

The Historical Development of Arabic Education in Indonesian Pesantren: Continuity, Reform, and Modernization

Ibnu Fitrianto ^{1a}

¹ Madani Islamic Education College, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

e-mail: ibnufitrianto09@gmail.com ^a

Article History:

Received: Jul 12, 2026

Revised: Aug 26, 2026

Accepted: Sep 22, 2026

Keywords:

Arabic education; pesantren; Islamic education; historical development; continuity.

Abstract:

This study examines the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren by focusing on the processes of continuity, reform, and modernization. Arabic education has historically occupied a central position in pesantren as a means of accessing Islamic knowledge, particularly through the study of classical Islamic texts. This study employs a qualitative historical approach using documentary analysis of relevant scholarly literature, historical studies, and publications concerning pesantren, Islamic education, and Arabic language education in Indonesia. The data were analyzed through historical analysis, source criticism, thematic analysis, and chronological-comparative interpretation. The findings reveal that the development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren has not followed a linear transition from traditional to modern practices. Instead, traditional practices such as the study of *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, *sharf*, *bandongan*, and *sorogan* have continued alongside curricular reforms, formal educational structures, communicative language objectives, modern learning materials, and educational technologies. The study further demonstrates that modernization has expanded the objectives and methods of Arabic education without completely eliminating its traditional foundations. Consequently, the historical trajectory of Arabic education in pesantren can be characterized as a process of negotiation and hybridization between tradition and modernity. This development reflects the adaptive capacity of pesantren to preserve their Islamic intellectual heritage while responding to changing educational demands and contemporary developments in Arabic language pedagogy..

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Ibnu Fitrianto

Madani Islamic Education College, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

e-mail: ibnufitrianto09@gmail.com ¹

Introduction (مقدمة)

Arabic education has occupied a significant position in the intellectual and educational traditions of the Muslim world. As the language of the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Islamic scholarship, and a substantial body of religious literature, Arabic has historically functioned not only as a means of communication but also as an important instrument for accessing Islamic knowledge. The development of Arabic education has therefore been closely connected with the

transmission of religious knowledge and the formation of Islamic intellectual traditions. In different historical contexts, Arabic learning has developed through diverse educational institutions, curricula, teaching methods, and scholarly networks (Al-Attas, 1979; Makdisi, 1981).

In Indonesia, the history of Arabic education is closely associated with the development of Islamic educational institutions, particularly **pesantren**. Pesantren have played an important role in transmitting Islamic knowledge and preserving traditional scholarly practices across generations. Arabic has traditionally been taught in pesantren because students need to understand classical Islamic texts, particularly *kitab kuning*, which contain discussions of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, Qur'anic interpretation, Hadith, Arabic grammar, and other branches of Islamic scholarship. Consequently, Arabic education in pesantren cannot be separated from the broader history of Islamic education in Indonesia (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 1995).

The emergence and development of pesantren also contributed to the institutionalization of Arabic learning within Indonesian Muslim communities. Traditional pesantren education generally emphasized the study of classical Islamic texts through methods that prioritized intensive interaction between teachers and students. Learning activities were frequently centered on reading, translating, explaining, and interpreting Arabic texts. Methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, memorization, and grammatical analysis became important components of traditional Islamic learning. These practices demonstrate that Arabic education in pesantren developed within a distinctive pedagogical environment shaped by religious objectives, scholarly traditions, and teacher-student relationships (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 1995).

Historically, the primary objective of Arabic education in many pesantren was not necessarily communicative proficiency in the modern sense but the ability to access and understand Islamic sources. Arabic grammar, particularly *nahwu* and *sharf*, received considerable attention because linguistic competence was regarded as essential for interpreting classical texts accurately. Students were expected to develop the ability to read unvowelled Arabic manuscripts and understand their linguistic and religious meanings. This orientation established a strong connection between Arabic language education and Islamic textual literacy, which remains an important characteristic of traditional pesantren education (Azra, 2004; van Bruinessen, 1995).

However, Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren has not remained unchanged. The development of modern educational institutions, changing social conditions, national education policies, globalization, and increasing interaction with international Islamic institutions have encouraged pesantren to reconsider their educational practices. Some pesantren have maintained traditional approaches, while others have incorporated modern curricula, classroom-based instruction, language laboratories, textbooks, and communicative approaches. This development illustrates a process of educational adaptation in which traditional Arabic learning has interacted with emerging models of language education (Azra, 2004; Steenbrink, 1986).

