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Teachers' Perspectives in Arabic Education: A Narrative Inquiry from Pesantren Ar- Raudlatul Hasanah

وجهات نظر المعلمات في تعليم اللغة العربية: تحقيق سردي من
معهد الروضة الحسنة للتربية الإسلامية

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examines how Arabic language teachers at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah implement the Direct Method, focusing on their instructional strategies and the challenges they encounter. **Design/methods/approach** – Using a narrative inquiry approach grounded in Clandinin and Connelly's framework, data were collected through unstructured narrative interviews with ten teachers (2–5 years' experience), supported by observations and field notes. The narratives were thematically analyzed while preserving the authenticity of teachers' voices. **Findings** – The results show that teachers employ a context-responsive hybrid Direct Method, combining full Arabic instruction with selective translation, peer clarification, embodied demonstration, teaching aids, and outdoor activities. Challenges include spelling accuracy, differing literacy backgrounds, large class sizes, and fluctuating student attention. Teachers respond through individualized support, repetitive drills, collaboration with senior tutors, and adaptive code-switching. **Research implications** – The study contributes the concept of a Pesantren-Based Hybrid Direct Method and highlights the value of narrative inquiry in uncovering teachers' lived pedagogical reasoning. It recommends strengthening teacher training, improving media availability, and aligning assessment with oral–written balance.

KEYWORDS:

Arabic language learning; direct method; narrative inquiry, pedagogical training, pesantren education, teacher professionalism

الملخص

الهدف – يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة كيفية توظيف معلمات اللغة العربية في معهد الروضة الحسنة للتربية الإسلامية بميدان لطريقة التدريس المباشرة، مع التركيز على إستراتيجياتهن التعليمية والتحديات التي يواجهنها. المنهج والمدخل والتصميم – استخدم البحث منهج الاستقصاء القصصي بالاعتماد على إطار كلاندينين وكونلي، حيث جمعت البيانات عبر مقابلات سرديّة غير مقيّدة مع عشر معلمات يملكن خبرة تدريس تتراوح بين سنتين وخمس سنوات، إضافة إلى الملاحظات الميدانية. وحلّلت السرديات موضوعيًا مع الحفاظ على أصالة صوت المبحوثات. النتائج – أظهرت النتائج أن المعلمّات يطبّقن صيغة هجينة من الطريقة المباشرة تجمع بين استخدام العربية الكاملة

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والترجمة الانتقائية، والتوضيح بين الطالبات، والتعليم الجسدي، والوسائل التعليمية، والأنشطة خارج الصف. وتمثل التحديات في ضعف الإملاء، وتباين الخلفيات القرائية، وكبر حجم الفصول، وتشتت الانتباه. وقد واجهن هذه التحديات عبر الدعم الفردي، والتدريبات المتكررة، والتعاون مع المدرّسات الخبيرات، واستخدام التحويل اللغوي عند الحاجة. الآثار - يقدم البحث إسهامًا مفاهيميًا يتمثل في إبراز الطريقة المباشرة الهجينة في سياق المعهد، ويؤكد فاعلية المنهج السردى في الكشف عن منطق الممارسة لدى المعلّمت. وتوصي النتائج بتطوير برامج تدريب معلّمت اللغة العربية، وتوفير وسائل تعليمية أكثر تنوعًا، ومواءمة أدوات التقييم بين المهارات الشفوية والكتابية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: تعليم اللغة العربية، الطريقة المباشرة، التحقيق السردى، التدريب التربوي، مهنية المعلم والمعلّمت

1. Introduction

The idea that Arabic serves as the primary medium for Muslims to access Islamic knowledge must also be understood in reverse: the spread of Islam across diverse regions has significantly contributed to the expansion of Arabic usage. One of the key instruments sustaining this development is Arabic language education, within Indonesian context, is pesantren. Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG) Ponorogo, as noted by Masqon, represents an institution that consistently develops Arabic language instruction through the direct method (*al-ṭarîqah al-ḥadîtsah*).¹ This method is an adaptation of Mahmud Yunus's eclectic pedagogical approach grounded in the Berlitz Method.² Although scholars have used various terms to describe it, the method has proven effective in enhancing students' *mahârah kalâm*, including those at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah in Medan, North Sumatra, which forms the setting of this study.³ The present research focuses specifically on exploring the perspectives of teachers regarding the implementation of the direct method in this institution.

