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DALILA as an Arabic Language Ecosystem: Intensive Holiday Immersion, Communicative Competence and Linguistic Environment

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Abstract

Arabic instruction in many Indonesian pesantren traditionally emphasizes textual and grammatical mastery over functional communicative competence. Short, holiday-based immersion formats designed to address this existing gap have received little systematic academic attention. This article examines DALILA (*Daurah Arabiyyah Liburan Sekolah*), an intensive 14-day holiday Arabic immersion program designed by the Language Center of Institut Pesantren Mathali'ul Falah (IPMAFA) and implemented at Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah Bulumanis, Pati, Central Java. This study explores how the program constructs a temporary *bi'ah lughawiyyah*, successfully integrates communicative teaching with pesantren culture, supports targeted vocabulary acquisition, and serves as a transferable educational model. Using a comprehensive qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, data were gathered through non-participant observation, thorough analysis of program documents and assessment records, content analysis of learning modules, and semi-structured interviews with host-institution leaders, participating female teachers (*ustadzah*), and 15 female students (*santriwati*). Program records covering 431 *santriwati* and approximately 100 *ustadzah* revealed mean post-test scores of 79.7 for *mufradat* and 82.1 for *kalam*. Participant accounts confirmed an engaging and enjoyable learning experience marked by significant

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progress. Specifically, the *santriwati* mastered 120 *mufradat* and successfully applied them in daily *kalam*, while the *ustadzah* mastered 70 operational sentences crucially needed for teaching and guiding the *santriwati*. The research findings demonstrate that DALILA functions as a robust, institution-wide language ecosystem built upon three mutually reinforcing pedagogical layers: a dual-track structure that positions teachers as co-learners, a module-driven sequence integrating fundamental language skills with contextualized *nahwu-sharaf*, and interactive formats (*hiwar*, *al'ab lughawiyyah*, *funun al-kalam*) culminating in public performance. This study conceptualizes this programmatic configuration as culturally adaptive communicative language teaching. Although the lack of retained pretest data restricts the statistical measurement of improvement, post-test results and qualitative reports clearly evidence tangible communicative advancement. These findings offer transformative, transferable insights for educational institutions designing short-term language immersion programs.

Keywords: Arabic immersion; linguistic environment; communicative language teaching; intensive holiday program; pesantren (Islamic Boarding Scholl)

Introduction

Arabic language education in non-Arab contexts has long been shaped by a tension between the transmission of religious texts and the cultivation of communicative competence. Many learners engage with Arabic primarily through Qur'anic recitation, hadith, and classical jurisprudence, yet remain unable to use the language as a medium of everyday interaction, a gap long noted in Arabic-language scholarship on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers (Tu'aymah, 1989); survey evidence from non-native learners identifies limited speaking practice, insufficiently responsive feedback, and weakly contextualized curricula as persistent obstacles (Almelhes, 2024). In Indonesia, where pesantren have served as centers of Arabic learning for centuries, recent reviews describe an ongoing but uneven transformation in which curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, and teacher development proceed at different speeds across institutions (Tauhid, 2026).

The problem is especially visible in pesantren whose Arabic curricula remain anchored in the grammar-translation reading of kitab kuning. Studies of speaking instruction in such settings report that a grammar-centered orientation constrains communicative competence (Tamam et al., 2025), while pesantren that succeed in speaking combine daily vocabulary, conversation practice, speeches, and an Arabic-language environment (Mubaligh et al., 2023; Silviyana

et al., 2023). The concept of bi'ah lughawiyyah—a deliberately constructed Arabic-language environment—has become the most widespread local response. Recent research shows that its effectiveness depends on how comprehensively formal instruction is integrated with authentic communicative practice (Hamid et al., 2024), and that its implementation involves program planning, communication habits, language-use regulations, and evaluation mechanisms rather than exposure alone (Putri & Muflihah, 2026). The same literature also records its fragility: an intensive Arabic course at a girls' pesantren strengthened speaking and reading, yet did not produce a stable Arabic environment because students had not yet internalized the habit of using the language (Akmalia et al., 2021).

Two theoretical lenses frame this study. Communicative language teaching (CLT) foregrounds meaning negotiation, authentic interaction, and learner-centered task performance, but classroom research has repeatedly documented gaps between its principles and teachers' actual practice, particularly where traditions favor teacher-fronted instruction (Adem & Berkessa, 2022). Arabic-language scholarship on communicative teaching likewise grounds communicative curricula in linguistic, cultural, psychological, and educational foundations rather than in technique alone (Tu'aymah & al-Naqah, 2006). Sociocultural theory, in turn, locates language development in socially mediated activity, implying that the design of the social environment is itself a pedagogical variable (Alkhudiry, 2022). Taken together, the two lenses suggest that the success of communicative Arabic in pesantren depends less on importing CLT techniques than on adapting them to the cultural, religious, and institutional ecology in which they are enacted.