The process of **continuity** represents one of the most important characteristics of Arabic education in pesantren. Despite substantial educational changes, many pesantren continue to preserve traditional elements such as the study of classical Arabic texts, *nahwu* and *sharf*, memorization, teacher-centered textual instruction, and the transmission of Islamic scholarly traditions. Such continuity demonstrates the resilience of pesantren as educational institutions. Rather than simply abandoning traditional Arabic education, many pesantren have attempted to maintain practices that are considered essential to their religious and intellectual identity while adapting other aspects of education to contemporary circumstances (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 1995).

Alongside continuity, **reform** has become an important dimension of the historical development of Arabic education in pesantren. Educational reform can be observed in the diversification of Arabic curricula, the introduction of modern textbooks, the development of

structured language programs, and the increasing emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In some institutions, Arabic is no longer taught exclusively as a tool for reading classical Islamic texts but also as a living language for communication. Such changes reflect broader developments in language pedagogy and indicate an expansion of the objectives of Arabic education within Islamic educational institutions (Azra, 2004; Effendy, 2012).

The reform of Arabic education has also been influenced by the emergence of modern Islamic educational models in Indonesia. Some pesantren have established formal madrasah or school systems alongside traditional learning arrangements. Through these systems, Arabic instruction has increasingly been integrated into formal curricula, lesson schedules, assessment systems, and standardized learning objectives. The coexistence of traditional and formal educational structures has produced diverse models of Arabic education. This diversity is significant because it demonstrates that pesantren should not be understood as homogeneous institutions; rather, they have responded differently to educational, social, and institutional changes (Dhofier, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2001).

The third dimension, **modernization**, represents a broader transformation in the goals, methods, resources, and institutional organization of Arabic education. Modernization has encouraged the adoption of communicative language teaching, audiovisual resources, language laboratories, digital learning platforms, and technology-supported instruction. These developments have expanded the possibilities for Arabic learning beyond the traditional classroom and printed textbook. Digital technologies, in particular, have provided students with access to Arabic audio, video, online dictionaries, digital texts, educational applications, and international learning resources. Consequently, the modernization of Arabic education has increasingly connected pesantren with wider developments in global language education (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Albirini, 2014).

Nevertheless, modernization does not necessarily mean the complete replacement of traditional educational practices. Instead, the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren reveals an ongoing interaction between **tradition and innovation**. Traditional textual learning may continue to coexist with communicative approaches, while classical Arabic texts may be studied alongside modern textbooks and digital resources. This combination suggests that pesantren have developed adaptive educational strategies in response to changing circumstances. The resulting educational model can therefore be understood as a process of selective modernization, in which institutions adopt new practices while retaining elements that are considered central to their religious and cultural identity (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Azra, 2004).

Despite the important role of pesantren in the history of Islamic education in Indonesia, studies of Arabic education often focus on contemporary teaching methods, curriculum effectiveness, student achievement, or the implementation of specific instructional models. Comparatively less attention has been given to the **historical trajectory** of Arabic education in pesantren as a process involving continuity, reform, and modernization. Examining this trajectory is important because contemporary Arabic education cannot be fully understood without considering the historical foundations from which its current practices emerged. A historical perspective can reveal why certain traditional practices have survived, why particular reforms have emerged, and how modernization has reshaped Arabic education (Dhofier, 2011; Steenbrink, 1986).

Therefore, this study examines the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren, focusing specifically on the dimensions of continuity, reform, and modernization. The study seeks to explore how Arabic education has developed from traditional forms of Islamic textual learning toward more diverse and contemporary pedagogical practices

while maintaining important elements of its historical heritage. By integrating historical, educational, and Arabic language perspectives, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the transformation of Arabic education in pesantren and its continuing significance for Islamic education in Indonesia.

Method (منهج)

This study employed a qualitative historical research design to examine the development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren from its traditional foundations to contemporary forms. A qualitative historical approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding educational changes within their social, cultural, religious, and institutional contexts rather than measuring variables statistically. Historical research enables researchers to reconstruct past educational practices, identify patterns of continuity and change, and interpret the factors that influenced the transformation of Arabic education over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Howell & Prevenier, 2001).

