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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Implementation of *Maharatul Kalam* Problem-Based Learning in Enhancing Arabic Language Proficiency at the Ma'had

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Abstract: This study is motivated by the low level of *Maharatul Kalam* proficiency among students at Ma'had Ibnu Zubair, Padang, despite their adequate mastery of Arabic vocabulary and grammatical rules. This phenomenon indicates a gap between teacher-centred, theory-oriented instruction and the demand for communicative speaking skills in real-life contexts. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method involving observation, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that although students are able to memorise vocabulary and understand grammar, they struggle to use Arabic spontaneously in communication, experience difficulties in comprehending authentic conversations, and tend to be passive during learning activities. These problems are influenced by limited exposure to real communicative contexts and insufficient opportunities for meaningful language practice. Therefore, this study recommends the consistent implementation of Problem-Based Learning by positioning real-life problems at the centre of the learning process, supported by improved instructional design, enhanced learning facilities, and expanded opportunities for language interaction to ensure the development of speaking proficiency becomes more functional, natural, and sustainable in accordance with students' communicative needs within the ma'had environment.

Keywords: Problem-based learning; *Maharatul Kalam*; Arabic language proficiency; Ma'had.

***Abstrak**: Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh lemahnya kemampuan Maharatul Kalam santri Ma'had Ibnu Zubair Padang, meskipun mereka telah menguasai mufradat dan kaidah gramatikal. Fenomena tersebut menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang masih bersifat teoritis dan berpusat pada guru dengan tuntutan kemampuan berbicara komunikatif dalam konteks nyata. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan Focus Group Discussion. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa santri mampu menghafal kosakata dan memahami tata bahasa, tetapi belum mampu menggunakannya secara spontan dalam komunikasi, mengalami kesulitan memahami percakapan autentik, serta cenderung pasif dalam proses pembelajaran. Kondisi ini dipengaruhi oleh minimnya paparan konteks nyata dan terbatasnya kesempatan praktik berbahasa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan Problem-Based Learning secara konsisten dengan menempatkan masalah nyata sebagai pusat pembelajaran, disertai perbaikan desain pembelajaran, peningkatan fasilitas pendukung, dan perluasan interaksi bahasa agar pengembangan kemampuan kalam berlangsung lebih fungsional, alami, dan berkelanjutan sesuai kebutuhan komunikatif santri di lingkungan ma'had.*

***Kata kunci**: Problem-based learning; Maharatul Kalam; Kemahiran berbahasa Arab; Ma'had.*

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1. Introduction

The implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in *Maharatul Kalam* to enhance Arabic language proficiency at the Ma'had is driven by an increasingly critical social issue, namely that students (santri) demonstrate limited speaking ability in Arabic despite having studied extensive theory, grammatical rules, and *mufradat*. Many Ma'had institutions educate learners who are capable of memorising instructional content; however, they continue to experience difficulties in understanding conversations and responding spontaneously. Instructional patterns that remain teacher-centred and memorisation-oriented render the learning process insufficiently responsive to students' communicative needs. This condition necessitates a learning approach that is more direct, contextual, and places students' linguistic problems at the centre of learning activities. Therefore, this paper advocates a shift from theory-oriented instruction towards learning practices that genuinely foster the development of *kalam* proficiency.

This topic has been extensively examined by previous scholars within the academic domain. For instance, early studies have emphasised that the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and role-playing methods in Arabic language instruction has generated significant positive impacts, particularly in enhancing students' participation, autonomy, and confidence in speaking (Isnani, 2025; Husnah, 2025; Nuha et al., 2023). However, the majority of these studies continue to concentrate on the development of comprehension and speaking confidence without placing sufficient emphasis on the sustained development of speaking fluency (Dewi & Wahyuningsih, 2025; Zarkasyi et al., 2023). Moreover, subsequent research highlights a central issue concerning the lack of authentic, context-based practice, which results in limitations in *kalam* proficiency in everyday communication (Mahyudin, 2025; Sugirman & Hamid, 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024). Therefore, even though progress has been achieved in terms of motivation and participation, there remains a pressing need for pedagogical approaches that prioritise continuous speaking practice and real-life contexts in order to foster the optimal development of students' speaking proficiency.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify three principal indicators demonstrating that the mastery of *Maharatul Kalam* at the Ma'had remains suboptimal. First, there is an imbalance between students' ability to memorise *mufradat* and grammatical rules and their capacity to speak fluently and spontaneously. Second, the predominance of teacher-centred instructional methods limits students' active engagement in Arabic communicative practice. Third, students exhibit low level proficiency of Arabic in authentic communicative situations. By identifying these three issues, the study seeks to provide a clear portrayal of the challenges encountered in improving Arabic speaking proficiency within the Ma'had environment.

