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Students' Perceptions of a CTL-Based Arabic Conversation Textbook Integrated with QR Code Native-Speaker Audio: A Descriptive Study of *Istamti' bi-Lughatik*

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ABSTRACT

This study describes students' responses to a Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)-based muhadatsah textbook, Istamti' bi-Lughatik, supported by native-speaker audio linked through QR codes. A descriptive quantitative design with complementary qualitative data was used. Twenty-two Grade 10 students completed a 34-item, five-point Likert questionnaire covering six aspects, along with three open-ended questions. Students rated the textbook very good, with an overall mean of 4.31 out of 5 (86.2%). Content quality and suitability scored highest (4.45), whereas motivation and independent practice scored lowest (4.15 each). The lowest item, speaking Arabic with peers outside class (3.64), reflects the absence of a sustained language environment. Supporting data showed high expert validation (content 95.9%; media 98.3%) and improved speaking scores from 35.7% to 91.2% before and after use (n = 23). The textbook merits further use in Arabic conversation instruction, with refinements to audio access, out-of-class use, and visual presentation.

Keyword Student response; *muhadatsah*; Contextual Teaching and Learning; QR code; Arabic textbook; Islamic boarding school

مستخلص البحث

تصف هذه الدراسة استجابات الطلاب نحو كتاب المحادثة «استمتع بلغتك» (*Istamti' bi-Lughatik*) المبني على مدخل التعليم والتعلم السياقي (CTL)، والمدعوم بتسجيلات صوتية لمتحدثين أصليين مرتبطة برموز الاستجابة السريعة (QR). استخدمت الدراسة تصميمًا كميًّا وصفيًّا مع بيانات نوعية مكمّلة. أكمل اثنان وعشرون طالبًا من طلاب الصف العاشر استبانة مكوّنة من 34 بندًا وفق مقياس ليكرت الخماسي، تغطي ستة جوانب، إضافةً إلى ثلاثة أسئلة مفتوحة. قيّم الطلاب الكتاب بدرجة جيدة جدًا، بمتوسط عام قدره 4.31 من 5 (86.2%). وحصل جانب جودة المحتوى ومناسبته على أعلى درجة (4.45)، بينما حصل جانبا الدافعية والتدريب المستقل على أدنى درجة (4.15 لكل منهما). وكان أدنى بند هو التحدث بالعربية مع الزملاء خارج الصف (3.64)، وهو ما يعكس غياب بيئة لغوية مستمرة. وأظهرت البيانات الداعمة ارتفاع نسب تحكيم الخبراء (المحتوى 95.9%، والوسائط 98.3%)،

وتحسّن درجات مهارة الكلام من 35.7% إلى 91.2% قبل الاستخدام وبعده (ن = 23). ويستحق الكتاب مواصلة استخدامه في تعليم المحادثة العربية، مع تحسينات في إتاحة الوصول إلى الصوتيات، والاستخدام خارج الصف، والعرض البصري.

كلمات أساسية **استجابة الطلاب؛ المحادثة؛ التعليم والتعلم السياقي؛ رمز الاستجابة السريعة؛ كتاب اللغة العربية؛ المعهد الإسلامي**

Introduction (المقدمة)

Arabic speaking ability develops when learners use linguistic resources in meaningful interaction. In Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), muhadatsah (Arabic conversation practice) provides room for this practice through academic and everyday situations (Anwar et al., 2025; Prawoto et al., 2023). Repeated conversational habituation, for example through a daily conversation book, has also been reported to help learners become accustomed to speaking Arabic (Fahma et al., 2026; Amin et al., 2026). Muhadatsah should therefore be understood not as an additional subject but as a means of communication practice that needs to be supported by suitable teaching materials and a suitable environment.

