

Enhancing students' linguistic competence through Arabic conversational training: evidence from an Islamic boarding school context

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Arabic conversational training in enhancing students' linguistic competence at Madani Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School, Deli Serdang, specifically at the MTs level. The research employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The sample consisted of 31 students selected from the boarding school population. Data were collected through speaking tests and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques by comparing mean scores before and after the implementation of Arabic conversational training. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' linguistic competence after the intervention. The post-test results show higher mean scores compared to the pre-test, indicating that structured conversational practice effectively supports students' ability to use Arabic more fluently and accurately in daily communication. This improvement suggests that consistent exposure to guided Arabic conversation contributes positively to developing students' speaking proficiency in a real communicative context. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the implementation of Arabic conversational training within a pesantren environment, where traditional language learning often emphasizes grammatical knowledge rather than active speaking practice. This research demonstrates that integrating communicative training into Islamic boarding school language instruction can bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical language use. The study implies that Arabic language teaching in Islamic boarding schools should shift toward more interactive and communicative approaches. Educators are encouraged to incorporate structured conversational activities to enhance students' active language skills. This approach not only improves linguistic competence but also increases students' confidence in using Arabic in real-life situations.

Keywords: Arabic Conversation Practice, Linguistic Competence

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Introduction

Language is both a means of communication and a tool for thinking. Using language means utilizing it as a medium to convey ideas to others. If someone can apply it effectively, both orally and in writing, they will be able to adapt to their social environment, thrive in society, and influence their surroundings. Language plays a vital role in life because it is the primary means for humans to communicate, convey ideas, and build social relationships. Through language, individuals can express thoughts, feelings, and experiences, thus creating meaningful interactions with others. Furthermore, language functions as a tool for acquiring knowledge, transmitting culture, and strengthening group identity. Without language, communication would be hindered, and human social and intellectual development would be limited. Therefore, language is an essential foundation for shaping civilization and enriching daily life.

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Arabic has many advantages, and numerous educational institutions, such as schools, madrasas, and universities, have made it a primary and significant subject. However, it is undeniable that in the process of learning Arabic, students inevitably face certain challenges. These difficulties include limited vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and differences in pronunciation systems that are not always aligned with their native language. In addition, psychological factors such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes often become barriers to communication. Nevertheless, with consistent practice, appropriate learning strategies, and a supportive learning environment, these challenges can be overcome, enabling students to gradually improve their linguistic competence (Muflihah et al., 2023; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024; Muhajir et al., 2025).

Learning Arabic in Islamic boarding schools plays a crucial role, not only as a means of religious communication but also as a way to understand Islamic teachings directly from their original sources. However, several studies indicate that students' ability to actively use Arabic remains low, particularly in speaking skills. Although students have studied grammatical rules such as *nahwu* and *sharaf* for years, many still struggle to communicate in daily contexts (Allam, 2025). This is further supported by research conducted by Yunadi, which highlights that limited opportunities for communication practice are a primary cause of weak Arabic speaking skills in Islamic boarding schools. Moreover, psychological factors such as speaking anxiety and lack of self-confidence exacerbate these difficulties (Siti Maesaroh et al., 2025).

The development of Arabic language learning in madrasas has not yet reached the expected outcomes, partly because the methods used do not sufficiently support students in actively using the language. Education and teaching are complex processes involving multiple elements, among which the teacher plays a central role. Teachers significantly influence the success of the learning process through the selection of appropriate methods, strategies, and learning environments (Ulfah, 2023). Therefore, one approach considered effective in addressing this imbalance is the *muhadatsah* method, or active dialogue. This method focuses on direct language practice in various social and contextual situations, providing students with opportunities to develop functional communication skills. This approach aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which views language as a tool for interaction rather than merely a set of rules. The implementation of *muhadatsah* in modern Islamic boarding schools has been shown to improve students' fluency and spontaneity, as they are trained to use the language in real-life situations. In addition, continuous practice through this method also helps students reduce hesitation and gradually build confidence in speaking Arabic more naturally and effectively (Abusyairi, 2022).

