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Integrating Communicative-Contextual Learning and Language Environments for Arabic Communicative Competence

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ABSTRACT

The development of Arabic communicative competence among first-year students is influenced by differences in initial proficiency, limited active vocabulary, low self-confidence, and insufficient opportunities to use Arabic outside the classroom. This study aims to analyze the integration of the communicative-contextual approach and formal-informal language environments in developing communicative competence among students of the Arabic Language Education Program at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected from 10 first-year female students through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed through data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal three main aspects. First, the communicative-contextual approach was implemented through dialogues, simulations, question-and-answer sessions, and presentations based on everyday communication situations. Second, informal Arabic practice occurred through peer conversations, vocabulary practice, and independent speaking activities, although their frequency and consistency varied. Third, continuity of Arabic practice was influenced by limited opportunities to communicate outside the classroom and the absence of a language dormitory. This study concludes that integrating communicative-contextual instruction with informal language practice provides meaningful opportunities for students to use Arabic in both formal and informal settings. However, the findings describe learning practices and supporting conditions rather than measurable improvements in communicative competence.

Keywords: communicative-contextual approach; formal-informal language environments; communicative competence; Arabic language learning; beginner students.

مستخلص البحث

مستخلص

يتأثر تطوير الكفاءة التواصلية باللغة العربية لدى طالبات السنة الأولى بالاختلافات في مستوى الكفاءة الأولية، ومحدودية المفردات النشطة، وانخفاض الثقة بالنفس، وعدم كفاية الفرص المتاحة لاستخدام اللغة العربية خارج الفصل الدراسي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل دمج النهج التواصلي-السياقي والبيئات اللغوية الرسمية وغير الرسمية في تطوير الكفاءة التواصلية لدى طالبات برنامج تعليم اللغة العربية في معهد الإرشاد الإسلامي (IAI) بجاكرتا.اعتمد هذا البحث نهجًا نوعيًا بتصميم دراسة حالة. تم جمع البيانات من 10 طالبات في السنة الأولى من خلال الملاحظة الصفية والمقابلات والتوثيق، وتم تحليلها من خلال تكثيف البيانات وعرضها واستخلاص النتائج. وتكشف النتائج عن ثلاثة جوانب رئيسية. أولًا، تم تطبيق النهج التواصلي-السياقي من خلال الحوارات والمحاكاة وجلسات الأسئلة والأجوبة والعروض التقديمية المستندة إلى مواقف التواصل اليومية.ثانياً، كانت ممارسة اللغة العربية بشكل غير رسمي تتم من خلال المحادثات بين الزملاء،

وممارسة المفردات، وأنشطة التحدث المستقلة، على الرغم من تباين وتيرتها وانتظامها.ثالثاً، تأثرت استمرارية ممارسة اللغة العربية بمحدودية فرص التواصل خارج الفصل الدراسي وغياب سكن مخصص لتعلم اللغة. تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن دمج التدريس التواصلي-السياقي مع الممارسة اللغوية غير الرسمية يوفر فرصًا مفيدة للطالبات لاستخدام اللغة العربية في كل من السياقات الرسمية وغير الرسمية. ومع ذلك، فإن النتائج تصف ممارسات التعلم والظروف الداعمة أكثر مما تصف تحسينات قابلة للقياس في الكفاءة التواصليّة.

كلمات أساسية **النهج التواصلي-السياقي؛البيئة اللغوية الرسمية-غير الرسمية؛الكفاءة التواصليّة؛ اللغة العربية؛ الطالبات المبتدئات**

Introduction

Arabic language instruction in higher education aims not only to develop students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures but also to enable them to use the language effectively in various communicative situations. Communicative competence involves the ability to understand linguistic forms and use them appropriately according to communicative purposes, social contexts, and interlocutors.(Abdeldeen & Fu, 2022) For learners of Arabic as a foreign language, developing this competence requires meaningful opportunities to interact, produce language, receive feedback, and negotiate meaning during communication .(Abdullah & Rahmi, 2020) Therefore, Arabic language instruction needs to move beyond the transmission of linguistic knowledge toward learning activities that facilitate purposeful language use.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) provides a theoretical foundation for this orientation. CLT emphasizes the use of language as a means of communication and positions interaction as a central component of the learning process. Within this framework, learners develop their communicative abilities through activities that require them to exchange information, express ideas, respond to interlocutors, and achieve communicative purposes. Interactive activities can support vocabulary development, sentence formation, speaking fluency, and learners' confidence in using the target language.(Alfitri, Harif Supriyady, 2020) Nevertheless, the effectiveness of communicative instruction depends on the extent to which learning activities provide meaningful opportunities for language use and accommodate learners' linguistic and psychological conditions.(Annida & Nuha, 2023) In the context of higher education in Indonesia, the development of Arabic communication skills faces challenges related to the heterogeneity of students' initial proficiency levels, prior learning experiences, motivation, and opportunities to use the language outside the classroom.(Guettaoui Bedra & Febriani, 2023)