However, a language-rich environment does not automatically guarantee sustained speaking practice. Previous studies have noted limited vocabulary and the difficulty of maintaining Arabic communication as obstacles in pesantren settings (Marlius et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2025). Other studies show that learners' language competence is influenced by the variety of methods, learning resources, and instructional support (Husein et al., 2023). Teaching materials therefore need to connect linguistic content with communication situations that reflect learners' real experiences. In teaching speaking, tasks designed around clear communicative goals make it more likely that learners use the language to interact rather than merely memorize it (Dwijayani & Musigrungsi, 2022; Adem & Berkessa, 2022).

Similar obstacles were found at SMA Al Izzah Batu, a senior high school. According to the head of curriculum for the mu'adalah program, this class is prepared for students (santri) who wish to continue their studies in the Middle East, including the Islamic University of Madinah. The school has added Arabic lesson hours and involved native speakers, but instruction still emphasizes linguistic knowledge over practice, students' speaking ability is uneven, and speaking practice tends to stop inside the classroom. The researcher's initial needs analysis of 87 students showed a consistent picture: 51.7% of respondents considered their vocabulary inadequate for everyday conversation, the most frequently chosen themes related to pesantren routines (for example, waking up, 52.9%), and illustrations and layout received the highest support (64.4%), whereas support for QR-coded audio was more varied (49.4%). Interviews also showed that

the book in use did not reflect students' lives and that students do not carry mobile devices, so audio access must be guided by the teacher.

A systematic needs analysis is required so that learning problems like these are translated into decisions about developing teaching materials. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguish target needs, that is, what learners must achieve, from learning needs, that is, the conditions and processes that make learning possible. In instructional design, needs analysis is the basis for determining what needs to be designed before materials are developed and implemented (Branch, 2009). Recent research on Arabic teaching materials also emphasizes the importance of examining learners' and teachers' perspectives when determining the content and features of materials (Al Husna et al., 2025), and combining multiple data sources can give a more complete picture of needs (Smith et al., 2022).

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach provides a pedagogical foundation for linking Arabic teaching materials with learners' everyday experiences through seven core components: constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. Instead of presenting vocabulary and expressions as separate items, CTL places language use in meaningful situations and communicative purposes. This approach has been examined in muhadatsah textbooks in pesantren (Prawoto et al., 2023), in muhadatsah instruction using communicative and contextual approaches (Islam et al., 2025), and in Arabic teaching materials and instruction in schools and madrasas (Kosim et al., 2025; Zaeni et al., 2025; Muyasaroh et al., 2025; Thontowi & Ru'iya, 2023). In the present study, these seven components also served as the basis for the questionnaire items so that students' responses could be tied directly to the book's pedagogical design. Even so, the selection of themes, vocabulary, expressions, and communicative tasks still needs to fit the characteristics of learners in each educational setting.

Digital media can provide additional support for oral language learning, although its benefits depend on the learning content and access conditions. QR code-based Arabic teaching materials have been developed and studied for listening and speaking skills (Aisa et al., 2024; Annisa Fitri & Aisa, 2023; Mutiatunnisa et al., 2024; Nadziro et al., 2023; Salamah & Wibisono, 2024), and one study examined learners' motivation toward QR codes in pronunciation learning (Tan & Chee, 2021). Broader Arabic digital learning resources are also discussed by Faiqoh et al. (2025), Abidin and Sutrisno (2025), and Dahlia et al. (2025), while the research landscape of communicative Arabic teaching materials with QR codes is summarized by Adnan et al. (2026). Visual elements are relevant too: listening and speaking materials based on picture stories have been developed (Mahiroh et al., 2026), and the integration of listening and speaking through a communicative approach has been studied in pesantren (Irawan et al., 2026). In pesantren that restrict phone use, access arrangements become an important

consideration because audio may have to be played through a teacher's or staff member's device rather than dtrough a teacher's or staff member's device rather than accessed independently by each student.

Based on this analysis, the researcher developed the muhadatsah textbook Istamti' bi-Lughatik. The book contains dialogues on students' lives, a thematic dictionary, linguistic expressions (asalib lughawiyah), illustrations, graded exercises, and native-speaker audio accessible through QR codes, with a CTL design that connects the material to students' real experiences.

