

The Mubasyarah Method in Maharah Kalam Instruction: A Structured Narrative Review of Evidence, Conditions, and Limitations

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ABSTRACT

Arabic speaking instruction requires approaches that expand learners' opportunities to speak while addressing hesitation, limited active vocabulary, and dependence on translation. This article examines the contribution, enabling conditions, and limitations of the mubasyarah or Direct Method in the teaching of maharah kalam. It addresses a recurring weakness in the literature: findings from classroom action research, one-group pretest–posttest studies, comparative experiments, qualitative case studies, and learner-perception studies are often combined as though they provide equivalent evidence of effectiveness. A structured narrative review was conducted using publications issued from 2020 to September 2026 and accessible through official journal pages, DOI links, or publisher websites. Thirty-two journal articles, proceedings papers, and books were included in the conceptual synthesis, while the principal empirical studies were mapped by educational setting, participants, design, intervention, outcome, finding, and evidential limitation. The synthesis indicates that mubasyarah is promising for increasing speaking opportunities, classroom participation, confidence, and context-specific fluency when teachers provide gradual scaffolding, comprehensible input, repeated interaction, and a supportive language environment. The evidence does not, however, justify a universal claim of superior effectiveness. Several studies lack control groups, use non-equivalent outcome measures, report perceptions rather than performance, or examine reading, grammar, and numerical vocabulary instead of speaking. Teacher competence, practice intensity, initial proficiency, institutional language policy, and complementary methods remain plausible alternative explanations. Direct oral interaction should therefore constitute the core of speaking practice, while selective first-language support, explicit feedback, and eclectic techniques should be used according to learner needs.

Keywords: *Arabic Language Learning; Direct Method; Evidence Synthesis; Maharah Kalam; Mubasyarah*

A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking ability, commonly referred to as maharah kalam, is a central outcome of Arabic language education because it demonstrates whether learners can transform their knowledge of vocabulary and structure into oral communication. In many classrooms, learners can recognize grammatical rules or translate written passages but remain hesitant when asked to answer questions, initiate conversations, or express ideas spontaneously. These difficulties are associated with limited active vocabulary, pronunciation problems, slow language processing, speaking anxiety, and insufficient

opportunities to use Arabic in meaningful interaction (Nurlaila, 2020; Takdir, 2020; Umudini et al., 2023).

The mubasyarah method responds to this problem by making the target language the principal medium of instruction. Meaning is introduced through objects, images, actions, situations, examples, and question-and-answer exchanges so that learners connect linguistic forms directly with meaning rather than depending continuously on translation. Oral modelling, imitation, dialogue, pronunciation correction, and spontaneous responses receive substantial emphasis, while reading and writing are developed after learners acquire an initial foundation in oral comprehension. In Indonesian Arabic education, the terms *thariqah mubasyarah*, direct method, and Direct Method are often used interchangeably, although institutions differ in the extent to which they restrict the first language and sequence classroom activities (Sudjani & Gunadi, 2020; Suroiyah & Zakiyah, 2021; Dimiyati et al., 2021; Rahmah et al., 2023).

The practical relevance of this approach is reflected across early childhood education, madrasahs, pesantren, extracurricular programs, and universities. Studies conducted in these settings commonly report increases in participation, speaking confidence, vocabulary use, or achievement following instruction. Nevertheless, conclusions regarding effectiveness are frequently constructed by combining classroom action research, uncontrolled pretest–posttest studies, comparative experiments, descriptive implementation studies, and learner-perception research. These designs answer different questions and do not provide equivalent inferential strength (Adam & Azis, 2020; Kasmianti, 2023; Qomaruddin et al., 2023; Rochmat et al., 2023).

Differences in outcome measures require similar caution. Improvement across action-research cycles indicates change within a particular classroom; a posttest difference between comparable groups provides comparative evidence; interviews explain experience and acceptance; and observation documents implementation processes. Findings concerning reading, grammar, or numerical vocabulary cannot automatically be treated as evidence of improvement in speaking. When these distinctions are ignored, the term effective can become a general label that exceeds what the studies actually measured (Zahro et al., 2020; Sugiharto & Yasin, 2020; Safaruddin et al., 2022).

