

CLASSICAL ISLAMIC TEXTS AS A MODEL FOR ARABIC LEARNING IN PESANTREN

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ABSTRACT

This article develops a conceptual model of Arabic learning in Indonesian pesantren by positioning classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) not merely as religious content, but as an integrated language-learning environment. Using an integrative literature review, the study synthesises research published between 2019 and July 2023 on kitab kuning pedagogy, sorogan, bandongan, halaqah, Arabic grammar instruction, Pegon annotation, and accelerated reading methods. The review identifies a text-centred learning model consisting of five interdependent processes: guided oral modelling, grammatical decoding, lexical-semantic mediation, individual performance with corrective feedback, and interpretive discussion. These processes demonstrate how traditional pesantren practices can function as a coherent pedagogical sequence for developing Arabic literacy, particularly reading comprehension, grammatical awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and interpretive competence. The proposed model is derived from published Indonesian studies and therefore requires empirical validation across different pesantren traditions, institutional types, learner levels, and instructional settings. The findings suggest that pesantren can preserve the authenticity of classical texts while organising Arabic instruction through a clearer progression from teacher modelling to independent interpretation. This article therefore reframes kitab kuning as a structured pedagogical system for Arabic learning, rather than solely as a religious curriculum, and offers a conceptual basis for future research and systematic instructional development.

Keyword: Arabic learning; classical Islamic texts; pesantren; text-centred pedagogy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Arabic occupies a distinctive position in Indonesian pesantren because it is simultaneously a language to be learned and the principal medium through which the classical Islamic scholarly tradition is accessed. In many pesantren, students encounter Arabic not first through communicative drills or a modern language textbook, but through kitab kuning: unvocalised or minimally vocalised classical texts in jurisprudence, theology, Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, ethics, logic, and Arabic grammar. This learning ecology produces a pedagogical configuration that differs from mainstream foreign-language classrooms. The linguistic form of the text cannot be separated from its disciplinary meaning, and linguistic competence is developed

through repeated engagement with authoritative texts, teacher explanation, annotation, recitation, translation, grammatical analysis, and individual correction. Makinuddin (2022) argues that the intensity of kitab kuning learning, imitation of teacher reading, and repeated use of sorogan and weton contribute to Arabic acquisition among pesantren students. In this sense, kitab kuning functions as both curriculum content and a sustained linguistic input environment.

Research on pesantren pedagogy has commonly examined particular methods such as sorogan, bandongan, halaqah, Tamyiz, Amtsilati, Al-Miftah Lil Ulum, or Ibtida'i. Such studies are valuable because they reveal how specific instructional practices work, but the fragmentation of the literature can obscure a larger pedagogical structure. A systematic review by Arif, Harun and Aziz (2023) shows that twenty-first-century kitab kuning pedagogy increasingly combines classical practices such as sorogan, bandongan, mudzakah, muhafadzah, talaqqi, halaqah and tarkib with more structured methods including Al-Miftah Lil Ulum, Ibtida'i, Tamyiz and Amtsilati. This development suggests that the key question is no longer whether traditional or modern methods should be chosen, but how the text itself organises a sequence of language-learning practices across different methods.

Several empirical studies point to this possibility. Suteja et al. (2022), studying pesantren in West Java, underline the role of sorogan in sustaining literacy in classical Islamic texts through close teacher-student interaction. Jailani, Yoyo and Perawironegoro (2022) describe sorogan and bandongan as enduring approaches in Arabic learning through kitab kuning in Madurese pesantren. Maskuri, Kholison and Islamiyah (2022) likewise report the use of sorogan, bandongan, memorisation and mudzakah, supported by periodic evaluation. Nuur and Said (2021) show that halaqah centred on nahwu and sharaf remains a significant mode of textual learning. Across these studies, a recurrent pattern appears: the text is heard, marked, parsed, translated, read back, corrected, and discussed. These are not isolated classroom techniques; together they form a recognisable instructional cycle.

This article therefore proposes that classical Islamic texts can be conceptualised as a model for Arabic learning in pesantren. The expression 'as a model' does not imply that a book itself teaches language autonomously. Rather, it indicates that the textual characteristics of kitab kuning, together with the pesantren's modes of transmission, shape an instructional architecture. Unvocalised Arabic requires attention to morphology and syntax; dense religious terminology demands lexical mediation; teacher reading provides oral modelling; interlinear or Pegon annotation externalises linguistic analysis; sorogan transforms comprehension into observable performance; and discussion moves learners from decoding to interpretation. The pedagogical model emerges from the interaction between text, teacher, learner, linguistic tools and scholarly tradition.

