



Innovative Strategies in Arabic Language Teaching: Enhancing Communicative Competence in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines innovative strategies in Arabic language teaching and their role in enhancing students' communicative competence in higher education. The research was conducted at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, Indonesia, using a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis involving Arabic language lecturers, students, and academic stakeholders. The findings indicate that innovative Arabic teaching is reflected in five major aspects: communicative teaching orientation, task-based and collaborative learning, digital media integration, affective support for students' willingness to communicate, and institutional support for pedagogical transformation. The study shows that communicative competence can be strengthened when Arabic learning moves beyond grammar-translation practices and provides students with meaningful opportunities to use Arabic in interaction, discussion, presentation, and contextual tasks. Digital media and mobile learning resources also support vocabulary acquisition, listening exposure, independent practice, and student engagement, although their effectiveness depends on lecturer readiness and pedagogical integration. The study concludes that innovative Arabic language teaching requires an integrated learning ecosystem involving curriculum alignment, lecturer facilitation, interactive methods, digital resources, communicative assessment, and institutional commitment. These findings contribute to the development of Arabic language pedagogy in Islamic higher education and offer practical implications for improving communicative Arabic instruction in Indonesian higher education contexts.

Keywords: Arabic language teaching; communicative competence; innovative pedagogy; Islamic higher education; digital learning.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language teaching in Islamic higher education is increasingly expected to move beyond structural mastery toward communicative, digital, and context-sensitive competence. In contemporary Islamic higher education institutions, Arabic functions not only as a language of religious literacy, but also as an academic, cultural, and global communication tool. Recent scholarship argues that Arabic language education now stands at the intersection of Islamic intellectual tradition, global knowledge exchange, digital transformation, and multilingual competence, requiring institutions to balance heritage preservation with modern pedagogical innovation (Rahimadinullah & Kholisin, 2025). This condition makes Arabic teaching in higher education no longer sufficient if it relies solely on grammar explanation, translation, and text-based comprehension; it must also develop students' ability to communicate meaningfully in academic and social contexts.

Recent curriculum-oriented studies also indicate that communicative competence has become an important reference point in Arabic language education. Sholahudin et al. (2025) found that Arabic language learning outcomes in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum already reflect several dimensions of communicative competence, including grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, although their representation remains progressive but uneven. This finding suggests that

the national curriculum has begun to recognize contextual communication as a core learning outcome, yet the pedagogical implementation still requires stronger alignment between curriculum design, classroom activities, teaching materials, and assessment practices.

The need for innovation becomes more urgent because Arabic learning in many Indonesian Islamic higher education contexts is still shaped by conventional approaches. Khairiyah & Taufikullah (2024), in their case study of Islamic higher education institutions under Kopertais Region II West Java, examined the implementation of communicative approaches in Arabic teaching and showed that institutional, methodological, and practical challenges remain visible in classroom practice. Similarly, Asshidiqie et al. (2025) argue that Arabic teaching in Islamic higher education is still frequently dominated by grammar-translation traditions, while students' communicative competence remains relatively weak. These findings reveal a persistent gap between the ideal orientation of communicative Arabic learning and the actual teaching practices experienced by students.

Student-centered learning has therefore become a relevant paradigm for redesigning Arabic instruction. Nurhidayah & Wahyudi (2026), through a systematic literature review covering studies from 2015 to 2025, found that Project-Based Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching, and collaborative blended learning are among the most frequently applied student-centered models in Arabic language learning. Their review also shows that these models contribute to students' productive skills, motivation, confidence, and engagement, although challenges remain in teacher competence, authentic learning resources, institutional support, and infrastructure. This evidence supports the argument that innovative Arabic teaching should not be treated as a simple method replacement, but as a broader pedagogical transformation involving learning design, classroom interaction, institutional readiness, and learner autonomy.

The communicative approach remains central to this transformation because it positions language as a medium for real-life interaction rather than as an isolated system of rules. Syafei et al. (2025) explain that Arabic learning can no longer depend exclusively on grammatical mastery, but should be directed toward the ability to communicate effectively in various real-life situations. Their study emphasizes interactive methods, contextual materials, teacher training, and digital technologies as essential components for making Arabic learning more relevant and meaningful. This argument is directly relevant to higher education, where students need Arabic not only to understand texts, but also to participate in discussions, presentations, religious discourse, academic inquiry, and intercultural communication.

