



## Exploring Arabic Language Learning Practices in a Remote Arab Village: An Ethnographic Study of Islamic Boarding School Students

استكشاف ممارسات تعلم اللغة العربية في القرية العربية النائية: دراسة إثنوغرافية لطلبة

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### ABSTRACT

Arabic language learning in Islamic boarding schools develops not only through formal instruction but also through repeated practices embedded in students' everyday lives. This study explores how Arabic language learning practices are manifested among students at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in the remote Arab Village of Parmeraan, North Padang Lawas, Indonesia. Using an interpretive qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, data were generated through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and documentation. Six students representing Grades 7, 8, and 9 served as primary informants, supported by Ustadz Bustaman (the school leader), an Arabic teacher, and the language-program coordinator. Data were analyzed inductively through Spradley's domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural-theme procedures. The findings reveal three interconnected patterns. Students processed Arabic through note-taking, reviewing, imitation, rewriting, and memorization through repetition; organized learning through discipline, continuity, and self-monitoring; and learned socially through consideration for peers, collaborative learning, self-confidence, respect for teachers, and humility in seeking knowledge. These recurring practices formed relatively stabilized learning patterns through repeated participation in a consistent educational ecology, rather than remaining isolated or purely situational learning actions. Respect for teachers and humility also provide a context-sensitive interpretation of the social-affective domain within this Islamic educational setting. These findings imply that Arabic pedagogy should cultivate repeatable learning routines and relational conditions that allow productive practices to develop into sustainable learning patterns.

**Keywords:** Arabic language; arabic learning; learning practices; ethnography; Islamic boarding school.

### مستخلص البحث

لا يقتصر تعلم اللغة العربية في المعاهد الإسلامية على التعليم الرسمي داخل الصف، بل يتشكل كذلك من خلال الممارسات المتكررة والتفاعل الاجتماعي والروتين اليومي للطلبة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن ممارسات تعلم اللغة العربية لدى طلبة معهد دار السلام في القرية العربية النائية بارميران بمحافظة بادانغ لاواس الشمالية، إندونيسيا. استخدم البحث مدخلا كيفيا تفسيريا بتصميم إثنوغرافي، وجمعت البيانات من خلال الملاحظة بالمشاركة، والمقابلات الإثنوغرافية، والتوثيق. شارك ستة طلبة من الصفوف السابع والثامن والتاسع بوصفهم مخبرين أساسيين، مع الاستعانة بمدير المعهد، ومدرس اللغة العربية، ومسؤول البرنامج اللغوي بوصفهم مصادر داعمة. وحلت البيانات استقرايا وفق تحليل المجال، والتحليل التصنيفي، والتحليل التركيبي، وتحليل الموضوعات الثقافية عند سبريدلي. أظهرت النتائج ثلاثة أنماط مترابطة تمثلت في: معالجة المادة من خلال التدوين والمراجعة والمحاكاة وإعادة كتابة المادة والحفظ بالتركرار، وتنظيم عملية التعلم من خلال الانضباط والاستمرارية والمراقبة الذاتية، والتعلم الاجتماعي الوجداني من خلال مراعاة الزملاء والتعلم الجماعي والثقة بالنفس واحترام المعلم والتواضع في طلب العلم. وتتمثل جودة البحث في أن هذه الممارسات المتكررة تسهم في تكوين أنماط تعلم مستقرة نسبيا تنشأ من المشاركة المتواصلة داخل بيئة تربوية متسقة، بدلا من بقائها أفعالا تعليمية معزولة أو ظرفية. كما أن احترام المعلمين والتواضع يقدمان تفسيرًا حساسًا للسياق للمجال الاجتماعي-الوجداني ضمن هذا السياق التربوي الإسلامي. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أهمية بناء بيئة تعليمية تدعم الروتينات القابلة للتكرار

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic learning in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools is often described through formal instruction, language programs, institutional regulations, and the creation of a language environment. These dimensions are important because a sustained language environment expands opportunities for exposure and use, particularly when Arabic is embedded in classroom, dormitory, religious, and extracurricular activities (Ritonga, Nurdianto, and Rahmawati 2022). Recent research in pesantren contexts has likewise shown that Arabic learning can be reinforced through daily conversation, vocabulary memorization, thematic speech, and other structured language programs supported by social interaction and teacher involvement (Khofifah et al. 2025). However, the presence of a supportive language environment does not by itself explain what learners repeatedly do with the linguistic input and opportunities made available to them. Students still have to notice, record, revisit, imitate, test, reorganize, and socially negotiate what they encounter. The everyday actions of learners therefore constitute an analytical layer that is distinct from, although inseparable from, the institutional environment in which they study.

Research on language-learning strategies has long emphasized the learner's active role in processing and regulating second-language learning. Cognitive strategies involve direct manipulation of learning material, metacognitive strategies organize and monitor learning, and social-affective strategies draw on interaction and the management of affective conditions (O'Malley and Chamot 1990). Within the Indonesian context of Arabic language learning, learners have been shown to employ a range of strategies to develop different language skills, including collaborative communication, independent speaking practice, text review, and intensive writing activities (Hamid, Widayanti, and Febriani 2022). Self-regulated Arabic learning has also been associated with goal setting, learning-environment structuring, task strategies, and time management (Albantani, Madkur, and Rozak 2022). These studies confirm that Arabic learners actively organize and adapt their learning, but they primarily identify or classify strategies and regulatory actions rather than explain how repeatedly enacted practices develop into recurring and relatively stable patterns over time. More recent international research has likewise shown that language-learning

engagement is shaped by repeated self-study routines, goal structures, peer interaction, and opportunities for meaningful language use (He and Loewen 2022).

