

Application of Constructivist Approach by Kiai in Arabic Language Teaching at Al-Falah Pesantren, Banjarbaru: An Active Learning Model to Enhance Arabic Language Skills

Penerapan pendekatan konstruktivis oleh Kiai dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab di pesantren al-Falah Banjarbaru: model pembelajaran aktif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Arab

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Abstract: This research addresses the role of the constructivist approach in teaching Arabic at the al-Falah Islamic boarding school, Banjarbaru. This research used a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and participatory observation as data collection methods. The results showed that the constructivist approach to learning Arabic at Pesantren al-Falah applies active learning methods, such as discovery learning and free expression. Kiai, instructors, and dormitory leaders have created various programs and activities to improve student's language skills. The learning environment is not only limited to the classroom but also involves the dormitory, playground, kitchen, mosque, and other places. In addition, problem-solving and thinking skills are taught during the learning process. Overall, the Kiai as a role model approach model effectively improves students' skills in Arabic in pesantren. This research contributes to developing the Arabic language in other pesantren in Indonesia.

Keywords: constructivist; Arabic; teaching; al-Falah; learning model.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengangkat peran Kiai dalam pengembangan pengajaran bahasa Arab di pesantren al-Falah, Banjarbaru dengan pendekatan konstruktivisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif sebagai pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan konstruktivisme dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di pesantren al-Falah menerapkan metode pembelajaran aktif, seperti pembelajaran penemuan dan bebas berekspresi. Kiai, instruktur, dan ketua asrama menciptakan berbagai program dan kegiatan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa siswa. Lingkungan pembelajaran tidak hanya terbatas pada ruang kelas, tetapi juga melibatkan asrama, tempat bermain, dapur, masjid, dan tempat lainnya. Selain itu, keterampilan pemecahan masalah dan keterampilan berpikir juga diajarkan dalam proses pembelajaran. Secara keseluruhan, model pendekatan Kiai sebagai panutan menjadi metode yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan siswa dalam bahasa Arab di pesantren. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan berbahasa arab di pesantren lainnya di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: konstruktivis; bahasa Arab; pengajaran; al-Falah; model pembelajaran.

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INTRODUCTION

Kiai's role in improving Arabic language skills in pesantren is important in Islamic education (Muslimah, 2016). Arabic is central to understanding and developing religious knowledge and Islamic activities. As an Islamic educational institution, pesantren has long recognized the importance of Arabic language skills for *Santri* to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings and literature (Adib, 2021). *Kiai* plays a significant role in improving Arabic language skills. *Kiai*, as a spiritual and intellectual leader in pesantren, has the duty and responsibility to guide students in learning and mastering Arabic. Through his knowledge, experience, and spiritual authority, *Kiai* can inspire, motivate, and direct *Santri* (students boarding school) in learning Arabic (Afif, 2019). *Kiai* also plays an active role in applying effective learning approaches, such as active learning, in teaching Arabic to *Santri*. The active learning approach provides an interactive learning experience, allows *Santri* to be actively involved in the learning process, and encourages them to use Arabic in real situations (Muslimah, 2016).

As a teacher, *Kiai* can implement interesting learning methods such as language games, group discussions, and simulations to improve students' Arabic language skills (Dewi, 2019). This article aims to explore the role of *Kiai* in improving Arabic language skills at al-Falah Islamic boarding schools in Banjarbaru, focusing on applying active learning approaches to teaching Arabic to students. By exploring the role and effective methods, this article hopes to provide insights and inspiration for *Kiai*, teachers, and education stakeholders to improve the quality of Arabic language education in pesantren.

At al-Falah, the learning process was not limited to learning and memorization. Students are also required to truly understand and acquire knowledge, be able to solve problems independently, discover new things on their own, and always try to develop ideas. One of the important principles in educational psychology states that a teacher conveys knowledge to students and needs guidance in various activities. Students must develop knowledge in their minds based on the direction and guidance of *Kiai*.

Kiai and teachers facilitate this process by using teaching methods that make information meaningful and relevant to students, thus providing opportunities for students to discover and reinforce their ideas and inviting them to be aware of and actively use their learning strategies (Afif, 2019). The constructivist theory argues that students must constantly examine new information necessary for a renewal movement to gain a good understanding quickly (Adak, 2017). This view has deep implications in the teaching process, not only in learning, but there is also a demand that students can be active and develop themselves. This is because, in Pondok Pesantren, they are only allowed to go home once a month, so 24 hours they are in the dormitory and school environment only.