Short-term intensive programs constitute a distinct modality within this landscape. Evidence from other languages indicates that concentrated immersion can produce measurable development within weeks: learners in a six-week, 96-hour domestic immersion program in Spanish showed gains in some of the same areas as peers in short-term study abroad (Moranski et al., 2023), and the oral proficiency outcomes of short-term intensive immersion have also been examined in study-abroad settings (Moneypenny & Aldrich, 2024). In Arabic education, intensive formats have been evaluated in university intensification programs (Firdaus et al., 2025) and oral-skill programs for young learners (Hadi et al., 2024), and Arabic camps (mukhayyam) in Southeast Asia have been reported to strengthen speaking proficiency, confidence, and soft skills—in one case a three-week camp in Malaysia led by Indonesian instructors (Jundi et al., 2024; Masnun et al., 2025). Research on intensive Arabic programs located inside pesantren and scheduled during school holidays, however, remains scarce.

Previous studies have examined components that DALILA combines. External providers have built Arabic programs inside host pesantren, as when a

pesantren-based university's training center introduced vocabulary input, language games, speeches, and Arabic drama at a tahfidz pesantren (Setiyadi et al., 2023), or a university Arabic education department ran recurring skills training at a partner pesantren, evaluated mainly through participant satisfaction (Siregar et al., 2023). Studies document game-based and eclectic methods in modern pesantren (Hanani et al., 2024) and institutional language policy as a dimension of Arabic learning (Nurmala et al., 2025). None has examined such components compressed into a single holiday period and applied to students and teachers simultaneously.

Four gaps follow: holiday-based intensive formats remain largely undocumented beside year-round bi'ah lughawiyyah programs; the integration of CLT with pesantren values has seldom been conceptualized; modules purpose-designed for intensive holiday immersion have not been analyzed systematically; and programs immersing students and teachers simultaneously have not been theorized, although teacher competence is a key condition for Arabic reform in pesantren (Tauhid, 2026).

This article addresses these gaps by examining DALILA (Daurah Arabiyyah Liburan Sekolah), a 14-day intensive Arabic program designed by the Pusat Bahasa of Institut Pesantren Mathali'ul Falah (IPMAFA), Pati, and implemented at one host institution, Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah Bulumanis, Margoyoso, Pati, Central Java. The study does not claim to describe Indonesian pesantren in general: its scope is a single program at a single site, and references to pesantren beyond this site concern the wider context in which the findings may be read. The study is guided by four research questions:

RQ1. How does DALILA construct an Arabic bi'ah lughawiyyah within the setting of Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah?

RQ2. What pedagogical strategies characterize DALILA's integration of communicative Arabic teaching with pesantren culture?

RQ3. How does DALILA's intensive holiday format support vocabulary acquisition and communicative confidence?

RQ4. What does DALILA offer as a transferable model for Arabic language innovation in other pesantren settings?

The study documents DALILA's pedagogical architecture and proposes culturally adaptive CLT as a lens for interpreting it, contributing a description of a holiday-based, dual-track immersion design not previously reported.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical design. The design was chosen because the aim was to describe the components of an

existing program systematically and to analyze how these components relate to one another and to relevant theory, rather than to test an intervention or to measure learning outcomes. The object of analysis is a single, bounded program implemented at one site; the study therefore has a single-site scope, and its findings are interpreted in terms of transferability rather than statistical generalization (Kim, 2025).

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah Bulumanis, Margoyoso, Pati, during DALILA's implementation from 30 June to 13 July 2025 (14 days); the host's class lists also call the program Mukhoyyam 'Araby (Arabic camp). Program records list 431 santri with at least one recorded assessment, all female (santriwati): 262 at the junior secondary (SMP) and 169 at the senior secondary (SMA) level, in 18 class groups named after Arab countries, including three groups of newly enrolled students; one further listed class has no records. Sixteen class instructors (tutors), one per regular class, taught the daily sessions and recorded scores, and approximately 100 ustadzah took part in the teacher track, in line with the program's public announcement (Redaksi IPMAFA, 2025). Interviewees comprised 15 santriwati selected at random and, selected purposively, two members of the host leadership—the academic director and the head of the foreign-language development unit—and three ustadzahs from the teacher track.

