

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH (AL-MADKHAL AL-ITTISHALI) IN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the concept, principles, and implementation of the communicative approach (al-madkhal al-ittishali) in Arabic language learning, as well as to analyze its effectiveness and the challenges encountered in its implementation. The study is motivated by the fact that Arabic language learning in many educational institutions is still dominated by a structural approach oriented toward the mastery of nahwu (syntax) and sharaf (morphology), so that learners' active communicative ability, particularly speaking skill (maharah kalam), remains underdeveloped. This research employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. Data were collected through documentation techniques from scholarly journal articles, books, and prior research relevant to the communicative approach, second language acquisition theory, and the teaching of Arabic language skills. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis combined with thematic analysis. The findings show that the communicative approach positions communicative competence, rather than mere linguistic competence, as the primary goal of Arabic language learning, emphasizing authentic, contextual, and interactive language use through activities such as muhadatsah (conversation practice), simulation, role-play, and discussion. Various empirical studies indicate that the implementation of this approach consistently improves learners' speaking skills, although its implementation still faces challenges such as limited instructional time, the scarcity of an authentic Arabic-speaking environment, and teachers' tendency to revert to grammar-based teaching patterns. This study recommends strengthening teacher training, developing teaching materials based on communicative contexts, and creating a supportive language environment as strategic steps to optimize the implementation of the communicative approach in Arabic language learning.

Keywords: Communicative Approach; *Al-Madkhal Al-Ittishali*; Arabic Language Learning; Speaking Skill.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic occupies a strategic position in Islamic education because of its status as the language of the Qur'an, hadith, and the classical Islamic intellectual heritage. Mastery of Arabic is not merely an academic requirement but also an essential instrument for learners to access the primary sources of Islamic teachings directly. In practice, however, Arabic language learning in many madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions is still oriented toward mastering grammatical rules (qawa'id an-nahwu wa ash-sharaf) and vocabulary

memorization, while active communicative ability receives insufficient attention¹. As a result, many learners are able to understand Arabic sentence structure theoretically, yet struggle to use the language in real oral communication.

This problem has encouraged the emergence of alternative approaches to language teaching, one of which is the communicative approach (*al-madkhal al-ittishali*). This approach arose from criticism of the audiolingual method and the grammar-translation method, which were considered to overemphasize linguistic form while neglecting the function of language as a means of communication². The communicative approach holds that the ultimate goal of language learning is not merely mastery of grammatical structure, but the ability to use language appropriately according to social context, a notion Hymes termed communicative competence³. Canale and Swain later developed this concept into four dimensions of competence — grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence — all of which must be developed in an integrated manner in language learning⁴.

In the context of Arabic language learning, the communicative approach is translated into the four language skills — *istima'* (listening), *kalam* (speaking), *qira'ah* (reading), and *kitabah* (writing) — with particular emphasis on authentic and meaningful language use through activities such as dialogue, simulation, role-play, and discussion⁵. Various studies indicate that the implementation of this approach in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) and *madrasah* settings has encouraged learners to be more confident and active in speaking Arabic compared with learning centered solely on rote memorization of grammatical rules⁶.

Research on the communicative approach in Arabic language learning has in fact been conducted fairly extensively. Edi examined the theoretical foundations and principles of implementing the communicative approach in Arabic language learning in general, while Zaid described its implementation experience at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor⁷. Yunita and Pebrian, as well as Khotimah et al., focused more specifically on the application of the

¹ Relit N. Edi, "Pendekatan Komunikatif (Al Madkhol Al-Ittisholi) Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab," *Jurnal Al-Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (2012).

² Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 90–91.

³ Richards and Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, 159–161.

⁴ Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (1980): 1–47.

⁵ Ahmad Muradi, "Pendekatan Komunikatif dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab," *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab dan Kebahasaaraban* 1, no. 1 (2014).

⁶ Abdul Hafidz Zaid, "Pendekatan Komunikatif Dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Arab (Pengalaman Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor)," *At-Ta'dib* 7, no. 2 (December 12, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v7i2.77>.

⁷ Zaid, "Pendekatan Komunikatif Dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Arab."

communicative approach for developing speaking and listening skills within particular learning contexts⁸. Meanwhile, Royani and Ammar demonstrated quantitatively that the integrative-communicative approach based on muhadatsah significantly improved students' speaking ability⁹. Nevertheless, these studies are generally partial in nature, addressing only a single language skill or a single institutional context, and few have offered a comprehensive conceptual synthesis of the principles, implementation, effectiveness, and challenges of the communicative approach in Arabic language learning as a whole.

