



Scenario-Based Dialogues and Performance-Based Assessment for Early Arabic *Kalam*: Implementing a Communicative Approach in an Islamic Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study investigates how a communicative approach—operationalised as Scenario-Based Dialogues and performance-based assessment—was implemented in fourth- and fifth-grade Arabic *kalam* materials at Islamic Elementary School (SDI) Annuriyah Rambipuji..

Design/methods/approach – Using a qualitative descriptive case-study design, data were collected through systematic document analysis of teaching modules, semi-structured interviews with the Arabic teacher and head of madrasah, and classroom observations triangulated by thematic analysis.

Findings – Findings show a substantive curricular shift from grammar-centred tasks to functionally oriented scenario dialogues, multimodal scaffolds, and a semesterly “Kalam Performance Week” that privileges fluency and interactional competence. Classroom evidence indicates increased vocal participation and emergent linguistic confidence during guided tasks, although persistent code-switching outside lessons and a shortage of authentic child-appropriate Arabic resources constrained wider language habituation. The study concludes that contextually relevant scenario tasks and performance assessment can meaningfully foster early communicative competence, but sustainable impact requires teacher training, accessible authentic materials, and out-of-class habituation strategies. Limitations include the single-site case design and lack of longitudinal retention measures, which restrict generalisability and call for multi-site, mixed-method, and longitudinal follow-up studies to test scalability and durability.

Research Implications – Practical recommendations include targeted in-service training on interactive facilitation, development or procurement of age-appropriate Arabic materials, and structured school routines to extend classroom speaking into broader communicative ecologies.

Article History

Received 7 February 2026

Revised 2 March 2026

Accepted 6 March 2026

Keyword:

Communicative Language-Teaching; Scenario-Based Dialogues; Islamic Elementary-School; Arabic Speaking; *Maharah Kalam*.

Introduction

The ability to use Arabic for everyday and religious interaction in Islamic primary schools constitutes both a pedagogical necessity and a social imperative within many Muslim communities, as early oral competence underpins later literacy and faith-based practices (Thoyyibah & Rusady, 2022). Despite widespread endorsement of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) across applied linguistics, its uptake at the primary Islamic-school level remains uneven, creating a tension between contemporary pedagogy and entrenched grammar-focused traditions (Sutarjo, 2025). This tension is particularly salient where Arabic functions simultaneously as a subject, a liturgical medium, and a vehicle for socialization, which raises distinctive curricular and assessment questions for elementary settings. Innovations that foreground spoken interaction and performance-based evaluation therefore carry potential to



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How to Cite (APA 7th Edition): Baroro, F., & Al Gholi, M. H. H. (2026). Scenario-Based Dialogues and Performance-Based Assessment for Early Arabic *Kalam*: Implementing a Communicative Approach in an Islamic Elementary School. *Lingua: Jurnal Keilmuan dan Kependidikan Bahasa Arab*, 12(1), 32–42. <https://doi.org/10.32678/lingua.v12i1.12659>

reframe early Arabic instruction from rote reproduction toward authentic communicative use (Fajriyati & Ghufron, 2025). Accordingly, examining instructional designs that reconcile communicative aims with contextual constraints at the elementary level is timely and of broad relevance to language educators, curriculum developers, and policy-makers (Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Empirical work across Islamic education contexts indicates that systematic teacher modelling within a supportive linguistic environment can substantially increase learners' confidence and oral fluency (Zubair, 2026). Concurrently, studies suggest that teacher communicative competence acts indirectly—mediated by interaction quality and practice intensity—rather than as a simple determinant of student speaking gains (Attruk, 2025). These findings highlight the central role of meaningful interaction and sustained speaking practice in developing communicative proficiency (Kurniawan & Fikriansyah, 2025). Research in elementary Islamic schools also demonstrates that communicative approaches integrated with project-based activities significantly improve students' participation, collaboration, and speaking performance (Yuliasari et al., 2025). Together, these findings underline the importance of interactive pedagogy in fostering communicative competence in Arabic learning environments (Pulungan et al., 2026).