The present study therefore distinguishes individual learning strategies from recurrent learning practices and the broader patterns that emerge from them. A learning strategy refers to an action employed to facilitate a particular learning task, whereas recurrent learning practices refer to actions that are repeatedly enacted within learners' everyday educational routines. When such practices recur across relatively stable situations, they may develop into more sustained learning patterns. This process-oriented perspective is consistent with research on habit formation showing that repetition in stable contexts can strengthen automaticity and goal attainment (Stojanovic, Grund, and Stojanovic 2022). It also corresponds with contemporary self-regulated learning research, which views regulation as a dynamic process developing through recurring cycles of planning, monitoring, action, and reflection rather than as a static learner attribute (Stebner et al. 2022). In this sense, the focus is not on fixed learner preferences but on how repeated practices become patterned within a particular educational ecology.

Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Parmeraan offers a distinctive setting for examining how such patterns emerge. The school is located in a remote part of North Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, outside a native Arabic-speaking community, yet Arabic has a visible presence in educational, religious, and social activities. Earlier research described Parmeraan as an unusual Arabic-language environment in a remote Muslim community, where Arabic circulates beyond formal lessons and appears in daily interaction (Mubarak and Octriana 2025). Rather than asking again whether an Arabic language environment exists, the present study shifts attention to what students repeatedly do within that environment, how such practices recur across everyday settings, and what meanings students attach to them.

Although previous studies have provided important insights into Arabic learning strategies, self-regulated learning, and pesantren language environments, several dimensions remain underexplored. Conceptually, limited attention has been given to how repeatedly enacted learning actions develop into recurrent and relatively stabilized patterns over time. Contextually, the relationship between institutional language environments and students' micro-level learning practices in everyday pesantren life remains insufficiently examined. Methodologically, existing research has offered limited ethnographic evidence of how such practices are repeatedly enacted

across classrooms, dormitories, religious activities, and peer interactions. These gaps point to the need for an ethnographic investigation that connects learner-level practices with the educational ecology in which they are formed and sustained.

Ethnography is particularly useful for addressing these gaps because familiar learning practices are not always fully articulated by learners themselves. Observing notebooks, review routines, imitation, peer interaction, timing, correction, and the use of learning spaces makes it possible to examine not only what learners say they do, but also what they repeatedly enact in natural settings. An ethnographic perspective can therefore reveal how individual actions become recurrent practices and how those practices acquire relative stability through sustained participation in the everyday educational life of the Islamic Boarding School.

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: How are Arabic language learning practices manifested among students of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in the remote Arab Village of Parmeraan? The study aims to identify recurrent Arabic learning practices inductively, examine the patterns that emerge from these practices, and interpret how cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective dimensions are manifested within the everyday educational life of the Islamic boarding school.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed an interpretive qualitative approach with an ethnographic design. Ethnography was selected because the learning practices under investigation were expected to become visible not only through participants' verbal accounts but also through recurrent routines, interactions, uses of learning spaces, and naturally occurring learning events in the everyday life of the pesantren (Spradley 1980). The study followed Spradley's ethnographic orientation, in which participant observation and ethnographic interviewing are conducted iteratively to identify cultural domains, relationships among categories, contrasts, and broader cultural themes (Spradley 1979).

Fieldwork was conducted at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Parmeraan, North Padang Lawas, from 23 January to 28 February 2026. Within this period, fourteen days of intensive full-day participant observation were concentrated in three phases: 26–31 January, 5–8 February, and 13–16 February. On these intensive observation days, the researcher remained engaged in the field from approximately 04:00 until 21:00, with intervals for meals, prayer, rest, and the consolidation of field notes. Observation began

before dawn during students' preparation for the *Fajr* prayer and continued through post-*Fajr* activities until breakfast at approximately 06:30. It resumed during formal morning instruction from approximately 07:30 to 10:30 and continued again during the post-*Dhuhr* prayer learning period until approximately 13:30. After *Asr* prayer, observation included a thirty-minute religious study session and, on several occasions, students' informal leisure activities. Evening observation resumed after *Maghrib* prayer and continued until approximately 21:00. This temporal distribution enabled learning practices to be observed across different periods and settings of pesantren life, making it possible to examine whether particular practices recurred beyond a single lesson or instructional setting.

The primary data sources were six junior-secondary students purposively selected from Grades 7, 8, and 9. Two students represented each grade level, with one male and one female student at each level. Their length of residence in the boarding-school environment ranged from approximately six to thirty-three months. Selection emphasized students who were actively involved in Arabic learning and everyday language activities while also providing variation in grade level, gender, and length of residence. Three additional informants—Ustadz Bustaman, the school leader; an Arabic teacher; and the language-program coordinator—served as supporting informants to clarify institutional routines, expectations surrounding Arabic learning, and the meanings associated with practices observed among students. Student participants are identified in this article by the codes P1–P6.