These considerations are particularly relevant for first-year students in Arabic Language Education programs. Students may enter higher education with different levels of initial proficiency, learning experiences, motivation, and exposure

to Arabic. Some students may have previously studied Arabic through grammar-oriented instruction, whereas others may have experienced more interactive learning environments. Such differences can influence their readiness to participate in communicative activities and their ability to use Arabic spontaneously.(Bruen & Erdocia, 2024) (Ningsih & Munir, 2022) Previous research has also identified challenges in communicative language instruction, including limited self-confidence, difficulty selecting learning materials that match students' interests, and the need for sufficient instructional time.(Dalle & Jundi, 2021)

Annida dan Nuha (2023) Furthermore, speaking anxiety associated with fear of negative evaluation, limited linguistic proficiency, and low self-confidence may restrict students' participation in classroom communication (Annida & Nuha, 2023). These conditions indicate that developing communicative competence requires attention to both pedagogical practices and the psychological and social dimensions of language learning.(Hamid et al., 2024) One approach that can address these challenges is the integration of communicative and contextual learning. Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes interaction and purposeful language use, whereas Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) connects learning materials with situations that are relevant to students' experiences. The integration of these approaches allows students to practice language through activities that reflect meaningful communication, such as introducing themselves, asking questions, exchanging information, discussing familiar topics, and expressing opinions.(Ilmiani et al., 2020) Contextual learning can make linguistic content more accessible by relating vocabulary and grammatical structures to situations that students encounter in their daily lives. At the same time, communicative activities provide opportunities to apply this knowledge through interaction.

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Previous studies have examined the implementation of contextual and communicative learning in Arabic language instruction. Wahdah et al. (2024) reported that Contextual Teaching and Learning in Arabic speaking courses emphasizes student-centered learning. Bedra and Febriani (2023) also highlighted the relevance of contextual approaches and learning materials related to everyday life in university-level Arabic instruction. In addition, Islamiy and Fahyuni (2024) developed an Arabic teaching module based on constructivism and communicative learning that emphasizes collaboration and active language use. These studies demonstrate the relevance of contextual and communicative principles in designing Arabic instruction. However, their primary focus on instructional models, learning materials, or classroom activities provides a different perspective from examining

how classroom learning is connected with students' language use beyond formal instruction. (Mohammad, 2023)

Meanwhile, Islamiy and Fahyuni (2024) developed an Arabic language teaching module based on constructivism and the communicative approach, which emphasizes collaboration and active language use. However, the success of this approach depends not only on the design of classroom activities but also on students' ongoing opportunities to use the language in their daily lives.(Islamiy, 2024)

The relationship between classroom instruction and language use outside the classroom can be understood through the concept of formal and informal language environments. The formal language environment consists of structured learning activities, including lectures, guided exercises, discussions, presentations, and instructor feedback. In contrast, the informal language environment involves language use in everyday interactions that are not entirely governed by academic instruction, such as conversations among peers, independent speaking practice, and communication through digital media.(Kafahulloh, 2024) These environments provide different but potentially complementary opportunities for language learning. Formal instruction can introduce linguistic knowledge and communicative strategies, while informal interaction can provide opportunities to use and adapt these resources in everyday communication.

The relationship between these environments can also be examined through Sociocultural Theory. From a sociocultural perspective, language learning develops through social interaction, mediation, and participation in meaningful activities. Learners can use linguistic resources and assistance from others to perform communicative tasks that may initially be difficult to accomplish independently. In the context of Arabic learning, interactions with classmates, instructors, and other language users may provide opportunities to negotiate meaning, develop vocabulary, and practice communicative strategies. This perspective suggests that informal language practice should not be viewed merely as an extension of classroom instruction. Rather, it represents a social process through which learners participate in language use and develop their communicative resources

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of informal language environments in Arabic learning. Samin et al. (2023) associated informal Arabic language environments in higher education with social and cultural interaction, virtual learning, instructor support, emotional factors, and institutional policies. Bruen and Erdocia (2024) also emphasized the potential of informal learning activities to expand opportunities for oral practice, encourage student engagement, and support independent learning. Hamid et al. (2024) further indicated that formal and informal environments can play complementary roles in language acquisition through language input, interaction, and language production. These findings suggest that the development of communicative competence depends not only on

classroom instruction but also on the opportunities available for students to use the language in other settings.(Mufid et al., 2024)