In addition, as the author is also a santri, these challenges in achieving fluent Arabic are experienced firsthand, particularly as a result of instructional methods that have predominantly emphasised the memorisation of *mufradat* and grammatical theory rather than contextualised speaking practice. Such learning patterns often result in students' passive understanding of grammatical rules without adequate training in using Arabic spontaneously, appropriately, and in accordance with real-life situations within the Ma'had environment. Drawing on this lived experience, the author contends that the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) may serve as an effective solution to address these constraints, as this approach centres learning on authentic problems encountered by students, encourages discussion and collaboration, and requires the active use of Arabic in solving problem-based tasks. Consequently, PBL is believed to be capable of optimising the development of *Maharatul Kalam* in a more natural, meaningful, and sustainable manner.

2. Literature review

2.1. Problem-based learning

The structure of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) generally involves several systematic stages, beginning with the identification of a problem to be solved by learners (Januari & Muna, 2025; Fernando et al., 2025). Subsequently, students engage in the collection of data and information from various sources, followed by group discussions aimed at sharing understanding and deepening the analysis of the problem (Unisri, 2024). The final stage consists of presenting the problem-solving outcomes, which requires students to use Arabic actively and authentically (Kholifah, 2024; Larasati & Fernando, 2024; Wuysang et al. 2025). Within the Ma'had context, the implementation of PBL provides broader opportunities for santri to develop their speaking skills (*Maharatul Kalam*) in a more natural and contextual manner compared to conventional methods that remain heavily focused on memorisation (Alfarisy, 2024). Through case simulations or problem scenarios introduced during discussions, students are able to apply Arabic in everyday interactions, enabling their speaking skills to develop in a functional and effective way (Bahri et al., 2025). This approach also encourages social interaction among santri in Arabic, fosters self-confidence, and enhances learning motivation (Maghribi & Mujahadah, 2025). Thus, PBL not only enhance linguistic competence but also fosters the social and emotional skills that contribute to holistic learning outcomes.

2.2. *Maharatul Kalam*

Maharatul Kalam constitutes one of the core competencies in Arabic language learning, with a primary focus on the ability to speak fluently and accurately.This concept extends beyond the mere mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures to include the capacity to convey messages clearly and appropriately within communicative contexts, whether formal or informal (Isnaini et al., 2022). Success in *Maharatul Kalam* is measured by speaking fluency, the accurate use of linguistic structures, and the ability to adjust language style according to the interlocutor and situational context (Arsyad et al., 2024). Accordingly, the instruction of *Maharatul Kalam* is considered as a primary priority within the Ma'had, as it aims to develop students' active communicative competence, enabling them not only to comprehend religious texts but also to engage in dialogue, debate, and express ideas effectively in Arabic. This form of learning is particularly crucial, as it functions as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and the practical application of language in real-life contexts (Hanisa, 2024).

In order to optimise *Maharatul Kalam*, complementary elements are required, including mastery of *mufradat* (vocabulary), *nahw* and *sharaf* rules (grammar), and spontaneous speaking practice supported by relevant and authentic learning contexts (Zaenudin, n.d.). The PBL model is particularly well-suited to meet these needs, as it provides problem situations that stimulate discussion, reflection, and the active, continuous use of language (Irawan, 2025). Through the integration of PBL at the Ma'had, speaking practice becomes more engaging and meaningful, as students are encouraged not merely to memorise or repeat passive sentences, but to interact within scenarios that resemble real-life communication (Haba, 2019). *Maharatul Kalam* enables comprehensive language development across phonological, morphological, and pragmatic dimensions while simultaneously fostering self-confidence and speaking initiative, both of which are essential for successful communication (Bakri, 2017). Through this approach, *Maharatul Kalam* transforms from a memorised subject into a practical life skill that can be applied directly and sustainably.