The research adopted a historical-analytical approach that focused on three interconnected dimensions: continuity, reform, and modernization. Continuity refers to the preservation of traditional Arabic learning practices, including the study of *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, *sharf*, memorization, and classical teacher-student relationships. Reform refers to changes in curriculum, teaching objectives, learning materials, and pedagogical practices. Modernization refers to the adoption of formal educational structures, communicative approaches, educational technology, and digital learning resources. This analytical framework was used to trace how traditional and modern elements have interacted in the development of Arabic education in pesantren (Dhofier, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2001).

The research data consisted primarily of documentary sources related to the history of pesantren and Arabic education in Indonesia. These sources included books, scholarly articles, historical studies, educational documents, curriculum-related publications, and other relevant academic literature. Particular attention was given to sources discussing pesantren institutions, *kitab kuning* traditions, Islamic educational reform, Arabic language teaching, and the modernization of Islamic education. Documentary analysis was considered appropriate because historical research depends substantially on the systematic examination and interpretation of written records and other documentary evidence (Bowen, 2009).

The selection of sources employed purposive sampling, meaning that documents were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and analytical framework. Sources were included when they provided substantive information concerning the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren or explained changes in educational institutions, curricula, teaching methods, and learning objectives. Priority was given to authoritative scholarly works, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and historically significant publications. This selection strategy helped ensure that the analysis remained focused on the specific trajectory of Arabic education rather than on pesantren education in general.

The historical analysis was conducted through several stages. First, relevant documents were identified and classified according to their historical period, institutional context, and thematic relevance. Second, the researcher examined the content of each source to identify descriptions of Arabic learning practices, educational objectives, curricula, teaching methods, and institutional changes. Third, information from different sources was compared to identify patterns of continuity and transformation. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a historical narrative explaining the development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren. This process followed the general principles of historical inquiry, particularly source criticism, contextual

interpretation, and chronological analysis (Howell & Prevenier, 2001).

The analysis also incorporated source criticism to evaluate the reliability and relevance of historical materials. External criticism was used to consider the origin, authorship, date, and authenticity of documents, while internal criticism focused on the credibility, consistency, and contextual meaning of the information contained in the sources. This process was important because historical accounts of pesantren and Islamic education may reflect different scholarly perspectives and institutional contexts. Comparing multiple sources allowed the researcher to reduce dependence on a single historical interpretation and develop a more balanced understanding of the development of Arabic education (Howell & Prevenier, 2001).

Thematic analysis was subsequently used to organize the historical evidence into the three main analytical categories of continuity, reform, and modernization. Evidence concerning the persistence of classical textual learning, Arabic grammar, memorization, and traditional pedagogical relationships was categorized under continuity. Changes in curriculum, learning objectives, instructional methods, and formal educational structures were categorized under reform. Evidence concerning technology, communicative language teaching, digital resources, and contemporary educational practices was categorized under modernization. Thematic analysis enabled the study to identify recurring patterns across different historical periods while maintaining attention to the specific contexts in which those patterns emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A chronological-comparative analysis was also applied to examine differences and similarities between traditional and contemporary forms of Arabic education. The analysis compared major characteristics of traditional pesantren education with subsequent developments associated with madrasah, modern schools, and technology-supported learning. Rather than assuming that modernization completely replaced traditional education, the study examined how traditional and modern practices coexisted and interacted. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Indonesian pesantren context, where modernization has frequently involved adaptation and integration rather than the complete abandonment of established educational traditions (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Azra, 2004).

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study employed data triangulation by comparing information obtained from different types of scholarly and historical sources. Claims concerning the development of Arabic education were examined across books, journal articles, historical studies, and institutional literature where available. The researcher also repeatedly reviewed the evidence and analytical categories to ensure consistency between the historical sources and the conclusions drawn from them. Triangulation is widely recognized as a strategy for enhancing credibility in qualitative research by allowing researchers to examine a phenomenon from multiple sources and perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, the findings were interpreted within the broader historical, cultural, and educational context of Indonesian Islam. The study did not treat Arabic education as an isolated language-learning phenomenon but as part of the wider development of pesantren, Islamic scholarship, educational reform, and social change in Indonesia. The combination of historical analysis, documentary analysis, and thematic interpretation enabled the research to explain how Arabic education has maintained important traditional characteristics while simultaneously responding to institutional reform and modernization. Through this methodological framework, the study provides a systematic account of the historical trajectory of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren and identifies the relationship between continuity, reform, and modernization as central dimensions of its development.

