

**FROM CLASSROOM TO STAGE: ARABIC DRAMA CONTEST
AS AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH IN ARABIC CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT PONDOK MODERN DARUSSALAM GONTOR
PUTRI 1ST CAMPUS**

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon sebagai pendekatan experiential learning dalam pengembangan kurikulum bahasa Arab di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Kampus 1. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan etnografi pendidikan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana kegiatan berbasis drama berkontribusi terhadap kompetensi komunikatif, hidden curriculum, dan implementasi kurikulum dalam lingkungan pendidikan pesantren. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan guru bahasa Arab, pembimbing drama, pengurus santri, dan peserta kegiatan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Arabic Drama Contest berfungsi sebagai lingkungan pembelajaran komunikatif autentik yang memperkuat kelancaran berbicara, kepercayaan diri, penguasaan kosakata, kreativitas, dan interaksi kolaboratif santri. Kegiatan ini juga menjadi hidden curriculum yang menanamkan nilai disiplin, kepemimpinan, tanggung jawab, dan kerja sama melalui praktik pendidikan partisipatif. Selain itu, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan kurikulum pesantren tidak terbatas pada pembelajaran kelas formal, tetapi juga terintegrasi dalam pertunjukan budaya dan aktivitas organisasi santri di lingkungan bi'ah lughawiyah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis drama menghadirkan model inovatif dan holistik dalam pengembangan kurikulum bahasa Arab di pesantren modern.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan kurikulum bahasa Arab; Lomba Drama Arab; pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman; etnografi pendidikan; pesantren.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon as an experiential approach in Arabic curriculum development at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Campus 1. Using a qualitative educational ethnography approach, this research explores how drama-based activities contribute to communicative competence, hidden curriculum, and curriculum implementation within the pesantren educational environment. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Arabic teachers, drama supervisors, student organizers, and student participants. The

findings reveal that the Arabic Drama Contest functions as an authentic communicative learning environment that strengthens students' speaking fluency, confidence, vocabulary mastery, creativity, and collaborative interaction. The activity also serves as a hidden curriculum transmitting values of discipline, leadership, responsibility, and teamwork through participatory educational practices. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that curriculum development in pesantren extends beyond formal classroom instruction into cultural performances and student organizational activities integrated within the bi'ah lughawiyyah. The study concludes that drama-based experiential learning provides an innovative and holistic model for Arabic curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools by integrating linguistic competence, character formation, and cultural participation into a unified educational ecosystem.

Keywords: *Arabic curriculum development; Arabic Drama Contest; experiential learning; educational ethnography; pesantren.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of Arabic language curriculum in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) has increasingly shifted from teacher-centered instruction toward communicative, contextual, and experience-based learning models. In contemporary Arabic language education, curriculum development is no longer limited to formal classroom instruction, but also encompasses extracurricular, cultural, and performance-based activities that facilitate authentic language use in real social settings. This paradigm emphasizes that language acquisition becomes more effective when students are directly involved in meaningful communicative experiences rather than merely memorizing linguistic structures. In this context, pesantren-based Arabic education possesses unique characteristics because it integrates formal learning, language environment (*bi'ah lughawiyyah*), and boarding school culture into one educational ecosystem.¹

Modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have long been recognized for their dynamic curriculum adaptation in responding to social transformation and globalization. Curriculum modernization in pesantren does not necessarily eliminate traditional values; instead, it encourages educational innovation while maintaining Islamic identity and institutional culture.² Within this framework, Arabic language learning is designed not only to develop grammatical competence but also to strengthen students' communicative abilities, creativity, collaboration,

¹ Nur Kholis dan M. Arif Mustofa, "Development of Competency-Based Arabic Language Curriculum in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 2 (2024): 827–48, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i2.10819>.