2.3. Ma'had

As Islamic educational institutions, whether in the form of *pesantren* or Arabic language courses—commonly referred to as *ma'had*—they play a strategic role in guiding students (santri) not only to master religious knowledge textually but also to use Arabic actively and communicatively (Islam et al., 2018). Arabic language instruction at the Ma'had is intended not merely to understand classical texts (*kitab kuning*) or religious materials, but also to develop character and integrated language skills (Ali & Zulhendra, 2025). Consequently, students are expected to be capable of employing Arabic in various life contexts, including religious discussions, sermons, and everyday social interactions. The Ma'had functions as a platform that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects within the Arabic learning process, thereby enabling the comprehensive and sustainable achievement of Islamic educational objectives (Islam et al., 2023). However, to realise this goal, the Ma'had must adopt instructional methods that facilitate active language practice and authentic contexts, rather than relying solely on memorisation-based learning.

Unfortunately, Arabic language instruction in many Ma'had institutions is still dominated by teacher-centred methods that prioritise memorisation and passive absorption of material (Ash-shiddiqi et al., 2025; Yanti et al., 2025). This approach inadequately supports the optimal development of *Maharatul Kalam*, as students merely receive information without opportunities to practise speaking actively and spontaneously (Alam, 2024). The integration of PBL presents an effective solution to transform this instructional pattern into a more student-centred, interactive, and communicative approach (Mallu et al. 2024). By introducing relevant contextual problems and discussion activities in Arabic, the Ma'had can become a more dynamic and productive learning environment for developing students' speaking fluency (Mustofa & Makruf, 2025). This approach not only accelerates the functional mastery of Arabic but also fosters sustained motivation, self-confidence, and initiative in communication. Consequently, the objectives of Arabic language education at the Ma'had can be achieved more comprehensively and effectively (Ali & Zulhendra, 2025).

3. Method

This study focuses on the unit of analysis comprising students (santri) and the Arabic language learning process at Ma'had Ibnu Zubair, Padang. The students serve as the primary subjects, as they directly experience the implementation of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method in the development of *Maharatul Kalam* (speaking) proficiency (Ash-shiddiqi et al., 2025). The main focus is on language interaction occurring during teaching and learning activities, particularly in discussions, speaking exercises, and problem-solving tasks facilitated by the teacher. In addition, the learning process and the role of educators are included in the analysis to understand the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing students' speaking proficiency. Determining an appropriate unit of analysis is essential to ensure that the research focus remains precise and comprehensive. Accordingly, the data collected relate to the dynamics of learning process, mastery of vocabulary, application of grammatical rules, and students' spontaneous responses in communicative interactions.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design with a case study approach, as this method allows the researcher to depict and gain an in-depth understanding of how Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is implemented in the Arabic language learning process at Ma'had Ibnu Zubair, Padang. The choice of a case study is based on the need to observe learning phenomena contextually, particularly the interactions among students, teachers, and the naturally occurring learning environment (Siregar et al., 2024). This approach is also relevant since Arabic language learning is influenced not only by instructional methods but also by the Ma'had's culture, discipline, and the language environment cultivated within

it. Consequently, this research design provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing students' speaking fluency in an authentic and sustainable manner.

This study utilises primary sources consisting of direct data from the Ma'had environment, including observations of *Maharatul Kalam* learning activities, interviews with students experiencing difficulties using vocabulary in authentic communication, and documentation of learning processes that remain teacher-centred. These primary sources provide a factual depiction of the limited implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Arabic classes and the students' inability to apply vocabulary in authentic situations. In addition, the study draws on secondary sources, such as scholarly literature on PBL and Arabic language teaching, including journal articles, textbooks, and previous research examining the effectiveness of problem-based learning in enhancing language skills. These secondary sources are employed to strengthen the theoretical analysis and to compare field findings with prior studies.