Data were collected through four techniques (Table 1). Non-participant observation of both tracks and the culminating events was recorded in field notes. Document analysis examined class-division lists (*Pembagian Kelas Program Mukhoyyam 'Araby*), schedules, and assessment records (*Blanko Penilaian Mufrodat Santri*) containing daily vocabulary tests and post-test scores in mufradat and kalam. Module content analysis examined the student module Risalatul Mardhiyyin, the teacher module Taisir an-Nathiqin, and the Dalil al-Istikhdam usage guide as texts; it did not involve testing the modules (Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Semi-structured interviews explored the leaders' and the ustadzah's views on relevance, outcomes, and sustainability, and santriwati's experiences of the program. Quotations are translated from Indonesian by the authors, and interviewees are identified by role and code (L = leader; T = teacher; S = santriwati).

Table 1. Data collection techniques, sources, and alignment with the research questions

Technique	Focus	Sources and scope	RQ
Non-participant observation	Daily learning activities, interaction patterns, language use, and culminating events	Morning santri track (07.30–12.00) and afternoon teacher track (13.30–14.30); daily sessions from 30 June to 13 July 2025; opening ceremony, Day 10 teacher presentation, Day 14	RQ1–RQ3

Technique	Focus	Sources and scope	RQ
		festival	
Document and record analysis	Program organization, targets, participation, and formative performance	Class-division lists; daily vocabulary tests and post-test scores in mufradat and kalam (lisan) for 18 class groups; festival rundown; administrative records	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Module content analysis	Content, sequence, and prescribed procedures of the instructional materials (analysis of texts, not testing of modules)	Risalatul Mardhiyyin (students); Taisir an-Nathiqin (teachers); Dalil al-Istikhdam (usage guide); Kamus Saku DALILA	RQ2, RQ3
Semi-structured interviews	Relevance, outcomes, and sustainability (leaders, teacher); experiences of the program (santriwati)	15 randomly selected santriwati; 2 host-institution leaders; 3 participating ustadzah	RQ1–RQ4

Source: Author's research design.

Data were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding was conducted by the author. The analysis proceeded through familiarization with field notes, documents, module texts, and transcripts; initial coding; construction of candidate themes; review of themes against the full data set; and definition and naming of themes. The four research questions served as the organizing frame: themes were constructed inductively from the data and then mapped onto the question each helped to answer, producing the four sections of the findings. Triangulation across the four techniques, and across the perspectives of santriwati, host-institution leaders, and a participating teacher, was used to check whether a pattern identified in one source was corroborated, qualified, or contradicted by the others.

The assessment records were analyzed descriptively as supplementary evidence for RQ3. They contain post-test scores, administered on 13 July 2025 (Day 14), for mufradat (vocabulary mastery) and kalam (recorded as lisan; the use of that vocabulary in everyday speech). Instructors kept them with differing conventions; where day-by-day records exist, the mufradat score equals the mean of the daily tests. Recorded scores were used where available and otherwise the mean of daily scores; kalam scores on a 0–10 scale were rescaled to 0–100; non-numeric entries (such as sakit, izin, and pulang) and zero daily entries were treated as missing; and one transferred student was counted once.

Researcher positionality requires explicit acknowledgment. The authors are leaders of the Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, the unit that designed and delivered

DALILA, and also served as the program's coordinators and lead instructors (Redaksi IPMAFA, 2025); the authors therefore occupied a strong insider position with privileged access to documents, personnel, and activities. Insider status can deepen understanding and rapport, but it also risks assumed understanding and an affirmative reading of one's own institution's work (Bukamal, 2022). To manage this risk, the authors kept reflexive notes throughout data collection and analysis, treated informants' accounts as perspectives to be compared with observational and documentary evidence rather than as confirmation, and deliberately searched the data for tensions, constraints, and counter-evidence, which are reported in the discussion and in the limitations (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

The study was conducted within the formal partnership between Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA and Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah, with the permission of the pesantren's caretaker (pengasuh) and leadership. Because the santriwati interviewed were minors, their parents' permission was also obtained. Interviews took place between 4 and 13 July 2025. All interviewees are reported anonymously by role or code, the santriwati are not identified by name, and observation focused on group-level instructional activity.

Findings and Discussion

The findings are organized by research question, followed by the study's novelty and limitations; Figure 1 and Table 2 summarize the program's operational model.