**Table 1. Profile of Primary Student Informants**

| Participant | Gender | Grade   | Length of Residence | Status            |
|-------------|--------|---------|---------------------|-------------------|
| P1          | Male   | Grade 7 | 6 months            | Primary informant |
| P2          | Female | Grade 7 | 7 months            | Primary informant |
| P3          | Male   | Grade 8 | 19 months           | Primary informant |
| P4          | Female | Grade 8 | 19 months           | Primary informant |
| P5          | Male   | Grade 9 | 33 months           | Primary informant |
| P6          | Female | Grade 9 | 31 months           | Primary informant |

*Source: Research field data (2026)*

Data were collected through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and documentation. Observation extended across classrooms, mosque-based learning circles, dormitories, verandas, rest areas, and other spaces in which students' learning activities naturally occurred. Attention was directed to recurrent practices such as recording vocabulary, reviewing notes, imitating pronunciation, rewriting learning materials, repeating linguistic forms, preparing for scheduled learning activities, monitoring understanding, seeking assistance from peers, attempting to speak despite possible errors, and interacting with teachers. Observing these practices across different times and settings allowed the researcher to distinguish recurrent practices from actions that appeared only incidentally.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted iteratively throughout the fieldwork and were guided by emerging observations and analytical needs rather than by a fixed one-time interview schedule. The frequency of interviews therefore varied among informants. Some informants were interviewed approximately four to six times, whereas others were interviewed eight to twelve times or more, particularly the school leader and teachers who served as key supporting informants. Most interview encounters lasted approximately 5–15 minutes and were integrated into the natural rhythm of fieldwork, while several extended interviews—particularly those with the school leader—lasted up to approximately one hour. Descriptive, structural, taxonomic, and contrast questions were used to elicit participants' explanations of observed practices and the meanings they attached to them. Repeated interviewing also enabled the researcher to return to emerging observations, clarify participants' accounts, and examine whether initial interpretations remained consistent with subsequent field encounters.

Documentation was used to complement observation and interview data. The materials examined included students' notebooks, vocabulary records, activity schedules, Arabic-learning materials, photographs, and other relevant artifacts. These materials provided additional evidence for tracing practices across occasions and were used to corroborate patterns identified through observation and interviewing.

Data analysis was conducted inductively and iteratively alongside fieldwork. Field notes, interview accounts, and documentary materials were examined for recurrent actions, expressions, and relationships. Domain analysis identified broad fields of practice, taxonomic analysis mapped relationships within each domain, componential analysis examined contrasts among related practices, and cultural-theme analysis

identified broader patterns connecting them. Emic meanings were retained through participants' own expressions before being interpreted analytically. Only data directly relevant to the research question addressed in this article were included in the analysis.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Results**

The learning practices identified in the field did not initially appear as ready-made theoretical categories. They appeared as recurrent actions distributed across students' everyday routines: writing down newly encountered vocabulary, reopening notebooks outside class, imitating the speech of teachers and senior students, repeating conjugations collectively, preparing learning materials before lessons, asking peers for clarification, and returning to teachers when understanding remained incomplete. These practices were traced across different times and learning spaces before being grouped into broader patterns. The results are therefore presented from recurrent field practices toward the larger patterns that connected them.

#### **a. Cognitive Learning Practices**

Notebooks were among the most consistently used learning objects across the field setting. Students brought them to formal classes, mosque-based learning circles, and other study activities, recording vocabulary, grammatical rules, conjugation patterns, and expressions introduced by teachers. The notes varied in form. Some students added Indonesian meanings or examples, while others underlined difficult items, used color markings, or reorganized grammatical and morphological material into simpler schemes.

"When I encounter new vocabulary, I immediately write it down so that I can read and review it later" (P2).

"My notes help me remember lessons that the teacher has previously explained. When I look at them again, it becomes easier for me to recall the teacher's explanation" (P3).

The notebooks were also used outside formal lessons. Students were observed reopening them in dormitories, mosque corridors, rest areas, and spaces near classrooms. Review occurred before sleep, in the early morning, during free periods, and before examinations. Review sometimes remained individual, but it frequently became dialogic, one student read, another answered, and a peer corrected or

explained. Students moved between personal notes, *Ajurrumiyyah*, *al-Kawakib al-Durriyyah*, conjugation tables, and vocabulary displayed in the environment.

“We usually review the lesson material and new vocabulary before going to sleep so that they become more firmly established in our memory. Sometimes, some of us also wake up early to review” (P3).

Review was not always conducted individually. During several observations, students read material together, asked one another questions, corrected responses, and returned to grammar books, conjugation tables, or vocabulary records when clarification was needed. The same material could therefore be encountered repeatedly across formal and informal learning periods.



**Picture 1**

**Students imitate the teacher**

*Source: Research field data in Ma'had mosque*

A third practice became visible when beginners listened closely to teachers and more advanced students. They observed pronunciation, intonation, sentence patterns, and common expressions and then attempted to reproduce them. Imitation constituted another recurring practice. Beginning students listened closely to the pronunciation, intonation, sentence patterns, and expressions used by teachers and senior students and attempted to reproduce them.

“We usually follow the way the teacher or the senior students speak so that our pronunciation becomes more correct” (P5).