The data collection in this study was carried out through a combination of observation, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to address three primary evidential issues (Siti Ramdona, n.d.). Regarding the first issue—the imbalance between memorisation and language use—the researcher conducted participatory classroom observations and speaking exercises to document the frequency and contextual settings in which students employed Arabic spontaneously. Regarding the second issue—the predominance of teacher-centred learning patterns—unstructured interviews were carried out with both teachers and students to examine their perceptions of the instructional methods and the factors limiting active participation. Regarding the third issue—the limited use of Arabic in real-life situations—FGDs were conducted with student groups to simulate authentic communicative scenarios and to discuss their experiences and challenges. Consequently, a methodological triangulation approach, combining observation, interviews, and FGDs, was employed to enhance the validity of the data in accordance with contemporary qualitative research practices.

Data analysis in this study was carried out in a systematic, phased manner to ensure that all information collected from the field could be accurately and clearly interpreted (Febriani et al., 2023). First, the researcher reviewed all observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation, selecting sections related to the three main issues: oral response errors, lack of spontaneity, and limited context-based speaking practice. Subsequently, all relevant data were simplified, categorised, and coded according to the problem categories to facilitate analysis. The subsequent step involved presenting the data in tables, summaries, and narrative descriptions to identify patterns, including when students most frequently made errors or when they struggled to speak. From this presentation, the researcher initiated an observation of the relationship between the implementation of PBL and changes in students' *Maharatul Kalam* proficiency. The final stage entailed formulating preliminary conclusions, which were subsequently cross-verified by comparing multiple data sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

4. Result

The findings of this study reveal three primary pieces of evidence indicating that students' *Maharatul Kalam* proficiency has not developed optimally. The first piece of evidence pertains to the imbalance between vocabulary memorisation and practical language use, as presented in Table 1: Students Are Able to Memorise *Mufradat* but Unable to Apply Them in Speech. The second piece of evidence concerns the persistence of teacher-centred instructional patterns, as illustrated in Table 2: Dominance of Teacher-

Centred Approaches at the Ma'had. The third piece of evidence highlights students' limited in Arabic language comprehension in authentic communicative context, as illustrated in Table 3: Low Ability of Students to Use Arabic in Real-Life Situations. Collectively, these three pieces of evidence provide the foundation for analysing the factors contributing to the low speaking proficiency of students.

4.1. Students are able to memorise Mufradat and grammar but are unable to apply them in speech

As shown in the table below:

Table 1. Imbalance between Mastery of *Mufradat*/Grammar and Ability to Apply Them in Speech

Aspects	**Problems**	**Detailed Explanation at the Ma'had (Arabic Language Learning Institution)**
Mufradat / Vocabulary Mastery	Memorises vocabulary but unable apply it in oral sentences.	Students understand the meaning of words individually, but when asked to explain something, they are unable to construct spontaneous sentences. Vocabulary remains memorised and is not applied in actual communication.
Mastery of *Nahw–Sharaf* Rules	Understands the rules but unable apply them in speech.	Students can memorise *jumlah ismiyyah, jumlah fi'liyyah*, *i'rab*, and verb patterns. However, when speaking, their sentence structures become disorganised, grammatically incorrect, and incoherent. Their knowledge remains theoretical rather than practical.
Speaking Proficiency (*Kalam*)	Lacks confidence to speak or falters in real-life communication.	When required to speak spontaneously, students struggle to organise their ideas. Fear of making mistakes leads them to remain silent. *Kalam* proficiency do not develop due to a lack of context-based practice.
Learning Model	Instruction is overly teacher-centred.	Teachers focus primarily on teaching theory, explaining grammatical rules, and drilling memorised dialogues, rather than encouraging students to speak based on specific problems or situations. As a result, students remain passive and are not actively engaged in discussions.
Language Comprehension	Students struggle to understand conversations in real-life contexts.	When faced with spontaneous conversations, students fail to grasp the overall meaning and only recognise words individually. This results in an imbalance between their speaking ability and language comprehension.