1. Constructing Bi'ah Lughawiyyah: The Institutional Layers of DALILA (RQ1)

Observation and document analysis show that DALILA constructs its bi'ah lughawiyyah by reorganizing institutional time, roles, and ritual rather than by relying on classroom instruction alone. For the 14 program days, the institutional space of Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah was reframed as a temporary Arabic-medium environment. From a sociocultural perspective this is significant because it makes the social environment, and not only the lesson, the unit of pedagogical design (Alkhudiry, 2022). It also corresponds to the finding that bi'ah lughawiyyah succeeds when formal instruction and communicative practice are designed as one system rather than as parallel activities (Hamid et al., 2024; Kasmantoni et al., 2022).

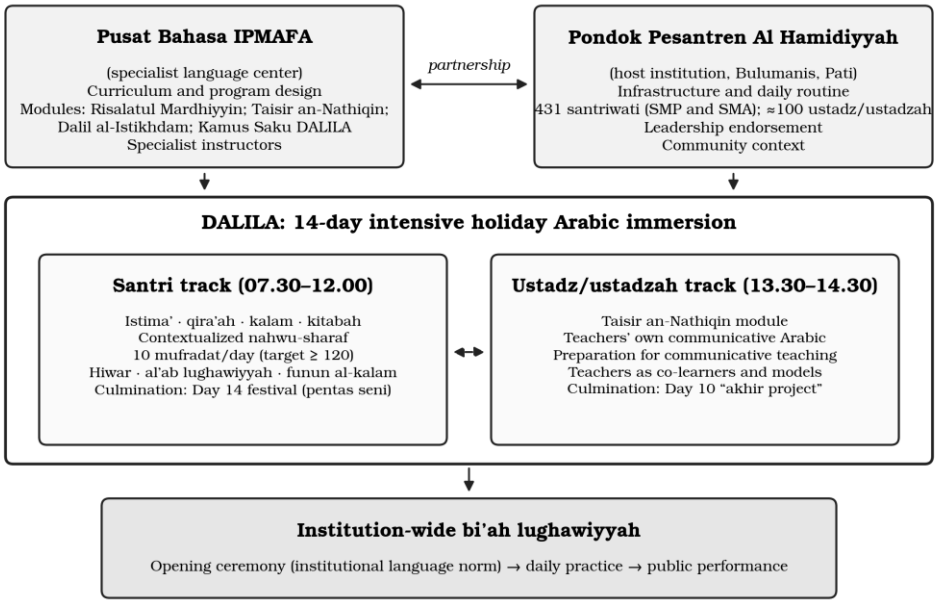


Figure 1. DALILA's operational model: inter-institutional partnership and dual-track immersion

Source: Author's analysis of program documents and observation.

The first layer is temporal and structural. Santri followed a morning block (07.30–12.00) on each program day, which reorganized the daily rhythm of the pesantren around Arabic activity, while ustadz and ustadzah followed a parallel afternoon block (13.30–14.30), as summarized in Table 2. The dual-track design positions teachers not as supervisors of an event but as learners and practitioners within it. When teachers visibly practice Arabic alongside their students, the legitimacy of communicative Arabic use extends across the institutional hierarchy. This is a mechanism that bi'ah programs relying mainly on student discipline—language monitoring teams and vocabulary sanctions, for example—do not target directly (Ubadah & Anandi, 2022).

Table 2. The dual-track structure of DALILA

Feature	Santri track	Ustadz/ustadzah track
Participants	431 santriwati with assessment records (262 SMP, 169 SMA) in 18 class groups; 16 class instructors (tutors)	Approximately 100 ustadz and ustadzah
Daily time block	07.30–12.00 (approx. 4.5 hours)	13.30–14.30 (1 hour)
Core module	Risalatul Mardhiyyin: Muqarrar fi al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah li an-Nahdhiyyin	Taisir an-Nathiqin: Dalilul Kalam li Murasysyahi Mudarrisin al-Indunisiyyin

Feature	Santri track	Ustadz/ustadzah track
Daily components	Istima', qira'ah, kalam, kitabah; contextualized nahwu-sharaf; 10 mufradat from Kamus Saku DALILA; hiwar, al'ab lughawiyyah, funun al-kalam	Communicative Arabic for teachers' own use and preparation for communicative classroom teaching
Vocabulary target	At least 120 mufradat over 12 active learning days; records show 8–11 assessed days in continuing classes	70 practical classroom expressions
Culmination	Day 14: Arabic festival (kalam jama'i, khithabah, syi'r, ghina', ilqa' al-qishshah, masrahiyyah)	Day 10: "akhir project" presentation; participation in the Day 14 festival
Role in the ecosystem	Primary learners	Co-learners and visible models of Arabic use

Source: DALILA program documents and module analysis.