Numerous studies have examined the direct method, such as those by Munir,

¹ Dihyatun Masqon, "Muassasah Dâr Al-Salâm Gontor Wa Dauruhâ Fî T a'lim al-Ghah al-'Arabiyyah Li-al-Nâtiqîn Bi Ghairihâ Bi Ma'ad Gontor Namudhajan," *TSAQAFAH* 10, no. 1 (2014): 167–200.

² Muhammad Yusuf Salam et al., "The Eclectic Method of Teaching Arabic According to Mahmud Yunus: Its Application at the Darus Salam Islamic Boarding School, Gontor," *Istawa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2022): 71–90; Tim Penulis Gontor, *Biografi KH. Imam Zarkasyi; Dari Gontor Merintis Pesantren Modern* (Gontor Press, 1996); Maximilian Delphinus Berlitz, *The Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages: English Part*, vol. 1 (Siegfried Cronbach, 1888).

³ Marfirah Syam Zebua and Arwin Juli Rakhmadi, "Implementasi Metode Mubasyaroh Pada Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan," *Edu Society: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 3, no. 3 (2023): 1070–79.

Ismail et al., and Saragih & Mavianti.⁴ However, these studies tend to concentrate on showcasing learning outcomes, with relatively limited attention to the rich pedagogical experiences of teachers who implement the method. Highlighting these experiences is essential, as teachers occupy a central role in the direct method. Merlin & Rogers, in their review of the Berlitz Method, emphasize that the success of the direct method depends heavily on the readiness and competence of its teachers.⁵ This underscores the need to understand teachers' strategies, considerations, and professional experiences rather than merely evaluating learning results.

In the context of Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, most teachers are alumni of the institution who apply the direct method based on their own prior experiences as students. Masqon views this circumstance –also present in PMDG– as advantageous because it fosters alignment in the vision for students' Arabic language development.⁶ Nonetheless, such circumstances may also result in limitations, particularly when teachers rely solely on past experiences without integrating them with relevant pedagogical theories or acknowledging developments within the direct method itself. This observation aligns with Fauzi's findings, which highlight the need for improving teacher competencies in similar contexts.⁷ Through a narrative inquiry approach, the present study aims to confirm and enrich those findings by drawing directly on teachers' lived experiences.

The urgency of this research is further reinforced by the growing complexity of contemporary learning environments. Teachers now face students with increasingly diverse intellectual backgrounds and learning styles, requiring continuous pedagogical adaptation without abandoning the foundational principles of the direct method. In practical classroom contexts—or when pressured to produce quick comprehension—teachers often combine the direct method with translation-based techniques, even though the two stand in conceptual opposition. As Rasyidin & Harahap note, teachers implementing the direct method need not worry about students' initial comprehension or detailed lexical understanding. Their primary task is to habituate students to consistently hearing Arabic, much like a mother stimulating her child's listening ability, from which accurate pronunciation naturally

⁴ Moh Munir, "Sociolinguistic Phenomena in Arabic Language Learning Through Direct Method," *Alsinatuna* 7, no. 2 (2022): 189–203; Mohammad Ismail et al., "Educational Concepts in Improving Arabic According to KH. Imam Zarkasyi," *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1120–33; Fuji Anugrah Saragih and Mavianti Mavianti, "Implementasi Metode Dengar Ucap Pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren Ar-Raudhatul Hasanah," *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1917–24.

⁵ Shirley B Merlin and Sue F Rogers, "Direct Teaching Strategies," *The Reading Teacher* 35, no. 3 (1981): 292–97.

⁶ Masqon, "Muassasah Dâr Al-Salâm Gontor Wa Dauruhâ Fî T a'lim al-Ghah al-'Arabiyah Li-al-Nâtiqîn Bi Ghairihâ Bi Ma'ad Gontor Namudhajan."