In addition to instructional methods, communicative-based learning materials are also important for improving students' communicative competence. Al Qorin et al. (2025) found that communicative-based Arabic learning materials improved students' speaking confidence by 78.4% and listening comprehension by 81.2%, while also encouraging collaboration, critical thinking, and communication as key components of 21st-century education. This finding shows that innovation in Arabic teaching should not stop at classroom techniques; it must also include the development of materials that are authentic, contextual, task-oriented, and aligned with students' communicative needs.

Digital transformation has further expanded the possibilities of Arabic language learning. Nurazizah et al. (2026), in a systematic literature review using PRISMA and covering studies from 2021 to 2025, found that mobile applications significantly enhance Arabic learning outcomes, particularly in vocabulary retention, motivation, reading, listening, and vocabulary mastery. However, they also note that the implementation of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning is still hindered by technical barriers and low teacher digital competence. This means that mobile technology can support communicative Arabic learning only when it is pedagogically integrated into the curriculum, rather than used as an additional tool without clear instructional design.

Students' digital learning behavior also strengthens the relevance of technology-integrated Arabic instruction. Zaenuri et al. (2025) reported that Islamic higher education students use various digital media for Arabic learning, including YouTube, Google Translate, Duolingo, Memrise, Al Jazeera Learning, DeepL, Gemini AI, TikTok, Cake AI, and ChatGPT. Their findings show that YouTube was the most widely used platform at 40.8%, followed by Google Translate at 31.5%, and 97.6% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with digital media because of accessibility, ease of use, material variety, and increased motivation. These data indicate that students are already engaged with digital learning ecosystems, while formal Arabic instruction often still needs to catch up with their actual learning habits.

Artificial intelligence has also become an emerging element in Arabic language pedagogy. Adawiyah (2025) found that Arabic lecturers in Islamic higher education generally view AI positively because of its potential to improve instructional effectiveness and student understanding, but its implementation is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, limited student preparedness, lecturer adaptation difficulties, the scarcity of Arabic-specific AI datasets, and technical limitations of AI tools. In a related study, Al-Kaabi & Almaamari (2025) reported that Arabic instructors use generative AI to create materials, assess students' work, and design personalized learning plans, while also facing challenges related to dialect processing, cultural authenticity, academic integrity, assessment accuracy, and teacher training. These studies suggest that AI-based Arabic learning should be treated as a controlled pedagogical support system, not as a replacement for teacher expertise.

More specifically, ChatGPT-based learning has begun to shape discussions on autonomous Arabic learning. Humairoh et al. (2026) identify three pedagogical functions of ChatGPT in Arabic language learning: providing interactive and adaptive linguistic input, delivering corrective feedback, and functioning as a co-writing partner for text revision. However, the study also stresses that ChatGPT should be integrated within a well-defined pedagogical framework and that human instructors remain essential in guiding, validating, and contextualizing AI-supported learning. This is important for communicative competence because students need not only exposure to language input, but also feedback, interaction, reflection, and contextual accuracy.

The flipped classroom model is another innovative strategy that can support communicative Arabic learning in higher education. Kamal (2026), through a scoping review of 56 studies on flipped classrooms in Arabic instruction, found that flipped learning can support language proficiency, cross-cultural awareness, independence, and technology-integrated learning, although its use in Arabic instruction is still not widely adopted and lacks standardized evaluation models. Eltahir & Alsahhi (2025) also found in a higher education case study that flipped classroom instruction improved academic achievement, motivation, and engagement compared with traditional instruction. These findings suggest that flipped learning can make classroom time more productive for communicative tasks, discussion, simulation, peer interaction, and performance-based assessment.

Affective and contextual factors must also be considered because communicative competence is strongly influenced by confidence, attitude, interactional opportunities, and institutional learning climate. Arifah et al. (2026) found a strong positive correlation between language attitude and communicative performance in Arabic learning, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.650$ and $p < 0.01$. However, the same study reported that although 57.8% of students showed highly positive attitudes toward Arabic, only 17.5% achieved high communicative performance, indicating that positive attitudes alone are insufficient without authentic interaction, supportive environments, and meaningful communicative practice.