Previous research has examined CTL-based muhadatsah books (Prawoto et al., 2023), QR code-based teaching materials for particular skills (Aisa et al., 2024; Mutiatunnisa et al., 2024), and the need for interactive multimedia teaching materials (Al Husna et al., 2025). However, few reports describe how students themselves evaluate a single book that combines contextual themes, CTL-based activities, a thematic dictionary, visual support, and QR-coded audio in a pesantren that restricts device use. User responses matter because they show whether a design judged feasible by experts is also experienced as useful, easy to use, and motivating by learners, and they provide concrete input for revision before the book is disseminated.

The purpose of this study is to describe Grade 10 students' responses to Istamti' bi-Lughatik on six aspects: material quality and suitability, application of CTL components, ease of use, quality of digital media (QR codes and audio), learning motivation, and independence in speaking practice. The study also identifies the strongest and weakest items and students' suggestions for improvement. Expert validation results and speaking scores before and after use are presented as supporting data, not as a test of effectiveness. The contribution of this study is a picture of user responses to contextual, QR code-based muhadatsah teaching materials under limited-access conditions, which can serve as a reference for developers of Arabic teaching materials in pesantren..

Methods (منهجية البحث)

Research Design and Participants

This study used a descriptive quantitative design with complementary qualitative data, and forms part of the implementation and evaluation stage in developing a textbook using the ADDIE model (Branch, 2009). The integration of quantitative and qualitative data follows the principles of mixed-methods design (Fetters et al., 2013). The participants were Grade 10 students (*santri*) at SMA Al Izzah Batu, East Java. The questionnaire was completed by 22 students and the speaking test was taken by 23 students. All Grade 10 students who used the book were included (total sampling).

The Product Evaluated

The product is the *muhadatsah* textbook *Istamti' bi-Lughatik*. The book contains dialogues on students' lives, a thematic dictionary, linguistic expressions, illustrations, graded exercises, a speaking assessment rubric, and native-speaker audio opened through QR codes. Because students do not carry personal mobile devices, the QR codes were scanned with the teacher's help and the audio was played through a loudspeaker.

Instruments

The study used three groups of instruments.

(1) **Student response questionnaire.** It consisted of 34 statements on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5) and three open-ended questions about the most liked part, difficulties, and suggestions for improvement. The items were divided into six aspects: material quality and suitability (6 items), CTL application (7), ease of use (5), digital media quality (6), learning motivation (5), and independence in speaking practice (5).

(2) **Expert validation sheets.** The content expert validation sheet contained 44 items on five aspects (content, CTL components, pronunciation and native-speaker audio, presentation, and language), rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum score of 220. The validation was conducted by one Arabic language education expert from a state university. Media validation used an expert media validation sheet of 24 items on three aspects (graphics, QR code integration, and native-speaker audio), rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum score of 120, completed by one learning media expert from a state university. Before assessing QR code and audio integration, the expert was asked to scan the QR codes on several pages and listen to the audio.

(3) **Speaking skills test.** It was scored with a six-indicator rubric (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and interaction) on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum score of 30. The tasks were performance-based: pronouncing vocabulary and sentences, delivering a simple conversation, question-and-answer, and dialogue practice.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire scores were analyzed using the mean and the percentage of the maximum score for each item and aspect, then interpreted using five equal-interval categories (81–100% very good; 61–80% good; 41–60% fair; 21–40% poor; ≤20% very poor). Internal consistency was checked with Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). Validation scores were calculated as a percentage of the maximum score. Pre- and post-test scores were analyzed with the mean, standard deviation, *N-gain* (Hake, 1998), and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test (Wilcoxon, 1945) because the distribution of post-test scores was not normal

(Shapiro–Wilk, p = 0.007). A paired-samples t-test is reported for comparison, and effect size is expressed with the r coefficient (Cohen, 1988). Open-ended answers were grouped thematically and their frequencies counted. Interviews with the head of curriculum (W1) and the Arabic teacher (W2) were used as context for interpreting the findings.