The Madani Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School in Deli Serdang is an Islamic educational institution that seeks to improve the quality of Arabic language learning by implementing various methods, including Arabic conversation exercises integrated into students' daily activities. However, the effectiveness of these conversation practices in improving students' linguistic competence still requires empirical and systematic investigation. Based on interviews conducted with the principal and teachers of MTs Pondok Pesantren Madani Ikhwanul Hasanah Deli Serdang, it was found that students' linguistic competence remains relatively low despite various efforts. This condition is influenced by several factors, including limited vocabulary mastery, difficulties in understanding grammar, insufficient practice intensity, limited opportunities for active communication, and low levels of self-confidence among students. These findings indicate the need for more appropriate, varied, and sustainable learning strategies (Masrukhi & Wicaksono, 2023).

In line with recent developments in Arabic language pedagogy, there has been a paradigm shift from grammar-based instruction to communicative approaches that emphasize active language use. Approaches such as *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT), task-based learning, and interactive dialogue methods have been widely recognized as effective in improving speaking skills, fluency, and learner confidence. However, previous studies have not specifically examined the effectiveness of structured Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*) in enhancing students' linguistic competence in a comprehensive manner, particularly within specific Islamic boarding school contexts that have unique learning environments. In addition, most existing studies tend to be descriptive and lack empirical evidence that directly measures the impact of conversation-

based training on key aspects of linguistic competence, such as vocabulary mastery, fluency, and communicative confidence (Zakly et al., 2025).

Based on this gap, this study offers novelty by empirically examining the effect of structured Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*) on students' linguistic competence in an Islamic boarding school setting. This research not only focuses on speaking skills but also provides a more comprehensive analysis that includes vocabulary mastery, speaking fluency, and students' confidence in communication. In addition, this study is expected to strengthen the existing literature by providing contextual evidence on how structured conversational practice can systematically enhance multiple aspects of language proficiency. Thus, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of Arabic language learning and practically by offering effective and applicable instructional strategies in classroom settings (Munasib & Dardjito, 2020).

Based on the preceding discussion, this study aims to examine the effect of Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*) on improving students' linguistic competence at Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School in Deli Serdang. Arabic conversation training is positioned as a crucial instructional strategy within communicative language learning, as it emphasizes active interaction, meaningful practice, and the functional use of language in real contexts. Through structured and continuous conversation practice, students are expected to develop not only their speaking ability but also other interconnected language skills such as listening, vocabulary mastery, and grammatical accuracy (Zarkasyi et al., 2022).

Linguistic competence, as the dependent variable in this study, refers to learners' ability to understand and produce language appropriately based on linguistic rules, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure. Previous studies have indicated that the development of linguistic competence is strongly influenced by the intensity of language exposure and active usage in communicative settings (Zahirah, 2023). Therefore, Arabic conversation training is assumed to have a significant impact on enhancing students' linguistic competence, particularly in fostering fluency, accuracy, and confidence in language use.

Furthermore, this study also takes into account supporting variables such as learning motivation, student participation, and interaction patterns during the learning process, all of which are widely recognized as important factors influencing successful language acquisition. In addition, attention to classroom dynamics and learner engagement is considered essential, as these elements can significantly affect the intensity and quality of language practice among students. By integrating these aspects, Arabic conversation training is expected to create a more interactive, engaging, and supportive learning environment that not only encourages active participation but also facilitates the gradual and sustainable development of students' overall language proficiency (Thohir & Imannisya, 2020).

Based on the above description, this study aims to examine the effect of Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*) on improving students' linguistic competence at Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School in Deli Serdang. Arabic conversation training emphasizes active communication and meaningful interaction, which are essential for developing language skills. Linguistic competence refers to students' ability to use language accurately and appropriately, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the integration of language skills (Purnomo, 2025). In addition, this study also considers supporting variables such as learning motivation and student participation, which significantly influence language learning outcomes.

The focus of this study is as follows:

1. the implementation of Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*),
2. the level of students' linguistic competence, and
3. the effect of Arabic conversation training on improving students' linguistic competence.

The findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to Arabic language education, particularly in strengthening communicative approaches and offering recommendations for improving students' linguistic competence in Islamic boarding school contexts.

Literature review

Arabic conversation practice

Arabic conversation practice is commonly referred to as muhadatsah (المحادثة), which denotes an interactive oral communication activity involving two or more individuals using Arabic to convey ideas, thoughts, opinions, and emotions in a meaningful, contextual, and purposeful interaction (Masrukhi & Wicaksono, 2023). In Arabic language pedagogy, muhadatsah is not positioned as a supplementary activity, but rather as one of the fundamental pillars of language acquisition, particularly in developing learners' ability to use Arabic as a living language in real communicative settings. This emphasizes that language learning is not only about understanding grammatical rules or memorizing vocabulary lists, but also about the ability to actively use the language in spontaneous and functional communication. In this regard, muhadatsah reflects the essence of language as a social tool for interaction and meaning-making (Sani et al., 2023).