This circumstance makes students demand a more active role from students in their learning compared to the current common practice in most classrooms. Constructivist strategies are often associated with student-centered learning because of the emphasis on active students. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher's role is to facilitate students to discover facts, concepts, or principles independently, rather than just giving lectures or managing whole class activities. This article explores how Arabic language teaching in pesantren is implemented using a constructivist learning approach.

METHOD

Research Methods This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of Pesantren's Arabic language learning model. Qualitative research comprehensively explores students' and teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices in the Arabic language-learning process. Observation, Participatory observation was used to observe and document the teaching and learning activities in the Arabic language classroom (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This method helps understand the actual implementation of the language learning model and the interactions between students and teachers. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview transcripts, observation notes, and document analysis findings were examined and coded to identify

recurring themes, patterns, and key insights related to the Arabic language learning model. This process involved organizing and categorizing the data for meaningful interpretation.

The location of this study is Pesantren Al-Falah Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan. The reasons for choosing this pesantren as a research location are as follows: Relevance: Pesantren Al-Falah Banjarbaru has a significant Arabic language learning program and is considered relevant to answering research questions about Arabic language learning models in pesantren. Diversity: Pesantren Al-Falah Banjarbaru has a diverse range of learners with different backgrounds and levels of Arabic comprehension. This provides an opportunity to observe learning model variations and gain comprehensive insights. Thematic analysis was used to identify the key themes or patterns emerging from the data. These themes will be developed based on an in-depth understanding of the research context and previously set research questions. By using these approaches and analytical steps, it is hoped that this research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of *Kiai* in shaping the Arabic language learning model at Pesantren Al-Falah Banjarbaru.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Management of Active Learning in Theory and Practice in Islamic Boarding Schools

The role of *Kiai* in pesantren education is very important. *Kiai* is a figure respected and used as a role model by students. They have in-depth religious and scientific knowledge and act as spiritual leaders in pesantren (Hidayah, 2018). As spiritual leaders, *Kiai* are responsible for providing religious instructions to the *Santri*. They teach religious subjects, such as the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, tafsir, and Islamic history. *Kiai* also provides guidance and advice to the *Santri* regarding religious values, morals, and ethics that must be upheld daily. In addition, the *Kiai* also acts as a figure who provides examples of and inspiration for *Santri* (Amirudin, 2021)

With a polite life, extensive knowledge, and high dedication to religion, the *Kiai* is a good example of a *Santri* pursuing scientific and religious paths. In the formal education process, learning is designed to teach students. Activity-oriented learning is needed in which students abandon all assumptions about education (Daulay, 2001). Therefore, the realities of education can be interrelated, such as human interaction, construction, and development of human potential, occurring throughout life, appropriate to the ability and developmental level of students, balanced in terms of freedom and subjects covered as well as teacher integrity, and improvement of the quality of human life. Active learning is an approach that emphasizes the active role of students in the teaching-learning process (Hedden et al., 2017).

This learning model shifts the role of the teacher from the main instructor to a learning facilitator, while students become active subjects who are directly involved in learning activities. In theory and practice, active learning has several significant implications and importance. One main reason active learning is important is that it increases student engagement and motivation. In an active learning environment, students can interact directly with the subject matter, participate in group discussions, conduct independent research, and apply knowledge in real situations. These activities help to increase students' interest in learning and make them feel more involved in the learning process.

In addition, active learning also encourages students to develop critical, creative, and independent thinking skills. This model encourages students to solve problems, analyze information, make decisions, and generate new ideas. They learn to think critically, develop argumentation skills, and see problems from multiple perspectives. This is very important to prepare students to become independent individuals who can face challenges in the real world (Hafidzi, 2021). In addition, active learning can also improve students' social and collaborative skills. In this model, students are invited to work in groups, share ideas, discuss concepts, and create solutions.

They learn to listen to other's opinions, respect differences, and build good relationships with classmates. These social skills are essential in everyday life and prepare students to work in teams in the future. Applying active learning in theory and practice significantly benefits students, teachers, and the learning environment. The approach encourages students to become active, engaged, and independent learners and to develop

social, critical, and creative skills (Hafidzi, 2021; Izzah, 2011). By creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment, active learning creates meaningful and effective learning experiences for students. Therefore, the teacher's job is to teach and design learning so that students can actively become the subject of learning. This research shows that learning involves memorizing several facts and information and is a mental event and experiential process.