Source: In-depth interviews

Based on the table above, it is evident that students at the Ma'had possess strong cognitive abilities, including memorising *mufradat* and understanding *nahw–sharaf* rules; however, these competencies are not translated into speaking proficiency. Students can recall word meanings, verb patterns, and basic sentence structures, but when required to produce spontaneous speech, they falter, lack confidence, and struggle to construct coherent sentences. This situation is further compounded by a teacher-centred learning model, where instructors predominantly explain theory and provide memorised dialogues rather than training students to use the language in authentic contexts. Consequently, students' *kalam* activities become repetitive, limited to dialogue recitation, and offer little opportunity for independent development of both language comprehension and production skills.

From the table above, three main tendencies can be observed. First, students' memorisation abilities are significantly stronger than their communication skills, rendering their language knowledge theoretical rather than functional. Second, the persistence of teacher-centred instruction limits students' active engagement in language use, preventing *kalam* skills from developing naturally. Third, speaking exercises that focus solely on memorised dialogues leave students unaccustomed to organising their own ideas and unprepared for spontaneous conversation in real-life contexts. These three tendencies highlight the need for a learning approach, such as Problem-Based Learning, that encourages students to apply *mufradat* and grammatical rules directly through problem-based communicative activities.

4.2. Learning at the Ma'had remains dominantly teacher-centred with minimal meaningful kalam practice

As shown in the table below:

Table 2. Dominance of Teacher-Centred Learning and Minimal Meaningful *Kalam* Practice at the Ma'had

Main Aspect	Expectation	Fact at the Ma'had
Teacher dominance	Teachers act as facilitators, providing examples and creating an active learning environment.	Teachers spend more time explaining theory than guiding speaking practice.
Student role	Students actively participate in discussions, dialogues, and communicative practice rather than merely listening and taking notes.	Students remain passive, merely listening and taking notes.
Kalam practice	Speaking practice is conducted in varied activities that require spontaneity.	Speaking practice is limited to repeating memorised dialogues.
Language context	Practice is aligned with real-life contexts and students' communicative needs.	There is no practice based on real-life situations.
Impact	Students are able to speak spontaneously and confidently in Arabic.	Students struggle to speak spontaneously and lack confidence.

Source: In-depth interviews

The table above indicates that the learning process at the Ma'had remains dominated by a teacher-centred approach, with instructors serving as the primary source of material delivery. Teachers focus predominantly on explaining theory, providing examples,

and requiring memorisation of *mufradat* and dialogues, without balancing these activities with practices that actively engage students. As a result, students tend to be passive, merely listening, taking notes, and memorising, without sufficient opportunities to develop speaking skills independently. The lack of meaningful *kalam* practice—limited to repeating memorised dialogues without real-life contexts—leads students to remain unaccustomed to using the language in communicative situations. This directly impacts their spontaneity, diminishes confidence, and stalls the development of Arabic speaking skills within the Ma'had environment.

From the table above, three clear tendencies emerge. First, teacher-centred instruction limits students' active development, resulting in minimal improvement in speaking skills. Second, repetitive *kalam* exercises that merely involve memorised dialogues do not provide students with opportunities to organise ideas or construct sentences creatively. Third, the absence of context-based practice leaves students unprepared for spontaneous conversation, making it difficult for them to apply *mufradat* and grammatical rules functionally. These tendencies highlight the need for a more communicative and practical learning model to optimise the development of students' *kalam* skills.

4.3. Student's limited Arabic comprehension in real-life speaking situations

As shown in the table below:

Table 3. Issues of Students' Limited Arabic Comprehension in Real-Life Communicative Situations

Problem Aspect	Concrete Finding in the Field	Implication and Developmental Expectation
Difficulty in understanding the interlocutor's speech	Students frequently ask for repetitions and fail to grasp the meaning of spontaneous sentences.	Context-based listening practice is needed, such as role-plays and situational dialogues.
Slow and inaccurate in responding	Responses are irrelevant or merely repeat words without understanding the context.	Communicative learning is needed to promote comprehension of meaning rather than mere memorisation.
Struggles when facing language variations	Confused by changes in intonation, dialect, or non-memorised sentence structures.	Students need exposure to language variations through guided conversations and intensive practice.
Limited experience with real-life conversations	Interaction is limited to memorised dialogues without everyday situational context.	There should be situational kalam activities that simulate real-life conversations.

