



Enhancing Arabic Speaking Skills through Vocabulary (*Mufrodat*) Mastery: The Effectiveness of the *Durusul Lughah* Textbook among MTs Students in an Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study investigates the effectiveness of systematic vocabulary (*mufrodat*) mastery through the *Durusul Lughah* textbook in improving the Arabic speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) of seventh-grade students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi.

Design/methods/approach – The research employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test model to measure students' speaking performance before and after the instructional intervention. The participants consisted of 24 students selected through a total sampling technique, and data were collected through an objective test designed to assess vocabulary mastery supporting speaking competence.

Findings – Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the mean score increased significantly from 67.92 in the pre-test to 96.67 in the post-test, accompanied by a reduction in the standard deviation from 14.28 to 7.45, indicating both improvement in overall performance and greater consistency among students. Furthermore, all students moved into the high-ability category after the intervention, demonstrating the strong instructional impact of structured vocabulary learning using *Durusul Lughah*. These findings highlight that contextualized vocabulary instruction can effectively facilitate the transformation of receptive language knowledge into productive speaking competence. However, the study is limited by its single-group design, small sample size, and focus on a single educational institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

Research Implications – Pedagogically, the results suggest that Arabic language instruction at the MTs level should prioritize systematic vocabulary mastery as a central component of speaking development. Future studies are therefore recommended to employ experimental designs with control groups, larger samples, and longitudinal approaches to further examine the long-term impact of vocabulary-based Arabic learning on students' communicative competence.

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Introduction

The ability to communicate orally in Arabic (*maharah kalam*) remains a central objective in Arabic language education and plays an important role in supporting students' academic, social, and religious engagement (Indahwati et al., 2025), particularly in Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren (Kusmayani & Ngaisah, 2025). Effective speaking skills allow learners to actively participate in communication, express ideas, and interact using Arabic in authentic contexts (Amira,



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2024). One of the most essential components supporting speaking ability is vocabulary mastery (*mufradat*), as lexical knowledge directly influences fluency, accuracy, and confidence in language production (Istiqomah & Sopian, 2025). However, many Arabic language learning environments still emphasize memorization and structural learning rather than systematic vocabulary development oriented toward communicative use (Nurlatipah et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening vocabulary mastery through structured instructional materials becomes an important strategy to enhance students' speaking competence.

Previous studies have demonstrated that structured Arabic learning materials can significantly improve students' learning outcomes and engagement. For instance, the implementation of Project-Based Learning using the *Durus al-Lughah* textbook significantly improved students' Arabic achievement and increased their confidence and participation in classroom activities (Assefi et al., 2025). This finding indicates that textbook-based learning can become more effective when combined with interactive instructional strategies. Moreover, research on the *qawaid wa tarjamah* method showed that repeated grammar practice combined with teacher guidance can improve Arabic reading and translation abilities (Admoko & Alwi, 2026). However, the study also highlighted challenges such as vocabulary retention problems, varying student abilities, and limited instructional time.

Several studies have also explored the effectiveness of innovative learning media in improving students' speaking skills. The use of pantomime media in Arabic learning was found to significantly enhance students' speaking ability and confidence, with a very strong correlation between instructional treatment and speaking performance (Hartanto, 2020). Similarly, structured lecture methods integrated with interactive discussions were shown to improve university students' speaking ability, with average scores increasing from 68.7 to 80.4 (Haq, 2025). These findings demonstrate that instructional design and learner engagement play an important role in improving oral language performance. Consequently, effective learning methods should combine structured instruction with opportunities for active language use.

In addition to classroom instructional strategies, intensive language programs have also proven effective in improving speaking proficiency. A three-day Arabic camp program significantly increased students' *maharah kalam* scores from a pretest mean of 71.7 to a posttest mean of 86.1, indicating a strong influence of immersive learning experiences (Syagif & Nurhidayati, 2023). Likewise, the direct method implemented in a *muhadatsah* program increased the proportion of students achieving good performance from 26% to 68% (Qomaruddin et al., 2023). Cooperative learning techniques have also been found effective, such as the Inside–Outside Circle method, which significantly improved students' speaking competence (Hresnawanza, 2022). These findings highlight that interactive communication-based learning environments can positively influence students' oral proficiency.