In broader instructional practice, Arabic conversation serves as a communicative approach that encourages continuous interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. The classroom is transformed from a teacher-centered environment into a more interactive and student-centered space, where learners are actively involved in negotiating meaning, expressing ideas, and responding to communication in real time (Ratnaningtyas & Mufidah, 2023). This approach is strongly aligned with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes that language is best learned through meaningful communication rather than through mechanical drills or isolated grammatical exercises. CLT views interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of language learning, meaning that learners are expected not only to learn about the language but also to learn to use the language effectively in authentic contexts (Takdir & AR, 2020).

Within this framework, students are continuously encouraged to engage in speaking and listening activities that require them to respond spontaneously in Arabic. Such practices include question-and-answer sessions, role-playing, dialogue simulations, group discussions, and situational conversations that reflect real-life communication scenarios. Through these activities, learners gradually develop communicative competence, which includes grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. In addition, repeated exposure to conversational practice helps reduce speaking anxiety, build self-confidence, and improve fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation over time (Marlina et al., 2023).

Empirical research also supports the effectiveness of communication-based learning in improving Arabic language proficiency. Studies have shown that students who are actively engaged in conversational activities tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, participation, and language achievement compared to those who rely solely on traditional lecture-based instruction (Busthomi Ibrohim & Nesa Novrizal, 2025). This is because interactive learning environments stimulate learners' cognitive and affective engagement. When students are given opportunities to speak and respond in Arabic, they are more likely to internalize vocabulary, understand sentence structures in context, and retain linguistic knowledge for longer periods. Furthermore, active participation in conversation also fosters a sense of ownership in learning, which contributes to sustained motivation and continuous improvement (Musaddad, 2021).

In addition, muhadatsah functions as an integrative language-learning activity that simultaneously develops multiple linguistic components. These include vocabulary enrichment, grammatical accuracy, phonological awareness, listening comprehension, and pragmatic competence. Rather than treating these components separately, conversation practice integrates them naturally within communicative tasks. For instance, during dialogue activities, students must select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatically correct sentences, pronounce words accurately, and interpret their interlocutor's responses in real time. This integrated nature of muhadatsah makes it a highly effective method for developing holistic language proficiency (Hasan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, according to Assyifa and Sayekti (cited in Zahirah, 2023), structured conversation practice has been proven to significantly enhance students' speaking skills in Arabic. Structured activities such as guided dialogues, controlled practice, and gradually free communication tasks help learners move from guided production to independent language use.

This gradual scaffolding process allows students to build confidence and competence step by step, reducing cognitive overload while improving fluency and accuracy. As a result, learners are better prepared to use Arabic in both academic and real-world contexts.

Beyond linguistic development, Arabic conversation practice also plays an important role in fostering socio-cultural awareness. Language is deeply connected to culture, and effective communication requires understanding not only linguistic forms but also cultural norms, values, and communication styles of Arabic-speaking communities. Through muhadatsah, students are exposed to expressions of politeness, greetings, social etiquette, and culturally appropriate ways of interaction. This exposure helps learners develop intercultural competence, enabling them to communicate more appropriately and effectively in diverse social contexts (Hairani et al., 2022).

Moreover, the implementation of muhadatsah in classroom settings also contributes to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. During conversational tasks, learners are often required to think quickly, formulate responses, and adapt their language use according to the situation. This cognitive engagement enhances mental flexibility and improves learners' ability to process language under real-time conditions. Over time, such experiences build linguistic automaticity, where learners can use Arabic more naturally without excessive conscious effort (Abna & Nawawi, 2021).

In conclusion, Arabic conversation practice (muhadatsah) represents a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to language learning that integrates linguistic, cognitive, communicative, and socio-cultural aspects. It not only strengthens students' speaking abilities but also enhances their overall communicative competence, confidence, and cultural understanding. Therefore, muhadatsah holds a strategic position in Arabic language education as an effective pedagogical approach for producing learners who are capable of using Arabic fluently, accurately, and appropriately in various communicative situations (Ridha et al., 2026).