² Abd Muis Zaini, *Islamic Boarding School's Curriculum Management*, t.t.

leadership, and self-confidence through various language activities beyond the classroom.³

One of the innovative activities implemented in Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Campus 1 is the *Arabic Drama Contest* Between all Dormitory in this Boarding School, a large-scale annual performance involving students from different dormitory divisions (*rayon*). This activity represents a form of experiential language learning in which students practice Arabic through script writing, pronunciation training, role-playing, stage performance, and collaborative interaction. Drama-based language learning enables students to engage in spontaneous communication and authentic oral expression within meaningful contexts. Bora explains that drama approaches create opportunities for learners to develop oral fluency, emotional engagement, and communicative spontaneity in second-language learning environments.⁴

In Arabic language pedagogy, drama activities also contribute to the integration of linguistic, cognitive, affective, and social competencies simultaneously. Through theatrical performance, students are encouraged to negotiate meaning, interpret texts, embody characters, and use language interactively in natural situations. Such experiential learning reflects Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience theory, which emphasizes that direct participation and active involvement improve learning effectiveness and retention. Recent studies on Arabic experiential learning indicate that performance-based and collaborative learning models can significantly enhance students' speaking ability, motivation, and soft skills development.⁵

Furthermore, the Arabic Drama Contest functions not merely as entertainment or extracurricular activity, but as part of the hidden curriculum of pesantren education. Hidden curriculum refers to the transmission of values, discipline, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and social ethics through institutional culture and educational practices. In pesantren settings, language activities often become strategic instruments for internalizing moral values,

³ Koko Adya Winata dkk., "Development of Curriculum and Learning System in Pondok Pesantren. (A Case Study at Pesantren Al Falah Dago Bandung)," *Randwick International of Education and Linguistics Science Journal* 2, no. 1 (2021): 29–36, <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v2i1.196>.

⁴ S. F. Bora, "Curtain up! Enhancing L2 spontaneous and authentic speaking opportunities through play scripts and drama-based approaches," *Language Teaching Research* 25, no. 6 (2021): 915–935, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219887536>

⁵ Cecep Sobar Rochmat Cecep dkk., "The Analysis of Experiential Learning Method of Dale's Cone Experience Model in Improving the Effectiveness of Arabic Language Learning," *Izdihar : Journal of Arabic Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature* 7, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.22219/jiz.v7i1.30823>.

collective identity, and communicative discipline within students' daily life.⁶ Through the drama contest, students not only learn Arabic linguistically, but also experience organizational management, artistic creativity, emotional expression, and collaborative problem-solving as integral dimensions of holistic education.

Previous studies on Arabic curriculum development in pesantren have mainly focused on classroom instruction, competency-based curriculum models, sociolinguistic practices, and language environment formation⁷. However, limited research has explored drama performance as an experiential approach in Arabic curriculum development, particularly within the context of female Islamic boarding schools using an educational ethnography perspective.⁸ Most existing studies also emphasize formal instructional processes rather than performance-based language practices embedded in boarding school culture. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by examining how the Arabic Drama Contest contributes to Arabic curriculum development, communicative competence formation, and educational value internalization at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Campus 1.

This study employs a qualitative educational ethnography approach to investigate the cultural, pedagogical, and linguistic dimensions of the Arabic Drama Contest. Educational ethnography enables researchers to understand educational practices through direct observation of participants' interactions, institutional traditions, and lived experiences within their natural setting. Through this approach, the study aims to analyze the implementation process of the Arabic Drama Contest, explore its contribution to Arabic communicative competence, and identify its implications for Arabic curriculum development in modern Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using an educational ethnography approach. Educational ethnography is particularly appropriate for investigating educational practices, institutional culture, social interaction, and meaning-making processes within natural learning environments. Ethnographic inquiry enables researchers to understand how educational actors construct experiences, values, and learning traditions through daily interaction and cultural

⁶ Munir dan Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, "Characteristics of Preserving Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School Traditions: Lessons from Indonesia and Malaysia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2021): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2021.101.67-88>.

⁷ Ahmadi Ahmadi, "Ethnography of Code-Switching: A Classroom-Based Study in Bilingual (English–Arabic) Islamic Boarding Schools," *Tarling : Journal of Language Education* 9, no. 1 (2025): 153–78, <https://doi.org/10.24090/tarling.v9i1.14785>.

⁸ Kholis dan Mustofa, "Development of Competency-Based Arabic Language Curriculum in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools."

participation.⁹ In the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), ethnography is highly relevant because educational activities are deeply embedded in communal culture, disciplinary systems, language environments, and institutional traditions that cannot be separated from students' lived experiences.¹⁰

This research was conducted at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Campus 1, Indonesia, focusing on the implementation of the Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon as part of Arabic language activities within the boarding school environment. The study explored how the drama contest functioned as an experiential learning medium in the development of Arabic curriculum and communicative competence among students. The ethnographic approach allowed the researcher to examine not only the formal implementation of the activity, but also the hidden curriculum, social interaction, cultural symbolism, and educational values embedded within the program.