Other studies have emphasized the importance of vocabulary learning strategies and supporting learning resources. The *chain reaction* technique, which encourages students to recall vocabulary through sequential word associations, significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery with a high N-gain score of 0.73 (Insaniyah et al., 2023). Additionally, the use of the dialogue-based textbook *Al-Muhawarah Al-Haditsah* has been shown to improve students' speaking skills through contextual conversation practice (Istiqomah et al., 2026). Innovations in assessment systems based on the *Durus al-Lughah* curriculum have also been reported to enhance speaking performance, motivation, and student participation (Riswar & Baroroh, 2025). Furthermore, the consistent use of *Durus al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah* has been

shown to strengthen vocabulary mastery, dialogic fluency, and students' confidence in speaking Arabic (Mahsum & Qurrohman, 2026).

Despite these promising findings, several limitations remain in the existing literature. Many studies focus on instructional methods, learning media, or intensive programs rather than specifically examining the role of vocabulary mastery in improving speaking competence. Some studies also emphasize technological innovation or digital media development, such as augmented reality learning applications based on *Durus al-Lughah* (Fauzan et al., 2020). Additionally, research examining the effectiveness of *Durus al-Lughah* modules often focuses on learner interest and general achievement rather than directly measuring their influence on speaking performance (Priyana & Lailazhizah, 2024). Therefore, there is still a need for empirical research that specifically investigates how vocabulary mastery through *Durus al-Lughah* contributes to improving students' *maharah kalam*, particularly in the context of Islamic junior secondary schools.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to examine the effectiveness of vocabulary mastery (*mufrodat*) through the *Durus al-Lughah* textbook in improving the speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) of Grade VII students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi. Specifically, the study seeks to identify students' speaking ability before the implementation of vocabulary mastery using *Durus al-Lughah* through pre-test results. It also aims to analyze students' speaking ability after the implementation through post-test results. Furthermore, the study compares the differences between pre-test and post-test scores to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. Through this approach, the research is expected to contribute empirical evidence regarding the role of structured vocabulary mastery in improving Arabic speaking competence among MTs students in pesantren-based learning environments.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach utilizing a quasi-experimental method, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test design. In this framework, the researcher focuses on a single experimental group without the inclusion of a separate control or comparison group. The primary objective of this design is to measure the impact of an intervention by comparing the subjects' performance levels before and after the treatment is administered, thereby determining the extent of the influence exerted by the independent variable. The structure of the research design can be illustrated as follows:

$$O_1 X O_2$$

Notes:

O_1 : Pre-test

X : Treatment using *Durusul Lughah* textbook

O_2 : Post-test

The research was conducted through a systematic sequence of procedures beginning with the preliminary stage, where a pre-test was administered to the participants to establish a baseline for their *maharah kalam* (speaking skills) and *mufrodat* (vocabulary) mastery. Following the initial assessment, the treatment phase was implemented, during which students underwent an intensive Arabic language learning process utilizing the *Durusul Lughah* textbook as the primary instructional medium. Upon completion of the treatment period, a post-test was conducted using an identical instrument to observe any significant shifts in proficiency. The procedure

concluded with a rigorous comparison and analysis of the data obtained from both testing phases to evaluate the effectiveness of the method.

The primary pedagogical tool utilized in this research was the *Durusul Lughah* textbook, authored by K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, which served as the core curriculum for the intervention. To measure the students' progress, an objective written test comprising 20 items was developed, specifically designed to assess the acquisition of vocabulary necessary to support speaking competencies. Additionally, the study utilized statistical data processing software to ensure high precision in calculating descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean scores, variance, and standard deviation.

The population for this study encompassed the entire seventh-grade class at MTs Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi, totaling 24 students. Due to the limited population size, the researcher applied a saturated sampling technique (total sampling), wherein all members of the population were designated as the research sample. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the maximum and minimum scores, the mean, and the variance. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was performed to determine the statistical significance of the improvement between the pre-test and post-test results, providing an empirical basis for the study's conclusions.