Results & Discussion (نتائج البحث ومناقشاتها)

Results

Students' overall responses

The mean student response was 4.31 out of 5 (86.2%), which falls into the very good category. Of 748 answers (22 students × 34 items), 42.2% were strongly agree, 47.9% agree, 8.8% neutral, and only 1.1% disagree or strongly disagree. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was high (α = 0.97 for all items and 0.83–0.92 per aspect). Table 1 summarizes the results by aspect.

Table 1. Student responses by aspect (n = 22)

Aspect	Items	Mean (1–5)	Percentage	Category	Cronbach's α
Material quality and suitability	6	4.45	89.1%	Very good	0.89
Ease of use of the book	5	4.44	88.7%	Very good	0.87
Application of CTL components	7	4.36	87.3%	Very good	0.90
Digital media quality (QR codes and audio)	6	4.27	85.5%	Very good	0.91
Independence in speaking practice	5	4.15	83.1%	Very good	0.92
Learning motivation	5	4.15	82.9%	Very good	0.83
Overall	**34**	**4.31**	**86.2%**	**Very good**	**0.97**

Highest- and lowest-rated items

The two highest items each scored 4.59: the conversation themes match students' daily activities in the *pesantren*, and the book is easy to use for learning alone or with friends. Next were dialogues that are easy to understand and clear usage instructions (both 4.55). The lowest item was "I more often speak Arabic with friends outside class hours" (3.64), with five students (22.7%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Other low items were practicing speaking outside class hours with this book (4.00), not being too afraid of making mistakes when speaking (4.05), and ready-to-use expressions, audio intonation, and the ability to assess one's own difficult parts (each 4.14).

Among the CTL components, constructivism received the highest mean (4.50), followed by reflection (4.45), questioning and modeling (4.36), learning

community (4.32), and inquiry and authentic assessment (4.27). For digital media, the item "can repeat the audio at any time" scored 4.18 with five students neutral, whereas ease of scanning the QR code scored 4.41.

Open-ended answers

On the question about the most liked part, 19 students responded. Eight of them mentioned vocabulary or the thematic dictionary, four mentioned dialogues or conversations, and five answered "everything." The reasons given were content that is easy to understand and pictures that clarify meaning. Nineteen of the 22 students wrote that there was no difficulty, and one of them added that audio access might depend on the signal. Three students mentioned difficulty understanding Arabic, knowing meanings and rules, or applying the exercises.

On suggestions for improvement, eight students (36.4%) asked for the book to be printed in color, one asked for photos in the vocabulary section, one asked for more everyday-life themes, one asked for QR codes that can contain video, and one asked for more copies of the book. The rest stated that they had no suggestions or that the book was already good.

Content expert and media expert validation results

The content expert gave a score of 211 out of 220 (95.9%) and stated that the book is feasible to use with revisions according to suggestions. The CTL components and pronunciation and native-speaker audio received full scores. The lowest score was on the presentation aspect (93.3%), especially the contextual stimulus at the start of each theme, exercise variety, and graded exercises that imitate audio and then speak independently (each scored 4). The expert's notes stated that the content is good and the pronunciation matches that of Arab speakers, while the writing is generally correct but still contains some typographical errors that need to be corrected.

Table 2. Content expert validation results

Aspect	Items	Score	Maximum	Percentage
Content (thematic dictionary, expressions)	13	61	65	93.8%
CTL components	7	35	35	100.0%
Pronunciation and native-speaker audio	7	35	35	100.0%
Presentation	9	42	45	93.3%
Language	8	38	40	95.0%
Total	**44**	**211**	**220**	**95.9%**

The media expert gave a score of 118 out of 120 (98.3%) and stated that the book medium with QR code audio is feasible to use without revision. The graphics and native-speaker audio aspects received full scores. On QR code integration (95.0%), two items scored 4: the size and placement of QR codes on the page, and

the consistency of QR code labels or icons with theme captions. The media expert also noted two written suggestions. The two validators combined gave a score of 329 out of 340 (96.8%).