Senior students were themselves aware of this process, noting that younger learners often copied expressions that they heard repeatedly in the dormitory or around the mosque. This imitation was observed both during lessons and in less formal interaction around the mosque and dormitory. Senior students also reported that younger students frequently reproduced expressions they heard from more

experienced speakers.

Some students returned to lessons by rewriting what had already been recorded. This differed from immediate note-taking because it occurred later, often at night or during free time, when students reopened earlier notes and produced a clearer second version. They transformed rules into lists or tables, separated different types of information, added short Indonesian explanations, corrected unclear points, and highlighted material they considered important.

“When I rewrite the material, it becomes easier to understand and easier to remember” (P3).

“When my notes are well organized, I usually feel more motivated to study, and they are easier and more comfortable to read again. In addition, when I rewrite the material, I can use my notes to ask my friends about parts of the previous lesson that I did not understand” (P4).

During observation, rewritten pages often contained clearer organization, short Indonesian explanations, corrections, or highlighted items that students considered important. Repetition was particularly visible during morning and post-Maghrib activities. Students repeated vocabulary, expressions, and verb conjugations individually and collectively

“When we read the word and conjugate it together aloud, its sound keeps echoing in the mind, so we continue to remember it” (P5).

“I find group learning after Maghrib very helpful because when we practice conjugation together, I feel that the word becomes firmly embedded in my mind” (P3).

Ustadz Bustaman (the school leader) explicitly connected repetition with habituation, explaining that Arabic was expected to become part of students’ everyday life rather than remain a subject that disappeared when the class ended. From this perspective, repeated use of Arabic was intended to gradually turn classroom knowledge into a habitual form of communication. By encountering and using the language across daily activities, students were encouraged to develop a more natural and sustained relationship with Arabic beyond formal instruction.

Across these observations and participant accounts, five recurrent ways of working directly with Arabic material were identified as note-taking, reviewing, imitation, rewriting learning materials, and memorization through repetition. These practices constituted the cognitive pattern identified in the field.

## **b. Metacognitive Learning Practices**

A second pattern became visible not in what students did to a particular word or rule, but in how they organized their relationship with learning itself. The boarding-school day moved repeatedly through prayer, Qur'anic activity, classroom instruction, language sessions, book reading, and evening study. Arabic learning could occur in several periods from early morning to night, and students were often observed entering learning spaces with books, notebooks, and writing tools already prepared.

"When I am late entering the class, I usually feel that I am the one who loses, because I am afraid I will miss the vocabulary or the teacher's explanation" (P3).

P2 similarly explained that arriving on time allowed her to follow the teacher's explanation from the beginning. In these accounts, punctuality was described not only as compliance with a schedule but also in relation to access to the lesson itself. Time was therefore understood as a learning resource that needed to be protected.

Continuity appeared through the recurrent return of Arabic in relatively small amounts. A word presented in a morning activity could reappear in conversation, be read again in a book, be written into a notebook, and later be reviewed in the dormitory. The language-program coordinator summarized the institutional principle as what matters most is continuous habituation, even if only in a small amount.

"At first, it felt difficult, but over time we became accustomed to using Arabic expressions" (P5).

From the learner's side, P5's account and repeated observations indicated that continuity was experienced through sustained contact with Arabic across different periods and activities rather than through the duration of a single study session.



**Picture 2**

**Students check their understanding through peer explanation**

*Source: Research field data in Ma'had mosque*

Students were also observed monitoring their own understanding. They marked difficult sections of texts, reopened notes when uncertainty arose, compared present ability with earlier performance, and sought clarification from teachers, senior students, or peers. During interviews, expressions such as before, now, still difficult, and I want to be able to appeared repeatedly when students described their progress.

These field practices formed three recurrent forms of learning organization concerned with regulating learning rather than directly processing a particular item of Arabic. Discipline protected access to the learning sequence, continuity maintained contact with the language over time, and self-monitoring helped students identify and respond to gaps. These recurrent practices were consequently interpreted as a metacognitive learning pattern.

### **c. Social-Affective Learning Practices**

The third pattern appeared most clearly in situations where learning involved other people. During grammar and morphology activities, differences in students' speed of understanding were often visible. Students who had understood a rule earlier were observed explaining it again, repeating conjugations with classmates, correcting responses, or waiting while another student worked through the material. Assistance frequently occurred informally rather than as teacher-assigned tutoring.



**Picture 3**

**The students take turns checking and discussing their understanding of the text**

*Source: Research field data Ma'had auditorium*

Group learning became particularly visible before weekly and monthly examinations. Students gathered in dormitories or study areas with books, notebooks, vocabulary lists, and summaries. They discussed possible speaking topics, practiced sentences, tested one another on vocabulary and conjugation, and corrected pronunciation. Senior students frequently helped less experienced students by

explaining lessons again or guiding practice.

“Before the weekly examination, we usually study with our friends so that the material is easier to understand and we can prepare the speaking topic for the next day better” (P3).

The field data therefore showed both horizontal interaction among peers and vertical interaction between beginning and more advanced students. Collaborative learning occurred not only in formally organized group activities but also in the everyday shared life of the students. Confidence in using Arabic was also visible in daily communication. Students attempted greetings, requests for permission, questions, and simple conversations even when their vocabulary or grammatical control remained incomplete. Some paused while searching for a word and received help from a peer rather than abandoning the interaction.

“Although we still make many mistakes, we are required to keep speaking Arabic every day” (P5).

