anak untuk berbicara. Setelah anak terbiasa berbicara, kesalahan dalam berbahasa dapat diperbaiki secara bertahap" (Interview with Arabic teacher, IT-05, 2026). Thus, the findings suggest that the language environment provides psychological as well as linguistic support by reducing students' hesitation to initiate oral communication.

Peer interaction emerged as another significant factor in the development of speaking competence. Students did not acquire speaking ability exclusively through teacher-student communication but also through conversations with roommates, classmates, senior students, and members of language organizations. During observation, peer interaction provided students with more frequent and less formal opportunities to experiment with vocabulary and sentence construction. A student explained, "Latihan bersama teman terasa lebih mudah karena santri dapat mengulang percakapan dan saling bertanya apabila belum memahami kosakata tertentu" (Interview with student, IS-03, 2026). These findings indicate that *Maharah Kalam* develops through a combination of structured activities and informal interpersonal interaction that continuously exposes students to Arabic communication.

Challenges in Developing *Maharah Kalam*

Despite the relatively strong language environment, the findings also identified several challenges in developing *Maharah Kalam*. The first challenge was the unequal level of Arabic proficiency among students, particularly differences in vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, sentence construction, and confidence. Observation showed that some students could communicate relatively fluently, while others still depended on memorized expressions and occasionally switched to Indonesian when they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary. An Arabic teacher stated, "Kemampuan setiap santri berbeda-beda. Ada santri yang cepat memahami materi dan berani berbicara menggunakan bahasa Arab, tetapi ada pula yang membutuhkan pendampingan lebih intensif karena keterbatasan penguasaan kosakata" (Interview with Arabic

teacher, IT-06, 2026). This variation requires continuous support so that the language environment does not benefit only students who already possess relatively strong Arabic competence.

A second challenge concerned the consistency of Arabic use across different communication situations. Although the institutional environment encourages bilingual practices, the intensity of Arabic communication can fluctuate depending on the interlocutor, activity, and students' individual habits. Observation found that students were more consistent in using Arabic during designated language activities than during informal situations in which there was less direct linguistic supervision. A student participant acknowledged, "Kalau kegiatan berbahasa memang lebih mudah menggunakan bahasa Arab, tetapi ketika sedang santai bersama teman, terkadang kembali menggunakan bahasa Indonesia" (Interview with student, IS-04, 2026). This finding indicates that maintaining a sustainable Arabic-speaking environment requires not only formal programs but also continuous reinforcement of communicative habits in students' everyday interactions.

Integration of Formal Learning and Pesantren Life

The overall findings demonstrate that the development of *Maharah Kalam* at PPMI Assalaam occurs through the integration of formal Arabic learning and the wider social environment of the pesantren. Classroom activities provide students with linguistic resources, while daily interaction provides opportunities to activate those resources in practical communication. The institutional curriculum itself combines formal education with pesantren-based learning and emphasizes Arabic and English as important components of the educational environment. Observation confirmed that students' speaking practices were not isolated from their broader educational experiences but were embedded within academic, social, and religious routines. A school administrator summarized this integration by stating, "Pembelajaran di kelas memberikan dasar pemahaman bahasa, sedangkan kehidupan di lingkungan pondok memberikan kesempatan kepada santri untuk mempraktikkan bahasa tersebut secara langsung dalam komunikasi sehari-hari" (Interview with school administrator, IT-07, 2026).

The findings consequently show that *Maharah Kalam* can be understood as the culmination of a continuous process involving exposure, practice, interaction, correction, habituation, and confidence development. Students who experienced repeated opportunities to use Arabic demonstrated greater readiness to communicate, while students with limited interaction required stronger encouragement and more structured practice. The evidence also shows that the success of the language environment depends on the interaction between institutional programs and students' actual communicative behavior rather than on language regulations alone. The achievement of Arabic competence at PPMI Assalaam is therefore reflected not simply in students' ability to answer formal language questions but in their capacity to use Arabic to communicate ideas, negotiate meaning, respond to others, and participate in everyday social interactions. In this sense, the empirical findings position *Maharah Kalam* as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence because it brings together students' linguistic knowledge, communicative practice, confidence, and ability to function within the Arabic-speaking environment of the modern Islamic boarding school.