Several pedagogical interventions have been explored to strengthen Arabic speaking competence in Islamic educational contexts. The chain-story technique has been shown to improve students' speaking ability through structured vocabulary exercises and regular communicative practice (Nurkhamilah, 2025). Similarly, situational language teaching engages learners in real-life communicative contexts, thereby supporting the development of multiple language skills simultaneously (Ritonga et al., 2025). The Total Physical Response method also increases fluency, vocabulary retention, and verbal participation through kinesthetic and interactive activities (Prasetya & Ihwan, 2026). These approaches demonstrate that communicative and activity-based strategies can effectively enhance Arabic speaking competence in diverse learning settings (Azhar et al., 2022).

Other studies emphasize the role of creative learning strategies and collaborative interaction in improving speaking proficiency. Fun learning approaches incorporating games, thematic speaking activities, and storytelling events have been shown to increase learner motivation and confidence (Saleh et al., 2025). Constructivist collaborative techniques such as role play, debate, and language games also promote active knowledge construction and communicative competence (Falaqi et al., 2023). In addition, the Direct Method encourages intensive oral practice through dialogue and real-life conversation, leading to improvements in vocabulary mastery and pronunciation accuracy (Zainuddin & Kirom, 2025). These pedagogical practices demonstrate the value of interaction-rich learning environments in facilitating language acquisition (Muhlasin & Rofingah, 2025).

The broader learning environment also plays a crucial role in shaping Arabic language acquisition. Sociolinguistic perspectives highlight that language use is influenced by social contexts such as family, school, community, and media exposure (Mardhiyah et al., 2023). Institutional efforts to establish a *bi'ah 'arabiyah* through daily habituation, environmental visualization, and teacher modelling have been shown to strengthen communicative competence (Abidah & Chebaiki, 2024). Digital media innovations, such as Arabic podcasts, further support speaking development by exposing learners to authentic language input and encouraging autonomous practice (Effendy et al., 2026). However, challenges such as traditional assessment systems

and limited authentic materials often hinder the effective implementation of communicative approaches (Khairiyah & Taufikullah, 2024).

Despite this cumulative knowledge, notable gaps and tensions persist in the literature that constrain theory-to-practice translation for primary Islamic schools. First, much existing research privileges secondary or tertiary contexts or small-scale case designs, leaving an evidence gap specifically focused on elementary Islamic settings and their unique intersection of religious and communicative goals. Second, there is limited operationalization of teacher communicative competence as a reliably measurable construct, which hampers efforts to design targeted professional development and to test causal mediation hypotheses empirically. Third, the scarcity of validated, performance-based assessment instruments for young learners complicates efforts to evaluate scenario-based dialogues and other interactive tasks with both reliability and ecological validity. These limitations motivate a focused inquiry into pedagogies and assessments that are both developmentally appropriate and contextually feasible for schools like at Annuriyah Rambipuji Islamic Elementary School (SDI Annuriyah).

This study therefore investigates the systematic implementation of a Scenario-Based Dialogues curriculum and associated performance-based assessments for teaching Arabic speaking (*kalam*) at at Annuriyah Rambipuji Islamic Elementary School (SDI Annuriyah), with the aim of elucidating practical opportunities and challenges encountered by classroom teachers. Specifically, the research examines how scenario design, teacher facilitation, and assessment practices interact to enhance students' communicative competence and linguistic confidence in a primary Islamic-school context. By foregrounding empirical classroom processes and teacher perspectives, the study seeks to bridge the gap between CLT principles and on-the-ground instructional realities in resource-constrained settings. Findings are intended to contribute actionable guidance for curriculum designers, teacher educators, and school leaders concerning scalable strategies for embedding spoken Arabic into daily school life. Ultimately, the study aspires to advance both theoretical understanding and pragmatic solutions for cultivating early-stage Arabic oral proficiency within faith-based educational environments.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, centered at Annuriyah Rambipuji Islamic Elementary School (SDI Annuriyah). By adopting a case study framework, this research provides an in-depth investigation into the practical implementation of the communicative approach within the specific context of Arabic speaking (*kalam*) teaching materials. This methodological choice addresses the need for a contextual understanding of how theoretical communicative principles are translated into pedagogical tools and classroom practices. Unlike a pure literature review, this research functions as a field-based inquiry that treats the school's specific curriculum and materials as the primary object of analysis.