Nevertheless, the relationship between formal and informal language environments requires further examination in contexts where institutions do not provide structured language immersion. Research on Arabic language environments has frequently examined language dormitories, boarding schools, or specialized language programs. For example, Khotimah and Ilmiani (2024) discussed communicative strategies, contextual tasks, and language environments in dormitory-based learning. Nazhimah and Mohammad (2023) examined contextual learning in the *al-liqo al-usbuiyyah* program at a university and identified challenges related to time constraints, differences in class schedules, and variations in students' prior knowledge. Abdullah et al. (2021) also examined the development of Arabic speaking skills through the creation of an Arabic language environment. These studies provide important insights into the role of structured language environments. However, their findings cannot automatically explain how students maintain Arabic communication when they do not have access to a language dormitory or a continuously organized immersion program.(Rofiif et al., 2025)

The distinction between these research contexts is important. Studies focusing on communicative approaches primarily explain how classroom interaction can facilitate language learning. Studies focusing on contextual learning emphasize the relationship between instructional materials and students' everyday experiences. Meanwhile, research on language environments examines the opportunities and conditions that support language use beyond formal instruction. Although these perspectives are complementary, they do not necessarily explain how classroom-based communicative activities are connected with students' actual informal language practices. In particular, the process through which students transfer classroom learning into everyday communication, the experiences that shape their participation, and the factors that support or hinder the continuity of language use remain insufficiently understood in the specific context of beginner-level university students without a language dormitory.

This gap should not be interpreted as an absence of research on the relationship between formal and informal language learning. Rather, it reflects the need for a more context-sensitive understanding of the integration process. Previous studies have contributed to the development of communicative instructional models, contextual learning materials, and language environment programs (Alfitri et al., 2020; Aflisia & Hazuar, 2020; Dalle & Jundi, 2021; Kafahulloh, 2024; Khotimah & Ilmiani, 2024). Other studies have examined students' perceptions of contextual learning and the use of interactive activities to develop speaking skills (Maryani et al., 2024; Wahdah et al., 2024). However, further empirical investigation is needed to understand how these instructional and environmental dimensions operate together in a university context where informal

language practice depends largely on students' initiative, peer interaction, and the opportunities available in their daily lives.

To examine this issue systematically, communicative competence needs to be understood as a multidimensional construct. Canale and Swain's (1980) model identifies grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence as essential components of communicative competence. Canale (1983) subsequently incorporated discourse competence, emphasizing the ability to produce and interpret coherent and cohesive communication. These dimensions provide an analytical foundation for examining students' communicative practices. Grammatical competence concerns the use of linguistic forms, including vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. Sociolinguistic competence concerns the appropriate use of language according to social contexts and communicative purposes. Discourse competence involves the ability to organize utterances into coherent and connected communication. Strategic competence concerns the use of verbal and nonverbal strategies to overcome communication difficulties and maintain interaction.

In this study, these dimensions are used as an analytical framework rather than as a quantitative measurement of language proficiency. The framework enables the investigation to examine how classroom activities and informal interactions provide opportunities for students to use linguistic resources, respond appropriately to interlocutors, organize ideas, and address communication difficulties. It also provides a basis for interpreting students' participation and communicative experiences without assuming that participation or confidence alone represents an increase in communicative competence.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a framework for understanding the relationship between classroom instruction and informal language practice. Communicative Language Teaching explains the role of purposeful interaction in language learning. Contextual Teaching and Learning explains how communication activities can be connected with students' everyday experiences. Sociocultural Theory explains how language use develops through social interaction and participation. Meanwhile, Canale and Swain's model, together with Canale's subsequent development, provides the dimensions for examining communicative competence. Taken together, these perspectives support an analysis of how communicative-contextual instruction may be connected with informal language use and how the conditions surrounding this process shape students' communicative experiences.

This issue is particularly relevant to the Arabic Language Education Program at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta. In this institutional context, students do not reside in a language dormitory that provides structured and continuous exposure to Arabic. Consequently, opportunities to use Arabic outside formal instruction may depend on classroom experiences, peer interactions, students' individual initiatives, and the availability of supportive language practices. This context provides an opportunity

to investigate how communicative-contextual learning is implemented in the classroom, how students engage in informal Arabic practice, and how the two environments are connected in their everyday learning experiences.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to analyze the integration of the communicative-contextual approach and formal-informal language environments in the development of Arabic communicative competence among first-year students in the Arabic Language Education Program at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta. Specifically, the study examines: (1) the implementation of communicative-contextual learning in classroom activities; (2) the forms and experiences of students' informal Arabic language practice beyond formal instruction; (3) the relationship between classroom learning and informal language use; and (4) the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the continuity of Arabic communication. By employing a qualitative case study design, this research explores these processes through students' experiences, instructors' practices, classroom observations, and relevant documentation.