⁷ Muhammad Ridwan Fauzi, "Implementasi Metode Langsung Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren Syamsul 'Ulum Sukabumi," *Tarbiyatu Wa Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 01 (2019): 1–13.

emerges.⁸

To explore such teacher experiences, this study employs a narrative inquiry approach, which views experience as a storied, contextualized, and meaning-laden phenomenon. The narrative framework draws on Clandinin & Connelly's conceptualization of experience as an interaction between the personal and the social, as well as Riessman's thematic narrative analysis for identifying patterns of meaning within stories.⁹ Barkhuizen's work also informs the study, particularly in positioning teacher narratives as key data for understanding pedagogical practice, professional identity, and decision-making processes. This approach allows the study not only to gather descriptive information but also to interpret how teachers construct meaning around their instructional practices.¹⁰

Based on these considerations, the study addresses three major gaps: (1) the limited number of studies examining teachers' reflections and experiences in applying the direct method, (2) the lack of research focusing on the professional development of Arabic language teachers in pesantren, and (3) the scarcity of narrative inquiry studies that explore teachers' personal stories within Arabic language education. To address these gaps, the study seeks to understand how teachers at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah construct and narrate their experiences in implementing the direct method, what strategies they employ, and what meanings they attribute to their teaching practices. In doing so, this research aims to contribute concretely to the development of Arabic language pedagogy based on the direct method and offer recommendations for the enhancement of teacher professionalism.

2. Research Method

This study adopts a narrative inquiry approach as developed by Clandinin and Connelly, Riessman, and Barkhuizen.¹¹ Narrative inquiry views experience as stories of experience that possess structure, sequence, context, social relationships, and meaning. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the study is to understand the personal and professional experiences of Arabic language teachers in implementing the Direct Method at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, and to explore the meanings they construct through their everyday teaching practices. In line with the three-dimensional inquiry space proposed by Clandinin and Connelly, this study examines teachers' narratives across the dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality considers the relationship between teachers' past experiences as

⁸ Rasyidin Rasyidin and Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, "Guru Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Studi Penerapan Metode Keteladanan," *AT TARAKIB: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 1, no. 1 (2023): 35–47.

⁹ F Michael Connelly and D Jean Clandinin, "Narrative Inquiry," in *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research* (Routledge, 2012); Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Doing Narrative Analysis," *Narrative Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, 1993.

¹⁰ Gary Barkhuizen et al., *Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research* (Routledge, 2013).

¹¹ Connelly and Clandinin, "Narrative Inquiry"; Riessman, "Doing Narrative Analysis"; Barkhuizen et al., *Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research*.

students, their present experiences as teachers, and their future expectations regarding the Direct Method. Sociality focuses on personal and social conditions surrounding their teaching roles, including their responsibilities as homeroom teachers. Place refers to the specific settings that shape their experiences, such as classrooms, dormitories, and the broader pesantren environment. This framework allows the researcher to reconstruct and interpret teachers' stories in a way that captures the complexity of their pedagogical decisions and challenges.

The participants consisted of ten Arabic language teachers at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria. All participants taught *Durûs al-Lughah al-'Arabiyah* to first-year students, had between two and five years of teaching experience, had served or were serving as homeroom teachers, and willingly agreed to share their teaching experiences. These criteria ensured that each teacher possessed substantial and relevant experience in applying the Direct Method within the context of first-year Arabic instruction in the pesantren.

Data were collected primarily through in-depth narrative interviews. Each teacher participated in one uninterrupted interview session of approximately sixty minutes. Interviews were conducted in the teachers' dormitory area and staff room to provide a natural and comfortable setting. All interviews were recorded using a mobile device and manually transcribed by the researcher. The interviews began with an open narrative prompt inviting teachers to recount their experiences in applying the Direct Method in first-year Arabic classes. After participants completed their narratives, the researcher posed follow-up questions designed to elicit clarification and elaboration on specific events, pedagogical decisions, challenges, and classroom dynamics. To enrich and contextualize these narratives, the researcher also conducted observations of classroom situations, teacher-student interactions, the use of instructional media, the social dynamics of the dormitory, and relevant institutional practices. These observations were recorded as field notes and served to contextualize and triangulate the interview data.