The data for this research are derived from a combination of primary and secondary sources. The primary data consist of the actual *kalam* teaching materials utilized at SDI Annuriyah, supplemented by qualitative insights gathered through semi-structured interviews with the Arabic language teacher (F.S.) and the Head of the Madrasah (N.H.). These interviews serve to clarify the pedagogical rationale and the real-world challenges encountered in the field. Secondary data, used to establish a theoretical benchmark, include accredited scientific journals, reference books, and

curriculum documents published within the last five years, retrieved from reputable repositories such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ.

Data collection was carried out through systematic documentation and semi-structured interviews. The documentation process involved analyzing the teaching materials using an evaluation rubric that focuses on communicative indicators, such as task authenticity and student interaction. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, the researcher conducted interviews to verify how these materials function in a live classroom setting. This dual-method collection ensures that the findings are not only theoretically grounded but also reflective of the actual educational conditions at the elementary level.

The data were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis technique, following the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In response to the need for methodological precision, the researcher avoided the highly complex procedures of formal Grounded Theory, opting instead for an inductive approach that identifies patterns, themes, and challenges directly from the gathered data without rigid preconceived notions. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by cross-referencing the content of the teaching materials with the interview transcripts and the supporting literature. This systematic process ensures that the resulting interpretations are both robust and replicable for future research in Islamic elementary education.

Results

The following section presents the empirical findings gathered through a qualitative case study at Annuriyah Rambipuji Islamic Elementary School (SDI Annuriyah). By synthesizing data from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of internal teaching documents, this discussion delineates the practical execution of the communicative approach in Arabic language instruction. The results are categorized into two primary focuses: the structural implementation within teaching materials and the subsequent evaluation of student performance alongside the inherent pedagogical challenges.

3.1. Implementation of Communicative Approach in Teaching Materials at SDI Annuriyah

The findings at Annuriyah Rambipuji Islamic Elementary School (SDI Annuriyah) reveal that the implementation of the communicative approach is primarily manifested through the adaptation of internal teaching modules and the selection of specific themes relevant to the students' daily lives (Documentation, 2025). Based on our analysis of the Arabic *kalam* materials used in the 4th and 5th grades, the school has shifted its focus from purely grammatical structures to functional language use. During an interview, the Arabic language teacher (F.S.) stated that the teaching materials are no longer centered on rote memorization of vocabulary lists, but are instead organized into "Scenario-Based Dialogues" (Interview with F.S., 2025). These materials cover themes such as "Daily Activities at the Madrasah" and "Islamic Holidays," which allow students to internalize language through context rather than abstract rules.

The study observed three primary strategies in the implementation of these communicative materials. First, the use of contextualized short dialogues allows students to practice Arabic within a familiar Islamic environment. For instance, the materials include scripts for practicing gratitude (*shukr*) and daily prayers, making the language more meaningful to the students' spiritual identity (Observation, 2025). Second, the integration of public speaking exercises was identified as a core component of the syllabus (Documentation, 2025). In these sessions, students are

encouraged to present short stories or personal experiences in front of the class. According to F.S., this activity is designed to build linguistic confidence, moving beyond the "silent classroom" model often found in traditional Arabic teaching (Interview with F.S., 2025).

Third, the research found that the school utilizes multimodal teaching aids to supplement the written materials. Observations showed that the teacher frequently incorporates short Arabic animation videos and visual cards to trigger spontaneous verbal responses from students (Observation, 2025). This variety in materials aims to bridge the gap between textbook theory and real-life application. While the school draws inspiration from established models like *Al-Arabiyyah Baina Yadaik*, the head of the madrasah (N.H.) emphasized that the materials have been significantly simplified and modified to suit the cognitive level of elementary-aged learners, ensuring that the communicative tasks remain achievable yet challenging (Interview with N.H., 2025).