Discussion

Arabic as a Daily Communication Environment

The findings demonstrate that the linguistic environment at PPMI Assalaam Surakarta transforms Arabic from a classroom-based subject into a medium of everyday communication. This condition is theoretically consistent with contemporary second-language acquisition research, which emphasizes that language development is strengthened when learners receive continuous input and opportunities to produce language through meaningful interaction rather

than through formal instruction alone (Muttaqin et al., 2024). In the pesantren context, the integration of Arabic into dormitory life, organizational activities, and routine interactions creates a form of linguistic immersion in which students repeatedly encounter and use the target language. Similar findings have been reported in studies of Islamic boarding schools, where the intensity of Arabic interaction and the availability of a supportive linguistic environment contribute to the development of students' communicative competence (Harnika et al., 2024). Thus, the PPMI Assalaam environment can be understood as an ecological learning space in which Arabic acquisition occurs simultaneously through formal instruction, social interaction, and habitual communication.

The importance of this environment becomes clearer when speaking proficiency is understood as a competence that requires actual language use rather than merely knowledge about language. Contemporary research on second-language speaking emphasizes that proficiency involves the ability to mobilize linguistic resources during real-time communication, including fluency, interaction, and the capacity to construct meaningful utterances (Galaczi et al., 2023). The students' routine use of Arabic at PPMI Assalaam therefore provides an important bridge between linguistic knowledge acquired in the classroom and communicative performance outside it. Research on foreign-language learning beyond the classroom similarly shows that spoken input and opportunities for language use outside formal instructional settings can contribute to the development of speaking proficiency (Tsang & Lee, 2023). The present findings consequently suggest that the strength of PPMI Assalaam's Arabic environment lies not simply in the existence of language regulations but in the frequency with which students encounter Arabic as a functional medium of social interaction.

Maharah Kalam **as the Most Visible Form of Arabic Competence**

The finding that *Maharah Kalam* represents the most visible form of Arabic competence is consistent with the contemporary view that speaking constitutes a central manifestation of communicative language ability. Linguistic knowledge becomes practically meaningful when learners can retrieve vocabulary, organize grammatical structures, and formulate understandable messages under conditions of real-time interaction. Research on oral proficiency demonstrates that speaking performance is multidimensional and involves both cognitive processes and observable features of utterance production (Suzuki &Hanzawa, 2022). Consequently, students who can explain ideas, ask questions, respond spontaneously, and maintain interaction demonstrate a more functional form of language competence than students whose knowledge remains largely receptive or declarative. The findings at PPMI Assalaam therefore reinforce the argument that *Maharah Kalam* should be positioned not as an isolated language skill but as an integrative outcome of vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, fluency, interaction, and communicative confidence.

The differences observed among students further indicate that speaking development is gradual and strongly connected with opportunities to participate in communication. Students who repeatedly engaged in Arabic conversations demonstrated greater willingness to initiate interaction, whereas less-experienced students tended to depend on memorized expressions and shorter responses. This pattern corresponds with research showing a relationship between second-language competence and learners' willingness to communicate, although psychological factors such as foreign-language anxiety can influence whether competence is actually activated in interaction (Zhou et al., 2023a). Similarly, research on willingness to communicate indicates that perceived competence, motivation, anxiety, and frequency of language use constitute important factors shaping learners' readiness to communicate in a second language (Jin & Lee, 2022). The PPMI Assalaam findings therefore suggest that developing *Maharah Kalam* requires simultaneous attention to linguistic competence and students' readiness to use that competence in actual social interaction.

Language Programs as a Mechanism for Strengthening Speaking Competence

The structured language programs identified in this study demonstrate that the development of *Maharah Kalam* requires organized opportunities for students to produce language. Conversation, speeches, presentations, discussions, and other oral activities provide communicative tasks through which students are required to retrieve vocabulary and construct meaning rather than simply recognize linguistic forms. This finding is consistent with research on task-based language learning, which emphasizes that meaningful tasks can create interactional conditions in which learners negotiate meaning and develop their ability to use the target language (Sert&Amri, 2021). Collaborative speaking tasks have likewise been shown to provide opportunities for learners to practice oral production while receiving support from peers during the communicative process (Wiboolyasarin et al., 2023). Accordingly, the language programs at PPMI Assalaam can be interpreted as institutional mechanisms that transform Arabic from knowledge that students possess into language that students actively perform.