Table 3. Media expert validation results

Aspect	Items	Score	Maximum	Percentage
Graphics	9	45	45	100.0%
QR code integration	8	38	40	95.0%
Native-speaker audio	7	35	35	100.0%
Total	**24**	**118**	**120**	**98.3%**

Speaking scores before and after use

As supporting data, the mean speaking score (maximum 30) rose from 10.70 (SD = 4.04; 35.7%) to 27.35 (SD = 2.39; 91.2%). All 23 students improved. The Wilcoxon test showed a significant difference ($W = 0$, $z = 4.21$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.88$), and the paired-samples t-test led to the same conclusion, $t(22) = 25.90$, $p < 0.001$, with a mean difference of 16.65 (95% CI 15.32–17.99). The class *N-gain* was 0.86 (high category). At the individual level, 22 students were in the high category (≥ 0.70) and one in the medium category (0.60). Before use, 18 students (78.3%) scored below 50% of the maximum score. Afterward, 20 students (87.0%) reached 80% or more. Table 4 shows the increase on each indicator.

Table 4. Speaking scores by indicator (scale 1–5, n = 23)

Indicator	Before (SD)	After (SD)	*N-gain*
Pronunciation	1.83 (0.78)	4.87 (0.34)	0.96
Fluency	1.91 (0.85)	4.78 (0.42)	0.93
Vocabulary	1.83 (0.72)	5.00 (0.00)	1.00
Comprehension	1.78 (0.74)	4.61 (0.58)	0.88
Interaction	1.83 (0.89)	4.13 (0.63)	0.73
Grammar	1.52 (0.67)	3.96 (0.77)	0.70

Discussion

Contextual fit as the main strength

The highest item concerned the match between themes and *pesantren* life (4.59), and constructivism was the CTL component with the highest mean (4.50). This pattern answers the needs-analysis finding that students want themes close to their routines. It is also consistent with the interviews. The head of curriculum (W1) judged that the existing book is "more about life in general," and the Arabic teacher (W2) stated that its content does not yet match students' daily lives, so a suitable *muhadatsah* book is "very much needed." The starting point of CTL, namely beginning with experiences already familiar to learners, was felt by

students to be the book's strongest value. This aligns with CTL research on Arabic teaching materials that places real contexts as the basis of understanding (Prawoto et al., 2023; Kosim et al., 2025).

The CTL components that demand social activity and independent discovery, namely learning community (4.32), inquiry (4.27), and authentic assessment (4.27), scored slightly lower. Although still in the very good category, this gap suggests that the arrangement of pair or group activities and teacher support need to be designed more explicitly. In the needs analysis, learning community was also the component with the lowest support, so the same pattern appeared at two stages of the research.

Thematic dictionary and pictures as vocabulary support

Vocabulary and the thematic dictionary were the parts most often named by students as favorites. This finding is important because limited vocabulary was the main obstacle in the needs analysis, and W1 said students are "severely lacking" in vocabulary even though a vocabulary dictionary had been distributed before. According to W1, a book without practice does not help much. Placing vocabulary inside dialogues and exercises, rather than as a separate list, therefore seems to be the reason the book was judged helpful. In the speaking scores, the vocabulary indicator reached 5.00 for all students, but this also signals a ceiling effect, so the indicator no longer differentiates students' ability.

QR codes and audio: useful, but access is limited

The digital media aspect received a mean of 4.27, lower than the content aspect (4.45) and ease of use (4.44). Ease of scanning QR codes was rated well (4.41), but the items on repeating the audio at any time (4.18) and audio intonation (4.14) were lower. The most plausible explanation is the restriction on devices in the *pesantren*. W1 stated that students do not carry phones, so scanning must be guided and audio is played through a loudspeaker. Under these conditions, students cannot yet repeat the audio freely, and one student mentioned that access may depend on the signal. W1 still regarded QR codes as the simplest way to link audio and suggested that QR codes also contain video, in line with one student's suggestion.