Table 1. Summary of Communicative Approach Implementation at SDI Annuriyah

Aspect	Implementation Details	Evidence/Source
Material Structure	Shift from grammar-heavy to "Scenario-Based Dialogues" (e.g., Daily Madrasah life).	Interview with F.S.; Documentation (2025)
Instructional Strategy	Integration of public speaking and contextualized Islamic scripts (<i>shukr</i> , prayers).	Observation (2025); Syllabus Review
Media Utilization	Use of multimodal aids (Arabic animation videos and visual flashcards).	Observation (2025)
Assessment Focus	Performance-based metrics prioritizing fluency and interaction over grammar.	Documentation; Interview with F.S. (2025)

3.2. Evaluation of Communicative Materials and Practical Challenges

The evaluation of the communicative approach at SDI Annuriyah is characterized by a transition toward performance-based assessment. Our findings indicate that the school has moved away from traditional multiple-choice tests as the sole metric of success (Documentation, 2025). Instead, the assessment rubric for *kalam* skills now prioritizes fluency, interactional competence, and the ability to convey meaning over perfect grammatical accuracy (Documentation, 2025). This is evidenced by the "Kalam Performance Week" held at the end of each semester, where students participate in paired dialogues and role-play simulations (Observation, 2025). Interviews with F.S. confirmed that this shift has resulted in a noticeable increase in student participation and vocal confidence in using Arabic during classroom hours (Interview with F.S., 2025).

However, the field study also identified critical challenges that hinder the optimal implementation of these communicative materials. The most prominent obstacle is the lack of a supportive linguistic environment outside the classroom. While the teaching materials are designed for active communication, students often revert to a mixture of Indonesian and local dialects once they leave the Arabic session (Observation, 2025). Furthermore, the analysis of the school's current resources revealed a shortage of authentic communicative materials—such as Arabic children's magazines or interactive digital software—forcing the teacher to rely heavily on self-made, hand-printed modules (Observation, 2025).

Another challenge highlighted by the Arabic teacher is the pedagogical gap in developing complex communicative strategies. Although the intention to be communicative is present, the teacher noted a need for more specialized training in managing large-group interactive activities (Interview with F.S., 2025). Despite these hurdles, the general consensus from the case study suggests that the communicative approach at SDI Annuriyah has laid a strong foundation for students' oral proficiency.

The success of the program remains highly dependent on the teacher's ability to innovate within limited resources and the school's commitment to creating a more immersive Arabic-speaking atmosphere

Discussion

This discussion revisits the study's central question—how Scenario-Based Dialogues and performance-based assessments facilitate the implementation of a communicative approach to *kalam* at SDI Annuriyah Rambipuji—within the context of extant evidence on communicative reforms in Islamic education. Empirical work indicates that systematic teacher modelling within a supportive linguistic environment substantially increases learner confidence and oral fluency (Zubair, 2026). Other studies show that teacher communicative competence exerts its effect indirectly through interactional quality and the intensity of oral practice rather than as a simple direct predictor of student gains (Attruk, 2025). Programmatic innovations that combine communicative principles with project- or task-based activities have yielded measurable improvements in participation and speaking performance in elementary and madrasah settings (Yuliasari et al., 2025). Nonetheless, persistent institutional constraints—such as legacy grammar-translation practices and assessment systems that privilege accuracy—remain recurring barriers to full CLT realization (Khairiyah et al., 2024).

The present study found that SDI Annuriyah reoriented fourth- and fifth-grade *kalam* materials toward functional, contextually grounded Scenario-Based Dialogues, supplemented by multimodal aids and a semesterly performance-focused assessment cycle. Observed instructional strategies included short contextual scripts tied to Islamic routines, structured public-speaking exercises, and the use of animation and visual cards to trigger spontaneous verbal responses. The school's *Kalam Performance Week* and revised rubrics privileged fluency and interactional competence over discrete grammatical accuracy, and teachers reported increases in classroom vocal participation and student confidence. However, these classroom gains were tempered by limited external language exposure, scarcity of age-appropriate authentic materials, and a need for more specialized teacher training in interactive facilitation. Thus, while local pedagogical changes generated meaningful classroom-level improvements, structural and resourcing constraints moderated their broader impact.