Data analysis followed a thematic narrative analysis approach, drawing on Riessman, combined with a re-storying process inspired by Clandinin and Connelly. The researcher began by reading the full narratives holistically to understand the overall structure, key events, emotional tone, and contextual features embedded in each story. Narrative meaning units were then identified and coded, allowing patterns to emerge across the teachers' accounts. Through this process, two major narrative storylines were developed: (1) teachers' stories about how they implement the Direct Method, and (2) teachers' stories about the challenges they face and the solutions they employ in Arabic teaching. These themes were constructed not as isolated categories but as interconnected storylines representing a coherent interpretation of teachers' experiences. The re-storying stage involved reconstructing the fragmented narratives into more coherent interpretive accounts while

maintaining the authenticity of teachers' voices through the inclusion of direct quotations. This reconstruction linked past, present, and anticipated future experiences, while situating them within the social and institutional context of the pesantren.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Transcripts and preliminary interpretations were returned to participants for member checking, allowing them to confirm or correct the accuracy of the accounts. Triangulation was achieved by comparing interview data with field notes, classroom observations, and relevant institutional documents. Throughout the research process, an audit trail was maintained to document coding decisions, analytical reflections, and the development of emerging themes. The researcher also engaged in reflexivity by acknowledging their own position in the pesantren context and the potential influence of this positionality on interpretation.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. All teachers participated voluntarily, and their identities were anonymized using coded identifiers. Interview data and supporting documents were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes.

3. Results And Discussion

Arabic Language Teachers in Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah

To understand the teachers' perspectives on the Direct Method, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by "Arabic language teachers" in this study. This term refers specifically to teachers who instruct first-year (beginner) students at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah. These teachers use *Durûs al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*, volume 1, written by Imam Zarkasyi and Imam Subani, and teach a subject explicitly titled *Al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*. This clarification is essential because several other subjects, as *Insyâ'*, *Muthâla'ah*, *Imlâ'*, and *Khat*, functionally support Arabic language learning but fall outside the scope of this research.¹² Likewise, *Nahwu* and *Sharaf* are not taught in the first year, in accordance with the principles of the Direct Method, which emphasize spoken proficiency. The use of *al-Nahw al-Wâdih*, a book that prioritizes examples (*al-amsilah*) over theoretical explanation (*al-syarh*), further reinforces this orientation.

The linguistic environment also plays a major role in enhancing students' proficiency. The teaching vocabularies (*mufradât*) activities conducted by the *mudabbirah* and the daily conversational practice (*al-muhâdatsah al-yaumiyyah*) among students function as an immersion-based practice, complementing more structured formal learning through *tamrîn lughawî* and oral examinations.¹³

¹² Manshuruddin Manshuruddin et al., "Application Values of Character Education in the Modern Pesantren System and Culture (Study at Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan)," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 8, no. 12 (2021): 295–307.

¹³ Tulus Mustofa, *Imersi Bahasa Sebagai Solusi Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab-Pidato Pengukuhan Jabatan Guru Besar Dalam Bidang Ilmu Bahasa Arab*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023.

Despite this immersive environment, the role of Arabic teachers remains highly significant. Pesantren policy positions them simultaneously as homeroom teachers, making their role strategic in monitoring both the personal and academic development of students. Teachers act as daily mentors, supervisors, educators, and “foster mothers.”¹⁴ This aligns with Clandinin and Connelly’s concept of the place-sociality dimension, in which professional identity is shaped through close relational contexts in the daily lives of learners.

The selection of teachers’ perspectives as the focus of this study is based on several considerations. Many Arabic teachers also serve as homeroom teachers, meaning their pedagogical competence is infused with emotional sensitivity toward the adaptation needs of new students. The Direct Method’s demand for teacher fluency (Berlitz) operates in practice alongside classroom leadership, empathy, and teacher responsiveness. This corresponds with findings by Utari et al., who argue that pesantren teachers often rely more on pedagogical content knowledge than on academic specialization alone.¹⁵

Pedagogical constraints have also been documented. Zebua and Rakhmadi show that some teachers experience difficulty due to limited teaching materials – an issue that also appears in the narratives of this research.¹⁶ Teachers consistently emphasize the importance of instructional media for building student motivation, echoing findings by Rasyidin and Harahap.