Linguistic competence

The concept of linguistic competence was introduced by Noam Chomsky, who distinguishes between competence and performance as two fundamental dimensions of language ability. Competence refers to an individual's internalized, mental knowledge of the rules that govern a language system, including how sentences are formed and how meaning is structured. In contrast, performance refers to the actual use of language in real communicative situations, which is often influenced by external factors such as memory limitations, psychological conditions, attention, fatigue, and environmental constraints (Nengah & I Ketut, 2022). This distinction emphasizes an important pedagogical implication: possessing theoretical knowledge of language rules alone does not guarantee effective communication unless learners are also able to apply that knowledge in real-life interaction (Hairani et al., 2022).

Linguistic competence itself encompasses a broad range of abilities that allow individuals to understand and produce language accurately, appropriately, and effectively in both spoken and written forms. It includes mastery of core linguistic components such as grammar (rules of structure), vocabulary (lexical knowledge), pronunciation (phonological accuracy), and syntax (sentence construction). In addition, linguistic competence is closely integrated with the development of the four fundamental language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which function in a mutually reinforcing system (Mahfudz, 2023). When these components are well-developed, learners are able to construct coherent messages, interpret meaning correctly, and engage in communication that is both linguistically accurate and contextually appropriate (Diana et al., 2023).

Beyond structural knowledge, linguistic competence also involves the ability to use language flexibly according to different communicative contexts. This means that learners are expected not only to produce grammatically correct sentences, but also to select appropriate expressions based on social situations, interlocutors, and communicative purposes. Therefore, linguistic competence serves as a foundation for broader communicative competence, as it enables learners to function effectively in diverse interactional settings (Muizudin, 2023).

In the process of language learning, the development of linguistic competence is highly dependent on the intensity of practice, exposure to input, and frequency of language use (Setiyono et al., 2025). Repeated exposure to meaningful language input and active engagement in output

activities significantly contribute to vocabulary retention, grammatical development, and overall language fluency. Through continuous interaction with the language, learners gradually internalize linguistic structures, making language use more automatic and less cognitively demanding over time. This process of internalization is essential for achieving fluency and accuracy in communication (Ridha et al., 2026).

One of the most effective strategies to enhance linguistic competence is through structured and consistent conversation practice, or *muhadatsah*. Engaging in regular Arabic conversation provides learners with opportunities to apply linguistic knowledge in authentic communicative contexts, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical language use. In such interactive settings, students are required to retrieve vocabulary, construct sentences, and interpret responses in real time, which strengthens both their cognitive processing and linguistic accuracy. This experiential learning process allows grammar and vocabulary to move from passive knowledge to active usage (Wahyuni & Setiyawan, 2024).

Moreover, conversation practice contributes significantly to the improvement of multiple language components simultaneously. It enhances speaking ability by encouraging spontaneous expression, improves listening comprehension through continuous exposure to spoken input, strengthens grammatical accuracy through corrective feedback, and develops pragmatic awareness by exposing learners to context-sensitive language use (Zainuri & Wahyudi, 2023). In this way, *muhadatsah* functions as an integrative pedagogical tool that supports holistic language development rather than isolated skill training.

In addition, regular participation in conversational activities plays an important role in building learners' confidence and fluency. Many language learners experience anxiety when speaking a foreign language, especially in formal or academic settings. However, through repeated interaction in a supportive environment, learners gradually become more comfortable expressing themselves, experimenting with language, and responding spontaneously. As emphasized by (Sari, 2020), communicative activities such as conversation practice enable learners to develop more natural, meaningful, and context-sensitive language use, which is essential for real-life communication (Rohman et al., 2023).

Furthermore, linguistic competence developed through *muhadatsah* also supports learners' academic achievement. Students who have strong linguistic foundations are better able to understand texts, participate in discussions, and complete written assignments effectively. This demonstrates that linguistic competence is not only relevant for oral communication but also plays a crucial role in overall academic performance, particularly in language-based subjects such as Arabic studies (Musaddad, 2021).

Therefore, it can be concluded that Arabic conversation practice (*muhadatsah*) is a vital pedagogical strategy in enhancing students' linguistic competence. Through continuous, meaningful, and interactive language use, learners are able to strengthen their mastery of linguistic components, improve fluency and accuracy, and develop the ability to communicate effectively in both academic and real-life contexts. In this way, *muhadatsah* serves as a bridge between linguistic knowledge and practical communication skills, making it an essential element in Arabic language learning (Syukur et al., 2023).