The participants of this study consisted of Arabic language teachers, drama supervisors, student committee members, dormitory leaders, and students participating in the Arabic Drama Contest. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement and understanding of the activity implementation. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative inquiry to obtain rich and contextually meaningful data from participants who possess relevant experiences and insights related to the research focus.¹¹ The diversity of participants enabled the researcher to capture multiple perspectives regarding curriculum implementation, language learning processes, and institutional culture.

Table 1. Research Participants and Their Roles

No.	Participants	Number of Participants	Roles in the Arabic Drama Contest	Research Contribution
1	Arabic Language Teachers	3	Supervising Arabic language accuracy, pronunciation, and dialogue delivery	Providing information on curriculum objectives and communicative learning practices
2	Drama Supervisors	2	Guiding rehearsals, character interpretation, and stage performance preparation	Explaining experiential learning processes and performance-based pedagogy

⁹ David Mills dan Missy Morton, *Ethnography in Education* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446251201>.

¹⁰ Dennis Beach dkk. (ed.), *The Wiley Handbook of Ethnography of Education*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), p. 23.

¹¹ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2024), <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/qualitative-inquiry-and-research-design/book290677>

3	Student Committee Members	5	Organizing schedules, coordinating participants, and managing technical preparation	Describing organizational culture and collaborative learning practices
4	Dormitory Leaders (<i>Musyrifah Rayon</i>)	4	Monitoring language discipline and students' participation during preparation	Explaining the integration of language environment and boarding school culture
5	Student Participants	12	Performing Arabic drama, practicing dialogue, and participating in rehearsals	Sharing lived experiences regarding communicative competence development
6	Curriculum Coordinator	1	Supervising the integration of extracurricular activities into Arabic curriculum programs	Providing institutional perspectives on curriculum development
	Total Participants	27		

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Participant observation was conducted during preparation sessions, rehearsals, language coaching, stage performances, and evaluation activities. Through prolonged engagement in the field, the researcher observed students' communicative interaction, collaborative learning processes, language use practices, and cultural participation during the drama contest. Ethnographic observation is essential for understanding how educational meanings are socially constructed through routine practices and symbolic interaction.¹²

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, student organizers, and participants to explore their perceptions, experiences, and reflections regarding the educational contribution of the Arabic Drama Contest. Interviews focused on the implementation process, communicative language development, experiential learning dimensions, and curriculum implications of the activity. In addition, documentation such as drama scripts, activity schedules, institutional regulations, evaluation records, photographs, and competition archives were analyzed to strengthen contextual understanding and support data triangulation.

¹² Geoffrey Walford, "The Practice of Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes," *Ethnography and Education* 4, no. 2 (2009): 117–130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820902972713>

Data analysis employed an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.¹³ The researcher first organized field notes, interview transcripts, and documents into thematic categories related to experiential learning, communicative competence, hidden curriculum, and curriculum development. The data were then interpreted inductively to identify patterns, meanings, and educational practices emerging from the field. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher continuously compared observational findings, interview responses, and documentary evidence to ensure analytical consistency and contextual validity.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability procedures as proposed in qualitative research standards.¹⁴ Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources, and member checking with participants. Transferability was supported through thick description of the pesantren context and activity implementation. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through systematic documentation of field data, reflective notes, and transparent analytical procedures.

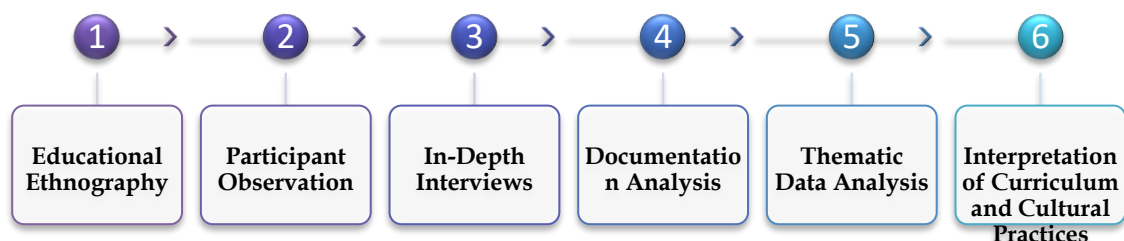


Figure 1. Research Design of Educational Ethnography

Ethical considerations were also carefully maintained throughout the study. Participants were informed about the objectives of the research and voluntarily agreed to participate in interviews and observations. Confidentiality and anonymity were preserved by using non-identifiable participant information in the research report. The researcher also respected institutional norms, boarding school regulations, and cultural values during the entire ethnographic process..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

¹³ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2020).