The findings also indicate that structured programs become more meaningful when they are connected with authentic communicative demands. Students' statements that speaking activities require them to search for appropriate vocabulary and construct sentences independently suggest that such activities encourage productive rather than reproductive language learning. This corresponds with research demonstrating that peer interaction can create opportunities for negotiation, language-related episodes, and attention to form while learners are engaged in communicative tasks (Toth& Gil- Berrio, 2022). From this perspective, the effectiveness of PPMI Assalaam's language programs does not primarily derive from the quantity of activities but from their capacity to require students to formulate meanings and respond to communicative situations. The language program consequently functions as a pedagogical bridge between controlled practice in formal lessons and spontaneous oral performance in the wider pesantren environment.

Interaction, Habituation, and Confidence in Speaking

One of the most important implications of the findings is that habituation contributes to students' willingness to speak despite incomplete linguistic accuracy. Students who repeatedly use Arabic become less dependent on extensive preparation and increasingly treat speaking as an ordinary component of social interaction. This finding is compatible with research on willingness to communicate, which demonstrates that learners' readiness to enter into L2 interaction is influenced by both perceived competence and affective factors such as anxiety and confidence (Zhou et al., 2023b). The reduction of hesitation observed at PPMI Assalaam therefore suggests that frequent exposure to communicative situations can gradually normalize the experience of speaking a foreign language. In this sense, habituation is not merely repetition but a process through which linguistic behavior becomes increasingly automatic, socially accepted, and psychologically less threatening.

Peer interaction further strengthens this process because students receive communicative opportunities that are more frequent and less formal than teacher-led classroom interaction. Conversations with roommates, classmates, senior students, and language-organization members allow students to experiment with vocabulary and sentence structures while receiving immediate responses from interlocutors. Research on second-language peer interaction shows that collaborative communication can create opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning and attend to linguistic forms during naturally unfolding exchanges (Toth& Gil- Berrio, 2022). In addition, studies of foreign-language learning beyond the classroom demonstrate that regular exposure to spoken language outside formal lessons can contribute to speaking development (Tsang & Lee, 2023). The PPMI Assalaam findings therefore highlight peer interaction as an important social mechanism through which linguistic knowledge is repeatedly activated, tested, corrected, and gradually transformed into communicative ability.

Challenges in Developing *Maharah Kalam*

Despite the strength of the language environment, the findings reveal that a shared linguistic environment does not automatically produce equal speaking proficiency among all students. Differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical knowledge, confidence, and previous language-learning experiences create different starting points for students participating in the same language environment. Research on oral proficiency similarly indicates that speaking ability is multidimensional and influenced by learners' linguistic and educational backgrounds (Zhang et al., 2020). This explains why some PPMI Assalaam students can move rapidly toward spontaneous communication while others remain dependent on memorized expressions and occasional Indonesian insertions. The implication is that a strong language policy must be accompanied by differentiated support so that weaker students can participate meaningfully rather than simply being exposed to the same communicative demands as more proficient peers.

Another important challenge concerns the consistency of Arabic use across different social situations. The findings indicate that students tend to use Arabic more consistently during formal language activities but may return to Indonesian during relaxed or less supervised interactions. This phenomenon suggests that institutional language policies alone are insufficient to establish a sustainable target-language environment because actual language behavior is also shaped by motivation, social relationships, perceived competence, and situational factors. Research on L2 willingness to communicate emphasizes that communication is dynamic and can vary according to interlocutor, context, emotional state, and perceived communicative competence (Syed et al., 2022). Therefore, sustaining Arabic at PPMI Assalaam requires a balance between institutional reinforcement and the development of students' intrinsic willingness to communicate. The challenge is consequently not merely to enforce Arabic use but to cultivate a social culture in which Arabic is perceived as a natural and useful medium of interaction.