Method

A research method is a systematic set of procedures used by researchers to obtain valid and reliable data in order to answer research questions. It includes approaches, techniques, and structured steps that are aligned with the objectives of the study. In general, research methods are categorized into qualitative and quantitative approaches. Therefore, the selection of an appropriate research method is essential to ensure that the research process is logical, systematic, and accountable (Juliani & Syahbudin, 2025).

Research design

This study employs a quantitative research method with a correlational approach. The quantitative approach is used because the study focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to examine the relationship between variables objectively. The correlational design aims to

determine whether there is a significant relationship between the Arabic conversation training method (*muhadatsah*) and students' linguistic speaking competence.

Through this design, the researcher seeks to identify patterns of relationship between variables without manipulating them. The results are presented statistically and interpreted descriptively to provide a clear and structured understanding of the phenomenon under study (Ilhami et al., 2022).

Population and sample

The population of this study consists of all female students at the Madani Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School (PMIH), specifically at the MTs (Islamic Junior High School) level. The total population is 31 students, distributed as follows:

Table 1. Population of PMIH Female Students

No	Class	Population
1.	VII B MTs	9
2.	VIII B MTs	14
3.	IX B MTs	8
	Total	31

This study uses a total sampling technique, meaning that the entire population is selected as the research sample. This technique is appropriate due to the relatively small population size and allows the researcher to obtain comprehensive and representative data without excluding any subjects.

Data collection techniques

The data in this study were collected using the following techniques: Test instrument. The primary instrument used in this research is a linguistic ability test designed to measure students' Arabic speaking skills. The test is developed based on specific indicators of speaking competence and may include oral performance assessments. The purpose of this test is to obtain measurable data regarding students' abilities after participating in Arabic conversation training (*muhadatsah*). Documentation. Documentation is used as a supporting data collection technique. It includes activity records, learning materials, and photographs of students' participation in the learning process. These documents provide additional evidence and help strengthen the research findings by offering contextual and visual data.

Data analysis techniques

The data analysis in this study uses quantitative statistical techniques, particularly correlational analysis. The researcher analyzes the relationship between the independent variable (Arabic conversation training) and the dependent variable (students' linguistic speaking competence). To support the analysis, descriptive statistics such as mean scores are used to present an overview of students' performance. In addition, correlation analysis is applied to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between variables. Furthermore, a comparison of students' performance can be observed through pre-test and post-test scores to identify any improvement in linguistic competence. The results of the analysis are then interpreted systematically to draw conclusions that are relevant to the research objectives.

Results

Based on the results of the analysis and processing of the research data, a description of the findings can be presented systematically. The data obtained from the study were organized and analyzed to provide a clear overview of the research outcomes. Furthermore, the presentation of these results aims to facilitate readers in understanding the patterns and key findings derived from the data. The detailed results are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Description of Research Data

Research Data	Mean	Std	Max Value	Min Value
Pretest Results	43,06	8,73	60	25
Posttest Results	85,00	6,32	95	70

Furthermore, based on Table 2, the description of the research data can be presented in the following graph:

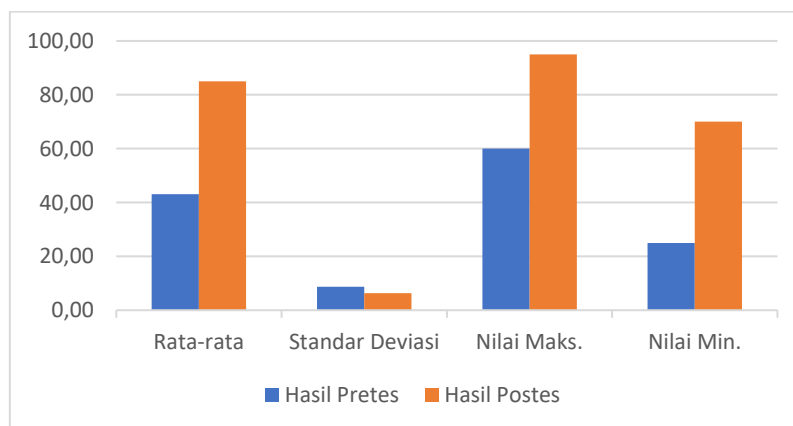


Figure 1. Description of Research Data

The results of testing the data analysis requirements for research data can be stated as follows:

Table 3. Data Normality Test Results

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Posttest	.145	31	.095	.935	31	.060
Pretest	.122	31	.200*	.958	31	.266

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on Table 3, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test show that the sig. value is >0.05, so it can be concluded that the research data is normal, which means that the data collected follows a normal distribution (Gaussian distribution).