¹⁴ Branda Nowell dan Kate Albrecht, "A Reviewer's Guide to Qualitative Rigor," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 29, no. 2 (2019): 348–63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muy052>.

Results

Table 2. Stages of Arabic Drama Contest Activities

Stage	Main Activities	Arabic Focus	Language	Educational Values Developed
<i>Theme Determination</i>	Selecting drama themes and story concepts collaboratively among rayon members	Vocabulary exploration and thematic development	and language	Creativity, collaboration, collective decision-making
<i>Script Writing</i>	Composing Arabic dialogue scripts and adapting storylines	Sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary enrichment	application, and	Critical thinking, linguistic creativity
<i>Casting and Role Distribution</i>	Assigning characters based on students' abilities and participation	Pronunciation practice and dialogue comprehension	and dialogue	Responsibility, self-confidence
<i>Rehearsal Sessions</i>	Practicing dialogues, gestures, intonation, and stage movement	Speaking fluency (<i>maharah kalam</i>) and communicative interaction	fluency and	Discipline, teamwork, persistence
<i>Language Coaching</i>	Correcting pronunciation, grammar, and language expression under teacher supervision	Language accuracy and communicative competence	accuracy and	Reflective learning, continuous improvement
<i>Stage and Property Preparation</i>	Preparing costumes, stage design, sound systems, and visual elements	Contextual vocabulary and instructional communication	and	Leadership, organizational skills
<i>Final Performance</i>	Performing Arabic drama before judges and audience	Public speaking, spontaneous communication, and expressive language use	speaking, and	Confidence, emotional expression
<i>Evaluation and Reflection</i>	Conducting post-performance assessment and feedback sessions	Language reflection and self-assessment	reflection and	Responsibility, self-evaluation, collaborative reflection

The Arabic Drama Contest as an Experiential Arabic Learning Environment

The findings revealed that the Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon functioned as an experiential learning environment in which students actively practiced Arabic through authentic communication and collaborative performance. Based on classroom and field observations, students were intensively involved in

script preparation, vocabulary exploration, pronunciation training, dialogue memorization, role interpretation, and stage performance. These activities encouraged students to use Arabic not merely as an academic subject but as a communicative medium embedded in real social interaction.

During rehearsal sessions, students frequently practiced spontaneous dialogue correction, negotiated meaning among peers, and discussed dramatic expressions using Arabic instructions. The researcher observed that the learning atmosphere differed significantly from conventional classroom instruction because students demonstrated higher emotional engagement, creativity, and participation. The integration of artistic performance with language learning created a more contextualized and meaningful educational experience. An Arabic supervisor explained:

“In drama activities, students unconsciously practice Arabic continuously. They are not only memorizing vocabulary, but also learning how to express emotions, respond to situations, and communicate naturally in Arabic.”
(Interview with Arabic Drama Supervisor, February 2024)

Similarly, one student participant stated:

“Drama makes us brave to speak Arabic publicly. Even students who are usually shy become more confident because they have roles and responsibilities on stage.” (Interview with Student Participant, February 2024)

Documentation analysis of rehearsal schedules, script drafts, and evaluation sheets also demonstrated that the drama contest required systematic language preparation over several weeks. Students were guided to improve pronunciation accuracy, sentence structure, intonation, and expressive communication before the final performance. These findings indicate that the Arabic Drama Contest operated as a form of experiential language pedagogy emphasizing active participation and situated learning.

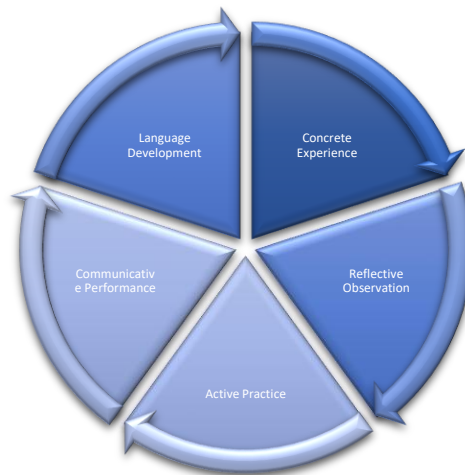


Figure 2. Experiential Learning Process in Arabic Drama Contest

Development of Arabic Communicative Competence through Performance-Based Learning

The study found that the Arabic Drama Contest significantly contributed to the development of students' communicative competence, particularly in speaking fluency (*maharah kalam*), pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and interactive communication. Observational findings showed that students gradually became more fluent and confident in using Arabic during rehearsals and informal interactions outside the performance setting.