Integration of Formal Learning and Pesantren Life

The integration of classroom instruction and pesantren life represents the central contribution of the findings to the understanding of Arabic language development in modern Islamic boarding schools. Formal learning provides students with vocabulary, grammatical patterns, discourse knowledge, and communicative strategies, whereas the pesantren environment supplies repeated opportunities to activate those resources. This relationship is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of language input, interaction, and output as interconnected components of language acquisition in boarding-school contexts (Muttaqin et al., 2024). It also corresponds with broader evidence that language learning beyond the classroom can provide additional input and communicative opportunities that support speaking proficiency (Tsang & Lee, 2023). PPMI Assalaam therefore illustrates an ecological model in which the classroom and the social environment are not separate learning spaces but interconnected components of one continuous process of Arabic language development.

The overall findings further suggest that *Maharah Kalam* should be conceptualized as the culmination of exposure, practice, interaction, feedback, habituation, and communicative confidence. Such a conceptualization moves beyond a narrow understanding of speaking as the ability to pronounce Arabic sentences and instead positions speaking as the capacity to use linguistic resources purposefully within authentic social situations. Contemporary scholarship on speaking proficiency supports this broader perspective by emphasizing the multidimensional nature of oral competence and the importance of interaction in demonstrating proficiency (Suzuki &Hanzawa, 2022). The distinctive feature of PPMI Assalaam is therefore the way in which institutional language programs and the daily pesantren environment mutually reinforce one another to create sustained opportunities for oral communication. The findings ultimately indicate that the achievement of Arabic competence is most visible when students can move from knowing Arabic to using Arabic spontaneously, confidently, and meaningfully in their

everyday lives.

Synthesis of the Discussion

Taken together, the findings position the Arabic-speaking environment as the foundational condition, structured language programs as the pedagogical mechanism, peer interaction as the social mechanism, and confidence as the psychological mechanism underlying the development of *Maharah Kalam*. This configuration corresponds with contemporary research demonstrating that L2 communication is influenced by the interaction of language proficiency, motivation, anxiety, social climate, and frequency of language use (Jin & Lee, 2022)(Wang et al., 2022). The PPMI Assalaam case adds an important pesantren-based dimension by showing how these factors can be institutionalized through the integration of formal education and residential life. Rather than treating speaking as an isolated classroom outcome, the institution creates a communicative ecology in which students encounter Arabic repeatedly across academic, social, organizational, and religious activities. Thus, *Maharah Kalam* emerges as the most visible indicator of Arabic competence because it represents the point at which linguistic knowledge, interactional experience, confidence, and environmental exposure converge.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that *Maharah Kalam* occupies a central position as the pinnacle of Arabic language competence within the language environment of PondokPesantren Modern Islam (PPMI) Assalaam Surakarta. Its development does not occur exclusively through formal classroom instruction but through the integration of structured language programs, daily communication, peer interaction, and continuous habituation. The Arabic language environment provides students with repeated opportunities to transform vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and linguistic expressions into meaningful oral communication. The findings further reveal that students' speaking competence is reflected in their ability to initiate conversations, respond spontaneously, express ideas, maintain interactions, and adapt Arabic expressions to different communicative situations. However, differences in students' initial proficiency, limited vocabulary, confidence, and inconsistent Arabic use in informal situations remain challenges that require continuous institutional support. Overall, the study confirms that an effective language environment functions as a communicative ecosystem in which *Maharah Kalam* develops through the interaction of instruction, practice, habituation, and social engagement. The study contributes an empirical perspective on how modern Islamic boarding schools can position speaking competence as the practical culmination of Arabic language learning.