The second layer is ritual and normative. The opening ceremony, attended by the leadership of both institutions, functioned as a public declaration that altered the expected language of institutional life for the program's duration—an institutional dimension of language learning that research on language policy in Arabic education has begun to examine (Nurmala et al., 2025). The third layer is performative: the closing festival, in which participants performed Arabic speaking tasks before pesantren leaders and community members, conferred public recognition on them as Arabic speakers.

These layers also have limits. The environment was temporary and institutionally sponsored, and the data do not show whether Arabic use persisted afterwards; bi'ah lughawiyyah weakens when learners have not consolidated their own habits of use (Akmalia et al., 2021). The host institution's academic director voiced precisely this concern:

> *"I hope this program can be continued, not only during the holidays, so that the Arabic-speaking environment we have long aspired to can be created in this pesantren."* (L-1)

The answer to RQ1 is therefore a temporary, institution-wide ecosystem built through structural, normative, and performative layers, whose durability remains an open question.

2. Integrating Communicative Teaching with Pesantren Culture (RQ2)

Module analysis identifies complementary integration, rather than substitution, as DALILA's core strategy. Classical pesantren pedagogy—sorogan, bandongan, and the memorization of grammar through texts such as al-Jurumiyyah and Alfiyyah Ibn Malik—privileges textual accuracy and scholarly authority, values that can sit uneasily with CLT's tolerance of error and its

emphasis on peer interaction. Studies of modern pesantren show that institutions increasingly combine these traditions with game-based and eclectic methods rather than choosing between them (Hanani et al., 2024).

DALILA retains daily nahwu-sharaf instruction, progressing from istifham through jumlah ismiyyah and fi'liyyah, isim fa'il and maf'ul, masdar, the nawasikh, and fi'il madhi and mudhari' to amr and nahy, and ties each structure to that day's istima' and kalam theme, so that grammar serves expression rather than being an end in itself (Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, 2025b), an approach also reported in simplifying nahwu for conversation in intensive daurah classes (Hanifansyah & Mahmudah, 2025). The module titles frame this within the host's identity: the student module addresses al-Nahdhiyyin, and the teacher module pairs taisir (facilitation) with preparing Indonesian teacher candidates (Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, 2025c). This retains a value the host community recognizes—grammatical accuracy—while subordinating it to communicative purpose, consistent with proposals to adapt communicative procedures to pesantren needs rather than transplant them (Tamam et al., 2025).

The twelve learning days progress from personally proximate topics (self-introduction, family) through institutional ones (pesantren routines, Qur'an memorization) to Islamic cultural content (Nusantara ulama, Nahdlatul Ulama, Sayyidah Khadijah) and aspirations (university study, careers). Day 8 is devoted, across all four skills, to KH MA Sahal Mahfudh, a leading Nahdlatul Ulama scholar of particular significance in the Kajen–Margoyoso area. Arabic materials built from learners' own cultural resources can support engagement and comprehension because learners draw on familiar knowledge (Al Farisi & Maulani, 2024); in DALILA the effect is also symbolic, presenting communicative Arabic as continuous with the intellectual heritage of the pesantren.

The interactive formats specify how this integration is enacted in class. Hiwar follows a four-stage sequence prescribed in the usage guide: the teacher models the dialogue while students listen; students repeat it chorally; individual students are nominated to practice it; and students then extend it creatively on the basis of their own circumstances (Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, 2025a). The sequence moves from modeled input through controlled practice to personalized production, resembling communicative procedures proposed for pesantren and for secondary-level learners (Amrullah et al., 2023; Tamam et al., 2025). In the opening unit (al-ta'aruf), the model dialogue between two students meeting in a pesantren includes one's admission of homesickness, giving learners affectively meaningful language.

Language games (al'ab lughawiyyah), long advocated in Arabic-language pedagogy for non-native speakers ('Abd al-'Aziz, 1983), follow a parallel procedure in which teachers explain the rules and group the students, who then

play within the teacher-established frame. Classroom research in Indonesia reports that language games can enhance learners' speaking skill (Marzuki & Kuliahana, 2021), and their introduction is particularly notable in a setting where hierarchical relations and a formal register normally dominate teacher–student interaction. Funun al-kalam, a dedicated section of the student module offering Arabic performance genres, extends interaction into rehearsed public performance. A systematic review of educational drama in language teaching and a classroom study of drama-based speaking activities both associate such performance with improved speaking outcomes, the latter particularly in discourse management (Dawoud et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2023).

