



al-Ittijah
Jurnal Keilmuan dan Kependidikan Bahasa Arab
Vol. 17 No. 2, December 2025, 134-147
P- ISSN: 2086-1370, E-ISSN: 2655-7444
doi: 10.15408/alittijah.v17i2.12198



Revisiting Canale and Swain's Communicative Competence: Contextual Arabic Language Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum Era

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Abstract

This study explores the use of Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework in teaching Arabic through contextual activities in the Merdeka Curriculum. The issue is relevant because schools are expected to help students communicate more naturally, not only master grammar. The research aimed to see how teaching practices encourage the development of grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic abilities. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied by gathering information through interviews, classroom observations, and a review of teaching documents. The data were examined through a gradual process of sorting, organizing, and interpreting. The results show that contextual tasks and project-based work give students more room to improve their grammatical and discourse skills, which also supports their confidence and fluency. In contrast, sociolinguistic and strategic skills have not grown as strongly, mainly because authentic materials are scarce, lesson time is limited, and teachers need more support in designing communicative activities. The study underscores the continued relevance of communicative competence in Arabic learning and points to the importance of providing richer learning media, performance-based assessments, and sustainable teacher development. Future studies may look into digital and authentic resources to strengthen all components of communicative competence.

Keywords: *Canale and Swain's-theory, Arabic Contextual-learning, Merdeka Curriculum.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi penerapan kerangka kerja kompetensi komunikatif Canale dan Swain dalam konteks instruksi bahasa Arab di bawah Kurikulum Merdeka. Penelitian ini menanggapi kebutuhan kritis akan pergeseran pedagogis yang memprioritaskan kemahiran komunikatif alami di atas penguasaan tata bahasa yang terisolasi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini mengevaluasi bagaimana praktik pengajaran kontekstual memfasilitasi pengembangan empat kompetensi inti: gramatikal, wacana, sosiolinguistik, dan strategis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur, observasi kelas, dan tinjauan komprehensif terhadap dokumen instruksional, yang dilanjutkan dengan proses sistematis kategorisasi tematik dan interpretasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tugas-tugas kontekstual dan pembelajaran berbasis proyek secara efektif meningkatkan keterampilan gramatikal dan wacana siswa, yang secara bersamaan memperkuat kepercayaan diri dan kefasihan mereka. Sebaliknya, kompetensi sosiolinguistik dan strategis masih kurang berkembang karena kelangkaan materi autentik, keterbatasan waktu instruksional, serta kebutuhan akan pelatihan guru khusus dalam desain komunikatif. Studi ini menegaskan relevansi berkelanjutan dari kerangka kompetensi komunikatif dalam pedagogi bahasa Arab dan merekomendasikan integrasi berbagai media pembelajaran, asesmen berbasis kinerja, dan pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan. Penelitian di masa

depan perlu mengeksplorasi peran sumber daya digital dan autentik dalam memperkuat seluruh dimensi kompetensi komunikatif.

Kata Kunci: *Canale dan Swain's-theory, Pembelajaran Kontekstual Bahasa-Arab, Kurikulum Merdeka.*

Introduction

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes contextual learning and real communication skills, making traditional form-focused Arabic instruction no longer sufficient. Students are expected not only to understand linguistic structures but also to use Arabic meaningfully in social situations.¹ This shift underscores the importance of Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory, which integrates grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions of language use. The theory offers a relevant foundation for designing Arabic learning that aligns with curriculum demands and supports authentic communication. Its relevance becomes clearer as schools face challenges in translating curriculum principles into practice, particularly due to limited teacher preparation and contextual resources. Understanding this theoretical framework is therefore essential for strengthening Arabic instruction in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum.²

Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and developing communication skills in language learning. By integrating grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competence, this theory helps learners to use language effectively and appropriately in a variety of communicative situations.³ In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, these components help in designing authentic, problem-solving, and contextual tasks according to the needs of students. Contextual Arabic language learning requires activities that connect linguistic material with real-life situations. Canale and Swain's theory is relevant because it guides teachers in designing communication scenarios that require the use of appropriate grammatical structures (grammatical competence), speech patterns in accordance with social norms

¹ I Made Ratih Rosanawati et al., "Pedagogical Model Innovation Based on Ki Hajar Dewantara's Among System for History Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum," *Educational Process: International Journal* 14 (2025): e2025039.