REFERENCE

De Jong, N. H. (2023). Assessing Second Language Speaking Proficiency.*Annual Review of Linguistics*, *9*(1), 541–560. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-030521-052114

Harnika, L., Abidin, Z., Maulana, M. F., Saputri, S., Salsabila, A. M., &Azim, A. (2024).Impact of Linguistic Environment on Speaking Skills of Female Students at the Arabic Language Center Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia.*Journal of Arabic Language Learning and Teaching (JALLT)*, *2*(2), 121–136.https://doi.org/10.23971/jallt.v2i2.180

Jin, S., & Lee, H. (2022). Willingness to Communicate and its High-Evidence Factors: A Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modeling Approach. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *41*(6), 716–745. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221092098

Lambert, C., Aubrey, S., &Leeming, P. (2021).Task Preparation and Second Language Speech Production.*TESOL Quarterly*, *55*(2), 331–365. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.598

Li, P., &Jeong, H. (2020). The social brain of language: Grounding second language learning in social interaction. *Npj Science of Learning*, *5*(1), 8.https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-020-0068-7

Maf'udah, S., Bahruddin, U., & Barry, N. H. A. (2025). Arabic Language Practice in Islamic Boarding Schools: (A Linguistic Landscape Study). *Shaut al Arabiyyah*, *13*(1), 203–219. https://doi.org/10.24252/saa.v13i1.55860

Muttaqin, I., Bakheit, B. M., &Hasanah, M. (2024). Arabic Language Environment for Islamic Boarding School Student Language Acquisition: Capturing Language Input, Interaction, and Output. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, *8*(3), 891–907. https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.624

Rahmi, E. N., Nurmala, M., Nurbayan, Y., Syukran, S., &Faza, A. M. (2024). A Phenomenological Study of Arabic Language Environment to Improve Students' Speaking Skills at Modern Islamic Boarding School.*MantiquTayr: Journal of Arabic Language*, *4*(1), 232–256. https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqutayr.v4i1.4085

Sert, O., &Amri, M. (2021). Learning Potentials Afforded by a Film in Task-Based Language Classroom Interactions. *The Modern Language Journal*, *105*(S1), 126–141. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12684

Solehudin, M., &Arisandi, Y. (2024). Language Interference in Arabic Learning: A Case Study of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia. *Al-Ta'rib : JurnalIlmiah Program StudiPendidikanBahasa Arab IAIN Palangka Raya*, *12*(2), 423–438. https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.9170

Suzuki, Y., &Hanzawa, K. (2022). MASSED TASK REPETITION IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD FOR FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT: AN EFL CLASSROOM STUDY. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *44*(2), 536–561. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263121000358

Syed, H., Memon, S., Chachar, Z. A., Zameer, S., & Shah, T. (2022). Willingness to communicate in a second language and the promise of complex dynamic systems theory: A narrative review. *Research in Education*, *113*(1), 41–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237211031261

Tavakoli, P., Nakatsuhara, F., & Hunter, A. (2020). Aspects of Fluency Across Assessed Levels of Speaking Proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal*, *104*(1), 169–191. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12620

Toth, P. D., & Gil-Berrio, Y. (2022). Exploring "Intersubjectivity Negotiation Episodes" and "Language Related Episodes" in Second-Language Peer Interaction. *Language Learning*, *72*(S1), 275–313. https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12484

Tsang, A., & Lee, J. S. (2023). The making of proficient young FL speakers: The role of emotions, speaking motivation, and spoken input beyond the classroom. *System*, *115*, 103047.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103047

Uchihara, T., &Clenton, J. (2023).The role of spoken vocabulary knowledge in second language speaking proficiency.*The Language Learning Journal*, *51*(3), 376–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2080856

Wang, M., Wang, H., & Shi, Y. (2022). The role of English as a foreign language learners' grit and foreign language anxiety in their willingness to communicate: Theoretical perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1002562.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1002562

Wiboolyasarin, W., Jinowat, N., Wiboolyasarin, K., Kamonsawad, R., Tiranant, P., &Boonyakitanont, P. (2023).Enhancing L2 speaking proficiency through collaborative tasks in RILCA world: The case of East Asian learners.*Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *8*(1), 37.https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00209-1

Zhang, X., Winke, P., & Clark, S. (2020). Background Characteristics and Oral Proficiency Development Over Time in Lower-Division College Foreign Language Programs. *Language Learning*, *70*(3), 807–847. https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12396

Zhou, L., Xi, Y., &Lochtman, K. (2023a). The relationship between second language competence and willingness to communicate: The moderating effect of foreign language anxiety. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *44*(2), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1801697