The state of the art reveals two gaps. First, much of the literature evaluates a single method or institution, whereas fewer studies conceptualise the relationship among the practices as an integrated Arabic-learning system. Second, kitab kuning is often discussed as an object of religious study or as a target of reading competence, while its role as a structured source of linguistic input, grammatical noticing, vocabulary development, oral modelling, translation practice and interpretive literacy is less explicitly theorised. Addressing these gaps is important for Arabic education because pesantren represent a long-standing indigenous ecology of second/foreign-language learning in which language competence develops through disciplinary texts rather than through topic-based communicative units.

Accordingly, this review asks two questions: (1) what recurring pedagogical processes characterise Arabic learning through classical Islamic texts in pesantren; and (2) how can those processes be organised into a coherent model that explains progression from dependent textual decoding to increasingly independent interpretation? The objective is to formulate an evidence-informed conceptual model that preserves the scholarly identity of pesantren while making its language-learning logic more explicit for curriculum design, teacher education and future empirical research.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kitab Kuning as Linguistic and Scholarly Text

Kitab kuning refers broadly to classical Islamic works that constitute the core scholarly literature of many traditional Indonesian pesantren. Its pedagogical significance lies not only in the subjects it contains but also in the linguistic demands it places on learners. The texts frequently use compact syntactic structures, specialised vocabulary, ellipsis, intertextual references, and unvocalised Arabic script. For beginning students, the difficulty is therefore multidimensional: they must identify word forms, infer grammatical functions, determine syntactic relations, access lexical meaning, reconstruct implicit vowels, and relate the literal wording to the conceptual tradition of the discipline. Muzammil and Prastika (2019) note that studying kitab kuning simultaneously exposes santri to Islamic knowledge and Arabic, so competence in the text can become a marker of pesantren learning.

The relation between text and grammar is especially strong. Nahwu and sharaf are not taught only as abstract systems; they function as analytical tools for deciding how a sentence should be read and understood. Nuur and Said (2021) document a halaqah tradition in which nahwu-sharaf learning is embedded in the study of kitab kuning. Muzaky and Ishari (2020), examining Al-Miftah Lil Ulum, similarly show that structured grammatical preparation can accelerate the ability to read unvocalised

texts. Wildan and Fuad (2019) report that Tamyiz integrates grammatical explanation with reading and translation, illustrating a wider tendency to make the instrumental relationship between grammar and text more explicit.

Another distinctive feature is annotation. In many pesantren, students mark the text with meanings, grammatical indicators, or interlinear translations, frequently using local conventions such as Arab Pegon. Hidayah (2019) shows that Arab Pegon can support the development of kitab kuning reading ability, while Rahmawati and Negara (2021) identify Pegon literacy as an important prerequisite for new students learning the classical texts. Annotation is pedagogically important because it externalises the learner's analysis: lexical meanings, syntactic roles and translation decisions become visible on the page and can later serve as prompts for rereading.

Traditional Transmission: Bandongan, Sorogan and Halaqah

Bandongan and sorogan organise complementary directions of performance. In bandongan, the teacher normally reads and explains while learners listen, follow the text and record meanings or grammatical cues. In sorogan, the direction is reversed: an individual learner reads or presents the text before the teacher, who monitors accuracy and provides correction. Putri (2020) reports that kitab kuning instruction at Pesantren Tarbiyah Islamiyah Malalo combines bandongan, sorogan, memorisation, discussion, qawa'id-tarjamah and deductive or inductive grammar procedures. The combination indicates that pesantren pedagogy is rarely reducible to one method.

Sorogan is particularly significant as an assessment-rich practice. Hidayat, Luthfie and Agustini (2020) describe it as a direct encounter in which the learner presents the message of the text to the teacher. Suteja et al. (2022) emphasise its relation to the quality of kitab kuning literacy, while the historical analysis by Abdurrahman (2020) places sorogan within a longer genealogy of knowledge transmission. Its language-learning value lies in making the learner's reading public and diagnosable. Misidentification of word endings, grammatical relations, lexical meanings or translation choices can be corrected immediately, creating a feedback loop that is difficult to reproduce in large-group explanation alone.