“At first, I felt embarrassed when I was asked to speak Arabic in front of my friends because I was afraid of making mistakes. But after becoming accustomed to daily conversation and participating in short speeches, I became more confident and was no longer as afraid of making mistakes as I had been before” (P2).

Two additional practices were repeatedly associated with learning relationships in the pesantren: respect for teachers and humility in seeking knowledge. Respect was observable in the way students participated in teaching sessions. When teachers explained material, students generally listened attentively, recorded important points, waited for appropriate moments to ask questions, and continued listening when corrections or additional explanations followed. Similar patterns appeared during evening grammar and morphology sessions, where students waited until the teacher had completed an explanation before asking questions.

“We have been taught to respect the teacher because knowledge does not easily settle within a person who does not have adab” (P2).

“The teacher told us that respecting the teacher is an inseparable part of success in seeking knowledge” (P4).

Humility appeared in several forms. Students continued taking notes even after answering correctly, listened to additional explanations, returned to teachers or more advanced students for clarification, and in some situations referred to themselves as *al-faqir* when speaking about their own knowledge. This expression was used even by

students who were able to answer questions or explain material, presenting themselves as people who still had more to learn. The school leader expressed the same orientation through the metaphor of an empty cup:

“Here, we do not want to exaggerate or make claims about ourselves. In this school, hardly any teacher or student behaves as though they are greater or smarter than others. We always teach ourselves to be like an empty cup before others.”

The pattern was not limited to the school leader’s account. Hasan Basri described mistakes as part of the path toward understanding and indicated that asking questions should not be a source of embarrassment. Hajar Aswad similarly explained that a student can continue finding something new to learn as long as he remains willing to learn from other people and in different situations.

“I have seen that the teachers in this school show great appreciation when students speak. If a student explains something or asks a question, the teacher listens seriously and gives full attention, even when what the student is talking about is not always related to the lesson” (P1).

Across the field data, the social-affective pattern therefore comprised consideration for peers, collaborative learning, self-confidence, respect for teachers, and humility in seeking knowledge. The first three appeared through peer assistance, shared study, and participation despite possible error, while respect and humility were repeatedly visible in how students listened, sought clarification, received correction, and positioned themselves in relation to teachers, senior students, and knowledge itself.

**Table 2. Inductive Patterning of Arabic Learning Practices**

| Emergent pattern              | Recurring practices                                      | Typical field manifestations                                                                                    | Interpretive category |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Working with Arabic materials | Note-taking; reviewing; imitation; rewriting; repetition | Recording vocabulary; reviewing before sleep; copying pronunciation; reorganizing notes; collective conjugation | Cognitive             |
| Keeping learning going        | Discipline; continuity; self-monitoring                  | Early preparation; repeated contact across the day; marking difficulty; seeking clarification                   | Metacognitive         |

|                                |                                                                  |                                                                                                   |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Learning through relationships | Peer consideration; collaboration; confidence; respect; humility | Peer explanation; group review; speaking despite error; attentive listening; accepting correction | Social-affective |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|

*Source: Research field data and inductive analysis (2026)*

The shared function of these practices was relational and affective. Peers provided help, groups reduced the burden of difficulty, repeated participation supported confidence, respect prepared students to listen and accept guidance, and humility kept them open to new knowledge. The pattern was therefore interpreted as a social-affective learning pattern comprising consideration for peers, collaborative learning, self-confidence, respect for teachers, and humility in seeking knowledge. The final two practices emerged as contextually distinctive elements of Islamic education.

## 2. Discussion

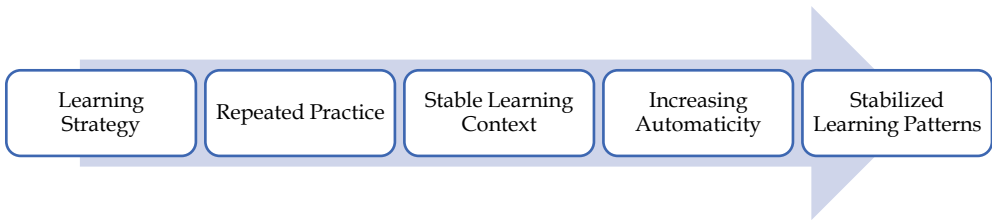
### a. From Learning Strategies to Stabilized Learning Patterns

The central analytical contribution of this study concerns the relationship between individual learning strategies, recurrent learning practices, and broader learning patterns. The Parmeraan findings do not support an understanding of learning as a set of fixed personal preferences. Instead, the field data show that particular actions became meaningful because they were repeatedly enacted within relatively stable educational situations. Note-taking was followed by review, review recurred at predictable moments, Arabic reappeared across different periods of the day, and social relationships repeatedly provided opportunities for imitation, correction, explanation, and help. What initially appeared as separate learning actions therefore became recognizable as patterned practices through repetition and contextual continuity.

This interpretation is informed by research on habit formation, which shows that repeated behavior in relatively stable contexts can strengthen cue-behavior associations and increase automaticity (Stojanovic et al. 2022). However, habit formation should not be treated as equivalent to the development of a learning pattern. Habit research provides a useful conceptual analogy for understanding how repeated actions may acquire greater stability over time, but it does not by itself demonstrate the emergence of a particular learning pattern. Accordingly, this study treats the movement from situational learning strategies to recurrent and relatively stabilized learning patterns as an interpretive proposition grounded in the ethnographic data rather than as an

established theoretical relationship.