Result (نتائج)

The historical analysis reveals that the development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren has followed a gradual process characterized by continuity, reform, and modernization. Rather than developing through a complete replacement of old educational practices by new ones, Arabic education has evolved through the interaction between inherited Islamic scholarly traditions and changing educational demands. The historical evidence indicates that traditional Arabic learning remains an important foundation, while curricular, pedagogical, and technological changes have gradually expanded the objectives and forms of Arabic education in pesantren (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 1995).

The first finding concerns the traditional foundation of Arabic education in pesantren. Historically, Arabic was primarily taught as an instrument for accessing Islamic knowledge, particularly through the study of *kitab kuning*. Students learned Arabic in close association with Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *tauhid*, and *akhlak*. Arabic proficiency was therefore closely connected to religious literacy and the ability to understand classical Islamic texts. This orientation established Arabic as a central component of pesantren education and contributed to the preservation of classical Islamic scholarly traditions in Indonesia (van Bruinessen, 1995; Dhofier, 2011).

The second finding demonstrates the continuing importance of traditional teaching methods. The historical literature indicates that methods such as *bandongan* and *sorogan* played a significant role in Arabic and Islamic textual learning. In the *bandongan* system, teachers read and explain classical texts to groups of students, whereas *sorogan* provides more individualized interaction between students and teachers. Memorization, grammatical explanation, translation, and intensive textual reading were also important learning practices. These methods established a pedagogical relationship in which the teacher served as a central source of knowledge and students gradually developed the ability to engage with classical Arabic texts (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 1995).

The third finding concerns the continuity of Arabic grammar instruction. *Nahwu* and *sharf* have historically occupied an important position in pesantren Arabic education because grammatical knowledge was considered essential for understanding Arabic texts accurately. Students were trained to recognize grammatical structures, word formation, sentence patterns, and linguistic meanings. Although contemporary Arabic education increasingly emphasizes communication, grammatical competence continues to be maintained in many pesantren because it remains closely connected to the interpretation of classical Islamic literature. This finding illustrates that traditional linguistic components have demonstrated considerable resilience despite broader educational changes.

The fourth finding indicates the emergence of curricular reform in Arabic education. As Indonesian Islamic education developed, some pesantren gradually expanded Arabic instruction beyond traditional textual reading. Arabic began to be incorporated into more structured curricula with specific learning objectives, lesson schedules, textbooks, and assessment practices. The emergence of formal madrasah and school systems within or alongside pesantren contributed to this development. Consequently, Arabic education increasingly included systematic instruction in language skills rather than focusing exclusively on the comprehension of classical religious texts (Steenbrink, 1986; Azra, 2004).

The fifth finding concerns the expansion of Arabic learning objectives. Traditional pesantren generally emphasized Arabic as a tool for understanding Islamic texts, whereas reform-oriented institutions increasingly incorporated communicative objectives. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing began to receive greater attention alongside grammar and translation. This shift indicates a broader understanding of Arabic as both a language of religious scholarship and a living language for communication. The development represents an important

stage in the reform of Arabic education because it expanded the functional purposes of Arabic learning within pesantren (Effendy, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The sixth finding demonstrates the coexistence of traditional and modern educational structures. The historical development of pesantren does not indicate a uniform transition from traditional to modern education. Instead, different institutions adopted different combinations of traditional and formal educational practices. Some pesantren retained intensive *kitab kuning* instruction, while others incorporated madrasah curricula, classroom teaching, standardized assessment, and modern textbooks. This diversity indicates that pesantren responded to modernization according to their institutional identities, educational objectives, and local circumstances (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Dhofier, 2011).