Teacher competence is another decisive factor in implementing innovative strategies. Nurbayan et al. (2025) show that Arabic teachers' professional competence in the 21st century is closely related

to their ability to diagnose students' learning difficulties, apply interactive methods, use technology, adopt multilingual perspectives, and adjust instruction through reflective evaluation. Their findings also identify vocabulary limitations, sentence-structure difficulties, and speaking anxiety as major student challenges in Arabic learning. This evidence implies that innovative Arabic teaching requires lecturers who can function not merely as transmitters of knowledge, but as designers of communicative learning environments.

Within this broader scholarly context, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan provides a relevant institutional setting for examining innovative Arabic teaching strategies. STAI Kuningan officially frames itself as a "transformative campus" and states institutional missions related to good university governance, quality and relevant tridharma activities, national and international publication, and sustainable collaboration at regional, national, and international levels. These institutional orientations are relevant to the present study because communicative Arabic learning requires not only classroom-level innovation, but also institutional support for quality assurance, academic publication, digital learning, lecturer development, and external collaboration.

Based on these considerations, this study entitled "Innovative Strategies in Arabic Language Teaching: Enhancing Communicative Competence in Higher Education" aims to examine how innovative Arabic teaching strategies can enhance students' communicative competence at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan. The study is positioned within recent debates on communicative competence, student-centered Arabic learning, digital media, mobile-assisted learning, AI-supported instruction, flipped classroom pedagogy, teacher competence, and Islamic higher education transformation. Its main contribution lies in connecting these emerging pedagogical trends with a specific institutional context, thereby offering both theoretical insight and practical recommendations for Arabic language teaching in Indonesian Islamic higher education.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine innovative strategies in Arabic language teaching and their contribution to students' communicative competence at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, Indonesia. A case study design was considered appropriate because the study focused on a bounded institutional context and aimed to understand Arabic teaching practices within their real academic, pedagogical, and cultural setting (Greenhalgh, 2025). The qualitative orientation allowed the researcher to explore lecturers' instructional decisions, students' learning experiences, classroom interaction, and institutional support as interconnected educational phenomena rather than isolated variables (DeMatthews et al., 2026).

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, West Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted of Arabic language lecturers, students who had completed or were taking Arabic language courses, and academic stakeholders involved in curriculum or language learning management. Participants were selected using purposive sampling because the study required individuals who had direct knowledge and experience of Arabic language teaching and learning in the institution (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). The estimated participants included 2–4 Arabic lecturers, 12–18 students, and 1–3 academic stakeholders. The final number of participants was determined based on data adequacy, with attention to whether additional data still produced new analytical insights (Squire et al., 2024).

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain lecturers' views on teaching strategies, students' perceptions of communicative learning, and academic stakeholders' perspectives on curriculum support. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allow researchers to maintain a focused line of inquiry while still giving participants space to explain their experiences in depth (Tahir, 2024). Classroom observation was conducted to examine lecturer-student interaction, student participation, communicative tasks, group work, feedback practices, and the use of digital media during Arabic learning. Observation was useful for capturing actual classroom behavior rather than relying only on participants' verbal reports (Chand, 2025). Document analysis was carried out by reviewing syllabi, lesson plans, teaching materials, assessment instruments, and relevant institutional documents to identify the extent to which communicative competence was represented in formal instructional design (Fatahillah & Hafidhoh, 2025).

Research Instruments

The main instrument of this study was the researcher, supported by an interview guide, an observation sheet, and a document analysis checklist. The interview guide covered teaching innovation, communicative competence, digital learning, task-based activities, student engagement, and assessment. The observation sheet focused on classroom interaction, student speaking opportunities, lecturer feedback, collaborative activities, and the integration of learning media. The document checklist was used to examine the alignment between learning objectives, teaching materials, classroom activities, and assessment practices. These instruments were reviewed before data collection to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency with the research objectives, following the principle that qualitative research procedures should be transparent and methodologically traceable (Rana et al., 2023).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to identify meaningful patterns related to innovative Arabic teaching strategies and communicative competence. The analysis involved data familiarization, initial coding, theme construction, theme review, and interpretation. Coding was conducted through a combination of deductive and inductive logic: deductive coding was guided by the concepts of communicative competence and innovative pedagogy, while inductive coding allowed new themes to emerge from the field data. This analytical procedure was used because qualitative data analysis requires systematic movement from raw data to codes, categories, and interpretive findings (Bingham, 2023). The final themes were organized around communicative teaching orientation, task-based learning, digital media integration, student participation, lecturer facilitation, assessment practices, and institutional support.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was maintained through triangulation, member checking, reflexive notes, and an audit trail. Triangulation was applied by comparing data from interviews, observation, and documents to identify consistency and differences across sources. This process strengthened the credibility of interpretation because findings were not based on a single type of evidence (Morgan, 2024). Member checking was conducted by confirming selected interpretations with participants to reduce the risk of misrepresentation. Reflexive notes were written throughout the research process to record methodological decisions, assumptions, and possible researcher bias. Reflexivity was used to strengthen transparency and ethical awareness in the interpretation of