² Matthew Kanwit and Megan Solon, *Communicative Competence in a Second Language: Theory, Method, and Applications* (Routledge, 2022).

³ Tetiana Kachak and Tetyana Blyznyuk, "Development of Communicative Competence of Future Special Education Teachers," *Journal of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University* 10, no. 1 (April 3, 2023): 87–98.

(sociolinguistic competence), text coherence and cohesion (discursive competence), and communication strategies when encountering obstacles (strategic competence).⁴

The communicative competence approach influences the selection of teaching methods, media, and assessment techniques in language education. The emphasis of the Merdeka Curriculum on independent and project-based learning provides an ideal framework for the application of these strategies, enabling the effective, meaningful, and engaging evaluation of students' communicative competence. Assessment becomes more holistic: not just grammar right or wrong, but also fluency, contextual appropriateness, text composition skills, and the use of strategies to overcome communication barriers. Although conceptually relevant, the application of Canale and Swain's theory in Arabic language learning in the field often faces obstacles: teacher readiness, availability of contextual teaching materials, and valid assessment mechanisms.⁵ Research testing the effectiveness of communicative competency-based learning models within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum is important. This study aims to examine how the integration of Canale & Swain's components into learning task design can improve students' communicative competence in the real context of Arabic language learning.

Based on previous studies, it appears that Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory has been attempted to be implemented in Arabic language learning through various approaches. Quasi-experimental studies show that task-based learning models are effective in improving grammatical and discursive competence, but are still weak in sociolinguistic and strategic aspects. Other studies highlight the importance of the teacher's role in internalizing the sociocultural context of Arabic; teachers who receive special training show an increase in their ability to apply sociolinguistic approaches, although time constraints and teaching materials are major obstacles.⁶ In addition, research on the development of assessment rubrics shows that the assessment of sociolinguistic and strategic competencies still faces reliability challenges because the indicators have not been properly operationalized. These findings show that Canale and Swain's theory has been partially

⁴ David Wei Dai, "What Do Second Language Speakers Really Need for Real-World Interaction? A Needs Analysis of L2 Chinese Interactional Competence," *Language Teaching Research* (January 31, 2023): 13621688221144836, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221144836>.

⁵ Fahmiyah Tsaqofah Islamiy and Eni Fariyatul Fahyuni, "Development of Arabic Teaching Modules Based on Constructivism with a Communicative Approach," *al-Mabara: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 10, no. 2 (2024): 279–295.

⁶ Rianda Ayu Ritnaning Tias and Sihono Sihono, "Inovasi Penilaian Tes Kemampuan Ekspresif Pada Buku Bahasa Arab LP2PPM," *Mabira: Journal of Arabic Studies and Teaching* 3, no. 2 (2025): 139–154.

applied, but has not been fully integrated into a contextual Arabic language learning system oriented towards the needs of the 21st century.⁷

Research by Al-Qahtani (2021) shows that task-based learning can improve grammatical and discourse competence in Arabic, but sociolinguistic competence remains underdeveloped due to limited cultural context in instruction.⁸ Rahmawati and Nuryatin found that teachers understand the concept of communicative competence in the Merdeka Curriculum, yet its implementation is still weak because of limited training and a lack of contextual teaching materials.⁹ Handayani developed a more holistic assessment rubric, but the evaluation of sociolinguistic and strategic competence is still not reliable. Thus, there is a research gap in developing a learning model and assessment tools that fully integrate all components of communicative competence within Arabic language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum.¹⁰