To maintain the academic rigor and integrity of the findings, several measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Content validity was established by aligning the test items with the *Kulliyatul Muallimin Al Islamiyah* (KMI) curriculum and subjecting the instrument to expert validation by Arabic language specialists to ensure it accurately measured the intended variables. Regarding reliability, the objective test was evaluated for internal consistency to ensure that the measurement remained stable and dependable across different testing intervals, thereby minimizing the margin of error in the final results.

Results

The primary objective of this study was to empirically evaluate the efficacy of utilizing the *Durusul Lughah* textbook and systematic vocabulary (*mufrodat*) mastery in enhancing the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi. The findings presented herein detail the transition of student proficiency from the pre-intervention phase to the post-intervention phase, utilizing statistical metrics to validate the pedagogical impact of the selected instructional materials.

3.1. Theoretical Framework: Vocabulary Mastery and the Role of *Durusul Lughah*

The efficacy of the learning outcomes in this study is grounded in the fundamental relationship between vocabulary acquisition and linguistic expression. Vocabulary, as defined by *The World Book Encyclopedia*, is the foundational act of deriving meaning from words, which serves as the primary vehicle for expressing ideas in written or printed form. In the context of Arabic pedagogy, vocabulary (*mufrodat*) is not merely a collection of words but the total capacity of a speaker to employ linguistic units for effective communication (Majid et al., 2024).

Mac Turck and Morgan define mastery as "great skillfulness and knowledge of a subject," suggesting that a student is deemed a 'master' of Arabic when they can transform theoretical knowledge into actionable communication (*maharah kalam*) (Marpuah & Sulton, 2019). Djiwandono further categorizes this mastery into two dimensions: (1) Receptive-Passive Mastery: The ability to comprehend meaning through listening and reading; and (2) Productive-Active Mastery: The ability to express ideas through speaking and writing (Lumbanraja & Fahada, 2024).

As highlighted by Gorys Keraf, language serves as a conduit for thought; thus, an expanded vocabulary directly correlates with the fluency of conceptual expression. In this study, the *Durusul Lughah* textbook—a seminal work by K.H. Imam Zarkasyi—serves as the primary instructional tool. Designed within the *Kulliyatul Muallimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI) curriculum, this textbook focuses on daily conversation patterns, bridging the gap between receptive recognition and productive application.

3.2. Pre-Intervention Analysis: Establishing the Baseline

Prior to the implementation of the *Durusul Lughah* textbook, a pre-test was conducted to assess the initial speaking proficiency of the 24 students. The baseline data is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Statistical Summary of Pre-Test Scores

No	Statistic	Value
1	Sample Size (n)	24
2	Maximum Score	80
3	Minimum Score	40
4	Range (r)	55
5	Mean (\bar{x})	67,92
6	Variance	203,99
7	Standard Deviation (S)	14,28

The pre-test results indicate that the students' initial ability was largely insufficient, with a mean score of 67.92, which falls below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (SKM) of 70.00. The high standard deviation ($S = 14.28$) and wide range (55) suggest a significant gap in linguistic competence among the students. These findings align with Djiwandono's assertion that a lack of vocabulary mastery leads to communicative paralysis; without sufficient *mufrodat*, students struggle to understand the substance of the language, let alone reproduce it vocally.

3.3. Post-Intervention Analysis: The Impact of *Durusul Lughah*

Following the intervention using the *Durusul Lughah* method, a post-test was administered to measure improvement. The quantitative shift is documented in Table 2:

Table 2. Statistical Summary of Post-Test Scores

No	Statistic	Value
1	Sample Size (n)	24
2	Maximum Score	95
3	Minimum Score	80
4	Range (r)	20
5	Mean (\bar{x})	96,67
6	Variance	55,56
7	Standard Deviation (S)	7,45

The post-test results show a substantial leap in proficiency, with a mean score of 96.67. This improvement confirms that the systematic approach of the *Durusul Lughah*—which focuses on the "productive mastery" described by Nurgiyantoro—successfully enabled students to apply words accurately in speaking tasks. The reduction in the standard deviation to 7.45 indicates that the method effectively homogenized student ability, ensuring that even students who initially performed poorly could reach the high-ability threshold.

