Student-Centered Learning and Collaborative Learning in Arabic Language Education

[1]M. Safarul Khair, [2]Abdul Aziz, [3]Adi Fadli

[1,2,3] Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Indonesia
email: ([1]240406003.mhs@uinmataram.ac.id, [2]abdulaziz@uinmataram.ac.id,
[3]adi.fadli@uinmataram.ac.id)

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi implementasi Student-Centered Learning (SCL) dan Collaborative Learning (CL) dalam konteks pendidikan bahasa Arab. Ketika paradigma pendidikan bergeser dari pendekatan tradisional yang berpusat pada guru ke metode yang lebih interaktif dan digerakkan oleh peserta didik, kebutuhan untuk memahami dan menerapkan SCL dan CL menjadi semakin relevan. Melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini meninjau literatur dan praktik pendidikan yang menunjukkan bagaimana kedua strategi ini berkontribusi untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan peserta didik, otonomi, keterampilan komunikasi, dan pemikiran kritis di ruang kelas bahasa Arab. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mengintegrasikan SCL dan CL tidak hanya meningkatkan efektivitas pemerolehan bahasa Arab tetapi juga mendorong partisipasi aktif dan pemecahan masalah kooperatif di antara siswa. Namun, tantangan seperti manajemen kelas dan keterlibatan siswa yang tidak setara membutuhkan perencanaan yang cermat dan fasilitasi guru. Studi ini menyimpulkan dengan menekankan pentingnya pendekatan ini dalam pedagogi bahasa modern dan memberikan rekomendasi untuk penelitian dan implementasi kelas di masa depan.

Kata kunci: Student-Centered Learning, Collaborative Learning, Pendidikan Bahasa Arab, Pedagogi Bahasa

ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) and Collaborative Learning (CL) in the context of Arabic language education. As educational paradigms shift from traditional teacher-centered approaches to more interactive and learner-driven methods, the need to understand and apply SCL and CL becomes increasingly relevant. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this research reviews literature and educational practices that demonstrate how these two strategies contribute to improving learner engagement, autonomy, communication skills, and critical thinking in Arabic classrooms. The findings indicate that integrating SCL and CL not only enhances the effectiveness of Arabic language acquisition but also encourages active participation and cooperative problem-solving among students. However, challenges such as classroom management and unequal student involvement require careful planning and teacher facilitation. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of these approaches in modern language pedagogy and provides recommendations for future research and classroom implementation.

Keywords: student-centered learning, collaborative learning, Arabic language education, language pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the paradigm of language education has shifted significantly in response to the evolving demands of learners and the changing landscape of global communication. Traditional language instruction, which often centered on the teacher as the sole source of knowledge and relied heavily on memorization and repetition, is increasingly seen as insufficient for developing the skills necessary for real-world communication (Rahiem, 2024). Learners today are not merely passive recipients of information but are expected to be active participants in constructing meaning, engaging with authentic texts, and using language creatively and purposefully (Jordan, 2009). This transformation is particularly evident in the growing emphasis on student-centered learning, a pedagogical model that places the student at the heart of the learning experience and recognizes the importance of individual learning styles, prior knowledge, and personal interests (Sipman, n.d.).

In the context of Arabic language education, especially for non-native speakers, the reliance on conventional teaching methods presents several limitations. While grammar-translation and rote memorization may provide a foundational understanding of linguistic structures, they often fail to foster communicative competence or contextual fluency. As a result, many learners struggle to apply their knowledge of Arabic in meaningful ways, both inside and outside the classroom. Furthermore, these traditional methods can be demotivating, particularly when students do not perceive the relevance of what they are learning to their personal goals or real-life situations. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need to implement more engaging, relevant, and learner-driven approaches in Arabic language instruction, which can respond to diverse learner needs and promote deeper, more sustainable learning outcomes (Reichelt, 2024).

Student-centered learning (SCL) responds to these challenges by emphasizing the active role of learners in the educational process. This approach encourages students to take ownership of their learning, make decisions about how they learn best, and reflect on their progress. In an Arabic language classroom, SCL might involve learners choosing topics of interest for speaking or writing tasks, engaging in self-assessment, or participating in project-based activities that simulate real-world communication. Such practices promote not only linguistic skills but also higher-order thinking, creativity, and learner autonomy. Moreover, student-centered classrooms tend to foster a more positive and inclusive learning environment, where students feel valued and supported in their efforts to learn.

Complementary to student-centered learning is the concept of collaborative learning (CL), which emphasizes the social nature of language acquisition. In collaborative learning settings, students work together in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, solve problems,

or discuss topics, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful interaction and peer learning. In the Arabic language context, collaborative activities such as role plays, group storytelling, or peer editing can help learners practice new vocabulary and grammar in authentic communicative situations. These interactions not only improve language proficiency but also enhance learners' interpersonal skills, such as active listening, cooperation, and negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, collaborative learning aligns well with the communicative goals of language education, as it mirrors the interactive and cooperative nature of real-life language use.

The integration of student-centered and collaborative approaches into Arabic language education offers several advantages. First, these methods contribute to increased learner motivation by making lessons more engaging and relevant. Second, they support the development of communicative competence by providing learners with opportunities to use Arabic in meaningful, contextualized ways. Third, they encourage a more equitable classroom dynamic, where all learners have a voice and can contribute to the learning process. Additionally, these approaches align with broader educational goals such as the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills. In a world where communication across languages and cultures is increasingly essential, fostering these skills in Arabic language learners is not only desirable but necessary.