Table 4. Data Homogeneity Test Results

		Tests of Homogeneity of Variances			
		Levene			
		Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Hasil Penelitian	Based on Mean	3.699	1	60	.059
	Based on Median	3.173	1	60	.080
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.173	1	54.996	.080
	Based on trimmed mean	3.576	1	60	.063

Based on Table 4 above regarding the results of the data homogeneity test, it is known that the sig. value is > 0.05, so it can be concluded that the research data is homogeneous, which means that the data comes from a population that has consistent properties or characteristics so that there are no major differences in its variations.

The results of testing the improvement of students' linguistic competence through Arabic conversation practice can be seen through the N-Gain calculation from the average pretest and posttest scores, namely:

$$N\text{-Gain} = \frac{\text{Skor Posttes} - \text{Skor Pretes}}{\text{Skor Maksimum} - \text{Skor Pretes}}$$

$$N\text{-Gain} = \frac{85,00}{100} - \frac{43,06}{43,06}$$

$$N\text{-Gain} = \frac{41,94}{56,94}$$

$$N\text{-Gain} = 0,74$$

Furthermore, the N-Gain value obtained is 0.74, which is included in the high category based on the scoring provisions in Table 5, which are stated as follows:

Table 5. N-Gain Criteria

No	Percentage	Criteria
1.	N-Gain > 0,70	High
2.	0,30 ≤ N-Gain ≤ 0,70	Medium
3.	N-Gain < 30	Low

Based on Table 5 regarding the N-Gain criteria, it can be concluded that testing the improvement of students' linguistic abilities using conversation exercises resulted in pretest and posttest results with an N-Gain of 0.74. The N-Gain results above are in the high category, indicating that the learning carried out was able to provide significant improvements to students' linguistic abilities. The high N-Gain value proves that the conversation exercises applied were effective in helping students understand the material, develop skills, and improve linguistic abilities.

The visualization of the statistical summary of the test on the improvement of the students' linguistic abilities is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Effectiveness Test Statistics

		Paired Samples Test					Significance			
		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Postes - Pretes	41.935	8.532	1.532	38.806	45.065	27.366	30	<.001	<.001

Based on Table 6, it is known that the calculation result of the significance level of 0.001 is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 (0.001 < 0.05). Thus, it can be concluded that the students' linguistic competence obtained an N-Gain value of 0.74 in the high category, which proves that there was an increase in the students' linguistic competence before and after learning using conversation exercises.

Discussion

The results of the study prove that the linguistic competence of the students is in the high category, which means that there is a change in the form of an increase in the linguistic competence of the students before and after learning using conversation exercises, especially in using Arabic. Improving linguistic competence is also linked to the role of teachers, whose competencies are crucial in the world of education. Teachers are not merely transmitters of material, but also guides, motivators, and role models for students. With these competencies, teachers act as facilitators who help students discover their potential, as motivators who foster a passion for learning, and as character builders who instill moral and social values (Juliani et al., 2025).

Language skills are one of the most important skills in human life, as they are the primary means of communication, conveying ideas, and understanding others. Through language, a person can express thoughts and feelings, and build social relationships. Furthermore, language skills play a significant role in education, employment, and cultural development. Language is not just about words; it also encompasses how to structure sentences, choose appropriate vocabulary, and understand the context of communication. People with good language skills typically find it easier to convey ideas clearly, are able to adapt to various situations, and interact more effectively. Linguistic ability in Arabic refers to a person's skills in understanding, using and mastering aspects of the Arabic language as a whole. This includes phonological skills (pronunciation of Arabic letters with correct makhraj), morphology (formation of words through a system of roots and patterns), syntax (arranging sentences according to nahwu rules), and semantics (understanding the meaning of words and sentences).