Zhou, L., Xi, Y., &Lochtman, K. (2023b). The relationship between second language competence and willingness to communicate: The moderating effect of foreign language anxiety. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *44*(2), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1801697

Asrofi, I., Supriatna, A., Kohar, A. A. R., &Ruswandi, A. (2026). Arabic language acquisition in boarding high school students: A study of environment, motivation, and social interaction. *Lughawiyah: Journal of Arabic Education and Linguistics, 7*(2), 138–153. https://doi.org/10.31958/lughawiyah.v7i2.16488

Cao, G. (2022). Toward the favorable consequences of academic motivation and L2 enjoyment for students' willingness to communicate in the second language (L2WTC).*Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 997566.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.997566

Cheng, L., &Xu, J. (2022). Chinese English as a foreign language learners' individual differences and their willingness to communicate. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 883664.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.883664

Creswell, J. W., &Poth, C. N. (2018).*Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

de Jong, N. H. (2023). Assessing second language speaking proficiency.*Annual Review of Linguistics, 9*, 541–560. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-030521-052114

Deygers, B. (2020). Elicited imitation: A test for all learners? Examining the EI performance of learners with diverging educational backgrounds.*Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 42*(5), 933–957. https://doi.org/10.1017/S027226312000008X

Ebn-Abbasi, F., Nushi, M., &Fattahi, N. (2022).The role of L2 motivational self system and grit in EFL learners' willingness to communicate.*Frontiers in Education, 7*, 837714.https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.837714

Fan, J., & Yan, X. (2020).Assessing speaking proficiency: A narrative review of speaking assessment research within the argument-based validation framework.*Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 330.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00330

Fitri, L., Mukhlishin, &Izomi, M. S. (2026). The implementation of the Arabic language environment (*bi'ah 'arabiyah*) as a strategic model for developing students' communicative competence at Hidayatullah Islamic Boarding School Lombok.*Journal of Educational Sciences, 10*(1), 725–745. https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.1.p.725-745

Galaczi, E. D., et al. (2023). Assessing second language speaking proficiency.*Annual Review of Linguistics*.https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-030521-052114

Harnika, L., Abidin, Z., Maulana, M. F., Saputri, S., Salsabila, A. M., &Iman, A. A. (2024).Impact of linguistic environment on speaking skills of female students at the Arabic Language Center Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia.*Journal of Arabic Language Learning and Teaching, 2*(2), 121–136. https://doi.org/10.23971/jallt.v2i2.180

Jin, S., & Lee, H. (2022). Willingness to communicate and its high-evidence factors: A meta-analytic structural equation modeling approach. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 41*(6).https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221092098

Korvesi, E., & Michel, M. (2022).Chatting with your peers across modalities: Effects of performing increasingly complex written computer-mediated tasks on oral L2 development.*Languages, 7*(4), 276.https://doi.org/10.3390/languages7040276

Lambert, C. (2021).Task preparation and second language speech production.*TESOL Quarterly, 55*(2), 331–365. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.598

Lee, J. S., & Chiu, M. M. (2023).Modeling EFL learners' willingness to communicate: The roles of face-to-face and digital L2 communication anxiety.*Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 43*, 64–87. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190523000090

Lee, J. S., & Lee, K. (2020). Affective factors, virtual intercultural experiences, and L2 willingness to communicate in in-class, out-of-class, and digital settings. *Language Teaching Research, 24*(6), 813–833.https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819831408

Li, P., &Jeong, H. (2020). The social brain of language: Grounding second language learning in social interaction. *npj Science of Learning, 5*, 8. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-020-0068-7

Lichtman, K., &VanPatten, B. (2021). Was Krashen right? Forty years later. *Foreign Language Annals, 54*, 283–305. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12552

Lilja, N. S., &Eilola, L. (2021).The smartphone as a personal cognitive artifact supporting participation in interaction.*The Modern Language Journal*.https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12697

Ma, H., Ismail, L., Noordin, N., &Razali, A. B. (2023).Bibliometric analysis of willingness to communicate in the English as a second language context.*Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 10*, 702.https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02109-8