Research on self-regulated learning provides a complementary perspective by showing that monitoring, strategic action, and adjustment develop through recurring cycles of engagement rather than as fixed learner characteristics (Graaf et al. 2022). In the present study, this perspective helps explain the regulatory dimension of the recurring practices observed in Parmeraan, while the proposed transition from situational strategies to stabilized learning patterns remains an interpretation derived from the ethnographic evidence.



**Figure 1**  
**Process from Learning Strategies to Recurrent and Relatively Stabilized Learning Patterns in the Parmeraan Context**

This process is especially visible in a residential educational environment. The pesantren does not merely provide exposure to Arabic; it repeatedly recreates the conditions in which particular practices can be enacted. The same notebook moves between classroom, mosque, and dormitory; the same senior students serve as linguistic models in different spaces; and the same vocabulary or grammatical form may be encountered during formal instruction, conversation, group study, and evening review. Previous research on Arabic language environments has emphasized the importance of institutional routines, exposure, and communicative opportunities in supporting language development (Hamid et al. 2024). The Parmeraan case adds a learner-level dimension to this literature by showing that environmental availability becomes pedagogically significant through the practices students repeatedly perform within it. The language environment therefore functions not as a mechanism that directly produces learning patterns, but as an ecology that makes their recurrence and stabilization possible.

**b. Cognitive Learning as a Cycle of Capture, Retrieval, Reorganization, and Reproduction**

The cognitive pattern identified in Parmeraan is best understood as a recurrent process of capturing, revisiting, reorganizing, reproducing, and retrieving linguistic material rather than as a collection of unrelated techniques. Students wrote down new

material, returned to it through review, reorganized it through rewriting, reproduced linguistic models through imitation, and strengthened recall through oral repetition. The significance of these practices lies in their interconnectedness: the same linguistic item could pass through several forms of processing across different moments of the day.

This pattern resonates with experimental research demonstrating the importance of retrieval and repeated production in second-language vocabulary learning. Experimental studies have shown that retrieval can support L2 vocabulary retention, although its effectiveness varies according to the form and timing of retrieval (Candry, Decloedt, and Eyckmans 2020; Kasahara and Kanayama 2021; Terai, J., and Pasich 2022). These studies primarily examine retrieval under controlled learning conditions. The Parmeraan findings complement this evidence by showing how retrieval-like activity becomes distributed across everyday learning: a lexical item may be heard during instruction, recorded in a notebook, revisited before sleep, tested with peers, and later reused in interaction.

The findings on note-taking and rewriting likewise suggest that written records function as more than repositories of information. Students reorganized earlier material, added explanations, corrected unclear points, and used rewritten notes as resources for later questions. This is consistent with research showing that the learning value of note-taking depends on active processing and subsequent engagement with the notes rather than transcription alone (Piolat, Olive, and Kellogg 2025). Studies of metacognitive learning also emphasize the importance of reorganizing information when learners monitor gaps in understanding and deliberately modify their learning materials (Li et al. 2023). In Parmeraan, notebooks functioned as mobile learning artifacts connecting formal instruction, individual review, and peer interaction. Their importance derived not merely from being written records, but from their repeated reuse across learning situations.

Imitation and oral repetition further show that cognitive processing in this context is socially mediated. Students did not imitate abstract language models; they repeatedly encountered teachers and senior students whose speech remained accessible throughout the day. Studies of collaborative second-language learning indicate that interaction can generate language-related episodes in which learners notice linguistic forms, compare alternatives, and jointly solve problems (Azkarai and Kopinska 2020). Peer instruction has likewise been associated with increased participation, motivation,

and learning achievement (Alfadda and Afzaal 2022). Whereas these studies primarily demonstrate the benefits of interaction within defined learning tasks, the Parmeraan findings show that residential proximity allows access to linguistic models to continue beyond those tasks.

### **c. Metacognitive Learning as Socially Scaffolded Self-Regulation**

The metacognitive findings complicate an exclusively individual understanding of self-regulation. Discipline, continuity, and self-monitoring were expressed through individual behavior, but their recurrence was embedded in the temporal and social organization of the pesantren. Scheduled learning activities repeatedly signaled when students should prepare and participate, teachers structured the sequence of instruction, and peers and senior students remained available when clarification was needed. Maree emphasizes the importance of deploying metacognitive strategies across tasks and contexts. The present findings extend this perspective by showing that such transfer can also be socially distributed: awareness of difficulty may lead not only to an individual strategy but to questioning a peer, returning to a teacher, or joining collective review (Maree 2025). Parmeraan demonstrates what this transfer can look like in everyday life; awareness of lateness, difficulty, or incomplete understanding triggers preparation, review, questioning, or renewed practice across several settings rather than within a single lesson.

Students' interpretations of punctuality illustrate this transition particularly clearly. P3's statement that he was "*the one who loses*" when arriving late did not focus on punishment but on the missed opportunity to understand. This shift is significant because it suggests that institutional discipline had acquired an educational meaning for the learner. Research on self-regulated language learning emphasizes that learners engage more persistently when goals and feedback become personally meaningful, and broader educational research shows that self-efficacy and perceived control are associated with stronger engagement (Bahruddin, Ramadhan, and Bahruddin 2021). The Parmeraan case therefore suggests that institutional discipline may provide an initial scaffold, while metacognitive regulation becomes visible when students begin to interpret that structure in relation to their own learning needs.