Halaqah and mudzakah add a social dimension to this cycle. Halaqah can structure collective attention around a text and provide repeated exposure to teacher modelling, whereas discussion or mudzakah requires learners to articulate interpretations, justify grammatical decisions and compare readings. Thus, the traditional ecology moves between receptive participation and accountable production. Rather than treating bandongan as passive and sorogan as active in a simple binary, it is more accurate to view them as sequentially complementary: teacher modelling reduces uncertainty at the beginning of a textual unit, while

individual or peer performance gradually transfers interpretive responsibility to learners.

Structured and Accelerated Methods

The rise of structured methods such as Tamyiz, Al-Miftah Lil Ulum, Ibtida'i and Amsilati reflects efforts to reduce the initial cognitive burden of classical Arabic. These methods typically reorganise grammar into high-frequency patterns, mnemonic devices, staged modules or directly applicable rules. Wildan and Fuad (2019) describe Tamyiz as a combination of traditional learning, explicit instruction and an engaging learning model, with formative and summative evaluation. Muzaky and Ishari (2020) show that Al-Miftah Lil Ulum uses sequenced modules, memorised verses and guided application to support beginners in analysing the structure of unvocalised text. Ardiansyah (2020) similarly discusses Ibtida'i as an approach to beginning kitab kuning reading.

These innovations do not necessarily displace classical transmission. Arif, Harun and Aziz (2023) identify a trend towards combinations of traditional and structured approaches. This observation is crucial for the present model: innovation in pesantren Arabic learning often occurs by reorganising the route into the text rather than by replacing the text. The classical book remains the object of reading, interpretation and scholarly authority; what changes is the scaffolding through which learners gain access to it.

III. METHOD

This study employed an integrative literature review designed to generate a conceptual synthesis rather than to estimate an effect size. The review focused on studies of Arabic learning and kitab kuning pedagogy in Indonesian pesantren published from January 2019 to July 2023. The period was selected to capture recent developments while remaining consistent with the temporal boundary used for the present manuscript. Searches were conducted through publicly accessible journal databases and publisher pages using combinations of the terms 'kitab kuning', 'Arabic learning', 'pesantren', 'sorogan', 'bandongan', 'halaqah', 'nahwu sharaf', 'Pegon', 'Tamyiz', 'Al-Miftah Lil Ulum', 'Ibtida'i', and 'Amsilati' in Indonesian and English.

Sources were included when they met three criteria: they addressed learning in pesantren or a closely related Islamic learning setting; they examined classical Islamic texts or methods directly used to access them; and they contained findings or conceptual discussion relevant to Arabic reading, grammar, translation, annotation, teacher modelling, feedback or interpretation. Studies concerned only

with institutional management or general pesantren history were excluded unless they clarified a pedagogical mechanism. The final interpretive corpus was dominated by empirical journal articles, supplemented by one systematic review that mapped the broader trend of kitab kuning reading methods.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, each study was coded for the principal instructional action described, such as teacher reading, listening, marking, grammatical parsing, vocabulary explanation, translation, individual recitation, correction, memorisation, discussion or evaluation. Second, similar actions were grouped according to their function in language learning: input and modelling, form-focused decoding, semantic mediation, productive performance, corrective feedback and interpretive extension. Third, the groups were ordered into a pedagogical sequence and compared against studies reporting combinations of methods. The resulting model is therefore a conceptual reconstruction grounded in recurring patterns across the literature rather than a claim that all pesantren implement an identical curriculum.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Methods to a Text-Centred Arabic Learning Model

The synthesis shows that the strongest common denominator across pesantren practices is not a single teaching method but a text-centred cycle. Whether instruction is labelled bandongan, sorogan, halaqah, qawa'id-tarjamah, Tamyiz or Al-Miftah Lil Uloom, learning repeatedly returns to the same problem: how a learner can transform a dense, often unvocalised Arabic passage into an accurately read and defensible interpretation. The instructional activities reported in the literature can therefore be organised into five interdependent processes: (1) guided oral modelling, (2) grammatical decoding, (3) lexical-semantic mediation, (4) individual performance and corrective feedback, and (5) interpretive discussion and transfer.

This reorganisation matters because method labels can conceal functional overlap. Bandongan and halaqah both provide extensive teacher-led modelling; nahwu-sharaf lessons and methods such as Al-Miftah or Tamyiz support form-focused decoding; Pegon annotation and translation support semantic mediation; sorogan operationalises individual performance and feedback; and mudzakaroh or discussion extends understanding beyond literal decoding. The model therefore does not eliminate named pesantren methods. Instead, it explains what each contributes to a larger progression in Arabic literacy.