The ethnographic observations further revealed that students often continued practicing Arabic dialogues in dormitory environments, dining areas, and organizational meetings. This phenomenon strengthened the *bi'ah lughawiyah* (Arabic language environment) within the *pesantren* culture. The drama contest therefore extended Arabic usage beyond formal instructional spaces into students' everyday social life. One language instructor explained:

“The most visible impact is students' speaking confidence. Students who rarely spoke Arabic before became more active because drama forces them to interact and perform publicly.” (Interview with Language Instructor, February 2024)

Field documentation also showed that each rayon developed unique thematic performances involving contemporary social issues, Islamic values, humor, and moral narratives in Arabic dialogue. This diversity encouraged students to adapt vocabulary and expressions according to communicative context, thereby strengthening sociolinguistic competence and linguistic creativity.

Moreover, students demonstrated improvement in non-linguistic communication skills such as gesture, emotional expression, voice projection, and teamwork coordination. The integration of verbal and non-verbal communication during stage performance enabled students to develop holistic communicative abilities rather than merely grammatical mastery.

Table 3. Findings on Arabic Communicative Competence Development

Aspect of Communicative Competence	Observational Findings	Interview Findings	Documentation Evidence
<i>Speaking Fluency (Maharah Kalam)</i>	Students demonstrated more spontaneous Arabic interaction during rehearsals and performances	Participants reported increased confidence in speaking Arabic publicly	Rehearsal notes and evaluation sheets showed improvement in dialogue delivery
<i>Vocabulary Mastery</i>	Students actively explored new vocabulary related to drama themes and daily communication	Teachers stated that students used more varied and contextual vocabulary expressions	Drama scripts contained thematic and situational Arabic expressions
<i>Pronunciation and Intonation</i>	Students gradually improved articulation, pronunciation accuracy, and expressive intonation	Supervisors emphasized significant improvement in pronunciation through repeated practice	Language correction records documented pronunciation revisions
<i>Communicative Confidence</i>	Students appeared more confident when speaking Arabic before audiences	Participants acknowledged reduced anxiety and fear of making mistakes	Performance assessment forms highlighted confidence development
<i>Interactive Communication Skills</i>	Students engaged in collaborative dialogue practice and peer correction activities	Teachers observed stronger interaction among students using Arabic during preparation periods	Observation field notes indicated increased Arabic interaction outside classrooms
<i>Sociolinguistic Competence</i>	Students adapted language expressions according to dramatic situations and character roles	Supervisors explained that students learned contextual and situational communication	Drama manuscripts reflected social and emotional language variation
<i>Non-Verbal Communication</i>	Students combined gestures, facial expressions, and	Participants stated that drama helped them express	Performance videos showed integration of verbal and non-

<i>Collaborative Language Learning</i>	emotional delivery effectively during performances	meaning words	beyond verbal communication
	Students practiced dialogues collectively and corrected peers' language mistakes	Student members emphasized teamwork language preparation	committee reports documented collaborative in rehearsal activities

The Arabic Drama Contest as Hidden Curriculum in Pesantren Education

Another significant finding of this study was that the Arabic Drama Contest functioned as a hidden curriculum within the pesantren educational system. Beyond language learning objectives, the activity implicitly transmitted educational values such as discipline, responsibility, leadership, collaboration, creativity, and collective solidarity.

Based on participant observation, students were responsible for managing rehearsal schedules, costume preparation, stage properties, script adaptation, and team coordination independently under teacher supervision. This process cultivated organizational and leadership skills through experiential participation. One student committee member stated:

“The drama contest teaches us how to cooperate, solve problems together, and manage time seriously because every rayon wants to give the best performance.” (Interview with Student Committee Member, February 2024)





The researcher also observed strong collective discipline during preparation periods. Students voluntarily practiced late at night, corrected each other's pronunciation, and collaboratively evaluated rehearsal performances. Such practices reflected the pesantren tradition of communal learning and mutual responsibility.