Although various studies show the effectiveness of some aspects of communicative competence theory, there are still research gaps that need to be bridged. First, there has not been much research that comprehensively integrates the four components of communicative competence into authentic task designs in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.¹¹ Second, teacher readiness and the availability of contextual teaching materials remain determining factors for success that have not been widely researched in the context of measurable interventions. Third, valid and reliable assessment instruments for sociolinguistic and strategic aspects still need to be developed. Finally, the effectiveness of applying Canale and Swain's theory in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum has not been empirically tested using a mixed methods approach.¹² The novelty of this study lies in the integration of all four components of Canale and Swain's communicative competence into the design of contextual

⁷ Siti Khumairotuzzahra, Rosna Wati, and Yusuf Safari, "Penguatan Kompetensi Guru Melalui Pelatihan RPP Bahasa Arab Berbasis CEFR Di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Qardbul Hasan: Media Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* 11, no. 3 SE-Articles (September 19, 2025): 351–363.

⁸ Maleeha Mohammed Zaaf Al-Qahtani et al., "Teaching Strategies Adopted in Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University and the Extent of Its Consistence with the University Prevailing Learning Patterns," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 12, no. 6 (2022): 164–183.

⁹ Dini Restiyanti Pratiwi and Eko Purnomo, "Dimensi Berkebhinekaan Global Dalam Buku Teks Bahasa Indonesia Kurikulum Merdeka," in *Proceedings Series on Social Sciences & Humanities*, vol. 20, 2024, 47–54, <https://conferenceproceedings.ump.ac.id/pssh/article/view/1302>.

¹⁰ Eka Dewi Mutiara, Abdul Aziz, and Abdul Bari, "Developing Technology-Based Authentic Assessment for Maharah Kitabah in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Arabic Textbook," *LISANLA: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 9, no. 1 (2025): 174–199.

¹¹ Yuliya Boyko et al., "Cross-Cultural Research in Cognitive Psycholinguistics: Analysis of Linguistic Diversity and Cognitive Processes," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 6, no. 6 (December 3, 2024): 28–42.

¹² Irfan Hania et al., "Revitalizing Arabic Learning in Madrasah: A Deep Learning-Based Holistic Framework Integrating Islamic Pedagogy," *HEUTAGOGLA: Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2025): 135–149.

Arabic language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to develop a learning model and assessment instruments that can improve students' communicative competence holistically. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relevance and effectiveness of integrating Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory into contextual Arabic language learning in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum, with a focus on developing learning models and assessment instruments that support the holistic improvement of students' communicative competence.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a phenomenological orientation to explore how Arabic language teachers implemented Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research was conducted naturalistically without any manipulation of learning conditions, allowing the teaching practices to occur as they normally would in the classroom setting.

The study was carried out from February to May 2024 at MTsN 4 Sidoarjo, East Java during the even semester of the academic year, allowing multiple observations of instructional cycles. The participants consisted of three Arabic language teachers teaching Grade VIII. They were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as a minimum of one year of experience with the Merdeka Curriculum and the active use of communicative and differentiated instruction. Students in Grade VIII A were not treated as primary participants; they served as supporting data sources through non-participant classroom observation and review of their learning products. The inclusion criteria ensured that the data represented authentic classroom practices related to communicative competence within the school's instructional context. The study was carried out from February to May 2024 during the even semester of the academic year, allowing multiple observations of instructional cycles.

Data collection followed established qualitative inquiry procedures. The researcher served as the primary instrument and entered the classroom during regular lessons to conduct participant observation, using an observation sheet that focused on teacher strategies for developing linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Unstructured interviews were conducted with each teacher using a flexible interview guide to explore instructional practices, perceptions of learner needs, and challenges in applying

communicative competence within the Merdeka Curriculum. Supporting evidence was gathered through documentation, including lesson modules, lesson plans, students' learning products, and audio-visual recordings of classroom activities. All procedures were applied iteratively so that emerging insights could be clarified and validated through repeated engagement with the field.