The contribution of this study lies in its context-specific analysis of the relationship between communicative-contextual instruction and informal Arabic language practice among beginner-level university students who do not have access to a structured language dormitory. Rather than claiming that the integration of formal and informal environments is entirely unexplored, this study seeks to explain how the integration takes place, how students experience and participate in informal language use, and what conditions shape its continuity. The findings are expected to contribute to a contextual understanding of communicative competence development in Arabic language education and provide practical insights for instructors and program administrators in designing sustainable, interactive, and contextually relevant language activities that connect classroom instruction with students' everyday communication. (Rofiif et al., 2025)(Sultan et al., 2025)

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the integration of the communicative-contextual approach and formal-informal language environments in the development of Arabic communicative competence among first-year students in the Arabic Language Education Program (PBA) at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand students' experiences, instructional practices, and language-use patterns within their natural educational context. The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of the relationship between classroom instruction and informal Arabic language practice within a specific institutional setting.(Orole et al., 2026)

The case was defined as the integration of communicative-contextual learning and formal-informal Arabic language practices among first-year PBA students at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta. The analysis focused on four aspects: (1) the

implementation of communicative-contextual learning in the classroom; (2) students' informal Arabic language practices outside formal instruction; (3) the relationship between classroom activities and informal language use; and (4) the factors supporting and hindering the continuity of Arabic communication. The study examined these aspects through students' experiences, instructors' teaching practices, and the institutional conditions surrounding Arabic language learning.(Dado et al., 2023)

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. These techniques were used to obtain complementary information about classroom instruction, informal Arabic language practices, and the conditions influencing the continuity of language use.(Dahal, 2025)

Data analysis using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model involves three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation were coded and grouped into major themes, including the communicative-contextual approach, formal and informal language environments, participation, self-confidence, and communicative competence. The data were then presented thematically to identify patterns and interrelationships among the themes, and subsequently verified based on the totality of the research evidence.(Morgan, 2021)

Results & Discussion

Integration of the Communicative-Contextual Approach in Arabic Language Instruction

Arabic language instruction in the Arabic Language Education Program at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta needs to be examined not only in terms of how the material is presented, but also in terms of the opportunities students have to use the language in communicative situations. The communicative-contextual approach positions students as active participants who develop their language skills through interaction and the use of language in context. (Restu Kurniawan Albana, Syamsul Arifin, Ubaid Ridlo, Muhbib Abdul Wahab, 2023) In practice, learning activities may include dialogues, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, simulations, role-playing, and presentations.

Based on interviews with faculty and students, this section will describe how these learning strategies are implemented, how the material is related to everyday life, and to what extent students have the opportunity to actively use Arabic. (Rahman, 2024). Classroom observations are used to confirm the alignment between the strategies presented by the instructor and classroom teaching practices.(Balaman, 2025) These findings were then analyzed to determine whether the instruction had provided meaningful communicative experiences, rather than merely theoretical mastery of vocabulary and language structures.

Formal Language Environments in the Development of Communicative Competence

A formal language environment is a learning space that is systematically designed through classroom activities, interactions between instructors and students, and the use of instructional materials.(Alshammari et al., 2026) In the context of this study, the formal setting serves as the primary space for students to acquire linguistic knowledge and practice their communication skills.

The findings of this study aim to identify the forms of formal learning support that contribute to the development of students' communicative competencies. Several aspects to be analyzed include the use of Arabic during lectures, opportunities to participate in communicative activities, feedback provided by instructors, and the use of materials relevant to students' communication needs.(Achmad Affandy,Suhendri, Arif Rahman,Abdul Fathah, 2026)

The discussion should also consider the relationship between instructional design and classroom practice. If classroom activities provide sufficient opportunities for interaction, the formal learning environment has the potential to serve as a foundation for students to develop confidence, active vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy in language use.(Achmad Affandy,Suhendri, Arif Rahman,Abdul Fathah, 2026)

Informal Language Environments and the Practice of Arabic

Unlike formal environments, which take place through structured learning activities, informal language environments are formed through everyday interactions outside the classroom.(Blair et al., 2025) Such environments may include conversations among students, spontaneous communication, group discussions, or independent practice using Arabic.