Every learning event and process demands students' intellectual and emotional involvement through cognitive assimilation and accommodation to develop knowledge, action, as well as direct experience within a framework that develops skills (motor skills, cognitive skills, social skills, and spiritual skills), appreciates, and internalizes them in the form of behavior and actions Learning through Free Expression (Mansir et al., 2020).

2. *Kiai's* Role in Language Management

Kiai, as a role model in Al-Falah boarding School, encourages students to be independent at the beginning of life in pesantren. Teachers should support their students to solve their problems or solve them in groups, not teach the answers to the problems. Learning should be flexible and exploratory or done through discovery.

If students try to understand a concept, give them time to solve it themselves before answering. The role of *Kiai* in language management in pesantren is significant. As the spiritual leader and educator in the *pesantren* environment, *Kiai* ensures that language teaching runs smoothly and effectively. One of *Kiai's* main roles in language management is to design and implement learning programs that suit the needs of the students. *Kiai* should understand the students' language ability and comprehension level and customize suitable teaching methods.

They can adopt constructivist, active learning, or other suitable approaches to improve students' language skills. In addition, *Kiais* also play a role in creating a supportive environment for language learning. They can organize extracurricular activities using Arabic, such as lectures, discussions, or art performances. This helps students practice the language in a wider context and increases their communication confidence. *Kiai* also has a role as a good language model.

They should be able to communicate effectively in Arabic and inspire students to develop their abilities. *Kiai* can model correct language use, provide constructive feedback, and direct students to overcome language difficulties. In addition, *Kiais* also play a role in motivating students to learn the language in earnest. They can organize interesting activities, such as language contests, field activities, or visits to places related to the Arabic language. This helps students gain additional motivation to learn the language and increases their interest in learning Arabic. Overall, the role of *Kiai* in language management in pesantren is very important. They are responsible for designing effective learning programs, creating a supportive environment, being good language models, and motivating students to learn the language with enthusiasm. With this strong role, *Kiai* can significantly contribute to improving students' language skills and strengthening education in pesantren.

3. Constructivist Methods in Language Mastery

Constructivist and student-centered methods have existed and dominate current thinking at Pesantren al-Falah. We see that reciprocal teaching in the language is a good example of observation of a constructivist approach based on the principle of making questions and being answered with the ability one already has called reciprocal teaching (Anagün, 2018).

This approach is designed to help students who are underachieving in understanding Arabic by involving teachers, instructors, and dormitory leaders. Initially, the teaching will provide examples of questions that students can ask while reading an Arabic text, but then they are asked to act as their dialog partners, ask questions, and answer them with their peers. Research on reciprocal teaching has generally found that these strategies successfully improve the performance of underachieving students (Neutzling et al., 2019).

Research comparing constructivist and traditional approaches to teaching is often complex and difficult to interpret because constructivist methods are usually intended to produce qualitative learning outcomes, as opposed to traditional methods. Most research on constructivist methods tends to be descriptive and lacking in comparisons. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to support the idea that constructivist approaches effectively improve student learning outcomes. This fact is enough to encourage education experts and practitioners to conduct systematic studies to improve or enhance the national education system that is currently lagging. Efforts to internalize and develop religious values among students must be done seriously and continuously through well-planned programs.

In educational institutions (Shah, 2019), the responsibility for developing a conducive school culture by integrating religious culture in schools lies with the teachers and involves other parties, especially the principal. Principals must find ways to develop a school culture that supports internalizing religious values. One alternative that can support the success of language education, especially in schools, is to develop Language Education into various forms of integrated activities, both in the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular activities, and supported by *Kiai* as a role model in pesantren.

This fact suggests the need for more in-depth research, efforts to internalize religious values, and the role of *Kiai*, teachers, and peers as important factors in improving the quality of religious education in educational institutions. 24-hour dormitory stays are controlled to ensure the running of the teaching and learning process. It is an opportunity for students to acquire skills and organize their time for learning in a supportive environment (Chairi, 2019).