Table 1 – Text-centred model of Arabic learning through classical Islamic texts

Stage	Core activity	Language-learning function	Typical pesantren practice
1. Guided oral modelling	Teacher reads, vocalises and explains a passage	Provides phonological, syntactic and interpretive input	Bandongan, halaqah, talaqqi
2. Grammatical decoding	Learners identify word forms, positions and relations	Develops nahwu-sharaf awareness and accurate vowel reconstruction	Qawa'id, tarkib, Al-Miftah, Tamyiz
3. Lexical-semantic mediation	Meaning is glossed, translated and annotated	Builds vocabulary and links form to disciplinary meaning	Pegon/interlinear meaning, qawa'id-tarjamah
4. Individual performance and feedback	Learner reads and explains before teacher	Makes competence observable and enables immediate correction	Sorogan, individual recitation
5. Interpretive discussion and transfer	Learners compare readings and apply rules to new passages	Extends comprehension, reasoning and independent reading	Mudzakarah, discussion, peer explanation

Guided Oral Modelling: Building a Shared Reading Frame

The first stage is guided oral modelling. Classical Arabic texts present a novice with multiple uncertainties at once: pronunciation, morphology, syntax, vocabulary and disciplinary meaning. Teacher reading reduces this uncertainty by providing a worked example of how the passage is segmented, vocalised and interpreted. In bandongan, learners follow the teacher's reading while attending to the printed text, often adding meanings or signs. This process can be interpreted as a form of modelling in which expert performance precedes independent production. Jailani, Yoyo and Perawironegoro (2022) demonstrate the continuing role of bandongan alongside sorogan in Arabic learning through kitab kuning, while Maskuri, Kholison and Islamiyah (2022) report similar combinations in classroom practice.

The pedagogical value of modelling is not equivalent to passive listening. When learners must mark the same passage, anticipate grammatical roles and later reproduce the reading in sorogan, attentive listening becomes preparation for

performance. Repetition also matters. Makinuddin (2022) identifies imitation of readings and the intensity of exposure to kitab kuning across different fields as factors contributing to Arabic acquisition. This suggests that pesantren learning creates a high-frequency textual environment: similar grammatical constructions and disciplinary vocabulary recur across fiqh, tafsir, hadith and other subjects, allowing patterns to become increasingly familiar.

A curriculum implication follows. Bandongan should not be evaluated only by the amount of teacher talk. Its effectiveness depends on whether teacher modelling is converted into learner noticing. Teachers can strengthen this conversion by explicitly signalling sentence boundaries, morphological patterns, governing relationships and recurrent vocabulary, then requiring students to predict or complete parts of the analysis. In this way, the classical practice remains intact while its language-learning function becomes more visible.

Grammatical Decoding: Nahwu and Sharaf as Reading Tools

The second stage is grammatical decoding. Because many kitab kuning are unvocalised, reading accuracy depends on the learner's ability to infer grammatical endings and morphological forms. Nahwu and sharaf therefore serve as operational tools rather than ancillary subjects. Nuur and Said (2021) show how nahwu-sharaf learning is embedded within a halaqah devoted to classical texts. Putri (2020) reports the use of qawa'id-tarjamah as part of a broader method combination, while Muzaky and Ishari (2020) demonstrate how Al-Miftah Lil Uloom reorganises grammatical content to accelerate access to unvocalised reading.

This instrumental role helps explain why structured methods have gained popularity. Traditional grammar books can place substantial terminological and memorisation demands on beginners before they experience successful reading. Tamyiz and Al-Miftah attempt to reverse that relation by selecting and sequencing grammatical information according to immediate reading needs. Wildan and Fuad (2019) describe Tamyiz as combining explicit instruction with traditional features, while Arif, Harun and Aziz (2023) identify accelerated methods as a significant contemporary trend. The shared principle is functional grammar: a rule is valuable not merely because it can be recited but because it helps the learner decide how a word or phrase works in an authentic text.

The proposed model therefore positions grammar between modelling and meaning. Learners first encounter a plausible reading, then analyse why the reading is grammatically defensible. This sequence prevents grammar from becoming detached from text while also preventing reading from becoming mechanical imitation. It supports a movement from 'the teacher reads it this way' to 'I can explain

why this reading is possible'. Such justification is central to independent kitab kuning literacy.