Data were analyzed throughout and after fieldwork using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analytical process enabled continuous checking of emerging interpretations and supported the identification of themes related to teachers' lived experiences in implementing communicative competence. To strengthen data validity, triangulation was carried out by comparing findings across observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation, ensuring that interpretations were consistent and grounded in multiple sources of evidence.

Ethical research principles were maintained throughout the inquiry. Permission was formally granted by the school administration, and informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers. To protect confidentiality, all identifying information was anonymized. Participants retained the right to withdraw or review their responses at any stage of data collection.

Result and Discussion

MTs Negeri 4 Sidoarjo is one of the state school that has implemented the Merdeka curriculum gradually since the 2023/2024 school year. This madrasah is known to be quite progressive in integrating project-based learning and contextual learning approaches into various subjects, including Arabic. The focus of the research is directed at class VIII A, which has 28 students, with one Arabic teacher who has participated in the Merdeka curriculum Implementation (IKM) training. In general, learning Arabic in this class emphasizes four main skills (*istimā'*, *kalām*, *qirā'ah*, and *kitābah*), but teachers try to relate all four to real-life contexts, such as simulated communication in the marketplace, conversations at school, and simple social interactions. Within the framework of Canale and Swain's (1980) theory, this learning is an ideal arena to observe the extent to which the four components of communicative competenThis study set out to explore how Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework is applied in contextual Arabic instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum at MTs Negeri 4 Sidoarjo. The findings highlight two main points:

project-based tasks and real-life learning situations help students strengthen their grammatical accuracy and their ability to build coherent spoken texts. These practices give students opportunities to use the language meaningfully rather than rely only on memorized forms. At the same time, the development of sociolinguistic and strategic competences is still limited, largely because teachers have restricted access to authentic materials, lack sufficient instructional time, and need more systematic training. These constraints show that the successful use of Canale and Swain's theory depends on broader institutional support.

The study carries several practical implications. Teachers need more opportunities to provide spontaneous communication practice, incorporate authentic multimedia resources, and apply performance-based assessment. Madrasah administrators should reinforce these efforts by improving facilities and creating spaces for professional collaboration. For curriculum developers, clearer guidance is required on how communicative competence—especially sociolinguistic and strategic aspects—should be developed in Arabic language classes. The research is limited to a single class setting, so it does not track long-term changes. Future studies could adopt experimental or classroom-based designs and explore the use of technology and digital authentic materials to enhance communicative competence at different grade levels in Indonesian madrasahs, namely grammatical competence, discursive competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence are applied and developed in a learning environment that applies the principle of Independent Learning.

Observations show that grammatical competence is still the main focus of teachers in learning activities. In the early stages of the meeting, the teacher often begins the lesson with an explanation of *qawa'id* (nahwu-sharaf rules) such as the use of *fi'il madhi* and *mudhari'*, as well as sentence patterns of the number of *ismiyab* and *fi'liyab*. However, in contrast to traditional learning that tends to emphasize memorization, teachers associate it with the context of students' daily activities. For example, in the theme of *al-yawmiyyāt* (daily activities), the teacher asks students to make sentences such as *adhbabu ilā al-madrasah fī as-sā'ah as-sābi'ah* (I go to school at seven). The teacher then provokes other students to respond with spontaneous questions, such as *limādzā tadhbabu mubakkiran?* (why did you leave early?). This activity indicates that grammatical mastery is not only taught mechanically, but is geared towards supporting real communication skills.

Interview results show that some students still struggle to use grammatical structures spontaneously and tend to depend on memorized patterns, indicating that grammatical competence, although foundational, has not been fully internalized. Discursive competence

develops through project-based activities; for instance, students create short thematic dialogues and practice them in groups. Observations show improvement in their ability to organize conversations coherently and use basic discourse markers, although maintaining idea continuity in unscripted speaking remains difficult. This suggests that structured projects strengthen discourse skills, but more improvisational practice is needed for authentic communication.