To address these challenges, the pesantren applies a structured teacher development system. Harahap and Ritonga describe how pesantren foster professionalism through leadership training.¹⁷ The *I’dâd Tadrîs* system and *dars naqqd* supervision provide teachers with opportunities to design lesson plans, implement practices, and receive systematic feedback.¹⁸ In narrative inquiry terms, this institutional structure is part of the “place” dimension that shapes teachers’ lived experiences of implementing the Direct Method.

Teachers’ Stories in Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah

This section derives from in-depth narrative interviews with ten first-year Arabic language teachers, each with two to five years of teaching experience. Teachers were asked to narrate their experiences without interruption, after which

¹⁴ Evarianta Ginting, “Pengaruh Sikap Dan Perilaku Persuasif Guru Terhadap Motivasi Berbahasa Arab Santri Di Pesantren Ar Raudlatul Hasanah Medan” (Doctoral Dissertation, Universitas Medan Area, 2021).

¹⁵ Dalia Utari et al., “Kompetensi Guru Pesantren Modern (Studi Tentang Pedagogical Content Knowledge),” *Nuris Journal of Education and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 139–46.

¹⁶ Zebua and Rakhmadi, “Implementasi Metode Mubasyaroh Pada Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan.”

¹⁷ Radinal Mukhtar Harahap and Abdullah Sani Ritonga, “Manajemen Profesi Guru Berbasis Kaderisasi: Konsepsi Dan Aplikasi Di Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan,” *Bidayah: Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 2023, 221–29.

¹⁸ Imam Tazali, “Implementasi Program Micro Teaching Bagi Guru Bahasa Arab Di Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan,” *EDU-RILIGIA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam Dan Keagamaan* 1, no. 2 (2017).

follow-up questions were posed. The narratives were analyzed and organized into two major themes: (1) teaching strategies and (2) challenges and solutions. The narrative analysis preserved the authenticity of the informants' voices while integrating the researcher's interpretation and dialogue with the relevant literature.

Teachers' Stories about Teaching Strategies

The Arabic teachers at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah use direct teaching methods. This is based on the guidelines of the Pesantren as set out in the curriculum document. This document is a specific translation of the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* curriculum. During the Arabic lessons, the teachers use direct teaching methods that they themselves have experienced and learned during their school years. The focus is on improving communication skills in Arabic.

One of the informants explained: *"I always try to pronounce each word in Arabic, even if the rhythm of the pronunciation has to be adapted to the students' reaction. Sometimes it has to be repeated several times, accompanied by facial expressions or body movements that clarify the meaning of each spoken word. This is what I understand by the direct method. I have also experienced this as a student of my former teachers."*

Another source said: *"Using Arabic throughout the lesson is indeed required in the direct method. However, in practice, there are classes that learn quickly and some need to repeat. There are also students who need to study with their classmates to understand the meaning in Bahasa. I only translate difficult-to-practice words directly into Bahasa, for example "يسيل الدم" in the material "جسم الإنسان". In this context, I give the meaning of "flowing blood (darah yang mengalir)". However, in other materials I interpret it in English, because it is assumed that students learned it in primary school."*

The interviews showed that combining direct methods with other methods is certainly possible. Direct methods are often used in combination with a strategy called by the pesantren *"Yadan bi Yadin"*, which stands for openness between students. The translation method is a last resort and is only used in urgent cases.

The speaker explained her strategy for using teaching aids in the form of a wall clock in the classroom. *"To teach time, I bring a large wall clock into the classroom. I spin it and ask the students to recite the time displayed. Using such aids helps me make sure that the students understand my lesson. However, for other materials, such as "الإنسان جسم", I have to rotate with other teachers because the school management has limited resources available."*

Another source said: *"Teaching Arabic using the direct method basically involves seeing and saying something, showing and then saying it. I take the students out of the classroom a few times and show them objects that can be named in Arabic. Understanding هذا - هذه is faster in an open space. I hold the medium to understand هذا - هذه and step away to explain ذلك - تلك"*

"Asking students to sing can also be done in the direct method. It is important to know that the note should not be longer than the harakat. I often ask students to sing, especially with the الجهات material, because I know they sang the Indonesian version in primary school." Another story from a teacher.