Variation in results may also be influenced by teacher competence, the duration and intensity of practice, learners' initial proficiency, class size, facilities, the language environment of a pesantren, institutional language policies, and the use of supporting methods. Improvement after the introduction of mubasyarah may partly reflect increased practice time, greater teacher attention, repeated testing, or a safer classroom climate rather than the exclusive effect of avoiding the first language. A synthesis that is useful for teachers must therefore identify not only whether outcomes improved, but also for whom, under what conditions, on which indicators, and with what limitations (Syarifah & Juriana, 2020; Jamil & Agung, 2022; Ngarifah et al., 2022).

This article reconstructs the discussion of mubasyarah through a structured narrative review. It addresses four questions: what forms of evidence and learning indicators have been used to evaluate mubasyarah; which learner characteristics and

instructional conditions are associated with positive outcomes; which methodological limitations and alternative explanations must be considered; and how direct instruction can be combined proportionately with explicit support or eclectic methods. The article contributes an evidence-sensitive map and conditional recommendations rather than claiming that one method is universally superior across all instructional settings.

B. METHODS

This study employed a structured narrative review. This design was selected because the objective was to compare concepts, contexts, research designs, outcomes, and limitations across a heterogeneous body of literature rather than calculate a pooled effect size. The procedure followed principles of transparent searching, explicit eligibility criteria, structured data extraction, and design-sensitive synthesis (Booth et al., 2022). Searches were conducted through Google Scholar, GARUDA, DOAJ, Crossref, and the official websites of journals and publishers. The final search was completed on September 21, 2026, using combinations of the terms mubasyarah method, thariqah mubasyarah, direct method, maharah kalam, Arabic speaking, Arabic language learning, eclectic method, and language environment. DOI links were directed to the source page; when no DOI was available, access was verified through an official journal or publisher page. The review does not claim the exhaustive coverage expected of a systematic review across all international databases.

Sources were eligible when they were published between 2020 and 2026; consisted of accessible journal articles, scholarly proceedings papers, or methodological books; addressed the Direct Method in Arabic education, speaking instruction, learning difficulties, language environments, or complementary methods; and provided enough information for relevance assessment. Duplicate records, untraceable citations, secondary citations without an identifiable source, and publications unrelated to the review questions were excluded. Thirty-two sources met the criteria for the conceptual and analytical corpus, while studies that directly examined mubasyarah implementation formed the central empirical subset.

Each principal study was entered into an extraction matrix covering setting and participants, design and data collection, instructional focus, outcome indicators, principal findings, and evidential limitations. Evidence was interpreted according to design: comparative studies informed differences between conditions; one-group pretest–posttest studies indicated within-group change; classroom action research documented local improvement across cycles; and qualitative or perception studies explained implementation processes, experience, and acceptance. Synthesis proceeded by grouping findings according to design and outcome, comparing recurrent patterns across educational levels and instructional conditions, and testing broad claims against alternative explanations. Because instruments, intervention duration, and outcomes were not equivalent, no meta-analysis or common numerical estimate of effectiveness was produced.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Operational Boundaries of Mubasyarah and Maharah Kalam

In this article, mubasyarah is operationally defined as the organization of instruction around a direct relationship between Arabic utterances and meaning through demonstration, context, visual support, questioning, and interaction. Its observable features include the predominant use of Arabic as the classroom language, teacher modelling, listening-and-repeating activities, intensive questioning, and communicative language use. This definition distinguishes mubasyarah from situations in which a teacher simply speaks Arabic without making meaning accessible, and from broader communicative approaches that may place greater emphasis on tasks and negotiated interaction (Sudjani & Gunadi, 2020; Rahmah et al., 2023).

Maharah kalam is likewise not treated as a single undifferentiated score. Learning outcomes may include willingness to initiate speech, frequency of participation, fluency, pronunciation accuracy, active vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, message comprehensibility, and spontaneous responsiveness. An activity may increase participation without immediately improving grammatical accuracy, whereas structural exercises may improve accuracy without reducing speaking anxiety. Distinguishing these indicators is necessary if conclusions are to remain aligned with what the studies actually measured (Nurlaila, 2020; Tazkiyah et al., 2024).