In this regard, teachers must be able to choose the right approach to learning because each student has different needs, learning styles, and backgrounds. With their pedagogical competence, teachers can adapt learning methods, strategies, and media to suit the characteristics of their students. For example, teachers can use a contextual approach to relate material to everyday life, a cooperative approach to foster cooperation, or an individual approach to provide special attention to students who need it (Juliani et al., 2023). Furthermore, linguistic competence also involves pragmatic skills, namely how Arabic is used in everyday communication contexts, both orally and in writing. A good command of Arabic linguistics enables one to correctly read classical texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, understand Arabic literature, and communicate effectively in modern conversation. To practice Arabic linguistic skills, structured and consistent methods are required. First, increasing practice reading Arabic texts, both classical and modern, will help enrich your vocabulary and improve your understanding of sentence structure. Second, deepening your understanding of grammar and morphology is crucial for constructing sentences correctly according to the rules. Third, practicing listening to Arabic conversations or lectures will train your phonological skills and understanding of context.

Conversation practice is one of the most effective ways to improve language skills, including Arabic. By practicing speaking directly, one can develop fluency, expand vocabulary, and become accustomed to using correct sentence structure. Conversation also helps train phonology, namely the pronunciation of letters and words according to the makhraj, and pragmatics, namely the use of language in real-life communication contexts (Fathur Rohman, 2023; Chapakiya et al., 2025; Sukenti & Tambak, 2025). Conversation practice in Arabic is an important method for improving active communication skills. Through conversation, Arabic language students can practice speaking fluency, improve their pronunciation of letters according to makhraj, and get used to using vocabulary and correct sentence structures. This activity also helps hone listening skills, because conversation requires quick understanding of what the other person is saying (Wahyuni dan Setiyawan, 2024). Conversation practice provides real-life experience in using Arabic, both in formal and everyday contexts. For example, simple conversations involving self-introductions, asking how someone is doing, or discussing daily activities can be effective practice. With regular practice, linguistic skills not only develop theoretically but are also honed in real-life communication, making Arabic feel more alive and easier to use (Zainuri dan Wahyudi, 2023).

Efforts to improve linguistic competence can be achieved through various targeted and sustainable strategies. First, strengthen the theoretical foundation by studying grammar (nahwu) and morphology (sharaf) to develop a deeper understanding of language structure. Second, enrich

your vocabulary by reading Arabic texts, both classical and modern, to broaden your semantic abilities. Third, practice listening and speaking skills by participating in conversations, discussions, or listening to Arabic audio materials to hone your phonology and pragmatics. Conversation practice plays a crucial role in improving linguistic competence, particularly in Arabic. Through regular speaking activities, students are able to practice fluency, improve the correct pronunciation of Arabic sounds, and become more familiar with appropriate vocabulary usage and sentence structures. This continuous exposure helps learners internalize language patterns more naturally, making communication more accurate and effective. In addition, conversational practice also strengthens listening skills, since students are required to respond quickly and appropriately to what their interlocutor says. Over time, this interaction builds both accuracy and confidence in using the language in real communicative situations (Susilawati et al., 2024). Conversation exercises serve as a means of practicing learned linguistic theories, such as grammar and grammar. Through direct interaction, students can test their understanding of grammar, semantics, and pragmatics in everyday communication contexts. This makes linguistic competence not just theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that can be applied in a variety of situations.

The combination of conversation practice and mastery of linguistic aspects will accelerate the development of overall Arabic language skills. Conversation practice develops fluency, listening sensitivity, and the ability to use vocabulary in real contexts. Meanwhile, mastery of linguistic aspects such as grammar, grammar, phonology, and semantics provides a strong theoretical foundation for constructing sentences correctly and understanding meaning in depth. When these two elements are combined, students not only master language theory but are also able to apply it in everyday communication. As a result, self-confidence increases, interactions become more effective, and Arabic language skills develop in a balance between theory and practice. With consistency, this combination will make the learning process more meaningful and effective (Qia, 2025). Conversation practice supports students' linguistic competence because through speaking practice, they can directly apply the language theory they have learned in real-life communication situations. Continuous conversational activities help students become more fluent, expand their vocabulary, and strengthen their understanding of sentence structures in accordance with grammatical rules. In addition, speaking practice also trains students' ability to think spontaneously in the target language, which is an important aspect of communicative competence. Oral interaction further improves listening skills, enabling students to quickly and accurately comprehend meaning in various contexts. Therefore, regular conversation practice plays an essential role in developing both productive and receptive language skills in an integrated way (Aprizal, 2021; Tambak et al., 2022; Chapakiya et al., 2025; Namora et al., 2025).