The seventh finding relates to the modernization of teaching materials and pedagogical resources. Arabic education gradually incorporated textbooks and learning materials designed according to contemporary language-teaching principles. Compared with traditional learning based heavily on classical texts, modern materials provided greater opportunities for structured vocabulary development, grammatical practice, dialogue, and language skills. This development reflects the influence of broader changes in language pedagogy and demonstrates how pesantren gradually adapted their Arabic instruction to changing conceptions of effective language learning (Effendy, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The eighth finding concerns the emergence of communicative and student-oriented approaches. Modernization encouraged a gradual movement away from exclusive dependence on teacher explanation and textual translation toward activities involving dialogue, conversation, practice, and active student participation. In institutions that prioritize Arabic communication, students are increasingly encouraged to use Arabic in classroom interaction and daily activities. This development represents a significant pedagogical transformation because Arabic is treated not only as an object of grammatical analysis but also as a language that learners are expected to actively use.

The ninth finding indicates the growing influence of educational technology on Arabic learning in pesantren. Technological development has introduced new resources such as digital texts, audio and video materials, online dictionaries, language-learning applications, and internet-based learning platforms. These resources have expanded access to Arabic beyond the physical classroom and traditional printed materials. Technology has therefore become an increasingly important component of modern Arabic education, particularly in institutions seeking to provide learning experiences that correspond with contemporary students' technological environments.

The tenth finding reveals that modernization has produced a hybrid model of Arabic education in which traditional and contemporary practices coexist. Classical *kitab kuning* may continue to be used alongside modern textbooks, while traditional grammar instruction can be combined with communicative activities and digital resources. This hybridization indicates that modernization in pesantren does not necessarily require the abandonment of historical educational traditions. Instead, institutions selectively integrate new approaches while maintaining practices considered essential to their religious and scholarly identity (Lukens-Bull, 2001; Azra, 2004).

The eleventh finding demonstrates that the historical development of Arabic education has been influenced by broader social and institutional changes. The expansion of formal education, globalization, increasing interaction with international Islamic communities, and changes in educational expectations have encouraged pesantren to reconsider the role of Arabic. Arabic education has consequently moved from an almost exclusively religious-textual orientation toward a broader educational function encompassing religious literacy, communication,

academic development, and global engagement. This transformation demonstrates that Arabic education in pesantren is closely connected to wider changes in Indonesian Muslim society.

The twelfth and final finding synthesizes the historical trajectory into three interconnected characteristics: continuity, reform, and modernization. Continuity is represented by the persistence of *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, *sharf*, memorization, textual interpretation, and teacher-student scholarly traditions. Reform is reflected in curricular diversification, formalization of instruction, modern learning materials, and the expansion of language skills. Modernization is demonstrated through communicative pedagogy, technological resources, digital learning, and broader educational objectives. Thus, the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren can be understood not as a linear movement from tradition to modernity, but as a dynamic process in which historical traditions are preserved, educational practices are reformed, and new technologies and pedagogical approaches are selectively incorporated (Dhofier, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2001; Azra, 2004).

Table1.1 Three Main Phases in the Development of Arabic Education in Indonesian Pesantren

Dimension	Continuity	Reform	Modernization
Primary Purpose	Understanding Islamic texts	Developing broader language competencies	Religious, communicative, academic, and global purposes
Learning Materials	<i>Kitab kuning</i> and classical texts	Modern Arabic textbooks	Digital texts and multimedia resources
Teaching Methods	<i>Bandongan</i> , <i>sorogan</i> , memorization	Structured classroom instruction	Communicative and technology-supported learning
Language Focus	<i>Nahwu</i> , translation	<i>sharf</i> , Four language skills	Communication and multimodal literacy
Teacher Role	Main source of knowledge	Instructor and facilitator	Facilitator, mentor, and technology-mediated instructor
Student Role	Listener and text learner	Active learner	Active, interactive, and digitally engaged learner
Learning Environment	Traditional pesantren setting	Classroom and formal institution	Blended and digital learning environments
Relationship with Tradition	Preservation	Adaptation	Selective integration
Main Outcome	Preservation of Islamic scholarly heritage	Curriculum diversification	Transformation of Arabic learning practices