These results align with prior findings that teacher modelling and a supportive *bi'ah 'arabiyah* facilitate greater oral participation and fluency (Zubair, 2026; Abidah & Chebaiki, 2024), and they echo evidence that communicative project-like tasks increase engagement and speaking outcomes at the primary level (Yuliasari et al., 2025). The study also corroborates the mediation thesis that teacher competence operates via interaction quality and practice intensity, since observed gains were closely tied to facilitation practices rather than solely to the presence of new materials (Attruk, 2025). Conversely, the persistent shortage of authentic resources and the reversion to Indonesian outside class reflect constraints documented in institutional analyses where grammar-translation legacies and material deficits impede CLT implementation (Khairiyah et al., 2024). In this respect, SDI Annuriyah's experience both supports and nuances existing literature by showing that small-scale, teacher-driven innovations can produce classroom effects even where macro-level supports are weak.

A plausible explanatory mechanism for the observed classroom gains is that Scenario-Based Dialogues increase the meaningfulness and salience of target vocabulary and pragmatic routines by anchoring them in students' religious and daily

experiences, thereby lowering affective barriers to speaking and improving retention (Mardhiyah et al., 2022). Multimodal scaffolds—animation clips and visual cards—likely reduced cognitive load and provided contextual cues that facilitated comprehension and risk-taking during oral production (Thoyyibah & Rusady, 2022). The adoption of performance-based assessment signalled a normative shift in classroom priorities, legitimizing oral output and reshaping interactional patterns toward more dialogic exchange (Ilhami & Robbani, 2021). Nevertheless, the limited transfer of oral use beyond classroom boundaries suggests that classroom-based interventions alone are insufficient to create a pervasive *bi'ah lughawiyyah* without complementary habituation strategies at home and in the school community (Abidah & Chebaiki, 2024). Therefore, while the internal classroom mechanisms appear robust, their external generalizability must be interpreted with caution.

Teacher capacity and access to materials emerged as central mediators of program fidelity and effectiveness: skilled facilitation amplified the impact of scenario tasks, whereas gaps in interactive management constrained dialogic depth (Attruk, 2025; Falaqi et al., 2023). The heavy reliance on teacher-created modules exemplifies local resourcefulness but also highlights a systemic shortage of age-appropriate authentic Arabic media that other studies identify as a recurring obstacle (Khairiyah et al., 2024). Complementary methods documented in the literature—such as chain-story sequencing and kinesthetic TPR—offer additional pathways to enhance engagement and retention when materials and training are aligned (Nurkhamilah, 2025; Prasetya & Ihwan, 2026). Investing in targeted in-service training focused on interactive facilitation, assessment literacy, and materials adaptation can therefore strengthen both the quality and sustainability of communicative practices. At the same time, policymakers should recognize that teacher-dependent innovations may produce variable outcomes without coordinated support.

Interpretive caution is warranted due to methodological constraints: as a single-case qualitative study, the research provides rich contextualized insights but does not establish causal generalizability across diverse elementary Islamic schools. The absence of longitudinal retention measures and standardized, objective oral-proficiency metrics limits claims about the durability and magnitude of gains beyond observed classroom behavior. Additionally, the teacher-centred nature of many adaptive strategies raises equity concerns if replication depends on highly motivated or unusually skilled personnel (Khairiyah et al., 2024). Future investigations should therefore pursue multi-site, mixed-method, and longitudinal designs that incorporate validated performance rubrics, delayed posttests, and measures of out-of-class language use to test transfer effects (Fajriyati & Ghufron, 2025; Thoyyibah et al., 2022). Such research would more rigorously adjudicate the causal pathways suggested by this case study and inform scalable policy prescriptions.