Source: In-depth interviews

Based on the table, it is evident that students' primary weaknesses in understanding spoken Arabic occur across four key aspects: comprehension of the interlocutor's speech, response speed, ability to handle language variations, and experience with real-life conversations. In practice, students struggle to grasp the meaning of spontaneous sentences, frequently request repetitions, and sometimes provide irrelevant responses due

to a lack of contextual understanding. They also become confused when faced with changes in intonation, dialect, or sentence structures that differ from memorised dialogues. This situation is exacerbated by limited exposure to real-life conversations, as kalam activities largely rely on repeated dialogues without authentic communicative contexts. These findings underscore the urgent need for context-based listening practice and situational conversation exercises in language learning.

From the table, three main tendencies can be identified. First, students' comprehension of spoken language remains partial, as instruction is overly focused on memorisation rather than meaning. Second, their response ability is low due to a lack of communicative practice that requires spontaneous interaction. Third, limited exposure to language variations leaves students unprepared for conversations that deviate from memorised patterns. These tendencies highlight the need for a more communicative, contextual, and situational learning approach to develop students' oral proficiency, encompassing both comprehension and response skills, as illustrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Ta'bir Shafahi Scores (Oral Proficiency) at Ma'had Ibnu Zubair

التعبير الشفهي (كلام)							
Score							
No.	Mid-Term Exam	Final Exam	Daily Assesement	Nasyath	Total	Credit Hours (SKS)	Cumulative
1.	24	55	4	3	86	1	86
2.	22	48	4	3	77	1	77
3.	23	50	4	1	78	1	78
4.	19	30	4	2	55	1	55
5.	24	58	5	3	90	1	90
6.	21	38	4	4	67	1	67
7.	24	39	4	3	70	1	70
8.	22	40	5	1	68	1	68
9.	22	23	4	1	60	1	60

Source: Ma'had Documentation

The *al-Taʾbir al-Shafahi* (speaking proficiency) course scores indicate that students at the Ma'had still face significant difficulties in expressing ideas and thoughts directly in real-life situations. This is evident from the wide cumulative score range of 55 to 90, with most mid-term and final exams scores falling in the lower category. The student with the lowest score (55) at Serial Number 4 demonstrates very limited final exam performance, reflecting an inability to respond spontaneously and communicatively in speaking tasks. The 35-point gap between students highlights that many have not yet mastered the basic *taʾbir* competencies, which should allow them to convey ideas, experiences, and understanding orally. This evidence underscores that the current learning process has not yet successfully trained students to articulate thoughts coherently in authentic communicative contexts.

5. Discussion

This study identified three principal challenges hindering the development of students' Arabic speaking proficiency at Ma'had Ibnu Zubair. First, there is an imbalance between the students' mastery of *mufradat* and grammatical rules and the ability to use the language actively, as their focus on *qawaʿid* often leads to hesitation in speaking. Second, the predominance of teacher-centred instruction limits opportunities for meaningful *kalam* practice. Third, students demonstrate weak comprehension in real-life communicative

situations, which hinders spontaneous responses and adaptation to language variations. These conditions indicate the need for a more communicative and problem-based learning approach to effectively enhance students' *kalam* fluency.

The three issues identified in this study are interrelated through causal relationships supported by various empirical findings. The imbalance between memorisation of *mufradat* and grammatical rules and actual speaking proficiency stems from an instructional emphasises on theoretical aspects over communicative practice. Arabic language teaching that is not problem-based renders students passive and prevents them from connecting vocabulary to real-life contexts (Husnah, 2025). The predominance of teacher-centred learning further hampers *kalam* development, as students primarily receive information without sufficient opportunities to process or actively express the language; this approach undermines spontaneity and speaking initiative (Maulida, n.d.). Moreover, weak comprehension in authentic Arabic situations results from limited exposure to real conversations and insufficient of context-based practice, with memorised dialogues failing to build either receptive or productive competence in direct communication. Consequently, these three issues converge in the predominance of theoretical instruction over experiential language use, preventing students' *kalam* proficiency from developing functionally (Ach. Rofiq, 2025).