Continuity operates through a similar relationship between external structure and learner participation. The language coordinator's emphasis on "*continuous habituation, even if only in a small amount*" reflects the broader principle that frequent repetition

under stable conditions can gradually strengthen automaticity (Stojanovic et al. 2022). It also aligns with L2 research in which sustained engagement and repeated exposure support vocabulary development and willingness to use language (Lee and Hsieh 2019). However, the field data indicate that continuity in Parmeraan does not consist of repeating one identical activity. Instead, students remain in contact with Arabic through a sequence of different practices: formal lessons, notebook use, conversation, book reading, collective repetition, and peer review. Continuity is therefore distributed across activities while remaining stable at the level of sustained contact with the language.

Familiar expressions, in particular, became easier to recall and produce as students encountered and practiced them repeatedly in daily interactions. The field data therefore suggested that continuity was experienced through sustained contact with the language across days, rather than through the duration of a single study session. This pattern indicates that regular exposure played an important role in transforming unfamiliar linguistic forms into expressions that students could use with greater ease and spontaneity.

Self-monitoring further illustrates the active role of learners within this structure. Students compared present and previous ability, marked material they still found difficult, returned to notes when uncertain, and sought explanation from teachers or more experienced peers. These practices correspond to contemporary accounts of metacognition in which monitoring becomes useful when it leads to subsequent regulatory action. The contribution of the Parmeraan case is to show that such action need not remain individually executed. Awareness of a knowledge gap may lead to a socially distributed response, such as asking a peer, returning to a teacher, or joining collective review. Metacognitive regulation in this environment is therefore personally experienced but socially supported.

#### **d. Social-Affective Learning: Peer Support, Confidence, and Relational Conditions**

The social-affective findings show that relationships are not peripheral to Arabic learning but constitute part of its everyday infrastructure. Students repeatedly asked, explained, corrected, waited for, and practiced with one another. These interactions occurred not only in teacher-assigned groups but also during exam preparation, dormitory study, mosque activities, and informal moments. Shared residence increased the availability of assistance by making peers and senior students recurrent rather than

temporary learning partners.

This finding is consistent with research showing that collaborative interaction provides opportunities for noticing, explanation, correction, and co-construction of linguistic knowledge (Azorín and Fullan 2022). Peer relationships have also been linked to stronger engagement and learning resilience when learners perceive support within their social environment (Wu, Huang, and Zhan 2026). While previous studies demonstrate the learning value of collaborative and supportive peer interaction, the Parmeraan data add a temporal dimension: the same peers remain repeatedly available across formal and informal settings. Collaboration consequently becomes embedded in everyday learning rather than remaining an episodic pedagogical technique.

The findings on confidence reinforce this relational interpretation. Students continued speaking Arabic despite limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and occasional embarrassment. Their accounts indicated that confidence increased through repeated participation rather than preceding it. This is consistent with research on willingness to communicate, which identifies confidence, affect, and anxiety as important influences on learners' readiness to use a second language (Lee and Hsieh 2019). The foreign-language anxiety can moderate the relationship between competence and willingness to communicate (Dewaele and Macintyre 2024). The Parmeraan data suggest an important reciprocal process: confidence may encourage learners to speak, but opportunities to speak, survive errors, receive help, and continue interacting can also strengthen confidence. In this sense, the educational environment does not simply reveal existing confidence; it participates in its development.

Consideration for peers similarly has a direct learning function. Waiting for a classmate, explaining a rule again, or helping another learner retrieve a forgotten word alters the conditions under which learning proceeds. Such practices reduce the social cost of not understanding and allow less experienced students to remain involved rather than withdraw from the activity (Hanifansyah, Mahmudah, and Syakur 2024). The Parmeraan findings therefore extend the understanding of collaborative learning beyond formal cooperation. Peer consideration is educationally significant because it preserves the accessibility of the group as a learning resource.

#### **e. Respect and Humility as a Contextual Extension of the Social-Affective Domain**

Respect for teachers and humility in seeking knowledge constitute the most contextually distinctive aspects of the social-affective findings. These patterns were

visible across observation and multiple participant accounts, not only in institutional explanations. Respect appeared in attentive listening, appropriate turn-taking, note-taking during explanation, willingness to receive correction, and students' own statements linking *adab* with successful learning.

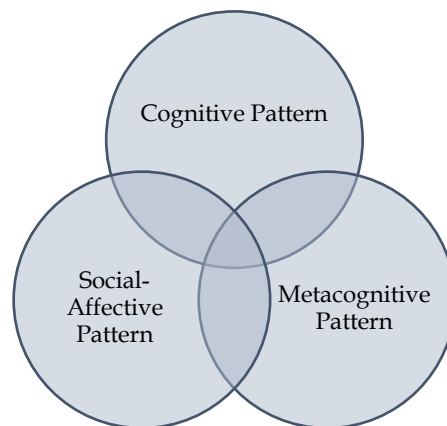
Previous research consistently associates positive teacher–student relationships with stronger student engagement (Gan 2021; Thornberg et al. 2020), while Tormey emphasizes that educational relationships cannot be reduced to formal authority alone (Tormey 2021). The Parmeraan findings extend these relational accounts by identifying a culturally specific mechanism: respect organizes attentive listening, appropriate turn-taking, acceptance of correction, and trust in those positioned as sources of knowledge. Its learning function therefore extends beyond interpersonal politeness by shaping the conditions under which explanation, guidance, and correction are received.