Lexical-Semantic Mediation: From Glossing to Meaning Construction

The third stage concerns lexical-semantic mediation. A student may identify a grammatical relation correctly and still fail to understand a passage because classical Islamic vocabulary is conceptually dense. Pesantren therefore use translation, glossing and annotation to bridge linguistic form and disciplinary meaning. Arab Pegon and interlinear meaning systems are particularly important because they record more than dictionary equivalence; they can preserve local cues about syntactic function and word order. Hidayah (2019) associates Arab Pegon learning with improved kitab kuning reading, and Rahmawati and Negara (2021) show why new students require explicit preparation in Pegon literacy.

From a language-learning perspective, annotation converts fleeting teacher explanation into a durable external memory. Students can revisit the same passage, compare lexical items across contexts and notice recurring constructions. However, annotation can also become mechanical if learners simply copy meanings without reconstructing the Arabic. The model therefore treats glossing as mediation rather than an end point. A productive sequence is to move from supplied meaning to partial prompting and finally to independent lexical inference, especially for recurrent function words, morphological patterns and technical terms.

Semantic mediation also explains why kitab kuning is more than a reading exercise. Vocabulary is learned within disciplinary networks. A term encountered in jurisprudence may carry a specialised legal sense; a word in theology or Sufism may require conceptual explanation that a general dictionary cannot provide. The teacher's scholarly role is therefore inseparable from language pedagogy. This is one reason the pesantren model cannot be reduced to generic grammar-translation: translation is embedded in a community of interpretation and tied to the intellectual content of the text.

Sorogan as Performance-Based Assessment and Corrective Feedback

The fourth stage is the strongest mechanism for transferring responsibility to the learner: individual performance before a teacher. Sorogan requires the student to read, vocalise, translate or explain a passage while the teacher attends closely to errors. Hidayat, Luthfie and Agustini (2020) describe sorogan as a direct mode of learning the message of kitab kuning, and Suteja et al. (2022) connect its decline with concerns about the quality of classical-text literacy. These findings support a view of sorogan as both instruction and assessment.

Its diagnostic power is unusually high. An incorrect final vowel may indicate weak syntactic analysis; a wrong word form may indicate a morphological problem; hesitant translation may reveal insufficient vocabulary; and an apparently fluent reading may still expose shallow comprehension when the learner is asked to justify a construction. Because feedback is immediate and text-specific, correction can be linked directly to the evidence that generated the error. This is different from a decontextualised grammar test, where a correct answer may not demonstrate the ability to read authentic text.

The main limitation is scalability. Individual attention requires substantial time and skilled teachers, a problem acknowledged across descriptions of traditional pesantren pedagogy. A practical adaptation is not to abandon sorogan but to distribute preparation: peer rehearsal, small-group checking and rotating individual performance can preserve accountability while reducing teacher overload. The essential principle is that every learner must periodically produce an observable reading that can be corrected. Without this stage, bandongan risks remaining teacher performance rather than learner competence.

Interpretive Discussion and Transfer Beyond a Single Passage

The fifth stage moves beyond accurate decoding towards interpretation and transfer. Discussion, mudzakah and peer explanation require students to articulate why a particular reading is acceptable, compare alternative interpretations and connect the passage to the wider discipline. Putri (2020) includes discussion among the methods used alongside bandongan and sorogan, and Maskuri, Kholison and Islamiyah (2022) note mudzakah as part of the instructional repertoire. These practices show that the endpoint of kitab kuning learning is not pronunciation alone but reasoned engagement with text.

For Arabic education, interpretive discussion has two important effects. First, it pushes learners to convert receptive knowledge into language about language: they must name grammatical relations, explain vocabulary and paraphrase meaning. Second, it promotes transfer. A student who can only reproduce a teacher's explanation of one passage has not yet developed independent reading. Transfer becomes visible when the learner can apply familiar grammatical and lexical patterns to a new passage, defend a reading, and identify which uncertainties require consultation.

This stage is also where the pesantren's scholarly orientation becomes most evident. Classical texts are studied within traditions of commentary, comparison and reasoned disagreement. The language curriculum is therefore inseparable from interpretive norms. A text-centred Arabic model should retain this feature rather than narrowing success to speed or grammatical accuracy. Reading proficiency is

demonstrated when linguistic analysis enables meaningful participation in the intellectual conversation surrounding the text.