The closing festival on Day 14 shows how these genres were enacted (Table 4). After the opening ceremonies, most of the morning went to santriwati performances in six genres, each coordinated by class instructors; the two longest segments, group conversation (kalam jama'i) and drama (masrahiyyah), were interactive, foregrounding co-constructed speech over recitation. The morning closed with the announcement of results and the presentation of awards, adding an element of friendly competition. Public speaking in Arabic is an established pesantren practice that builds confidence through repetition and habituation (Risqiyah et al., 2023).

Table 4. Program of the DALILA closing festival (Day 14)

Segment	Time	Duration	Mode of Arabic use
Opening, Qur'an recitation, remarks by Al Hamidiyyah and Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, prayer	07.30–08.20	50 min	Ceremonial
Kalam jama'i (group conversation)	08.20–09.00	40 min	Interactive speech
Khithabah (speech)	09.00–09.15	15 min	Prepared monologue
Syi'r (poetry recitation)	09.15–09.30	15 min	Recitation
Break	09.30–10.00	30 min	—
Ghina' (song)	10.00–10.15	15 min	Performance
Ilqa' al-qishshah (storytelling)	10.15–10.30	15 min	Narrative monologue
Masrahiyyah (drama)	10.30–11.10	40 min	Interactive performance
Announcement of results and awards; closing	11.10–11.30	20 min	Ceremonial

Source: DALILA festival rundown. Durations include preparation time.

In answer to RQ2, DALILA's strategies can be characterized as three forms of integration: structural (grammar retained but subordinated to communication), cultural (content drawn from the host community's own religious heritage), and procedural (interactive formats sequenced from controlled to personalized use). It is this combination, rather than any single technique, that distinguishes the program both from an unadapted import of CLT and from a continuation of grammar-translation.

3. The Intensive Format, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Communicative Confidence (RQ3)

DALILA's holiday format concentrates Arabic instruction into a 14-day block free from the demands of the academic calendar, giving santri about four and a half hours of structured Arabic activity per day. Such concentration can support development within weeks when learners must use the language in meaningful interaction (Moranski et al., 2023; Rodiyah & Hartiningsih, 2023). Each day integrated the four maharat with nahwu-sharaf and vocabulary, recycling target items across skills.

Vocabulary is the program's most explicit target: a minimum of 120 mufradat over 12 active learning days, at ten items per day drawn from the DALILA pocket dictionary (Kamus Saku DALILA). The module prescribes a multi-step procedure. Students read the items aloud with their meanings and memorize them; the teacher then gives five Arabic items for students to translate and five meanings for students to supply in Arabic; finally, students compose simple sentences with the items or related expressions (ta'birat) (Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA, 2025b). The procedure combines deliberate learning with retrieval in both directions and with productive use, practices that vocabulary research associates with stronger retention than repeated study of word lists (Chiu & Hawkins, 2023; Nation, 2022) and that guides for Arabic teachers recommend (Al-Fawzan, 2011; Hanifansyah & Mahmudah, 2024). The pocket format keeps vocabulary resources available throughout the day, extending vocabulary work beyond scheduled lessons.

The program's post-test records allow a descriptive view of end-of-program performance (Table 3). Across 431 santriwati, the mean mufradat score was 79.7 (SD 16.4; median 84.0), and 71.5% scored 75 or above. Senior secondary continuing classes scored highest (M = 87.5), followed by junior secondary continuing classes (M = 81.1). Newly enrolled junior secondary students, whose records cover only two to four assessment days, scored markedly lower (M = 58.9; 22.7% at or above 75), which suggests that the daily target was demanding for learners who had only just entered the pesantren. Kalam scores, available for 326 santriwati, averaged 82.1 and correlated moderately with mufradat scores (r = 0.45), consistent with the program's premise that vocabulary mastery should carry over into everyday speech.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of DALILA post-test scores in mufradat and kalam (0–100 scale)

Group	n	Mufradat M (SD)	Median	≥ 75 (%)	Kalam n	Kalam M (SD)	≥ 75 (%)
SMP, continuing classes	187	81.1 (12.1)	82.1	73.3	164	80.7 (11.4)	79.3
SMP, newly enrolled	75	58.9 (20.0)	60.0	22.7	—	—	—
SMA, continuing classes	162	87.5 (9.7)	90.0	91.4	162	83.5 (11.4)	83.3
SMA, newly enrolled	7	85.5 (8.4)	87.5	85.7	—	—	—
All santriwati	431	79.7 (16.4)	84.0	71.5	326	82.1 (11.5)	81.3

Source: Author's analysis of DALILA assessment records. Kalam scores were not recorded for the newly enrolled groups, one continuing class, and a few individual students.