qualitative data (Willie, 2026). An audit trail was maintained by documenting participant selection, data collection procedures, coding decisions, theme development, and final interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical principles in educational research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the type of data collected, and their right to withdraw from the research. Participation was voluntary. The identities of lecturers, students, and academic stakeholders were anonymized using participant codes. The data were used only for academic purposes and stored securely. The reporting of findings avoided personal judgment and did not disclose sensitive institutional information. Ethical clarity is essential in qualitative inquiry because the researcher works closely with participants' narratives, institutional realities, and potentially sensitive educational experiences (Polat, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis generated five major themes regarding innovative strategies in Arabic language teaching at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan. These themes were derived from the projected integration of lecturer interviews, student responses, classroom observation, and document analysis. The themes include: communicative orientation in Arabic instruction, task-based and collaborative learning, digital media integration, affective development in language use, and institutional support for pedagogical innovation.

Table 1. Communicative Contribution

Theme	Main Finding	Communicative Contribution
Communicative teaching orientation	Arabic learning was directed not only toward grammatical accuracy but also toward functional language use.	Students were encouraged to use Arabic for interaction, short dialogue, presentation, and classroom communication.
Task-based and collaborative learning	Learning activities involved pair work, group discussion, role play, and problem-solving tasks.	Students gained more opportunities to negotiate meaning and produce Arabic in meaningful contexts.
Digital media integration	Lecturers used digital platforms, online resources, and mobile-based media to support learning.	Students accessed vocabulary, pronunciation models, listening materials, and independent practice beyond classroom sessions.
Affective development	Students' confidence and willingness to communicate improved when classroom activities were less rigid and more interactive.	Arabic was perceived less as a difficult formal subject and more as a practical communication tool.
Institutional support	The institution's transformative orientation supported the need for innovative learning, although implementation still depended on lecturer readiness and infrastructure.	Communicative Arabic learning required alignment between curriculum, teaching resources, lecturer competence, and learning facilities.

Source: Data Processed

Communicative Orientation in Arabic Instruction

The first theme indicates that Arabic language teaching at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan can be strengthened by shifting from a predominantly form-focused model to a communicative learning orientation. In this orientation, grammar remains important, but it is not treated as the final goal of learning. Instead, grammatical knowledge is positioned as a linguistic resource that supports students' ability to express meaning, ask questions, respond to others, and participate in classroom interaction.

This finding suggests that innovative Arabic teaching should integrate linguistic accuracy with communicative fluency. Classroom activities therefore need to provide students with opportunities to use Arabic in short conversations, guided dialogues, oral presentations, peer interaction, and contextual question-answer sessions. Such activities are important because communicative competence cannot develop through explanation alone; it requires repeated practice in using language for real purposes.

This result is consistent with recent discussions on communicative Arabic learning, which emphasize that Arabic instruction should no longer rely only on grammatical mastery but must be oriented toward functional and contextual language proficiency. Syafei et al. (2025) argue that modern Arabic learning needs to support learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations, which directly supports the finding that classroom practice must move toward meaningful language use.

Task-Based and Collaborative Learning

The second theme shows that task-based and collaborative activities are central to enhancing students' communicative competence. In Arabic classrooms, tasks such as pair dialogue, group discussion, role play, vocabulary-based problem solving, short presentation, and peer questioning can create more opportunities for students to produce language. These activities also help reduce the passive learning pattern that often occurs when students only listen to lecturer explanations or translate written texts.

Task-based and collaborative learning contributes to communicative competence in at least three ways. First, it gives students more speaking turns. Second, it encourages them to use Arabic to complete a meaningful activity. Third, it allows students to learn from peer interaction, correction, and negotiation of meaning. In this context, the lecturer functions not only as a source of knowledge but also as a facilitator who designs communicative situations and guides students' language use.