Humility provides an even clearer contextual extension. The field evidence includes students' use of *al-faqir*, continued listening after giving correct answers, willingness to return to teachers or senior students, Hasan Basri's view that mistakes and questions are part of learning, and Hajar Aswad's statement that something new can continue to be learned from other people. These data are complemented by the school leader's "*empty cup*" metaphor and by Arman Maulana Siregar's observation that teachers themselves listen seriously when students speak.

These practices resemble what psychological literature describes as intellectual humility: recognition of the limits of one's knowledge combined with openness to revision, challenge, and further learning. Intellectual humility has been associated with mastery-oriented behavior, persistence after failure, and greater willingness to engage with challenging information (Porter et al. 2020). Related research on metacognitive regulation and teacher-student relationships also emphasizes openness to feedback, monitoring, and supportive relational conditions as resources for learning (Zhong et al. 2025). The Parmeraan setting gives this orientation an explicitly Islamic educational meaning: humility is not only an epistemic awareness that one may be wrong, but part of *adab* in seeking knowledge. Its educational function is visible in help-seeking, acceptance of correction, and willingness to learn from teachers, senior students, and peers.

These findings do not require replacing O'Malley and Chamot's social-affective framework. Rather, they indicate that its empirical expression can be broadened when language learning occurs within a value-laden educational tradition. The original

framework emphasizes social interaction and affective regulation, whereas the Parmeraan evidence shows that relational values can also organize participation. Respect supports receptiveness to guidance; humility makes not knowing socially and morally acceptable; peer consideration sustains assistance; and repeated participation supports confidence. The theoretical contribution is therefore contextual rather than classificatory; practices that might elsewhere be treated primarily as ethical or religious values can function directly as orientations of learning when they shape attention, help-seeking, correction, receptiveness, and persistence.



**Figure 2**

### **Integrated Model of Arabic Language Learning Practices and Emergent Patterns in Parmeraan**

The integrated model therefore represents three analytically distinct but interconnected patterns. Cognitive practices organize how students work directly with linguistic material; metacognitive practices organize how students sustain and monitor learning; and social-affective practices organize how learning proceeds through relationships, participation, and affective positioning. Their boundaries are analytical rather than absolute. Rewriting may expose a knowledge gap that triggers self-monitoring; self-monitoring may lead to peer help; peer interaction may provide a model for imitation; and respect or humility may shape how correction is received. The everyday learning ecology of the pesantren connects these practices by allowing them to recur across shared times, spaces, and relationships.

For Arabic language pedagogy, the findings suggest that productive learning practices are unlikely to be sustained through explicit strategy instruction alone. Institutions also need to create stable opportunities in which useful practices can recur and become embedded in everyday learning. Note-taking becomes educationally meaningful when students return to their notes; collaborative learning becomes

sustainable when asking and explaining are socially supported; self-monitoring becomes actionable when sources of assistance are accessible; and confidence can develop when imperfect language use is permitted within supportive interaction (Zhou, Xi, and Lochtman 2020). In residential Arabic-learning settings, pedagogical design should therefore attend not only to what strategies learners are taught, but also to the temporal, social, and relational conditions that allow those strategies to become recurrent and sustainable learning patterns.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that Arabic learning at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School is organized through recurrent cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective practices embedded in students' everyday educational life. Note-taking, reviewing, imitation, rewriting, repetition, discipline, continuity, self-monitoring, peer support, confidence, respect for teachers, and humility in seeking knowledge did not appear as isolated actions but as recurring practices that developed into relatively stabilized learning patterns through repeated participation in a consistent educational ecology.

The theoretical significance of the findings lies in understanding learning patterns as emerging from repeated practice rather than as fixed learner preferences. The study therefore proposes a process-oriented interpretation in which situational learning strategies may, under relatively stable conditions, become recurrent and relatively stabilized patterns. Within the social-affective domain, respect for teachers and humility in seeking knowledge should be understood as a contextual extension, or context-sensitive interpretation, of social-affective learning in the Islamic educational setting examined here rather than as a universal extension of the framework.

For the study of Arabic language learning, the findings highlight the importance of examining how institutional routines, shared spaces, peer relationships, and educational values interact with learner practices. Pedagogically, the study suggests that effective Arabic learning environments should not rely on strategy instruction alone but should provide stable opportunities for productive practices to recur across settings. Such environments can support sustained review, collaborative learning, self-monitoring, help-seeking, and confidence in using Arabic even when learners' competence is still developing.

The study is limited by its focus on a single pesantren, six primary student informants, and a fieldwork period of approximately two months. These conditions

limit the transferability of the findings beyond the specific educational context examined. The findings are therefore not intended to be statistically generalized to all pesantren or Arabic language learners. Future research involving multiple institutions, broader participant groups, and longer periods of observation could examine whether similar recurring practices and relational patterns emerge in other Arabic-learning environments.

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