Day-by-day records from the seven continuing classes that kept them show performance that was high from the outset and stable rather than rising: 77.5 on day one, 81.7–86.8 on days two to seven, and 80.7–83.6 on days eight to ten. Because each day's test covered new items, this indicates sustained performance on the daily target rather than cumulative growth. The records also reveal strains: recorded daily scores fell from 150 on day four to 117 on days nine and ten; 106 of 1,918 student-day entries (5.5%) carry absence codes, mostly izin (permission), sakit (illness), class transfer, and pulang (returning home); and continuing classes recorded eight to eleven assessment days rather than twelve, so the 120-item target is not fully documented.

Vocabulary is also embedded thematically across each day's texts and tasks, and QR-linked audio recordings add spoken input; such tools can support vocabulary and speaking (Hanafiah et al., 2022), but in DALILA they remain supplementary to interaction.

The study did not measure communicative confidence directly; the evidence comes from three sources. First, the kalam post-test scores indicate that most santriwati met instructors' expectations for using vocabulary in everyday speech, although they do not measure confidence. Second, the 15 santriwati interviewed described the program as enjoyable rather than boring, valued it as a productive use of their holiday, and reported that the closing festival made them eager to practice Arabic. One summarized the prevailing view:

"Learning Arabic felt enjoyable because it was delivered in enjoyable ways. We sang, told stories, recited poems, and developed our kalam cheerfully." (S-1)

Third, the host institution's leaders perceived a change in everyday speech. The academic director reported "a remarkable improvement in the children's everyday conversation in Arabic" (L-1), and the head of the foreign-language development unit observed that DALILA "has sparked the students to takallum in Arabic" (L-2). These are self-reports and perceptions given to a research team linked to the program; they corroborate the program team's own observations and indicate affective engagement, but they are not measures of proficiency; motivation research likewise treats confidence and satisfaction as conditions for sustained effort (Erlina et al., 2025).

These findings carry a clear caveat. The pretest administered on 23 June 2025 was not retained, so Table 3 reports post-test scores only, kept with differing conventions across classes. The program team observed noticeable improvement in santriwati's vocabulary mastery and everyday kalam, but without baseline data this impression cannot be quantified or tested. The 120-item target is also modest relative to the high-frequency vocabulary needed for basic communicative independence (Nation, 2022), and massed learning is vulnerable to forgetting without spaced review. The answer to RQ3 is therefore that the intensive format creates favorable conditions—dense exposure, bidirectional retrieval, productive use, and public performance—while the magnitude and durability of gains remain to be measured.

4. DALILA as a Transferable Model: Partnership, Teacher Development, and Culturally Adaptive CLT (RQ4)

DALILA's most transferable feature may be its reconception of the pesantren holiday. DALILA turns the holiday, usually a period of reduced activity, into a window for intensive Arabic engagement free from curricular pressures. Requiring no curricular restructuring, the format suits institutions for which wholesale reform is unrealistic.

The inter-institutional partnership is the second transferable element. Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA supplied curriculum design, modules, and specialist instructors, while Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah supplied infrastructure, participants, and community context (Figure 1). Comparable university–pesantren arrangements indicate that such partnerships are an emerging practice (Setiyadi et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2023). The partnership also answered a need the host had identified: according to the head of its foreign-language development unit, the pesantren's English program was already well developed, whereas Arabic—"especially in kalam"—was the weaker area (L-2). DALILA differs from these in combining partner-provided design with a dual-track structure and a module package authored specifically for the holiday format.

The teacher track is the third element. By placing ustadz and ustadzah in the same immersive event as their students, DALILA addresses teachers' linguistic competence—identified as a key condition for Arabic reform in pesantren—without the stigma that separate remedial training can carry (Al-Fawzan, 2011; Tauhid, 2026). The one participating ustadzah interviewed linked the training directly to the pesantren's existing language-environment policy:

> *"We teachers were greatly helped by the operational Arabic training for teachers. It strongly supports the bi'ah 'Arabiyyah program at Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah."* (T-1)

The teachers' Day 10 "akhir project" presentation mirrored the student performance model.