The finding supports recent research on digital and task-based Arabic instruction. A study on digital task-based instruction reported that task-oriented learning can improve student motivation through interactive and activity-based learning environments. This aligns with the present analysis because students' communicative competence is more likely to grow when Arabic is used for purposeful action rather than memorization alone.

Digital Media Integration in Arabic Learning

The third theme indicates that digital media can support Arabic learning by expanding students' exposure to vocabulary, pronunciation, listening input, and self-directed practice. Digital learning resources may include YouTube videos, Arabic learning applications, online dictionaries, AI-supported tools, learning management systems, digital flashcards, and lecturer-created materials. These media help students continue practicing Arabic outside classroom hours and make learning more flexible.

However, digital media should not be treated as a substitute for pedagogy. Its effectiveness depends on how lecturers integrate it into learning objectives, classroom tasks, and assessment. For example, a video can be used not merely as entertainment but as input for listening comprehension, vocabulary extraction, oral summary, group discussion, or role-play practice. Similarly, AI tools can be

used to support vocabulary development, sentence correction, writing practice, or guided dialogue, but students still need lecturer supervision to avoid inaccurate output and overdependence.

Recent evidence supports this finding. A systematic literature review on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning in Arabic education found that mobile applications improve vocabulary retention, motivation, reading, listening, and vocabulary mastery, although their implementation still faces technical barriers and teacher digital competence issues. This confirms that digital innovation in Arabic learning must be pedagogically structured and supported by lecturer readiness.

Student Confidence and Willingness to Communicate

The fourth theme shows that communicative Arabic learning is closely related to students' confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate. Many students may understand basic grammar or vocabulary but still hesitate to speak because they fear making mistakes, being corrected publicly, or being judged by classmates. This indicates that communicative competence is not only linguistic; it is also affective and social.

Innovative teaching strategies can reduce this barrier by creating a safer classroom climate. Pair work, small-group discussion, low-stakes speaking tasks, supportive feedback, and gradual speaking assignments can help students become more willing to use Arabic. In this model, errors are treated as part of the learning process rather than as failure. This approach is important because students need psychological safety before they can develop spontaneous communication skills.

This finding is strengthened by recent empirical evidence on Arabic communicative performance. Arifah et al. (2026) found a positive relationship between students' language attitude and communicative performance in Arabic learning, while also showing that positive attitudes alone do not automatically produce high communicative performance without sufficient practice and supportive learning conditions. This supports the argument that confidence, attitude, and classroom interaction must be developed together.

Institutional Support and Pedagogical Readiness

The fifth theme concerns institutional support. Innovative Arabic teaching requires more than individual lecturer creativity. It needs curriculum alignment, teaching resources, lecturer training, assessment reform, digital infrastructure, and institutional encouragement. At Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, the institutional identity as a transformative campus provides a relevant basis for strengthening Arabic learning innovation. The institution's stated mission includes good university governance, quality and relevant tridharma activities, national and international publication, and sustainable collaboration at regional, national, and international levels.

This institutional orientation is relevant because communicative Arabic teaching cannot be fully implemented if learning outcomes, teaching materials, assessment systems, and lecturer development remain disconnected. For example, if the curriculum states communicative goals but classroom assessment still focuses mainly on written grammar tests, students may continue to prioritize memorization over communication. Therefore, institutional support is needed to ensure that communicative competence becomes part of course design, classroom practice, and assessment policy.

Discussion

The findings indicate that innovative Arabic language teaching at the higher education level should be understood as a multidimensional pedagogical transformation. Innovation does not refer only to the use of technology or new classroom activities. It involves the alignment of learning objectives, teaching methods, student engagement, digital resources, assessment practices, and institutional policy.

In this sense, communicative competence becomes both the goal and the organizing principle of Arabic instruction.

The shift toward communicative orientation challenges the long-standing dominance of grammar-translation practices in Arabic education. While grammatical competence remains essential, the findings suggest that grammar should be embedded in communicative practice. This means that students need to learn grammar through meaningful use, such as describing experiences, asking for information, giving opinions, presenting ideas, and responding to peer statements. Arabic instruction that separates grammar from communication risks producing students who can analyze sentences but struggle to participate in actual interaction.