As a first grade Arabic teacher, the most important thing is to be enthusiastic

and confident. Enthusiastic because, for example, we have to explain verbs in a practical way. جری - یجری Yes, I have to run ahead of the students. دار - یدور I put them in a circle and walk around them. And I have to tell them with confidence that they understand what I am teaching them, even if the students sometimes misunderstand it. I mean, in the circle they understand "walking". And that is what they explain to me when they explain the meaning.

The Arabic teachers' stories confirm that all teachers have the same fundamental understanding of the Direct Method. Strategy is a form of implementation that is adapted to the subject matter, the students, and even the time of the lesson. One contact person explained: *"The Direct Method cannot be implemented in the same way. We have ten classes and each student has a different understanding. It all depends on the precision with which the teacher applies his method. In the morning, the students are usually enthusiastic. In the afternoon, that is not the case. The same goes for the subject matter. It is not the same whether you teach colour material (الألوان) or Numbers (الأعداد)."*

Teachers' stories about their challenges in implementing the Direct Method and their solutions

The challenges teachers face when using the Direct Method vary. One challenge that was mentioned by all the teachers successfully interviewed was checking the ability of students to write down spoken words correctly. One source stated: *"With the Direct Method, the biggest challenge is checking that each student can spell the words correctly. This can only be confirmed by answering written questions. Often students pronounce the words correctly but write them down incorrectly. Therefore, teachers often have to ask written questions, even if it is only one or two."*

Another source said: *"The direct method usually focuses on improving communication skills. Students often seem to be able to follow the lesson, especially when they are together. However, when they are questioned individually, some seem nervous and doubt the accuracy of their statements, especially in writing. In my opinion, teachers should really pay attention to this."*

Another source said: *"The challenge of the direct method lies in the written assessment system, especially for students who are used to writing in Latin. Spelling mistakes can hamper their ability to express themselves. Therefore, teachers need to meet with students outside the classroom on a regular basis. Alhamdulillah, Pesantren offers nine hours of Arabic lessons per week to support the learning objectives."*

The advantage for teachers in Pesantren lies in the dormitory environment. One teacher said: *"Learning outside the classroom is an important solution for teachers to prepare their students for written practice questions. The teachers live in the same neighborhood, which makes the work easier. This allows us to easily approach students individually."*

Another source spoke about repeated practice: *"Learning Arabic with a direct method must be practical. It cannot be just theory and concepts. That is why in class I require that every student can pronounce Arabic words directly. Outside of class, written exercises become a habit of independent learning. I often advise: the more you practice writing, the more*

mistakes in the workbook will be eliminated, so that only the correct ones appear on the exam papers."

Another challenge is that the teacher has not been teaching Arabic for very long. One teacher said: *"I am in my first year of Arabic. Therefore, I am the subject of the direct method; I am learning how to become an Arabic teacher directly from my experiences as a student. The challenge is to write the preparation and imagine how that preparation will be applied later by new students who do not yet master and understand the Arabic language. I have to anticipate this quickly. In practice, these obstacles usually occur at the beginning. Once you get used to it, everything will be easier, Insya Allah."*

Another source said: *"Teaching Arabic using the direct method comes with many challenges. One of them is when the class is large, with more than 25 or 30 students. Assessing each student's skills will definitely take a lot of time. The goal is also to complete all the course materials and improve the students' communication and writing skills. For me, communication with the tutor is the solution. Whatever obstacles arise, I often exchange ideas with other tutors to find solutions."*

Another source said: *"The direct method requires patience. The pitfall is that students often ask questions in Indonesian, so the teacher - because teaching means explaining something the student doesn't understand - answers in the same language, even though the teaching context is Arabic. That's why I usually explain it again in Arabic, even though I answered in Indonesian."*

"Some materials do indeed need to be introduced in Indonesian, even though they need to be presented in Arabic first. This includes the material اسم التفضيل, which is also an introduction, namely simple words such as اعلی, اكبر, احسن on the same scale (وزن). I was once asked what the difference is with the expression خير من, which means 'I am better than him'. I need such an explanation to give an introduction in Indonesian," another source said.