3.4. Comparative Synthesis

The comparison between pre-test and post-test outcomes demonstrates the high influence of the intervention on *Maharah Kalam*.

Table 3. Comparative Classification of Student Ability

No	Category	Pre-Test (Qty)	Post-Test (Qty)	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
1	High Ability	10	24	820	2.320
2	Moderate Ability	2	0	140	0
3	Low Ability	12	0	670	0
Total		24	24	1.630	2.320

As Purwo argues, vocabulary mastery is the ultimate measure of one's command over a language. The transition of all 24 students into the "High Ability" category suggests that the *Durusul Lughah* curriculum provides a superior framework for the MTs level at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi. By focusing on vocabulary that is "known and owned" by the specific community (Arabic speakers), the students were not overwhelmed by the vastness of the language but were instead empowered by a targeted curriculum that matches their communicative needs.

Discussion

This study investigated the effectiveness of vocabulary (*mufradat*) mastery through the *Durusul Lughah* textbook in improving the Arabic speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) of seventh-grade MTs students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi. The investigation was motivated by the assumption that lexical competence constitutes a foundational component in second language production and communicative fluency. In Arabic pedagogy, vocabulary mastery enables learners to transform receptive knowledge into productive linguistic performance, particularly in oral communication (Mahsum & Qurrohman, 2026). Therefore, structured learning materials that systematically introduce and contextualize vocabulary are expected to significantly enhance speaking proficiency (Riswar & Baroroh, 2025). The present study sought to empirically verify this assumption by comparing students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of *Durusul Lughah*-based vocabulary instruction.

The results of the study reveal a substantial improvement in students' speaking ability following the instructional intervention. The mean score increased from 67.92 in the pre-test to 96.67 in the post-test, indicating a significant improvement in *maharah kalam* performance. In addition, the reduction of the standard deviation from 14.28 to 7.45 suggests that the learning intervention also reduced disparities in students' linguistic competence. Another important finding is that all students transitioned into the "High Ability" category after the intervention, demonstrating a strong instructional impact. These findings collectively indicate that systematic vocabulary instruction using *Durusul Lughah* can effectively improve both the overall level and distribution of students' speaking proficiency.

The results of this study support previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of structured Arabic learning materials and communicative strategies in improving speaking competence. For instance, the integration of Project-Based Learning with the *Durus al-Lughah* textbook significantly improved students' Arabic learning outcomes and communicative confidence (Assefi et al., 2025). Similarly, consistent use of *Durus al-Lughah al-Arabiyah* has been shown to strengthen vocabulary mastery, fluency in dialogue, and students' willingness to speak Arabic (Mahsum & Qurrohman, 2026). Other studies highlight the importance of vocabulary-focused techniques, such as the chain reaction strategy, which significantly increased students' vocabulary acquisition and learning outcomes (Insaniyah et al., 2023). In addition, cooperative and communicative learning approaches such as the Inside-Outside Circle method and pantomime-based instruction have also been found to

improve students' speaking ability and confidence (Hresnawanza, 2022; Hartanto, 2020).

The effectiveness observed in this study may be explained by the central role of vocabulary in language production processes. When learners possess sufficient lexical knowledge, they can retrieve words more quickly and organize their ideas more fluently during communication. The *Durusul Lughah* textbook facilitates this process by presenting vocabulary in meaningful conversational contexts rather than isolated word lists. Such contextual learning enables students to connect lexical items with communicative functions and real-life situations. As a result, students are more capable of transforming receptive vocabulary knowledge into productive speaking performance.