This condition directly affects the quality of students' *kalam* development. The imbalance between linguistic memorisation and speaking practice makes it difficult for students to activate the language in daily life. As Isnani (2025) notes, instruction without communicative application fails to transform linguistic knowledge into productive skills. The dominance of teacher-centred learning also results in low participation and limited speaking initiative, consistent with findings by Islamiyati & Ammar (2023), which indicate that students' lack of active engagement hinders the acceleration of *kalam* proficiency. Moreover, limited exposure to authentic contexts exacerbates difficulties in understanding and responding naturally to meaning, as Anjani et al. (2024) emphasise that practice not based on real-life situations impedes students' ability to adapt language in direct communication. Consequently, students' *kalam* development remains largely non-functional and unprepared for factual interaction.

Based on the evidence above, it can be argued that the issues in students' *kalam* development are not merely associated with a particular teaching approach. Rather, these problems stem from a learning paradigm that treats language as memorisation rather than direct practice. This study offers new insights not previously explored, particularly regarding the root causes of weak *maharatul kalam* among Ma'had students. While prior research has often emphasised factors such as vocabulary, phonetics, or shyness, the present findings indicate that students' inaccurate responses are primarily due to the absence of authentic interaction contexts. Instructional structures still dominated by the IRF (Initiation–Response–Feedback) pattern have been illustrated to limit spontaneity and sustained speaking (Tsany et al., 2024). Moreover, these findings align with Khalid (2023), demonstrating that interactional problems extend beyond mere participation to fluency in responding to real-life situations. The study emphasises that interactivity without contextually driven problems that trigger natural conversation is insufficient to enhance *kalam* proficiency. Consequently, the novelty of this research lies in highlighting that authentic learning contexts play a more significant role than technical language factors in shaping students' fluency (Irsad et al., 2024). This comparison underscores that, as a source of the actual problem, the study prioritises context, learning situations, and interactional dynamics.

As a student who has personally experienced difficulties using Arabic, I recommend that Ma'had Ibnu Zubair strengthen the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to make Arabic instruction more aligned with the actual needs of the students. Through PBL, common challenges faced by students—including difficulty responding, uncertainty in selecting sentence structures, or lack of confidence in speaking—can serve as starting points for learning and be addressed through discussion, role-play, and simulations of everyday situations. In this way, students not only grasp linguistic concepts but also immediately apply them in relevant contexts. This recommendation aims to create a communicative and safe learning environment that effectively promotes the functional development of *maharatul kalam*.

6. Conclusion

The study entitled "The Implementation of Problem-Based Learning for Maharatul Kalam in Enhancing Arabic Language Proficiency at the Ma'had" concludes that the application of PBL provides a more focused and effective frameworks for students' learning. By grounding the learning process in real-life issues encountered by students—including difficulties in understanding speech, delayed responses, and inappropriate word choice—PBL renders instruction more relevant, targeted, and capable of producing rapid improvements. This approach has demonstrated greater efficiency compared to employing multiple instructional methods simultaneously, which often proves time-consuming, as concentrating on core challenges enables students to enhance their *Maharatul Kalam* proficiency in a direct and measurable manner.

From an academic contribution perspective, this study underscores the urgency of positioning PBL as a primary approach for enhancing Arabic speaking proficiency, particularly in Islamic boarding schools or Arabic language institutes. The research enriches the discourse on language teaching methodology by highlighting that a problem-focused approach is more advantageous than employing multiple methods simultaneously, which can be time-consuming. Furthermore, PBL has proven capable of linking modern pedagogical theory with the classroom context of students, thereby offering practical contributions to the study of Arabic language teaching methodology in ma'had environments.

In terms of strengths and limitations, this study is notable for presenting contextual data that reflect the students' actual needs and the direct relevance of PBL implementation. However, its limitations are evident in the narrow sample scope and the relatively short observation period. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to expand the study population, extend the intervention duration, and develop more varied evaluation instruments to provide a more comprehensive assessment of PBL's effectiveness. Such measures would allow subsequent studies to offer stronger theoretical and practical insights for the development of *Maharatul Kalam* learning in the future.

Author Contribution Statement
Contributions of the authors in this article: Adani Asri contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and drafting and revising of the manuscript. The author approved the final version of the manuscript and agrees to take full responsibility for all aspects of this work.

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