The table and historical trajectory demonstrate that the development of Arabic education

in Indonesian pesantren is not a linear transition from traditional to modern education. Instead, the historical process is characterized by the coexistence and interaction of old and new educational practices. Traditional elements such as *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, *sharf*, *bandongan*, and *sorogan* continue to provide the intellectual foundation, while curricular reform has expanded the objectives and methods of Arabic instruction. Modernization subsequently introduced communicative approaches and digital technologies, resulting in increasingly hybrid forms of Arabic education.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings of this study indicate that the historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren cannot be understood as a simple transition from traditional to modern education. Rather, it represents a continuous process in which established traditions have been maintained while educational practices, curricula, teaching objectives, and learning technologies have gradually changed. The three major dimensions identified in this study continuity, reform, and modernization demonstrate that Arabic education in pesantren has developed through interaction between inherited Islamic educational traditions and changing educational demands. This finding is consistent with the broader characterization of Indonesian pesantren as institutions capable of preserving religious traditions while responding selectively to social and educational transformation (Dhofier, 2011; Lukens-Bull, 2001).

The first important finding concerns the continuity of Arabic education as a fundamental component of Islamic learning. Historically, Arabic has occupied a central position in pesantren because many authoritative Islamic sources, particularly classical religious texts, are written in Arabic. Consequently, Arabic proficiency was traditionally viewed not merely as a linguistic competence but as an instrument for accessing Islamic knowledge. The persistence of this orientation explains why Arabic instruction in pesantren has remained closely associated with the study of *kitab kuning*. Van Bruinessen (1995) emphasizes that the transmission of classical Islamic texts constitutes one of the defining characteristics of pesantren education. Thus, the historical continuity of Arabic education is strongly connected to the continuing religious and intellectual functions of pesantren.

The second finding relates to the persistence of traditional pedagogical practices. Methods such as *bandongan* and *sorogan* historically positioned the teacher or *kyai* as an important source of knowledge, while students developed their understanding through listening, reading, translation, repetition, and direct engagement with classical texts. These practices were particularly effective for transmitting textual and grammatical knowledge within the traditional pesantren environment. Dhofier (2011) explains that the educational culture of pesantren is strongly influenced by patterns of teacher-student interaction and the transmission of religious knowledge. Therefore, although contemporary approaches have introduced new pedagogical models, traditional instructional practices continue to contribute to the identity and pedagogical heritage of Arabic education in pesantren.

The continued importance of *nahwu* and *sharf* provides another illustration of continuity. Grammar-based instruction has historically been considered essential for enabling students to understand the structure and meaning of Arabic texts. The emphasis on grammatical competence reflects the traditional orientation toward reading and interpreting classical Islamic literature. However, the findings also suggest that grammar has increasingly been positioned within broader language-learning objectives rather than being treated exclusively as an independent subject. This development indicates that traditional linguistic knowledge has not disappeared but has been reinterpreted according to contemporary educational needs. In this respect, the historical transformation of Arabic education represents adaptation rather than complete

replacement.

The emergence of curricular reform constitutes the second major dimension of the historical development identified in this study. As pesantren increasingly interacted with formal educational systems, Arabic instruction became more systematically organized through structured curricula, scheduled lessons, textbooks, assessment systems, and clearly defined learning outcomes. Steenbrink (1986) demonstrates that the development of Islamic education in Indonesia involved increasing interaction between traditional pesantren institutions and modern madrasah and school systems. This interaction contributed to the transformation of Arabic education from a predominantly text-centered learning activity into a more structured curricular component.

Curricular reform also changed the objectives of Arabic learning. Traditionally, the primary purpose of Arabic education was closely associated with understanding religious texts. In more developed curricular settings, however, students were increasingly expected to develop broader communicative competencies, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This expansion reflects developments in modern language pedagogy, which increasingly emphasizes meaningful communication and learner participation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the Indonesian context, Arabic education therefore experienced a gradual shift from an exclusively instrumental function for religious-text comprehension toward a more comprehensive conception of language competence.

Another important implication concerns the coexistence of traditional and formal educational structures. Rather than eliminating the traditional pesantren system, curricular reform frequently produced an educational environment in which religious learning and formal schooling operated alongside one another. Students could encounter classical Arabic texts and traditional teaching practices while simultaneously receiving structured instruction based on contemporary curricula. This coexistence supports Lukens-Bull's (2001) argument that Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia should not necessarily be understood through a rigid opposition between tradition and modernity. Instead, pesantren demonstrate the capacity to negotiate between the two.