Figure 3. Hidden Curriculum Values Embedded in Arabic Drama Contest

Institutional documents further revealed that the Arabic Drama Contest was officially integrated into annual language division programs under the supervision of the student organization and language advisory board. This indicates that extracurricular language activities in the pesantren were systematically designed as complementary components of curriculum implementation rather than merely recreational programs.

Curriculum Development through Integrative and Cultural Learning Practices

The findings demonstrated that the Arabic Drama Contest contributed to Arabic curriculum development through integrative, participatory, and culture-based learning practices. The activity bridged formal classroom instruction with real communicative application, thereby reducing the gap between theoretical language learning and authentic language use.

The ethnographic data showed that Arabic learning in the pesantren context was constructed through interconnected educational spaces involving classrooms, dormitories, student organizations, competitions, and cultural performances. Consequently, curriculum implementation became holistic and socially embedded within students' daily experiences. An Arabic curriculum coordinator explained:

“Formal classes alone are not enough to build language competence. Activities like drama contests become practical laboratories where students apply what they learn in class.” (Interview with Curriculum Coordinator, March 2024)

Documentation of language programs also indicated that the Arabic Drama Contest was aligned with institutional objectives emphasizing communicative Arabic mastery, student creativity, and character development. The activity integrated linguistic competence, experiential learning, artistic performance, and Islamic educational values simultaneously.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Arabic Drama Contest represents an innovative model of Arabic curriculum enrichment in Islamic boarding schools. Through experiential and performance-based learning, the activity strengthens communicative competence while simultaneously fostering students' social, emotional, organizational, and cultural development within the pesantren educational ecosystem.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon represents a form of experiential language learning that transforms Arabic instruction from a classroom-oriented activity into a socially and culturally embedded educational practice. The integration of drama performance into Arabic learning enables students to acquire language through authentic interaction, emotional engagement, and collaborative participation. This finding supports experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that meaningful knowledge is constructed through direct experience and reflective participation rather than passive reception of information.¹⁵ In the context of language education, experiential learning facilitates communicative competence because learners actively negotiate meaning and use language within real situations.

The ethnographic observations further reveal that drama-based activities create a contextualized Arabic learning environment where students employ language spontaneously and interactively. Unlike conventional grammar-centered instruction, the drama contest encouraged students to practice pronunciation,

¹⁵ “Experiential_Learning_Experience_As_The_Source_Of_,” t.t.

intonation, emotional expression, and situational communication simultaneously. These findings align with Bora, who argues that drama pedagogy enhances oral fluency and authentic communication by allowing students to engage emotionally and socially with the target language.¹⁶ Similarly, Galante and Thomson emphasize that performative language pedagogy strengthens learners' confidence and communicative spontaneity because language is experienced as social action rather than merely linguistic structure.¹⁷

Another important finding concerns the role of the Arabic Drama Contest in strengthening communicative competence (*al-kafā'ah al-ittiṣāliyyah*). The study found that students demonstrated increased speaking confidence, vocabulary flexibility, and interactional fluency during both formal rehearsals and informal daily communication. This indicates that performance-based learning contributes not only to linguistic mastery but also to sociolinguistic adaptation and pragmatic competence. According to Richards, communicative competence develops more effectively when language learners participate in authentic interaction requiring negotiation, collaboration, and contextual expression. The findings therefore reinforce the argument that extracurricular language activities can function as strategic extensions of formal curriculum implementation.¹⁸

Table 4. Contributions of the Arabic Drama Contest to Arabic Curriculum Development

Curriculum Dimension	Contributions of the Arabic Drama Contest	Educational Implications
<i>Learning Approach</i>	Promotes experiential and student-centered Arabic learning through active participation and performance	Encourages contextual and communicative pedagogy in Arabic education
<i>Communicative Competence Development</i>	Strengthens speaking fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, and interactive communication	Supports the implementation of communicative Arabic teaching models
<i>Integration of Theory and Practice</i>	Connects classroom-based instruction with authentic	Reduces the gap between formal learning and real communicative use

¹⁶ S. F. Bora, "Curtain up! Enhancing L2 spontaneous and authentic speaking opportunities through play scripts and drama-based approaches," *Language Teaching Research* 25, no. 6 (2021): 915–935, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219887536>