In this study, it is important to examine the informal environment because the students do not live in a language dormitory. This situation makes social interactions on campus a potential setting for expanding the use of Arabic outside the classroom. The analysis focuses on the frequency and forms of Arabic language use, the parties involved in the interactions, the students' motivations, and the obstacles they face.(Inayati et al., 2024)

The discussion should emphasize that the existence of an informal environment does not always automatically lead to language use. Peer support, self-confidence, motivation, and opportunities for interaction are factors that must be taken into account. Thus, an informal environment can be understood as a complementary space that broadens students' communicative experiences beyond formal learning.

Factors Supporting and Hindering Language Environment Integration

The integration of communicative-contextual learning and formal-informal language environments is influenced by various factors. Internal factors may include motivation to learn, self-confidence, vocabulary mastery, language anxiety, and students' readiness to communicate. Meanwhile, external factors may include instructors' strategies, peer support, the availability of teaching materials, program policies, and the culture of Arabic language use on campus.

An analysis of the results of interviews with students, faculty, and program administrators is necessary to identify how these factors influence student engagement in Arabic language learning and practice. A comparison across these sources can also reveal whether there are similarities or differences in perspectives regarding the obstacles encountered.

The findings in this section are important for illustrating that the success of language immersion depends not only on teaching methods, but also on social and institutional support that enables students to use Arabic on an ongoing basis.

The Contribution of Integrating the Communicative-Contextual Approach and the Language Environment to Communicative Competence

The integration of the communicative-contextual approach with formal and informal language environments can be analyzed through the relationship between classroom learning experiences and communication practices outside the classroom. Formal learning provides structure, content, and guidance on language use, while informal environments offer opportunities to apply that knowledge in more spontaneous interactions.

In this study, the development of communicative competence can be examined through several aspects, namely active vocabulary, speaking fluency, accurate use of expressions, confidence in communication, and the ability to respond to conversation partners. Interview data should be compared with observation results so that the progress reported by students can be verified through their observed communication behavior.

Conceptually, the integration of these two environments demonstrates that the development of communicative competencies requires continuity between structured learning and the experience of using the language in everyday life. Therefore, informal language environments are not intended to replace formal learning, but rather to complement it by providing opportunities to interact and practice Arabic in context.

Picture : Framework for Analyzing Research Findings



An Overview of Arabic Language Learning and Practice Experiences Female Student in the Arabic Language Program at IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta

Research aspects	Female students' experiences	Types of activities or behaviors	Contribution to speaking skills
Classroom Learning Experiences	The female students participate in the learning process through dialogue, question-and-answer sessions, group discussions, and simple presentations in Arabic.	Introducing themself, asking about the material, answering the instructor's questions, and practicing conversation in pairs.	Developing confidence in speaking, active vocabulary use, and the ability to form simple sentences.
Language practice outside the classroom	Female students try to use Arabic when meeting with friends, working on group assignments, or communicating through digital media.	Using greetings, asking how someone is doing, describing daily activities, and sending simple messages in Arabic.	Encouraging the use of Arabic outside of learning situations and reinforcing vocabulary retention.
Coursework and instructional materials	Instructors use teaching materials such as dialogues, thematic vocabulary, conversation examples, and content related to students' lives.	Reading dialogues, identifying expressions, constructing conversations, doing pronunciation exercises, and presenting the results of the exercises.	To help students understand the context in which expressions are used and apply them in spoken communication.

Student interactions on campus	Female students interact with their classmates and other students in both academic and non-academic activities.	Greeting friends, discussing assignments, asking about the class schedule, and trying to slip some Arabic phrases into the conversation	Provides opportunities to respond to the person you're speaking with, boosts self-confidence, and develops spontaneity in speaking.

Conclusions

The integration of communicative-contextual and formal-informal language environment approaches highlights the importance of continuity between classroom learning and communication practices outside the classroom. Activities such as dialogues, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, simulations, and presentations equip students with the language skills needed to convey messages orally. These skills can then be applied through daily interactions with peers, academic activities, and the use of digital media. Language practice outside the classroom expands students' opportunities to use their vocabulary, respond to conversation partners, and build their confidence in communicating. At the IAI Al-Irsyad Jakarta Foreign Language Program, which does not have a language immersion system, the continuity of this practice depends on student motivation, support from instructors and peers, and program policies. Thus, the integration of formal learning and informal practice has the potential to support the development of communicative competencies, particularly in terms of fluency, accuracy of expression, mastery of active vocabulary, and confidence in communication.

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