Based on this gap, the present study offers novelty in the form of a conceptual synthesis that integrates communicative approach theory from applied linguistics (Hymes, Canale and Swain, Krashen, Richards and Rodgers) with empirical findings on its implementation in Arabic language learning across various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Through a library research approach, this study is expected to enrich the body of knowledge on Arabic language education while providing practical recommendations for teachers and lecturers in optimizing the implementation of the communicative approach in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs the library research method with a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the concept, implementation, and effectiveness of the communicative approach in Arabic language learning. Data sources consist of primary data in the form of national and international scholarly journal articles discussing the communicative approach, second language acquisition theory, and the teaching of Arabic language skills, as well as secondary data in the form of Arabic language teaching methodology books and relevant prior research. Data collection was carried out through documentation techniques, namely identifying, selecting, and classifying literature based on thematic relevance, source credibility, and year of publication.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis combined with thematic analysis, involving data reduction, coding of key concepts, thematic grouping, synthesis of

⁸ Yenni Yunita dan Rojja Pebrian, "Metode Komunikatif Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Maharah Al-Kalam Di Kelas Bahasa Center for Languages and Academic Development," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 5, no. 2 (2020): 56–63, [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2020.vol5\(2\).5838](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2020.vol5(2).5838).

⁹ I. Royani dan F. M. Ammar, "Efektivitas Pendekatan Komunikatif Integratif Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Muhadatsah Pada Mahasiswa Mustawā Awwal (1) Putri, Ma'had Umar Bin Al-Khattab (MUBK), Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo," *Jurnal Pendidikan Non Formal* 3, no. 3 (2026): 58–67, <https://doi.org/10.47134/jpn.v3i3.2655>.

prior research findings, and interpretation based on the theoretical framework of the communicative approach. To maintain the credibility of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by comparing literature from applied linguistics, Arabic language teaching methodology, and field research on the implementation of the communicative approach across various levels of education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

A. Concept and Principles of the Communicative Approach

The findings indicate that the communicative approach (*al-madkhal al-ittishali*) is a language teaching approach that positions communication as both the goal and the means of learning¹⁰. Unlike the structural approach, which emphasizes the mastery of grammatical rules separately from their context of use, the communicative approach views language as a system for expressing meaning that functions within social interaction¹¹. The main principles of this approach include learner-centered instruction, the use of authentic materials, tolerance of language errors as long as they do not impede communication, and an emphasis on fluency without disregarding accuracy¹². Krashen adds a psycholinguistic perspective by asserting that language acquisition is optimal when learners receive comprehensible input in a learning atmosphere with a low affective filter, a condition that naturally arises in meaningful communicative activities rather than in rote memorization of grammatical rules.

In the context of Arabic language learning, this principle is realized through four integrated language skills, namely *istima'*, *kalam*, *qira'ah*, and *kitabah*, with *kalam* receiving the greatest emphasis because of its direct relevance to oral communicative ability¹³. The learning activities employed include guided and free dialogue, simulation of communicative situations, role-play, group discussion, and situational drills that bring learners closer to using Arabic in real-life contexts¹⁴.

B. Implementation of the Communicative Approach in Developing Speaking Skill

¹⁰ Muradi, "Pendekatan Komunikatif dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab."

¹¹ Hermawan, *Metodologi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab*.

¹² Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, 20–32

¹³ Julianti, Susilawati, dan Dede Rizal Munir, "Penggunaan Metode Dialog (*Muhawaroh*) Dalam Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Arab Kelas VII Di MTs Daarul Ma'arif Purwakarta," *Kalamuna* 3, no. 2 (July 2022).

Findings from various field studies show that the implementation of the communicative approach consistently contributes to the improvement of learners' speaking skill (maharah kalam). Suharmon, through classroom action research at MTsN Paninjauan, found that gradually conducted communicative exercises were able to increase students' confidence and fluency in speaking Arabic¹⁵. A similar finding was reported by Julianti, Susilawati, and Munir, who showed that the dialogue (muhawarah) method made learners more active and enthusiastic compared with lecture- and memorization-based methods¹⁶.

Quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of this approach was also found in Royani and Ammar's study of first-level students at Ma'had Umar Bin Al-Khattab, which showed an increase in the average muhadatsah score from 66.06 in the pre-test to 78.12 in the post-test following the implementation of the integrative-communicative approach. Similar results were reinforced by Amaris, Tatang, and Maulani, who identified various methods derived from the communicative approach, such as the direct method, community language learning, and the conversation method, as methods that empirically improve learners' Arabic language proficiency¹⁷. Meanwhile, Khotimah et al. emphasized that strengthening listening skill (istima') through the communicative approach is also an important prerequisite for successful speaking skill, since the two skills are reciprocal in oral communication.