¹⁷ The effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach for the development of second language oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness, A. Galante and R. I. Thomson, "The Effectiveness of Drama as an Instructional Approach for the Development of Second Language Oral Fluency, Comprehensibility, and Accentedness," *TESOL Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2021): 115–142, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.565>

¹⁸ Jack C. Richards, *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, t.t.

	language application in social contexts	
<i>Bi'ah Lughawiyah Development</i>	Expands Arabic language use into dormitory, organizational, and extracurricular environments	Reinforces sustainable Arabic language exposure in pesantren culture
<i>Hidden Curriculum Formation</i>	Internalizes discipline, leadership, teamwork, creativity, and responsibility through collaborative activities	Integrates character education into Arabic curriculum practices
<i>Student Engagement</i>	Increases motivation, emotional involvement, and confidence in Arabic learning	Creates meaningful and participatory learning experiences
<i>Cultural and Artistic Integration</i>	Combines language learning with drama performance, artistic expression, and cultural representation	Encourages interdisciplinary curriculum innovation
<i>Curriculum Innovation</i>	Positions extracurricular language programs as integral components of curriculum implementation	Expands the scope of curriculum beyond formal classroom instruction
<i>Social and Collaborative Learning</i>	Encourages peer interaction, cooperative learning, and collective problem-solving	Develops social communication and collaborative competencies
<i>Holistic Educational Development</i>	Integrates linguistic, cognitive, emotional, organizational, and social development simultaneously	Supports holistic Arabic education within the pesantren ecosystem

The continuation of Arabic interaction beyond rehearsal sessions also indicates the successful reinforcement of *bi'ah lughawiyah* within the pesantren environment. Ethnographic data showed that students continued practicing Arabic in dormitories, organizational meetings, and peer discussions, suggesting that the drama contest stimulated sustainable language habits. This finding supports previous studies asserting that language environments significantly influence second-language acquisition in Islamic boarding schools because language exposure becomes integrated into everyday social life. The pesantren system thus provides a unique ecosystem where formal curriculum, dormitory culture, and extracurricular activities collectively shape communicative language development.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the Arabic Drama Contest functions as a hidden curriculum within pesantren education. Beyond its explicit objective of improving Arabic proficiency, the activity implicitly transmitted values of discipline, leadership, collaboration, creativity, responsibility, and collective solidarity. Students were required to organize rehearsals, coordinate teams, solve performance problems, and manage time collectively, thereby developing social and organizational competencies through experiential participation. These findings

correspond with Jackson's concept of hidden curriculum, which explains that educational institutions transmit values and social norms through informal interaction and institutional culture.¹⁹

Within the pesantren context, hidden curriculum becomes especially significant because educational values are embedded in communal traditions and daily practices rather than solely in written curriculum documents. The Arabic Drama Contest exemplifies how cultural and organizational activities become pedagogical instruments for shaping students' character and social identity. This finding strengthens previous research arguing that pesantren education integrates moral formation, collective discipline, and language development through holistic educational experiences.²⁰ Consequently, Arabic learning in pesantren cannot be understood merely as cognitive instruction, but as a multidimensional educational process involving linguistic, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously.

Another notable contribution of this study lies in its analysis of curriculum development through integrative and participatory learning practices. The findings indicate that the Arabic Drama Contest bridges the gap between formal classroom instruction and authentic language application. Students no longer perceive Arabic merely as a subject to be memorized, but as a communicative tool used in meaningful social interaction and artistic expression. This reflects current perspectives on curriculum innovation emphasizing student-centered, project-based, and collaborative learning models.²¹

The drama contest also demonstrates how curriculum implementation in pesantren extends beyond formal academic structures into cultural performances and student organizations. In this regard, curriculum development is not limited to revising teaching materials or instructional methods, but includes designing educational ecosystems that facilitate authentic participation and experiential learning. Such findings support the view of curriculum as lived experience rather than merely written documentation.²² The ethnographic perspective employed in

¹⁹ Social education in the classroom: The dynamics of the hidden curriculum, H. A. Giroux and A. N. Penna, "Social Education in the Classroom: The Dynamics of the Hidden Curriculum," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 48, no. 4 (2020): 684–699, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2020.1803849>.

²⁰ Munir dan Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, "Characteristics of Preserving Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School Traditions: Lessons from Indonesia and Malaysia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2021): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2021.101.67-88>.