Practically, the study implies that curriculum designers and school leaders should prioritize scenario-based, culturally and religiously relevant speaking tasks, paired with multimodal supports and performance-oriented assessment frameworks to foster early-stage oral proficiency (Yuliasari et al., 2025; Ilhami & Robbani, 2021). Teacher education programmes must include focused modules on interactive facilitation, assessment literacy, and materials adaptation to ensure fidelity and scalability of communicative reforms (Falaqi et al., 2023; Muhlasin & Rofingah., 2025). Investment in accessible, age-appropriate Arabic materials and low-cost digital resources (e.g., child-friendly podcasts, short animated clips) could reduce teacher workload and increase authentic exposure (Effendy et al., 2026; Khairiyah et al., 2024). Finally, establishing modest out-of-class habituation routines and school-wide language

corners may help extend classroom gains into students' broader communicative ecologies and strengthen a sustainable *bi'ah lughawiyyah* (Abidah & Chebaiki, 2024; Saleh et al., 2025). Collectively, these measures offer a pragmatic roadmap for bridging CLT principles and everyday practice in resource-constrained, faith-based elementary settings.

Conclusion

The study set out to explore how a communicative approach—operationalised through Scenario-Based Dialogues and performance-based assessment—was implemented in Arabic speaking (*kalam*) materials at SDI Annuriyah Rambipuji and to evaluate the practical opportunities and challenges faced by teachers. Findings indicate that the school has substantively reoriented fourth- and fifth-grade materials from grammar-centred tasks toward contextualised Scenario-Based Dialogues, multimodal supports, and a “Kalam Performance Week” assessment cycle, changes that corresponded with observable increases in classroom vocal participation and student confidence while remaining constrained by limited authentic resources and out-of-class language exposure. These outcomes suggest meaningful pedagogical leverage: contextually relevant scenarios and performance assessment can reframe instructional priorities from accuracy to communicative competence, aligning with evidence that integrated, task-based designs improve participation and oral performance in similar elementary and madrasah settings. Nevertheless, the study's single-site, qualitative design and absence of long-term retention or standardized oral-proficiency measures limit claims about the durability and generalisability of gains, and the teacher-dependent nature of many innovations raises concerns about scalability without systematic professional development. Accordingly, future research should test the causal mechanisms suggested here using multi-site, mixed-methods, and longitudinal designs that incorporate validated performance rubrics, delayed posttests, and mediation analyses to evaluate how teacher competence, interactional quality, and practice intensity jointly produce speaking gains. For practice and policy, the findings recommend investing in targeted in-service training on interactive facilitation and assessment literacy, developing or procuring age-appropriate authentic Arabic materials and low-cost digital resources, and instituting modest out-of-class habituation routines (language corners, daily Arabic moments) to extend classroom gains into the school community. In sum, this case study demonstrates a feasible, context-sensitive pathway for translating CLT principles into primary Islamic-school practice and provides a pragmatic roadmap—combining scenario design, multimodal scaffolds, performance assessment, and teacher capacity building—that can inform scalable reforms and guide more rigorous evaluative research.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Faidatul Baroro acted as the first author who led the implementation of the research, starting from determining the study topic, designing the conceptual framework and classroom learning, coordinating the data collection process at An Nuriyah Elementary School, to drafting the research manuscript. Moh. Hilbal Hisan Al Gholi as the second author played a role in developing the theoretical basis covering educational psychology, second language acquisition theory, and Islamic pedagogy, compiling the learning materials and instruments, as well as refining the literature review and the research argumentation flow.

Funding statement

This research was conducted without external funding. The entire research process, from concept formulation and material development to data collection and analysis, to the preparation and dissemination of the results, was independently funded by the authors. No financial support, grants, or other assistance was received from government, private, or non-profit organizations. Furthermore, no sponsors covered the publication costs of the article, and no external funders were involved in the study design, data processing, publication decisions, or manuscript preparation.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study are available from the authors and are accessible on reasonable request for academic purposes.

Declaration of interests statement


The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper. Alternatively, the authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships, which may be considered as potential competing interests.

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