The principle of comprehensible input is relevant when teachers use images, gestures, examples, repetition, and situational context to make Arabic challenging but interpretable. Input alone is insufficient, however; learners need opportunities to produce utterances, receive feedback, and revise their language. The affective dimension should therefore be understood practically as the emotional conditions that can inhibit participation, including fear of error and embarrassment, rather than as proof that a single method automatically reduces anxiety for every learner (Umudini et al., 2023; Tazkiyah et al., 2024).

2. Mapping the Empirical Evidence by Design and Outcome

Table 1 shows that evidence regarding mubasyarah comes from different research designs and evaluates different outcomes. Positive findings recur in relation to participation and context-specific performance, but causal strength is uneven. The term improvement in classroom action research should not be equated with better than in a comparative experiment, and neither should be equated with a positive learning experience reported by participants.

Table 1. Evidence Map of Principal Mubasyarah Studies

Study	Context and design	Outcome and finding	Inferential limitation
Qomaruddin et al. (2023)	Pesantren; two-cycle classroom action research	The proportion of good and very good performance increased across cycles	Local improvement; no control group

Rochmat et al. (2023)	Pesantren; one-group pretest–posttest, n = 43	The reported mean increased from 6.95 to 8.42	Cannot isolate method effects from practice or time
Zahro et al. (2020)	Posttest experiment with a comparison group	Difference in comprehension of Arabic numerical expressions	Comparative design, but the outcome is not speaking
Pebrian et al. (2020)	University; evaluation of implementation	Participation and learning outcomes were reported positively	University context; limited control information
Adam and Azis (2020)	Modern pesantren; influence study	Change in general Arabic ability	Broad language outcome; limited generalizability
Nuzula and Fauji (2022)	Educational institution; qualitative description	Speaking processes and learner responses	Explains implementation, not causal effect
Handayani and Fauji (2022)	Madrasah aliyah; collaborative action research	Learning outcomes and classroom activity increased	Teacher, cycle, and practice effects remain combined
Kasmianti (2023)	Early childhood; classroom implementation	Engagement and use of simple utterances	Depends on developmental level and scaffolding
Nurhayati and Nurfaizah (2024)	Female pesantren; qualitative study	Implementation and perceived change	Process and perception evidence, not comparison
Tazkiyah et al. (2024)	Extracurricular program; learner perspectives	Acceptance and speaking-learning experience	Self-report is not equivalent to performance
Musyfiroh and Trifauzi (2024)	Arabic instruction; local evaluation	Implementation was evaluated as effective	Instrument and context constrain transferability
Nasution et al. (2025)	Preservice teacher class; two-cycle action research	Engagement and performance increased	No comparison or delayed outcome measurement

Source: Author's Synthesis Based on the Cited Studies: Numerical Values Follow the Original Reports.

The evidence most directly related to change in speaking performance comes from classroom action research and one-group pretest–posttest studies. In the Mamba'us Sholihin conversation program, the proportions of learners classified as good and very good increased after two cycles. At Darussalam Gontor for Girls in Mantingan, the

reported mean increased from 6.95 to 8.42 in the same group. These results are valuable as evidence of local instructional improvement, but neither study establishes mubasyarah as the sole cause because no comparison group received equivalent instructional time and teacher attention (Qomaruddin et al., 2023; Rochmat et al., 2023).

Action research in madrasah and preservice-teacher classrooms shows a comparable pattern: classroom activity, engagement, or scores improved after repeated cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The strength of this design lies in its close connection to classroom problem solving and the teacher's ability to revise instruction between cycles. Yet the refinement of materials, the teacher's growing familiarity with the intervention, repeated tasks, and increased practice time occur simultaneously, making it impossible to separate the contribution of each component (Handayani & Fauji, 2022; Nasution et al., 2025).