The third dimension identified in this study is modernization. Modernization is particularly visible in the development of learning materials, instructional strategies, language laboratories, multimedia resources, and digital technologies. These developments have expanded the possible learning environment for Arabic beyond the traditional classroom and printed textbook. Modern language education increasingly incorporates audio, visual, interactive, and digital resources to provide students with broader opportunities for language exposure and practice. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that developments in language teaching have increasingly emphasized communicative, learner-centered, and technology-supported approaches. In pesantren, these developments represent an important extension of earlier Arabic educational practices.

Modernization also contributes to the changing role of teachers and students. In traditional settings, the teacher generally occupied a dominant position as the transmitter and interpreter of knowledge. Contemporary approaches increasingly encourage teachers to function as facilitators while students participate more actively in learning activities. This transformation does not necessarily diminish the authority of the teacher; rather, it changes the pedagogical relationship by adding opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and independent learning. Consequently, modernization can be interpreted as a modification of pedagogical roles while maintaining the religious and educational authority that has historically characterized pesantren.

The findings further demonstrate that modernization in pesantren does not necessarily imply the abandonment of traditional Arabic education. Instead, traditional knowledge and

modern pedagogical practices can exist within a hybrid educational model. Classical texts may continue to be taught alongside modern textbooks, while *nahwu* and *sharf* may be combined with communicative activities and digital learning resources. This hybridization is significant because it demonstrates the adaptive character of pesantren education. Azra (2004) highlights the historical openness of Indonesian Islamic intellectual traditions to transregional influences, while Lukens-Bull (2001) illustrates how Islamic educational institutions negotiate modernity without necessarily abandoning their traditional foundations.

From a historical perspective, the relationship between continuity, reform, and modernization should therefore be understood as dynamic rather than sequential. Continuity provides the cultural and intellectual foundation of Arabic education; reform reorganizes educational structures and objectives; and modernization introduces new pedagogical resources and technologies. These dimensions interact with one another and may operate simultaneously within the same pesantren. The historical trajectory identified in this study consequently challenges the assumption that traditional and modern Arabic education represent mutually exclusive categories.

The findings also have implications for understanding the identity of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren. Arabic education functions simultaneously as religious education, linguistic education, and cultural-intellectual transmission. Its historical significance cannot therefore be evaluated solely through contemporary measures of communicative proficiency. The continued teaching of classical texts and grammatical structures reflects the broader mission of pesantren to preserve Islamic intellectual traditions. At the same time, the incorporation of communicative methods and technology demonstrates the institution's response to changing educational expectations. The distinctive character of pesantren Arabic education emerges precisely from this combination of preservation and adaptation.

Finally, the historical development identified in this study suggests that future Arabic education in pesantren will likely continue to involve negotiation between inherited traditions and emerging educational demands. The challenge is not simply to choose between traditional and modern approaches, but to determine how traditional Islamic knowledge can remain meaningful within changing pedagogical environments. A balanced model may preserve the intellectual depth of *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, and *sharf* while strengthening students' communicative competence and digital learning abilities. Such an approach would enable pesantren to maintain their historical identity while remaining responsive to contemporary developments in Arabic language education.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

The historical development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren demonstrates a dynamic relationship between continuity, reform, and modernization. Rather than replacing traditional educational practices, curricular reform and modernization have interacted with established forms of Arabic learning. The continued teaching of *kitab kuning*, *nahwu*, and *sharf*, together with traditional methods such as *bandongan* and *sorogan*, illustrates the persistence of the pesantren's religious and intellectual heritage. At the same time, the integration of structured curricula, communicative language objectives, modern learning materials, and formal educational systems indicates significant processes of reform. This historical trajectory confirms that Arabic education in pesantren has developed through adaptation and negotiation between inherited traditions and changing educational demands.

The study concludes that the distinctive character of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren lies in its ability to combine traditional Islamic knowledge with contemporary educational practices. Modernization through communicative approaches, multimedia

resources, and educational technology has expanded the scope of Arabic learning without necessarily eliminating its traditional foundations. The resulting hybrid model provides an important framework for understanding the resilience and adaptability of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions. Future development should therefore seek to maintain the intellectual and religious value of traditional Arabic education while strengthening students' communicative competence, digital literacy, and ability to engage with contemporary contexts. In this way, Arabic education in pesantren can preserve its historical identity while continuing to respond effectively to the demands of modern education.