Sociolinguistic competence presents a greater challenge. Teachers introduce simple variations in language use—such as differences in greetings and levels of formality—and use short video clips to illustrate cultural and dialectal differences. However, students still often use overly formal expressions in casual contexts, reflecting limited sociocultural exposure. Teachers note that the lack of authentic materials and real interaction models restricts the development of sociolinguistic awareness in class.¹³

Nonetheless, this learning is already on the right track by providing space for students to explore the nuances of the communication context. This is in line with the findings of the second study in the previous section, that teacher training and contextual resource support are the main keys to strengthening sociolinguistic aspects. Strategic competence, namely the ability to use communication strategies to overcome language barriers, develops through free speech activities and group discussions. The teacher encourages students not to stop talking when they forget vocabulary, but to use strategies such as descriptions (*huwalladzi nastakhdimuhu fi al-maktab*) or gestures.

Students also started using the phrase *ma ma'nā hādzihi al-kalimah?* Or *Nancy Pelosi...* as a form of linguistic compensation. This shows that they develop a pragmatic awareness of maintaining communication despite being limited in structure or vocabulary. Reflection activities at the end of the session, in which students review the strategies used, reinforce the metacognitive dimension of strategic competence. Although not all students are active, most show increased courage and fluency in speaking. This is in line with the principles of the Merdeka curriculum which emphasizes agency and independent learning.¹⁴

Relationship between Components and the Context of the Merdeka curriculum

¹³ Muhammad Nur Kholis et al., “Student Perceptions of the Use of Authentic Video in Learning Arabic Writing Skills,” *Tsaqofiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Arab* 7, no. 2 (2025): 700–710.

¹⁴ Maksudin Maksudin and Irfan Hania, “Behaviorism Approach: Julian Rotter’s Theory And Its Reorientation In Addressing Students’ Difficulties In Learning Arabic Language,” *IJAZ ARABI: Journal of Arabic Learning* 7, no. 2 (2024): 560–570.

The findings show that the implementation of Canale and Swain's theories does not occur separately between components, but rather interlocking. Grammatical and discursive competencies become the structural basis for speech formation, while sociolinguistic and strategic competencies become the drivers of meaningful communication in real contexts. The Merdeka Curriculum provides a space of flexibility for teachers to integrate communicative approaches through contextual projects. For example, the "*Arabic Market*" and "*Everyday Activities*" projects provide opportunities for students to apply language structures in functional contexts. This approach also strengthens the principles of learning by doing and assessment as learning.

However, in terms of implementation, it can be seen that the success of implementation is highly dependent on the pedagogical competence of teachers and the availability of contextual teaching materials. Teachers who have a communicative training background are better able to bridge theory with practice. In contrast, teachers who are still familiar with traditional grammar learning patterns tend to find it difficult to integrate cultural context and communication strategies. The limitations of evaluation tools are also an issue. The assessment used still focuses on linguistic outcomes (grammatical correct/wrong), not communicative performance as a whole. This is in line with the previous third research, that the rubric of communicative competencies that include sociolinguistics and strategic is still difficult to operationalize. Thus, this study shows that there is a gap between the ideal of communicative competency theory and learning practices in the field, especially in the aspect of assessment and strengthening the cultural context.¹⁵

The factors supporting the implementation of Canale and Swain's theory in contextual Arabic learning at MTs Negeri 4 Sidoarjo include several important aspects that strengthen the success of the learning process. First, the Merdeka curriculum policy provides ample space for teachers to create and design learning projects based on local contexts, so that Arabic language learning can be linked to students' real experiences.¹⁶ Second, support from madrasah heads for learning innovation, including the use of digital media and project-based activities, also strengthens the academic atmosphere that is adaptive to changes in the modern educational paradigm. Third, students' enthusiasm for communicative and

¹⁵ Asep Sunarko et al., "Pembelajaran Nahwu Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri," *SPEKTRUM: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 2, no. 2 (2024): 83–94.