The posttest experiment by Zahro et al. (2020) included a comparison group, but its primary outcome concerned comprehension of Arabic numerical expressions. Similarly, Sugiharto and Yasin (2020) focused on reading ability, while Safaruddin et al. (2022) compared grammar outcomes. These studies show that direct instruction can be applied to several language outcomes, but they do not directly demonstrate increased speaking fluency or confidence. Alignment between research design and outcome is therefore more important than the experimental label alone.

Descriptive and qualitative studies illustrate how teachers establish context, use question-and-answer exchanges, provide examples, and organize interaction. Such studies answer how the method is implemented and how participants experience it. Positive perceptions may indicate acceptance and a sense of safety, but perception is not equivalent to change in performance measured through speaking tasks. Qualitative evidence is consequently treated as evidence of process and feasibility rather than proof of causal superiority (Nuzula & Fauji, 2022; Nurhayati & Nurfaizah, 2024; Tazkiyah et al., 2024).

Mubasyarah may function differently in universities and modern pesantren. University students outside language programs may need more explicit vocabulary and sentence-pattern support, whereas learners in a language-rich pesantren receive additional exposure beyond classroom hours. Comparing these groups without accounting for exposure can lead to the mistaken attribution of the entire outcome to classroom technique. The institutional language environment should therefore be reported as part of the intervention rather than treated as a passive background condition (Adam & Azis, 2020; Pebrian et al., 2020; Syarifah & Juriana, 2020; Supriyadi, 2023).

3. What the Available Evidence Supports

Across designs, the most defensible recurring conclusion concerns opportunity and participation. Mubasyarah reorganizes classroom interaction so that learners hear and produce more Arabic, respond more frequently, and rely less on word-for-word translation during routine exchanges. Classroom action studies, implementation reports, and learner accounts converge on this practical mechanism even though they measure it

differently. This convergence supports a claim of pedagogical promise: when implemented as interactive practice rather than teacher monologue, the method can create conditions that are favorable to speaking development (Pebrian et al., 2020; Nuzula & Fauji, 2022; Qomaruddin et al., 2023).

Evidence for fluency and confidence is suggestive but more context-dependent. Repetition, patterned dialogue, and regular questioning can reduce the processing burden involved in producing familiar utterances, while supportive pair and group interaction may make learners more willing to speak. However, fluency demonstrated in rehearsed classroom routines does not necessarily transfer to unfamiliar topics or spontaneous communication. Few reviewed studies used delayed assessments, novel speaking tasks, or independent raters, so the durability and transferability of gains remain uncertain (Rochmat et al., 2023; Tazkiyah et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2025).

Evidence for grammatical accuracy and universal superiority is weaker. The method's emphasis on oral use may support implicit pattern learning, but strict avoidance of explanation can disadvantage beginners who need concise clarification or learners whose errors have become persistent. Moreover, studies reporting positive results do not consistently compare mubasyarah with an equally intensive alternative. The literature therefore supports a conditional proposition: direct interaction is useful for expanding oral practice, but its contribution to accuracy, long-term retention, and transfer depends on scaffolding, feedback, exposure, assessment design, and complementary instruction (Munawwir, 2020; Pohan & Hasnah, 2022; Irawan et al., 2025).

4. Conditions Supporting Successful Implementation

The first condition is the teacher's ability to make the target language comprehensible. Full Arabic instruction without gesture, visual support, objects, examples, repetition, or checks for understanding can turn immersion into confusion. Teachers need to regulate difficulty, segment utterances, model expected responses, and increase demands gradually. For beginners, success is determined not by the amount of Arabic spoken by the teacher, but by the proportion learners can understand and reuse (Halimah, 2022; Kasmianti, 2023).

The second condition is the intensity of speaking opportunities. Mubasyarah is beneficial when classroom time is not consumed by teacher monologue but is redistributed through paired dialogue, question chains, simulations, picture descriptions, role play, and short conversations. Improvement across cycles is plausible when every learner actually produces more language. In large classes, small-group work and task rotation are necessary to prevent the Direct Method from becoming an exchange between the teacher and a small group of already confident learners (Maulida et al., 2021; Qomaruddin et al., 2023).