To create a language culture in Pesantren, here are some strategies that can be implemented:

- (1) Implementing Arabic as the main language of communication: Pesantren can encourage using Arabic as the main language of communication in the Pesantren environment. This can be done by setting rules and policies prioritizing using Arabic in daily interactions between students, teachers, and pesantren staff.
- (2) Increase time and opportunities to speak Arabic: Pesantren can provide special time and sufficient opportunities for students to practice speaking Arabic. This can be done through activities such as group discussions, presentations, debates, or other activities that require using Arabic to communicate.
- (3) Providing a conducive learning environment: Pesantren can create a learning environment that supports using Arabic. This can be done by providing resources such as Arabic books, interactive learning materials, and comfortable learning spaces that encourage students to interact in Arabic.
- (4) Implementing active learning methods: Pesantren can adopt active learning methods that involve students directly in the learning process. Methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, language games, or simulation of real situations can increase students' participation in Arabic and strengthen their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.
- (5) Encouraging the use of Arabic outside the classroom: Pesantren can promote the use of Arabic outside the classroom through extracurricular activities, such as Arabic language clubs, conversation classes, or Arabic social events. This will provide additional opportunities for students to practice and use Arabic in a more relaxed and less formal context.
- (6) Involving the Arabic language community: Pesantren can cooperate with the community around the pesantren, such as the local Arabic community or higher education institutions offering Arabic language programs.

By involving these communities, students can engage in social and cultural activities that extend the use of Arabic beyond the pesantren environment. By implementing these strategies, pesantren can create a strong language culture where students feel comfortable and motivated to use Arabic daily, improve their language skills, and enrich their learning experiences. Finally, the school environment is a pillar for expanding language programs. The school environment can also support the development of students' language skills (Ali, 2019; Dewi, 2019). Creating an environment that facilitates communication and active language use will motivate students to learn and interact in the language being studied.

Language activities such as word games, group discussions, and collaborative projects can be part of teaching to improve students' language skills (Prayoga et al., 2020). To achieve holistic educational goals, active learning and constructivist approaches can guide educators. By giving students the freedom to explore,

discover and construct their knowledge, education can be a meaningful and relevant experience for students. Through this approach, students can become active subjects in the learning process and holistically develop their cognitive, social, and moral abilities. Active learning approaches also encourage students to overcome challenges, find solutions and develop problem-solving skills.

The teacher acts as a facilitator who assists students in acquiring knowledge and understanding concepts more deeply and meaningfully. By using teaching methods that build meaning and relevance for students, teachers can encourage students to discover and investigate new ideas actively. In addition, the constructivist approach and student-centered learning emphasize the active role of students in the learning process (Arpentieva et al., 2021). The teacher is not only an information provider but also a facilitator and guide in facilitating students to develop their knowledge. Education is a revolution related to learning approaches, strategies, and methods.

The constructivist learning approach is one of the most frequently used approaches. This approach suggests that students must independently discover and transfer complex information so that the information is truly theirs. The constructivist theory also states that students must continually test new information that conflicts with established rules and revise those rules if they are no longer fit. The constructivist learning approach demands a more active role from students in their learning compared to what is generally done in many classrooms.

Through this approach, students are invited to be active subjects in their learning, while the teacher's role is to facilitate students in discovering facts, concepts, or principles independently rather than giving lectures or managing the whole class activities. In conclusion, the active and constructivist learning approach will work well with the role of *Kiai* in strengthening the role of students in the learning process. This approach encourages developing their cognitive, social, and metacognitive skills by giving students the freedom to think and try and express their ideas. Through this approach, students can gain a deeper understanding, develop problem-solving skills, and prepare themselves to face challenges in the real world.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the application of the constructivist approach by *Kiai* in Arabic language teaching at Pesantren Al-Falah, Banjarbaru resulted in an active learning model that effectively improves students' Arabic language skills. Active learning methods such as discovery learning and free expression are used to create a learning environment that involves students actively in the learning process. In addition, *Kiai* instructors and dormitory leaders play an important role in creating diverse programs and activities to enrich Arabic language learning.

The findings of this study show that the learning environment in pesantren is not only limited to the classroom but involves dormitories, playgrounds, kitchens, mosques, and other places. In this environment, students have ample opportunities to use Arabic daily, strengthen their language skills, and deepen their understanding of Arabic culture. Applying the constructivist approach also helps students develop problem-solving and thinking skills. Students are encouraged to build their understanding through exploration, discussion, and reflection in the learning process. This enables them to become independent and critical learners. The results of this study contribute to the development of Arabic language education in other pesantren in Indonesia, as well as provide a strong basis for further research in this field that the success of language education is always seen from the role of the pesantren *Kiai* as a role model for students.

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