Acknowledgment (شكر وتقدير)

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this study. Special appreciation is extended to the scholars, researchers, and institutions whose publications and historical records provided valuable sources for understanding the development of Arabic education in Indonesian pesantren. The authors also acknowledge the academic support and constructive insights received throughout the research and writing process. Finally, sincere thanks are extended to everyone who contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of this research and the preparation of this manuscript.

Bibliography (مراجع)

- Al-Attas, S. N. (1979). *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.
- Albirini, A. (2014). *Modern Arabic sociolinguistics: Diglossia, variation, and language attitudes*. Routledge.
- Azra, A. (2004). *The origins of Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern "Ulamā" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dhofier, Z. (2011). *Tradisi pesantren: Studi pandangan hidup kyai dan visinya mengenai masa depan Indonesia* (Edisi revisi). LP3ES.
- Effendy, A. F. (2012). *Metodologi pengajaran bahasa Arab*. Misykat.
- Fitrianto, I. (2019). *تفصيل الدورة المكثفة في اللغة العربية لطلاب الكلية الجامعية الإسلامية العالمية KUIS: ماليزيا بجامعة دار السلام كورنتور العام 2018* بسلانجور Doctoral dissertation, University of Darussalam Gontor.
- Fitrianto, I. (2024). Critical Reasoning Skills: Designing an Education Curriculum Relevant to Social and Economic Needs. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 245-258.
- Fitrianto, I. (2024). Innovation and Technology in Arabic Language Learning in Indonesia: Trends and Implications. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 134-150.
- Fitrianto, I., & Abdillah, F. M. (2018). MODEL PEMBELAJARAN PROGAM PEMANTAPAN BAHASA ARAB DAN SHAHSIAH (KEMBARA) KE 4 MAHASISWA KOLEJ UNIVERSITI ISLAM ANTAR BANGSA SELANGOR (KUIS) TAHUN 2018. University of Darussalam Gontor 15-16 September 2018, 121.
- Fitrianto, I., & Farisi, M. (2025). Integrating local wisdom into 21st century skills: A contextual framework for culturally relevant pedagogy in rural classrooms. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 109-121.
- Fitrianto, I., & Hamid, R. (2024). Morphosemantic Changes in the Arabic Language in the Social Media Era:

- التغيرات المورفوسيميائية في اللغة العربية / A Study of Neologisms and Their Impact on Youth Communication/ دراسة حول النيو لوجيزم وتأثيرها على تواصل الشباب في عصر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: IJAS: International Journal of Arabic Studies, 1(1 September), 25-39.
- Fitrianto, I., & Saif, A. (2024). The role of virtual reality in enhancing Experiential Learning: a comparative study of traditional and immersive learning environments. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 97-110.
- Fitrianto, I., Al-Faruqi, M. R., & Hanifah, N. A. (2025). The Contributions of Ibn Malik to Arabic Language Education: A Historical and Pedagogical Analysis. *IJAS: International Journal of Arabic Studies*, 1-11.
- Fitrianto, I., Hamid, R., & Mulalic, A. (2023). The effectiveness of the learning strategy" think, talk, write" and snowball for improving learning achievement in lessons insya'at Islamic Boarding School Arisalah. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 13-22.
- Fitrianto, I., Layalin, N. A., & Ahmad, A. (2025). The Paradigm of Physical Punishment from the Perspective of Islamic Education and Its Implementation in Indonesia and Malaysia. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*, 147-156.
- Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001). *From reliable sources: An introduction to historical methods*. Cornell University Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Lukens-Bull, R. A. (2001). Two sides of the same coin: Modernity and tradition in Islamic education in Indonesia. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(3), 350-372. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.2001.32.3.350>
- Makdisi, G. (1981). *The rise of colleges: Institutions of learning in Islam and the West*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Steenbrink, K. A. (1986). *Pesantren, madrasah, sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam kurun modern*. LP3ES.
- van Bruinessen, M. (1995). *Kitab kuning, pesantren dan tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia*. Mizan.