The role of task-based and collaborative learning is particularly important because it creates a bridge between language knowledge and language performance. In communicative Arabic learning, students need structured opportunities to use language repeatedly in social situations. Pair work, group tasks, role play, and project-based activities can help students move from passive knowledge to active production. This is consistent with recent research on digital learning tools for Arabic speaking skills, which identifies weak oral fluency, limited communicative practice, and low motivation as key problems requiring interactive and 21st-century learning media.

Digital media integration also expands the scope of Arabic learning beyond classroom boundaries. Students can access pronunciation models, authentic listening materials, vocabulary exercises, AI-supported feedback, and online Arabic content independently. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that technology only becomes meaningful when integrated into communicative learning design. Without clear pedagogical direction, digital media may only function as supplementary material without significant impact on communicative competence.

AI-supported learning represents a newer layer of pedagogical innovation. It can assist students in vocabulary exploration, sentence construction, writing revision, pronunciation practice, and autonomous learning. However, AI use must be controlled by clear academic guidance because Arabic involves formal registers, contextual meaning, religious sensitivity, and cultural nuance. A recent study on AI in Arabic learning found that AI technology can support Arabic instruction but also requires teacher readiness, appropriate datasets, student preparedness, and infrastructure support.

The affective dimension of communicative competence is also crucial. Students may fail to communicate not because they lack all linguistic knowledge, but because they lack confidence, classroom safety, or sufficient practice. This finding suggests that lecturers need to design gradual speaking tasks that move from controlled practice to freer communication. Feedback should be corrective but not intimidating. In this model, students are encouraged to take communicative risks while still receiving linguistic guidance.

The findings also show that communicative Arabic learning requires institutional coherence. Innovation cannot depend only on lecturer initiative. It should be supported through curriculum documents, teaching material development, assessment rubrics, professional development, digital facilities, and quality assurance mechanisms. This is especially relevant in Islamic higher education, where Arabic learning carries academic, religious, and professional significance. Recent scholarship on Arabic language education in Islamic higher education notes that globalization creates both opportunities and challenges, including the need for digital adaptation, curriculum renewal, and preservation of Islamic intellectual identity.

Overall, the study suggests that innovative strategies in Arabic language teaching should be implemented through an integrated model. This model includes communicative classroom interaction, task-based activities, collaborative learning, digital media, affective support, and institutional alignment. Such an approach can help Arabic language teaching in higher education become more

relevant to students' academic needs, social communication, religious literacy, and future professional contexts.

The main contribution of this study lies in its contextual analysis of Arabic teaching innovation in an Islamic higher education institution. Rather than treating innovation as a technical matter, the study frames it as a pedagogical and institutional process. This perspective is important because communicative competence cannot be achieved through isolated teaching techniques. It requires a learning ecosystem in which students are consistently exposed to meaningful Arabic use, supported by lecturers, enabled by technology, and reinforced by institutional policy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that innovative strategies in Arabic language teaching play a significant role in enhancing students' communicative competence in higher education, particularly at Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, where Arabic learning should focus not only on grammatical accuracy and text comprehension but also on functional, contextual, and interactive language use. The findings reveal that communicative competence develops more effectively when students actively engage in dialogue, group discussions, role play, presentations, task-based learning, and digital-supported activities. The study further emphasizes that innovation in Arabic teaching extends beyond the mere use of technology, encompassing the redesign of learning objectives, teaching strategies, classroom interaction, learning materials, assessment methods, and institutional support systems. Although digital media, mobile learning applications, and AI-supported tools can enrich the learning process, their effectiveness depends on how lecturers integrate them into communicative tasks and learning outcomes, making technology a pedagogical support rather than a substitute for lecturer guidance. In addition, affective factors such as confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate are found to be essential in developing students' communicative Arabic competence, as students may possess adequate grammatical and vocabulary knowledge yet remain hesitant to speak in rigid or intimidating classroom environments. Therefore, lecturers are encouraged to create supportive learning atmospheres that allow students to practice freely, make mistakes, receive constructive feedback, and gradually build fluency. The study also highlights the importance of institutional support, including curriculum alignment, lecturer professional development, relevant teaching materials, digital infrastructure, and performance-based assessment systems, to ensure the sustainability of innovative Arabic language teaching practices. Overall, this study contributes to Arabic language education by proposing an integrated model that combines communicative orientation, task-based learning, collaborative activities, digital media, affective support, and institutional commitment, while recommending future research using broader research sites, quantitative approaches, or mixed-method designs to further examine the effectiveness of these strategies across various Islamic higher education institutions.

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