The third condition is the emotional climate. Correction that interrupts every utterance may improve immediate accuracy but reduce willingness to speak. Teachers can distinguish errors that block meaning, errors related to the lesson target, and developmental errors that can be addressed later. Feedback after message completion, recasting, and specific praise for communication strategies can protect confidence without neglecting accuracy (Tazkiyah et al., 2024; Umudini et al., 2023).

The fourth condition is continuity in the language environment. A pesantren that provides daily conversation practice, vocabulary routines, peer interaction, and language-use policies offers a different level of exposure from a school with two Arabic lessons each week. This environment may accelerate automaticity but also becomes a confounding factor when the success of an entire program is attributed to the classroom method alone. Non-pesantren schools can adapt selected features through language clubs, voice journals, conversation partners, and short audio assignments (Syarifah & Juriana, 2020; Nurhayati & Nurfaizah, 2024).

The fifth condition is alignment with initial proficiency and learning objectives. Realistic beginner goals may involve understanding instructions, introducing oneself, requesting basic information, and producing patterned utterances. At intermediate levels, tasks can progress to narration, presentation, negotiation, and argument. A test based only on memorized dialogue does not demonstrate transfer to unfamiliar situations. Assessment should include spontaneous tasks and an analytic rubric that separates fluency, comprehensibility, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical control (Nurlaila, 2020; Rohman, 2022).

5. Alternative Explanations and Evidential Limitations

Higher scores after an intervention have several possible explanations. Learners may improve because they receive more practice, encounter familiar posttest material, benefit from the teacher's increasing skill in later cycles, or respond to the novelty of the activity. Without a comparison condition that receives equivalent time and attention, change cannot be attributed exclusively to mubasyarah. This does not make classroom action findings unimportant; it limits their claims to improvement in the specific instructional setting (Handayani & Fauji, 2022; Qomaruddin et al., 2023).

Variation in instruments further constrains comparison. Some studies use oral tests, while others rely on general achievement scores, observation sheets, mastery percentages, questionnaires, or interviews. The expression Arabic ability sometimes combines speaking with reading, grammar, and vocabulary. This review therefore does not calculate an average improvement across studies or claim a uniform effect. Its conclusions are based on patterns in the direction of findings and implementation conditions, not on numerical equivalence that the literature does not provide (Zahro et al., 2020; Sugiharto & Yasin, 2020; Safaruddin et al., 2022).

Generalization is also limited by setting. Many studies were conducted in pesantren or institutions that already maintain a language culture, additional schedules, and shared discipline. Their results may not transfer directly to general schools with limited exposure or highly heterogeneous classes. Future research should report initial proficiency, language-learning history, exposure hours, class size, teacher qualifications, instructional materials, intervention duration, and the reliability of speaking assessment so that findings can be compared more fairly (Syarifah & Juriana, 2020; Jamil & Agung, 2022). A conceptual limitation appears when first-language use is treated as inherently harmful. At beginning levels, brief first-language explanations can prevent serious misunderstanding, clarify complex instructions, or support grammatical reflection. What should be avoided is translation-dominated instruction that removes opportunities for interaction, not all first-language use regardless of function. This boundary supports a flexible model that maintains Arabic as the principal medium while recognizing purposeful support (Munawwir, 2020; Ngarifah et al., 2022).

6. Integration with Eclectic Instruction

An eclectic method should not mean combining techniques without a rationale. Integration should begin with a diagnosis of the objective and the learning difficulty. When the main objective is confidence in responding, instruction may begin with demonstration and direct dialogue. When persistent structural errors obstruct meaning, the teacher may add a concise explicit explanation and focused practice before returning to communication. This sequence keeps interaction at the center while supplying support that strict versions of the Direct Method may not provide (Munawwir, 2020; Ngarifah et al., 2022). Research in madrasah settings suggests that combined techniques can support learners with varied proficiency, but they can also become an obstacle when the purpose of each activity is unclear. Rapid movement between methods increases cognitive demands and complicates evaluation. Teachers should explain the connection between vocabulary, structure, listening, and speaking tasks, and they should use consistent criteria from preliminary practice to final assessment (Pohan & Hasnah, 2022; Irawan et al., 2025). Table 2 summarizes implementation decisions derived from the synthesis. These recommendations are not a fixed package; they are a guide for adjusting instruction to classroom conditions.