Teachers' use of teaching aids also presents challenges. One teacher said, *"Female students are unique. When I bring teaching aids, they often see something that is not the focus of the lesson. So I try to bring the students' attention back to the lesson. Once, I brought a photo of a man to teach them about لكم, انتم, انما, لك, انت. What caught their attention and got them to react was the man's face in the photo. I actually wanted to explain the context of its use, since it was a female class."*

Teachers who use technology like projectors to present multiple learning videos tell similar stories. *"For teachers, Arabic learning programs are very useful to reinforce strategies or methods. However, the students' focus is often unpredictable. I gave them a learning video about الأعداد, which was sung live by a native speaker in the children's Arabic class. The responses were directed exclusively at the Arab person in the video."*

As for the students' reactions, this has been experienced even by teachers who teach expressively. The teacher said: *"I teach ليس, لست, ليست and its derivatives with expressions. I indicate the expression 'not' with hand gestures, as you would normally say 'not'. Students understand that Laisa is waving to her friends. In this case, teachers have to be very careful, even though it is unavoidable. Just see it as entertainment in the classroom."*

Direct Method in Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah

The teachers' narratives collectively demonstrate that the implementation of the Direct Method in Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is highly contextual, adaptive, and shaped by institutional as well as cultural dynamics.

First, the teachers' strategies reveal a unique blending of strict Direct Method principles, such as target-language immersion, demonstration, repetition, embodied explanation, with contextual adaptations including selective translation, peer-assisted clarification (*Yadan bi Yadin*), and the incorporation of affective and performative elements. This results in what may be described as a pesantren-based hybrid Direct Method, where methodological purity is balanced with the realities of heterogeneous learners, resource constraints, and large class sizes.

Second, the challenges faced by teachers reinforce well-documented tensions in Direct Method pedagogy: the imbalance between oral and written competencies, the pressure to maintain continuous target-language use, and the difficulty of ensuring individualized feedback. However, the pesantren environment offers distinctive compensatory mechanisms, especially through the dormitory-based learning ecosystem that extends teacher-student interactions beyond the classroom.

Third, the narratives highlight the critical role of teacher identity formation, particularly among novice teachers who rely heavily on their memories as former students. Their stories align with narrative inquiry literature that views teaching practice as an evolving identity shaped by experience, reflection, and institutional norms.

Finally, the students' unexpected reactions to media, gestures, or classroom aids reveal an important pedagogical insight: meaning-making is always socially mediated, and learner attention does not necessarily align with teacher intention. These micro-misalignments underscore the need for reflexivity and adaptation, which is skills that all interviewed teachers demonstrated in various ways.

Collectively, these findings illustrate that the Direct Method in this pesantren is not a fixed or homogeneous technique but a living, negotiated practice shaped by teacher agency, learner diversity, institutional culture, and the multilayered ecology of pesantren life.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of the Direct Method at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah operates as an adaptive and context-responsive practice rather than a fixed methodological template. Through teachers' narratives, the findings reveal a pesantren-based hybrid direct method in which full target-language immersion is combined with selective code-switching, peer clarification (*Yadan bi Yadin*), embodied teaching, and the use of contextual media. These adaptations emerge in response to learners' varying literacy backgrounds, large class sizes, and the institutional demand for both oral and written proficiency.

The narratives also highlight how teacher identity, prior learning experiences, and the pesantren's relational environment shape pedagogical decision-making. Challenges such as spelling accuracy, learner anxiety, and limited resources underscore tensions between classical Direct Method principles and the realities of classroom assessment. Teachers address these through additional written drills, one-on-one support in the dormitory environment, and collaborative problem-solving with colleagues.

Conceptually, the study contributes to current debates on the Direct Method by demonstrating that its effectiveness in pesantren settings depends on methodological flexibility and context-sensitive scaffolding. Methodologically, the research shows the value of narrative inquiry in uncovering the lived complexities of language teaching practice. Practically, the study recommends strengthening teacher training in adaptive Direct Method strategies, improving access to instructional media, and aligning assessment practices with the method's objectives. Overall, the study underscores that successful Direct Method implementation in pesantren requires a balance of immersion, adaptability, and institutional support, offering a foundation for future pedagogical development and research.

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