W1 also recounted from experience that Arab speakers sometimes find it difficult to understand Indonesian learners' speech because of pronunciation, so listening to native speakers is very important. The content expert and the media expert both gave full scores on pronunciation and native-speaker audio (100%), and the media expert rated QR code integration at 95%, including link stability and access without additional apps or accounts. The technical quality of the audio and QR codes is therefore not the source of the problem. The obstacle lies in the manner of access. This finding supports the observation in earlier studies that the benefits of digital media depend on access conditions (Faiqoh et al., 2025; Abidin &

Sutrisno, 2025), and gives practical direction in the form of offline downloads on shared devices or audio playback points in dormitories and classrooms.

Motivation and independence: limited by the language environment

Learning motivation and independence in practice received the lowest means (4.15), and the lowest item overall was speaking with friends outside class hours (3.64). This item cannot be attributed to the book. W1 stated that the vocabulary-delivery activity in the dormitory had once run and then stopped, that students do not yet speak Arabic with one another, and that the language environment has not been sustained, while W2 mentioned that there is no synchronization between the school and the *pesantren*. Language learning does require practice outside the classroom (Amin et al., 2026; Marlius et al., 2021). Students rated the book as making it easy to learn alone and with friends (4.59), but the habit of using it outside class hours has not grown because no program encourages it. Accordingly, the book needs to be placed as part of a broader program, for example a *muhadatsah* schedule in the dormitory and the empowerment of language officers, as proposed by W1. The score for not being afraid of making mistakes (4.05) also suggests that confidence in speaking needs to be built through repeated, low-risk practice.

Visual presentation and validation results

The most frequent request in the open-ended answers was color printing (36.4%). This is consistent with W1's view that today's students are more attracted to visual and audio material than to text, and with the needs-analysis result that placed illustrations and layout as the items with the highest support. From the content expert's side, presentation was the lowest-scoring aspect (93.3%), especially the contextual stimulus at the start of each theme and exercise variety. The media expert gave a higher score (98.3%) and rated the graphics as perfect, but two QR code integration items scored 4, namely the size and placement of the codes and the consistency of labels and captions. These three sources point toward improving visual presentation and QR code labeling. The expert also found several typographical errors, so revision of diacritics (*harakat*) and spelling needs to be carried out before the book is disseminated.

Speaking scores as supporting data

The increase in speaking scores from 35.7% to 91.2% is in line with students' responses stating that their speaking ability improved (4.27). The largest gains occurred in vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, which is consistent with the book's focus on the thematic dictionary and native-speaker audio. Interaction and grammar rose the least. This is plausible because the book emphasizes ready-to-use expressions rather than rules, and interaction depends heavily on conversation partners outside class. However, these figures must be read

cautiously. The design was a single group without a comparison group, the same instrument was used twice, the length of the treatment has not been reported, inter-rater reliability has not been tested, and post-test scores were close to the upper limit. These results are therefore presented as an indication, not as proof of effectiveness.

Conclusions (الخاتمة)

Grade 10 students rated the *muhadatsah* textbook *Istamti' bi-Lughatik* very good on all aspects (mean 4.31; 86.2%). The greatest strengths lie in the match of themes with *pesantren* life, ease of use, and the application of CTL components, while learning motivation and independence in practice received the lowest scores. The lowest item, speaking Arabic with friends outside class hours (3.64), reflects the lack of a language environment outside the classroom and not a weakness in the book's content. Content expert validation (95.9%) and media expert validation (98.3%), together with the increase in speaking scores (35.7% to 91.2%), support these findings as an indication, with the design limitations noted.

Suggestions for developers: (1) print the book in color, correct typographical errors, and strengthen the contextual stimulus and exercise variety; (2) provide audio that can be accessed offline on shared devices or at playback points in the dormitory, and consider video through QR codes; (3) clarify the guidance for pair and group activities. Suggestions for schools and *pesantren*: incorporate the book into the *muhadatsah* schedule in the dormitory and the language officers so that practice continues outside class. Suggestions for future researchers: test effectiveness with a comparison group, involve more than one validator and rater, and extend the participants to several classes or schools.

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