Pedagogical Progression: From Dependence to Interpretive Autonomy

Taken together, the five processes describe a progression from dependence to interpretive autonomy. Beginners require extensive modelling, supplied meanings and explicit grammatical scaffolding. Intermediate learners should increasingly predict structures, retrieve vocabulary, rehearse passages and perform them in sorogan. Advanced learners should face less annotated texts, justify grammatical choices, compare commentarial interpretations and transfer strategies across disciplines. The model is therefore developmental even when pesantren do not formally label levels in these terms.

This progression helps reconcile traditional and contemporary approaches. Structured methods such as Tamyiz or Al-Miftah can be positioned as entry scaffolds within the grammatical-decoding stage, while classical methods remain central for modelling, performance and interpretation. The question becomes one of orchestration: which scaffold is needed at which level, and when should it be withdrawn? Arif, Harun and Aziz (2023) observe precisely this tendency towards combinations of old and new methods. A coherent curriculum would make the progression explicit so that innovation supports, rather than fragments, the classical learning ecology.

The model also broadens the definition of Arabic proficiency appropriate to pesantren. Communicative speaking is important in many Arabic programmes, but the principal literacy demanded by kitab kuning includes accurate reading of unvocalised text, morphological and syntactic analysis, vocabulary in Islamic disciplines, translation, interpretive explanation, and the ability to learn from new texts. These outcomes are not inferior substitutes for general language proficiency; they represent a specialised academic literacy shaped by the institutional purpose of pesantren. Nevertheless, the model can be complemented by listening and speaking programmes when the institutional goal includes broader communicative competence.

Implications for Curriculum and Teacher Development

For curriculum design, the model suggests that kitab selection should be linked to linguistic progression as well as disciplinary importance. A beginning text should not only be religiously appropriate but should also contain manageable sentence structures, recurrent vocabulary and opportunities for visible grammatical analysis. Progression can then be planned by reducing annotation, increasing syntactic density, expanding disciplinary vocabulary and requiring more independent

interpretation. Evaluation should likewise sample all five stages: recognition of teacher modelling, grammatical parsing, lexical-semantic comprehension, oral or written performance, and transfer to an unfamiliar passage.

Teacher development is equally important. A competent kitab teacher already possesses substantial tacit pedagogical knowledge, but making the five functions explicit can improve lesson design. Teachers can ask whether a session provides sufficient modelling, whether grammar is tied to real textual decisions, whether supplied meanings are gradually withdrawn, whether each learner performs, and whether discussion requires transfer. These questions do not demand abandonment of pesantren tradition; they provide a language for reflecting on and strengthening it.

The model also has implications for educational technology. Digital tools may assist annotation, dictionary consultation, spaced vocabulary review or recording of student readings, but they should be evaluated according to whether they strengthen the text-centred cycle. Technology that merely displays a translation may reduce productive struggle, whereas tools that allow learners to hide and reveal glosses, annotate syntax, submit recorded sorogan preparation or compare readings could reinforce established pesantren processes. The pedagogical sequence, rather than novelty of media, should remain the organising principle.

V. CONCLUSION

This review argues that classical Islamic texts can be understood as a model for Arabic learning in pesantren when the focus shifts from isolated method labels to the recurring pedagogical functions organised around the text. Evidence from studies published between 2019 and July 2023 indicates a consistent ecology in which learners encounter expert oral modelling, decode grammatical structure, mediate meaning through glossing and translation, perform the text under corrective supervision, and extend understanding through discussion and transfer. Bandongan, sorogan, halaqah, qawa'id-tarjamah, Pegon annotation and newer structured methods are best viewed as complementary components within this ecology rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives.

The principal advantage of the model is that it makes the linguistic logic of pesantren tradition explicit without detaching Arabic from its scholarly purpose. It explains how authentic classical texts can provide sustained input, grammatical noticing, disciplinary vocabulary, performance-based assessment and interpretive literacy. Its limitation is that the synthesis is conceptual and based mainly on Indonesian case studies; it does not establish comparative effectiveness across different pesantren types or proficiency levels. Future research should therefore test

the five-stage progression empirically, develop level-specific indicators of kitab-based Arabic literacy, and examine how teacher expertise, text difficulty and digital scaffolds affect movement towards independent interpretation.

In practical terms, pesantren need not choose between preserving classical pedagogy and improving language instruction. A more productive strategy is to clarify the progression already latent in the tradition: model the text, make its grammar visible, mediate meaning, require individual performance, and demand interpretive transfer. When these processes are deliberately sequenced, kitab kuning can function not only as the repository of Islamic scholarship but also as a robust curriculum for advanced Arabic textual literacy.

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