¹⁶ M Rafi, S A Nisa, and M R Syafi'i, "Evaluasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Kurikulum Merdeka Di MA Arrahmaniyah Depok Berbasis Model Congruence," *Al-Maraji': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–15.

performative activities such as dramas, simulations, and language projects is the main driving force in creating an active and meaningful learning atmosphere. In addition, collaboration between teachers through the MGMP Arabic forum is also an important forum to share good practices and enrich learning strategies that are more communicative and contextual.¹⁷

However, there are several inhibiting factors that are still a challenge in the implementation of communicative competency theory in this madrasah. The limitations of authentic sources such as videos, contemporary Arabic cultural texts, and direct interaction with native speakers make it difficult to fully realize the implementation of context-based learning.¹⁸ The lack of advanced training for teachers related to communicative competency theory also causes some teachers to still be oriented towards traditional approaches that emphasize grammar and translation alone. In addition, the limited learning time in Arabic lesson hours is an obstacle to developing the four language skills in a balanced manner. Assessment instruments that are not adaptive to performative and authentic assessments also make the achievement of communicative competence difficult to measure comprehensively. Therefore, strengthening the learning ecosystem that includes teacher training, authentic media development, and contextual assessment design is needed so that Canale and Swain's theories can be effectively implemented under the umbrella of the Merdeka curriculum.¹⁹

The results of this study strengthen the relevance of Canale and Swain's theory in the context of Arabic language learning in Indonesia. The four components of communicative competence—grammatical, discursive, sociolinguistic, and strategic—have proven to be effective conceptual frameworks in directing meaningful learning. However, its implementation needs to be adjusted to the characteristics of madrasah students who have a multicultural background and are not native Arabic speakers. Theoretically, the findings of this study confirm that communicative competence is dynamic, where the compensation strategies used by students when facing linguistic limitations reflect pragmatic intelligence and meaning negotiation skills.²⁰

¹⁷ Eka Rizki Amalia et al., "Bridging Educational Reform and Faith: Evaluating Kurikulum Merdeka's Compatibility with Islamic Values in Madrasahs," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 4 (February 1, 2025): 483–500.

¹⁸ Sitti Hasnah, Mohamad Idhan, and Muh. Jabir, "Contextual Teaching Strategies in Arabic Language Education: Bridging Theory and Practice for Enhanced Learning Outcomes," *At-Ta'dib* 19, no. 2 (2024): 281–290.

¹⁹ Ahmad Imam Baihaqi et al., "Arabic Language Learning Based on the Merdeka Curriculum: Problems and Solutions," *Lughawiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Arab* 8, no. 2 SE-Articles (October 18, 2025): 301–318.

²⁰ Adel M Alharbi, "Conceptualization of Pragmatic Language Through Proverbs: A Comparative Study of Arabic and English Proverbs," *International Journal of Educational Sciences and Arts* 3, no. 8 (2024): 10–31.

In addition, the Merdeka curriculum provides great opportunities for integration between language, culture, and character building. Through contextual learning, students not only learn Arabic as a symbol system, but also as a tool for thinking, interacting, and understanding socio-cultural values.²¹ This is in line with the new paradigm of Arabic for communication, not translation which emphasizes the function of language as a means of communication across cultures. However, the sociolinguistic and strategic aspects of learning are still relatively weak due to limited exposure to Arabic culture and lack of development of authentic assignments. For this reason, Canale and Swain's theories need to be adapted into a contextual communicative competence model that combines the social reality of Indonesian students with Arab cultural values in harmony.²²