Maf'udah, S., Bahruddin, U., & Barry, N. H. A. (2025). Arabic language practice in Islamic boarding schools: A linguistic landscape study. *Shaut Al Arabiyyah, 13*(1), 203–219. https://doi.org/10.24252/saa.v13i1.55860

Mahsunah, M., Hadi, M. A. B., Khoirunnisa, D. A., &Mufidah, N. (2023).Implementation of Arabic program to improve speaking skill of students in Islamic boarding school.*Al Mahāra: JurnalPendidikanBahasa Arab*. https://doi.org/10.14421/almahara.2023.092-06

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., &Saldaña, J. (2020).*Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Mostafa, T. (2021).Predictors of English as second language learners' oral proficiency development in a classroom context.*International Journal of Applied Linguistics*.https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12358

Muttaqin, I., Bakheit, B. M., &Hasanah, M. (2024). Arabic language environment for Islamic boarding school student language acquisition: Capturing language input, interaction, and output. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education, 8*(3), 891–907. https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i3.624

Rahmi, E. N., Nurmala, M., Nurbayan, Y., Syukran, &Faza, A. M. (2024).A phenomenological study of Arabic language environment to improve students' speaking skills at modern Islamic boarding school.*MantiquTayr: Journal of Arabic Language, 4*(1), 232–256. https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqutayr.v4i1.4085

Sert, O., &Amri, M. (2021). Learning potentials afforded by a film in task-based language classroom interactions. *The Modern Language Journal.*https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12684

Shirvan, M. E., Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., &Taherian, T. (2019).A meta-analysis of L2 willingness to communicate and its three high-evidence correlates.*Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 48*, 1241–1267. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-019-09656-9

Solehudin, M., &Arisandi, Y. (2024). Language interference in Arabic learning: A case study of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. *Al-Ta'rib: JurnalIlmiah Program StudiPendidikanBahasa Arab, 12*(2), 423–438. https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.9170

Syed, H., Memon, S., Chachar, Z. A., Zameer, S., & Shah, T. (2022). Willingness to communicate in a second language and the promise of complex dynamic systems theory: A narrative review. *Language Teaching Research, 26*.https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237211031261

Tavakoli, P., Nakatsuhara, F., & Hunter, A. M. (2020). Aspects of fluency across assessed levels of speaking proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal, 104*(3), 769–785. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12620

Thai, C., & Boers, F. (2022). Massed task repetition is a double-edged sword for fluency development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 44*(2), 536–561. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263121000358

Toth, P. D. (2022). Exploring "intersubjectivity negotiation episodes" and "language related episodes" in second-language peer interaction. *Language Learning.*https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12484

Tsang, A., & Lee, J. S. (2023). The making of proficient young FL speakers: The role of emotions, speaking motivation, and spoken input beyond the classroom. *System, 115*, 103047.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103047

Uchihara, T., &Clenton, J. (2023).The role of spoken vocabulary knowledge in second language speaking proficiency.*The Language Learning Journal, 51*(3), 376–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2080856

Uchihara, T., &Clenton, J. (2023).The role of spoken vocabulary knowledge in second language speaking proficiency.*The Language Learning Journal, 51*(3), 376–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2080856

Wang, M., Wang, H., & Shi, Y. (2022). The role of English as a foreign language learners' grit and foreign language anxiety in their willingness to communicate: Theoretical perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1002562.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1002562

Wiboolyasarin, W., Jinowat, N., Wiboolyasarin, K., Kamonsawad, R., Tiranant, P., et al. (2023).Enhancing L2 speaking proficiency through collaborative tasks in RILCA world: The case of East Asian learners.*Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 8*, 37.https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00209-1

Yin, R. K. (2018).*Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications

Zhang, X., Winke, P., & Clark, S. (2020). Background characteristics and oral proficiency development over time in lower-division college foreign language programs.*Language Learning.*https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12396

Zhou, L., Xi, Y., &Lochtman, K. (2020). The relationship between second language competence and willingness to communicate: The moderating effect of foreign language anxiety. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 44*(2), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1801697

Zhou, L., Xi, Y., &Lochtman, K. (2020). The relationship between second language competence and willingness to communicate: The moderating effect of foreign language anxiety. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 44*(2), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1801697