C. Challenges in Implementing the Communicative Approach

Alongside these positive outcomes, the literature also reveals a number of challenges in implementing the communicative approach. These challenges include limited instructional time allocated for Arabic language learning in schools and madrasahs, the scarcity of an authentic Arabic-speaking environment outside the classroom, limited supporting facilities such as language laboratories, and the tendency of some teachers to revert to grammar-based teaching patterns because it is easier to assess¹⁸. Yunita and Pebrian further noted that teachers' pedagogical competence in designing varied communicative activities is a

¹⁵ Suharmon, "Upaya Peningkatan Keterampilan Berbicara Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Melalui Latihan Komunikatif Di MTsN Paninjauan Kabupaten Tanah Datar," *Ta'dib* 12, no. 1 (September 2016).

¹⁶ G. A. W. Amaris, Tatang, dan H. Maulani, "Metode-Metode Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berdasarkan Pendekatan Komunikatif Untuk Meningkatkan Kecakapan Berbahasa," *Mumtaza* 2, no. 2 (2023): 1-18.

¹⁷ G. A. W. Amaris, Tatang, dan H. Maulani, "Metode-Metode Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berdasarkan Pendekatan Komunikatif Untuk Meningkatkan Kecakapan Berbahasa," *Mumtaza* 2, no. 2 (2023): 1-18.

¹⁸ M. H. Khotimah et al., "Pendekatan Komunikatif Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Maharah Istima' dan Kalam," *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research* 4, no. 6 (2024).

determining factor in the success of this approach, making teacher training an indispensable need¹⁹.

Discussion

The findings above confirm that the shift from a structural orientation toward a communicative orientation in Arabic language learning is a response to learners' real need to be able to communicate, rather than merely to understand language rules theoretically. This is consistent with Hymes's view, which criticized Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence as overly abstract and neglectful of the context of language use in society²⁰. Communicative competence requires learners not only to be able to construct grammatically correct sentences, but also to use language appropriately according to the situation, interlocutor, and communicative purpose.

The four-competence framework developed by Canale and Swain helps explain why Arabic language learning that emphasizes only grammatical competence tends to fail to produce learners capable of active communication. Without the development of sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, learners may master nahwu-sharaf rules well yet still struggle to initiate or sustain even a simple conversation. The communicative approach, by emphasizing activities such as muhadatsah and simulation, directly trains these three competencies through authentic language experience.

Krashen's perspective on comprehensible input and the affective filter is also relevant in explaining why communicative activities that do not impose excessive evaluative pressure tend to be more effective than learning based on memorization and strict error correction. A relaxed, meaning-oriented learning atmosphere gives learners room to attempt using Arabic even when it is not yet grammatically perfect, as found in the studies by Suharmon and Julianti et al., which recorded increased confidence and enthusiasm among students following the implementation of communicative exercises.

Quantitative data from Royani and Ammar's study further reinforce the argument that the communicative approach is not merely a theoretical framework but has a measurable impact on improving learners' speaking ability²¹. Nevertheless, such effectiveness does not

²⁰ Canale and Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches."

²¹ Royani dan Ammar, "Efektivitas Pendekatan Komunikatif Integratif."

occur automatically; it depends heavily on teachers' readiness to design activities that are genuinely communicative, rather than simply relabeling a method without changing the essence of classroom teaching practice²². Therefore, implementation challenges such as limited time, the scarcity of a language-rich environment, and the tendency to revert to structural teaching patterns need to be addressed through strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence, developing teaching materials based on communicative contexts, and creating a supportive Arabic-speaking environment both inside and outside the classroom²³.

Overall, this discussion confirms that implementing the communicative approach in Arabic language learning is a strategic step to bridge the gap between mastery of linguistic rules and active communicative ability. The synthesis of applied linguistics theory and empirical field findings shows that the success of this approach depends on the consistent implementation of its principles as a whole, rather than a partial or merely formal methodological application.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the communicative approach (*al-madkhal al-ittishali*) is an Arabic language teaching approach that positions communicative competence as its primary goal, emphasizing authentic, contextual, and meaningful language use through activities such as *muhadatsah*, simulation, role-play, and discussion. The results of this library research indicate that the implementation of this approach consistently contributes to improving learners' speaking skill, as evidenced by various empirical studies, both descriptive-qualitative and quantitative-experimental in nature. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the communicative approach cannot be separated from a number of challenges, such as limited instructional time, the scarcity of an authentic Arabic-speaking environment, and teachers' tendency to revert to grammar-based teaching patterns.

Further research is recommended to empirically test the implementation of the communicative approach across more diverse educational levels and institutional contexts, using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches, in order to obtain a more comprehensive implementation model. On the practical side, strengthening pedagogical training for Arabic language teachers, developing teaching materials based on communicative

²²Effendi, *Metodologi Pengajaran Bahasa Arab*.

²³Arsyad, *Bahasa Arab dan Metode Pengajarannya*.

contexts, and creating a supportive language environment are strategic steps that must continue to be pursued so that Arabic language learning produces not only mastery of grammatical rules, but also the active communicative ability that constitutes the ultimate goal of language learning.

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