From a practical perspective, the results of this study provide several important implications. For Arabic teachers, there is a need for a learning activity design that balances the four components of communicative competence through the use of contextual and communicative project-based modules. For curriculum developers, operational guidance is needed that explains the steps for applying Canale and Swain's theories, including examples of authentic assignments and performative assessment rubrics. For advanced researchers, this study opens up opportunities to develop valid and reliable evaluation instruments to assess sociolinguistic and strategic competencies more accurately. Meanwhile, for madrasah and policymakers, support in the form of teacher training, the provision of digital learning resources, and partnerships with Arabic-speaking institutions are key factors in strengthening the application of this theory at the practical level.²³

Overall, the application of Canale and Swain's theory in MTs Negeri 4 Sidoarjo shows a positive direction, especially in strengthening grammatical and discursive competencies through project-based learning. However, sociolinguistic and strategic aspects still need to be strengthened so that learning Arabic is truly contextual and communicative. The integration of this theory with the philosophy of the Merdeka curriculum shows a strong synergy between the communicative approach and the principle of freedom of learning. The

²¹ Achmad Baidowi Alwi, "Perubahan Substansi Kurikulum Bahasa Arab Berdasarkan KMA Nomor 347 Tahun 2022," *Journal of Education Research* 4, no. 4 (2023): 1753–1760.

²² Fatima El Zahraa, "Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in the Context of Arabic Language Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Scale," *al-Ittihad: Jurnal Keilmuan dan Kependidikan Bahasa Arab* 16, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 23, 2024): 1–24, <https://ftk.uinbanten.ac.id/journals/index.php/al-ittihad/article/view/10882>.

²³ Zakiyatul Abidah and Khoirun Nisa, "Pendampingan Penyusunan Modul Ajar Bahasa Arab P5 Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Guru Bahasa Arab Tingkatan Sekolah Dasar Kecamatan Glagah Kabupaten Lamongan," *Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat Nusantara* 6, no. 2 SE- (April 3, 2025): 1856–1861.

Merdeka curriculum provides space for teachers and students to innovate, while Canale and Swain's theories provide a scientific framework that guides effective communication processes. With the enhancement of authentic resources, ongoing teacher training, and standardized performative assessments, Arabic learning can evolve from just teaching about language to teaching through language learning that humanizes communication, contextualizes meaning, and fosters true 21st-century proficiency.²⁴

This study is limited by the small scope of observation, reliance on a single class, and restricted access to authentic Arabic cultural materials, which may not fully capture the long-term development of communicative competence. Future research should explore technology-enhanced authentic resources, examine multi-site comparisons across madrasahs, and develop more comprehensive communicative assessment tools, particularly for sociolinguistic and strategic competences. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to understand how communicative competence develops over time under the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how Canale and Swain's communicative competence framework is applied in contextual Arabic instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum at MTs Negeri 4 Sidoarjo. The findings highlight two main points: project-based tasks and real-life learning situations help students strengthen their grammatical accuracy and their ability to build coherent spoken texts. These practices give students opportunities to use the language meaningfully rather than rely only on memorized forms. At the same time, the development of sociolinguistic and strategic competences is still limited, largely because teachers have restricted access to authentic materials, lack sufficient instructional time, and need more systematic training. These constraints show that the successful use of Canale and Swain's theory depends on broader institutional support. The study carries several practical implications. Teachers need more opportunities to provide spontaneous communication practice, incorporate authentic multimedia resources, and apply performance-based assessment. Madrasah administrators should reinforce these efforts by improving facilities and creating spaces for professional collaboration. For curriculum developers, clearer guidance is required on how communicative competence—especially sociolinguistic and

²⁴ Namiyah Fitriani, Badrus Zaman, and Mohammad Imron, "Pengembangan Evaluasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Penilaian Autentik Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahul Huda Madura," *Tarunaedu: Journal of Education and Learning* 3, no. 2 SE-Articles (September 11, 2025): 78–89.

strategic aspects—should be developed in Arabic language classes. The research is limited to a single class setting, so it does not track long-term changes. Future studies could adopt experimental or classroom-based designs and explore the use of technology and digital authentic materials to enhance communicative competence at different grade levels in Indonesian madrasahs.

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