By practicing conversation regularly, students not only improve their phonological and semantic abilities but also develop pragmatic competence, namely the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. This continuous exposure helps students understand how meaning is constructed and interpreted in real communication, not just in theory. As a result, their linguistic competence becomes more comprehensive because they are able to integrate grammatical knowledge with actual language use in daily interaction. In addition, regular speaking practice reduces hesitation and builds self-confidence, making students more effective and fluent in communicating in Arabic. Ultimately, this integration of theory and practice strengthens overall communicative competence in a more meaningful way (Nabiila et al., 2025). Conversation practice supports students' linguistic competence in learning because through speaking practice, students can directly apply the language theory they have learned in real-life communication. Conversations improve fluency, enrich vocabulary, and strengthen understanding of sentence structure according to the rules of grammar and grammar. Furthermore, oral interaction also hones listening skills, allowing students to quickly and accurately grasp meaning.

Linguistic ability is a person's capacity to understand, use, and manipulate language in various forms. It encompasses speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as well as the ability to understand the meaning, structure, and nuances of language. This ability is crucial because it forms the basis for communication, learning, and self-expression. People with high linguistic ability typically learn new languages easily, are good at arguing, and are able to express their ideas

effectively (Atikah et.al, 2023; Tambak & Sukenti, 2025; Abdullah et al., 2025; Firdaus et al., 2025; Rasyidi et al., 2025). By practicing conversation regularly, students not only improve their phonology and semantics but also develop pragmatic skills, namely the use of language in social contexts. This enhances linguistic competence, as students are able to combine theory with practice, thus becoming more confident and effective in communicating in Arabic both in the learning process and in everyday life (I. T. Wahyuni dan Zar, 2025). Linguistic skills need to be developed through conversational exercises so that the theory learned can be truly internalized in real-life communication. Conversations train students to use vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar and grammar principles directly, so that language is not only understood theoretically but also actively practiced. By practicing speaking, listening, and responding to others, aspects of phonology, semantics, and pragmatics can develop in a balanced manner (Effi dan Maemonah, 2022; Tambak et al., 2025).

Linguistic ability is a person's ability to understand, use, and process language to communicate effectively. This ability encompasses listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as an awareness of language structure and rules. With good linguistic ability, a person can convey ideas clearly, understand others' messages, and express their ideas both orally and in writing (Umar Gani dan Dwi Puspita, 2024). Consistent conversation practice will strengthen self-confidence, improve communication fluency, and enhance linguistic competence. This makes learning Arabic more effective, as students not only master the language's rules but also apply them in everyday interactions (Izza et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study concludes that students' Arabic linguistic competence at the Madani Ikhwanul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School in Deli Serdang falls into the high category, as evidenced by a significant improvement in their abilities before and after the implementation of conversation exercises. These findings indicate that structured and consistent Arabic conversation practice effectively enhances students' mastery of linguistic aspects, including phonology (makhraj accuracy), morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, particularly in real communication contexts. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on integrating conversation exercises with comprehensive linguistic components, not only focusing on speaking fluency but also connecting it with deeper linguistic mastery. This study also highlights the crucial role of teachers as facilitators, motivators, and guides in optimizing students' linguistic development through appropriate pedagogical approaches tailored to students' needs and learning characteristics. However, this study has several limitations, including the relatively small sample size and its focus on a single educational institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the duration of the intervention was limited, so it has not fully captured the long-term impact of conversation-based learning on students' linguistic competence. The implications of this research suggest that Arabic language learning should prioritize interactive and communicative methods, particularly conversation exercises, as an effective strategy to improve linguistic competence. Educators are encouraged to design learning activities that balance theoretical understanding and practical application, while future researchers are recommended to conduct broader studies with more diverse samples and longer observation periods to strengthen and expand these findings.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: First author, contributed as concepts and drafters of the article, data analyzers, interpreters, writing the manuscript and critically revising the article; Second author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript, collecting data and critically revising the article. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work. Both authors contributed equally and approved the final version of the article for publication.

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The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of use artificial intelligence

The author uses generative artificial intelligence in this paper for the data analysis process.

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