The model also carries constraints. It depends on an external partner with curriculum-development capacity, and the data do not show whether the host could sustain it independently. The afternoon track adds to teachers' existing duties, risking fatigue that the design does not address. A holiday program competes with family obligations: the records show absences for illness, permission, and returning home, and fewer recorded scores in the second week. Without baseline data, claims about effectiveness remain provisional.

Theoretically, DALILA's design can be interpreted as culturally adaptive CLT: a variant of communicative language teaching that retains its core principles—meaning-centered interaction, learner agency, and authentic communicative tasks—while adapting its surface features to the cultural, institutional, and religious values of the host community. It differs both from an unadapted CLT that ignores context, a mismatch documented in CLT research (Adem & Berkessa, 2022), and from a traditionalism that resists communicative innovation. The concept is proposed here as an interpretive lens grounded in one program; its usefulness in other contexts is for readers and future studies to test.

In answer to RQ4, DALILA offers not a ready-made template but a set of transferable design principles: using the holiday as an intensive window, pairing a host pesantren with a specialist language center, immersing teachers alongside students, and adapting communicative procedures to the values of the host community. Whether these principles transfer depends on how closely a receiving context resembles the one described here—a judgment that the detailed description in this article is intended to support (Kim, 2025).

5. Novelty of the Study

This study makes three original contributions. It documents a holiday-based intensive Arabic program inside a pesantren, a format absent from studies of year-round bi'ah lughawiyyah (Hamid et al., 2024; Putri & Muflihah, 2026)

and of intensive programs in university and non-pesantren settings (Firdaus et al., 2025; Moranski et al., 2023). It describes a dual-track design immersing teachers and students simultaneously, whereas the partnership-based programs reviewed above reported on students only (Setiyadi et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2023). And it proposes culturally adaptive CLT as a lens specifying structural, cultural, and procedural integration of communicative Arabic teaching with pesantren values.

6. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations bound these findings. The study covers one program, site, and cycle, so its findings are offered for transfer rather than generalization. The authors are the IPMAFA Language Center team who designed the program, and coordinated and taught in it, which may have shaped access and interpretation despite the reflexive measures described above; credibility rests primarily on triangulation rather than participant validation. The teacher track is represented by one interview, host leaders may view the partnership favorably, and all student participants were female, so transfer to male or mixed-gender pesantren requires caution. The pretest records were not retained, post-test scores were kept with differing conventions, and no follow-up examined persistence. Future research should use retained pre- and post-program measures, delayed follow-up, and comparisons across pesantren.

Conclusion

This study examined DALILA, a 14-day intensive holiday Arabic program designed by Pusat Bahasa IPMAFA and implemented at Pondok Pesantren Al Hamidiyyah Bulumanis, Pati. The program constructs a temporary, institution-wide *bi'ah lughawiyyah* through structural, normative, and performative layers (RQ1); integrates communicative teaching with pesantren culture structurally, culturally, and procedurally (RQ2); creates favorable conditions for vocabulary and *kalam*, reflected in post-test means of 79.7 and 82.1, as well as in the accounts of both *santriwati* and *ustadzah* confirming an enjoyable program with significant improvements—specifically, the *santriwati* mastered 120 *mufrodat* and applied them in daily *kalam*, while the *ustadzah* mastered 70 operational sentences crucial for teaching and guiding the students (RQ3); and offers transferable design principles rather than a template (RQ4).

The study contributes a description of a holiday-based, dual-track immersion design and the concept of culturally adaptive CLT. Because the evidence comes from one program at one site, institutions with a similar holiday window and a capable partner may find the principles adaptable, while others should treat them with caution. Future research should measure outcomes before and after such programs, follow participants over time, and compare several pesantren.

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Author Contributions Statement

S.M.A. conceived and designed the study, led the overall coordination, analyzed the primary data, and drafted the manuscript. P.E.S.F. contributed to the research design, conducted field data collection and interviews, and assisted in drafting and revising the manuscript. R. participated in data curation, module content analysis, and literature review. A.S. assisted in data validation, instructional materials review, and manuscript editing. All authors read, revised, and approved the final manuscript.

AI Writing Statement

To enhance grammatical clarity, sentence fluency, and academic readability during the revision of this manuscript, the authors utilized the generative artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT (OpenAI) specifically for English proofreading and language editing. The use of this assistive technology was strictly confined to linguistic aspects and did not affect the integrity of the scholarly content, as the entire research design, data collection process, critical analysis, and interpretation of findings are entirely the intellectual work and original contribution of the authors. The authors have carefully reviewed, re-edited, and verified every portion of the text as well as the accuracy of all references against their primary sources, and thus accept full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and overall content of this publication.

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