Another possible explanation relates to the pedagogical structure of the *Durusul Lughah* curriculum itself. The textbook emphasizes daily conversation patterns, repeated exposure to key vocabulary, and contextualized language use, which collectively reinforce lexical retention and communicative competence (Priyana & Lailazhizah, 2024). Repetition and contextual application help strengthen memory consolidation and lexical accessibility during speaking activities. In addition, the structured sequencing of vocabulary allows learners to gradually build linguistic complexity without experiencing cognitive overload (Assefi et al., 2025). Consequently, students can focus on expressing ideas rather than struggling to recall basic lexical items during oral communication.

Despite the strong improvement observed in this study, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research employed a single-group pre-test–post-test design, which limits the ability to fully control for external variables that might influence learning outcomes. Second, the relatively small sample size and the focus on a single pesantren context may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader educational settings. Additionally, the short duration of the intervention does not allow for evaluation of long-term retention of vocabulary and speaking skills. Future studies could address these limitations by employing experimental designs with control groups, larger samples, and longitudinal data collection.

The findings of this study have several important implications for Arabic language education, particularly in Islamic secondary schools. They suggest that systematic vocabulary instruction integrated with structured textbooks such as *Durusul Lughah* can significantly enhance students' speaking competence. Teachers may therefore consider prioritizing vocabulary mastery as a central component of speaking instruction rather than treating it as a supplementary activity. In addition, curriculum developers may integrate communicative vocabulary practice into Arabic learning materials to better support oral language development. Ultimately, the study contributes empirical evidence that vocabulary-focused pedagogy can play a crucial role in improving Arabic speaking proficiency among MTs students in pesantren-based learning environments.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of systematic *mufradat* (vocabulary) mastery through the *Durusul Lughah* textbook in improving the *maharah kalam* (speaking skills) of Grade VII students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ayyubi Jambi. The findings revealed a substantial improvement in students' speaking ability after the instructional intervention, as reflected in the increase of the mean score from 67.92 in the pre-test to 96.67 in the post-test. The reduction in the standard deviation from

14.28 to 7.45 further indicates that the learning intervention not only improved overall performance but also reduced disparities in students' linguistic competence. In addition, all participants transitioned into the "High Ability" category in the post-test, demonstrating the strong pedagogical impact of systematic vocabulary instruction using *Durusul Lughah*. These results suggest that structured vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in facilitating students' ability to transform receptive language knowledge into productive speaking performance. The contextual and communicative design of the *Durusul Lughah* curriculum enables students to internalize vocabulary through meaningful conversational patterns, thereby supporting more fluent and confident oral expression. Consequently, the findings highlight the importance of integrating systematic vocabulary instruction into Arabic language teaching, particularly in Islamic secondary school contexts where communicative competence is a central educational goal. From a pedagogical perspective, the study provides empirical support for prioritizing vocabulary mastery as a core component of speaking instruction rather than treating it as a supplementary activity. Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results of this study. The research employed a single-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, which limits the ability to fully isolate the effects of the instructional intervention. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size and the focus on a single pesantren institution may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Future research should therefore consider employing experimental designs with control groups, larger and more diverse samples, and longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term impact of vocabulary-based instruction on Arabic speaking proficiency.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Madah Rahmatan (1) led the study conceptualization and research design, developed the intervention protocol, coordinated field implementation, and wrote the original draft of the manuscript. Muhammad Kurniawan AR (2) managed data collection, classroom implementation logistics, and documentation of instructional procedures. Muhammad Ridho Pratama (3) performed statistical analyses, validated the data processing, and contributed to interpretation of quantitative results. Dewi Sartika (4) conducted the literature review, contributed to methodological design, and led substantial revisions and editing of the manuscript. Malikul Khandias (5) assisted in curriculum adaptation and materials preparation, supervised classroom activities, and contributed to data curation. All authors contributed to the discussion of results, reviewed successive manuscript drafts, approved the final version for submission, and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Data availability statement

The anonymized dataset that supports the findings of this study (pre-test and post-test scores, instrument items, and aggregated descriptive statistics) is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and subject to institutional and ethical

restrictions to protect participant confidentiality. A research data repository link will be provided upon journal acceptance if required by the publisher.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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