Table 2. Conditional Implementation Guide

Condition	Instructional choice	Indicator	Risk addressed
Beginners with limited vocabulary	Visuals, gesture, patterned utterances, and very short dialogue	Comprehension and basic response	Input that exceeds learner capacity
Fear of error and low participation	Pair work, wait time, and delayed correction	Speaking turns and willingness	Dominance by a few learners
Fluency rises but accuracy stagnates	Brief explicit feedback followed by repeated production	Fluency and accuracy scored separately	Persistent errors
Large class	Small groups, rotating roles, and audio recordings	Speaking opportunity per learner	Teacher-centered interaction
Limited exposure outside class	Language clubs and short audio assignments	Weekly frequency of use	Rapid loss of gains
Heterogeneous proficiency	Tiered scaffolding and task choice	Progress relative to baseline	Uniform target for all learners

7. Implications for Research and Practice

For teachers, the principal implication is not the obligation to apply a pure form of mubasyarah, but the need to ensure that each lesson includes comprehensible input, equitable oral production, focused feedback, and continuity of practice. Progress should be monitored through simple but consistent evidence, including recordings of initial and final tasks, analytic rubrics, speaking-turn records, and learner reflection. These sources help distinguish increased confidence from changes in fluency or accuracy (Maulida et al., 2021; Rahmah et al., 2023).

For researchers, future studies should compare mubasyarah with conditions that receive equivalent practice time, use comparable speaking tasks before and after the intervention, and employ assessors who are unaware of group assignment when feasible. Reporting effect sizes, inter-rater reliability, attrition, and delayed outcomes would strengthen the evidence. Qualitative inquiry remains necessary for explaining why particular learners progress or fall behind, but its claims should remain focused on process and experience (Booth et al., 2022; Rochmat et al., 2023).

Digital tools can expand exposure through voice recording, asynchronous feedback, and online conversation, but technology does not automatically create meaningful interaction. Digital tasks still require a communicative objective, an audience, a time frame, and transparent assessment criteria. In the context of Society 5.0, the fundamental concerns remain instructional quality, teacher readiness, learner access, and alignment between activities and speaking indicators (Jamil & Agung, 2022).

This review has limitations. The search was restricted to publications issued from 2020 to 2026 and to sources traceable through official pages or DOI records. It did not include closed dissertations and did not undertake meta-analysis. Several articles reported limited information about participants and instruments, preventing a full risk-of-bias assessment. Even so, separating research design, outcome, context, and inferential limits provides a more defensible synthesis than treating all positive findings as equivalent proof of superiority.

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D. CONCLUSION

Evidence published between 2020 and 2026 indicates that mubasyarah is a promising approach for expanding speaking opportunities, increasing participation, strengthening confidence, and supporting context-specific fluency. The most consistent support appears when teachers make Arabic comprehensible through visual support and demonstration, provide gradual and repeated practice, create a safe climate for error, and extend exposure beyond the classroom. These conclusions are conditional and do not establish that mubasyarah is universally superior to every alternative method.

The evidence base remains constrained by the predominance of classroom action research, one-group designs, local samples, non-equivalent instruments, and the mixing of speaking outcomes with other language outcomes. Teacher competence, practice intensity, initial proficiency, institutional language environment, repeated testing, and supporting methods remain plausible alternative explanations. Perception and qualitative studies are important for understanding implementation, but they do not replace performance measures or comparison groups.

In practice, direct oral interaction can serve as the core of maharah kalam instruction, while selective first-language support, brief structural instruction, explicit feedback, and eclectic techniques are added on the basis of diagnosed needs. Future studies should disaggregate speaking indicators, use fair comparison conditions, report exposure time, and examine the durability of outcomes. Mubasyarah is therefore best

understood as a potentially valuable strategy within an instructional ecology rather than a universal prescription independent of learners, teachers, and institutional context.

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