²¹ Linda Darling-Hammond, Lisa Flook, Channa Cook-Harvey, et al., "Implications for Educational Practice of the Science of Learning and Development," *Applied Developmental Science* 24, no. 2 (2020): 97–140, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>

²² Mark Priestley, ed., *Curriculum Making in Europe: Policy and Practice within and across Diverse Contexts*, First edition (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021).

this study therefore provides deeper insight into how curriculum operates within the social and cultural realities of Islamic boarding schools.

Moreover, the findings reveal that artistic performance serves as an effective medium for integrating language learning with creativity and emotional engagement. Students were not only trained to master linguistic structures, but also encouraged to interpret characters, construct narratives, and communicate values through dramatic representation. This interdisciplinary integration reflects twenty-first-century educational orientations emphasizing creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking as essential competencies for modern learners.²³ Consequently, drama-based Arabic learning contributes not only to communicative proficiency but also to broader student development.

This study also contributes methodologically by demonstrating the relevance of educational ethnography in investigating curriculum implementation within pesantren culture. Through prolonged observation and immersion in students' social environment, ethnography enables researchers to capture educational meanings, interactional dynamics, and hidden pedagogical processes that are often invisible in conventional curriculum studies. As argued by Mills and Morton, ethnographic approaches are particularly valuable for understanding how educational practices are socially constructed and culturally maintained in specific institutional contexts.²⁴

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the research focused on a single pesantren institution, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other Islamic boarding schools with different educational traditions. Second, the study primarily explored communicative and cultural dimensions of drama activities without quantitatively measuring language achievement outcomes. Future research may therefore combine ethnographic inquiry with mixed-method approaches to examine the measurable impact of drama-based Arabic learning on students' linguistic performance and long-term communicative competence.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Arabic Drama Contest represents an innovative and culturally grounded approach to Arabic curriculum development in Islamic boarding schools. Through experiential participation, performance-based interaction, and collaborative learning, the activity transforms Arabic education into a holistic educational experience integrating communicative competence, creativity, character formation, and institutional culture. The study therefore highlights the importance of integrating experiential and performance-oriented

²³ Joke Voogt and Natalie Pareja Roblin, "A Comparative Analysis of International Frameworks for Twenty-First Century Competences," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 54, no. 3 (2022): 299–321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2021.1881165>

²⁴ Mills dan Morton, *Ethnography in Education*.

pedagogies into Arabic language curriculum development within contemporary pesantren education.



Figure 4. Integrative Model of Arabic Curriculum Development in Pesantren

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Arabic Drama Contest Antar Rayon at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri Campus 1 functions not merely as an extracurricular performance activity, but as an experiential pedagogical model that substantially contributes to Arabic curriculum development within the pesantren educational system. Through drama-based learning, students actively engage in authentic communication, collaborative interaction, and contextual language practice that extend beyond formal classroom instruction. The findings demonstrate that the integration of theatrical performance into Arabic education strengthens communicative competence, speaking confidence, vocabulary acquisition, sociolinguistic adaptation, and spontaneous language use within the bi'ah lughawiyah of the pesantren.

The study further reveals that the Arabic Drama Contest operates as a form of hidden curriculum that simultaneously transmits educational values such as discipline, leadership, teamwork, responsibility, creativity, and collective solidarity. In this context, curriculum implementation is not confined to formal teaching materials or classroom activities, but is socially and culturally embedded within institutional traditions, student organizations, and boarding school life. The ethnographic findings therefore highlight that Arabic curriculum development in pesantren should be understood as a holistic educational process integrating linguistic competence, experiential participation, character formation, and cultural practice into a unified pedagogical ecosystem.

This research contributes theoretically by extending discussions on experiential learning and performance-based pedagogy in Arabic language education, particularly within Islamic boarding school contexts that remain underrepresented in international scholarship. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the relevance of educational ethnography for examining curriculum implementation as lived educational experience rather than merely formal policy documentation. Practically, the findings imply that Arabic language institutions

should incorporate more participatory, artistic, and collaborative learning activities into curriculum design to strengthen communicative competence and student engagement. Future studies are recommended to explore comparative pesantren contexts, longitudinal impacts of drama-based learning, and mixed-method approaches to measure the relationship between experiential activities and Arabic language achievement more comprehensively.

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