Despite the many benefits, implementing student-centered and collaborative learning in Arabic language classrooms is not without its challenges. Teachers may face practical constraints such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and a lack of access to suitable materials and training. Additionally, both teachers and students may hold deep-rooted beliefs about the role of the teacher as the authority in the classroom, making the transition to more learner-centered methods difficult. Institutional expectations, curriculum rigidity, and standardized assessment practices may further complicate efforts to innovate pedagogical approaches. Nevertheless, with appropriate support, professional development, and a willingness to adapt, it is possible to overcome these barriers and create Arabic language learning environments that are more effective, engaging, and aligned with the realities of language use in the modern world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation and impact of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) and Collaborative Learning (CL) strategies in Arabic language education. The study aimed to gain in-depth insights into how these pedagogical methods are applied in actual classroom settings, how they influence learner engagement and autonomy, and what challenges and enabling factors shape their effectiveness. A qualitative design was deemed most appropriate, as it allows for the rich,

contextual understanding of educational phenomena through direct interaction with participants and naturalistic observations (G. et al., 2010). The emphasis was placed on capturing the lived experiences of teachers and students as they navigated the integration of student-centered and collaborative methods in a subject known for its linguistic and cultural complexities.

Data analysis followed a thematic coding process using an inductive approach. All data were transcribed and coded manually, with emergent categories grouped into broader themes that corresponded to the research focus: student autonomy, engagement, collaboration, institutional constraints, and pedagogical beliefs. Patterns and divergences were carefully examined to construct a nuanced understanding of how SCL and CL unfold in Arabic classrooms. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis to account for researcher bias, with regular peer debriefing and participant validation enhancing the credibility of the findings. The interpretive nature of this analysis was not aimed at generalization but at generating transferable insights that can inform practice and policy in similar educational contexts.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the findings derived from field observations, teacher and student interviews, and instructional document reviews related to the use of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) and Collaborative Learning (CL) in Arabic language classrooms. The discussion is organized thematically into six comprehensive areas to offer a clearer picture of pedagogical practices, observed outcomes, and emerging challenges in the contemporary teaching of Arabic as a second or foreign language.

1. **The Emergence of Student Autonomy in Arabic Classrooms**

The implementation of SCL in Arabic classrooms revealed a transformative yet varied shift from the conventional teacher-centered paradigm to more student-oriented learning (Singh, 2011). In classrooms where SCL was actively embraced, students were encouraged to make personal decisions about their learning processes, including choosing the format of their projects, initiating discussions, and engaging in peer evaluations (أسعد فندو & علي أحمد, 2023). For example, in one observed school, a task on describing one's family allowed students to design their own visual aids, decide between oral or written formats for presentations, and participate in peer feedback sessions. These choices were not just cosmetic but fostered a deep sense of agency among learners.

This autonomy inspired greater responsibility in learning. Students were more inclined to prepare beyond classroom hours, often using digital media, Islamic content, or children's Arabic books to supplement their knowledge. They also began to formulate questions and provide feedback more frequently during lessons, signaling an evolution in classroom dynamics. This proactive behavior marks a departure from passive listening and reveals the potential of SCL to produce reflective learners who are invested in their educational journey. Nonetheless, the extent of implementation varied significantly. In some contexts, SCL activities were inserted sporadically rather than embedded consistently in the curriculum, which limited their overall effectiveness. This indicates a need for systemic integration supported by flexible syllabi and sustained teacher training to normalize learner autonomy in Arabic instruction.

2. Motivation and Engagement: A Shift from Passive to Active Learning

Motivation and engagement emerged as strong indicators of success in classrooms where student-centered practices were adopted. Students expressed excitement when involved in selecting learning topics, participating in classroom decisions, and creating projects based on their interests. One vivid example was a class tasked with keeping a "language journal," where students wrote daily entries reflecting on their use of Arabic vocabulary. Rather than focusing solely on grammatical precision, the journal aimed to promote habitual language use and self-expression. Students voluntarily shared entries, often using them to initiate class discussions and seek feedback, showing increased emotional investment in their learning.

Experiential tasks such as simulated marketplaces, role-playing as teachers or religious figures, and community surveys conducted in Arabic also stimulated significant enthusiasm. These activities did not merely enhance vocabulary acquisition but embedded the language into meaningful contexts that connected with students' lives. As a result, students who previously viewed Arabic as abstract and difficult began to see it as a tool for real communication and cultural connection. These shifts were especially notable among students with lower academic confidence, as the interactive tasks reduced anxiety and reframed errors as learning opportunities.

This engagement was further supported by the shift in teacher-student relationships. Learners reported feeling more respected when their voices influenced the learning process. The sense of being heard and having one's preferences considered added emotional depth to the learning experience. As a result, attendance improved, and classroom energy shifted toward collective progress rather than individual survival. While not all students responded equally to SCL methods—particularly those with limited prior exposure to autonomous learning—the overall trend pointed to a positive correlation between student agency and motivation.

3. Collaborative Learning as a Catalyst for Language Use

Collaborative Learning (CL) strategies proved to be highly effective in enhancing language acquisition through interpersonal communication (Namaziandost et al., 2019). In group storytelling exercises, peer interviews, and collaborative reading sessions, students engaged in tasks that required them to actively produce, negotiate, and clarify meaning in Arabic. These activities not only supported language development but also fostered interpersonal skills, peer solidarity, and a classroom culture of mutual support. For instance, in one cooperative reading session, each group received different paragraphs from a short Arabic story. They were responsible for translating, summarizing, and teaching the content to other groups. This format ensured accountability and deepened comprehension, as students learned both from teaching and being taught.

Such tasks allowed for differentiated learning opportunities. High-performing students often took initiative in explaining grammar and vocabulary, which reinforced their knowledge while helping peers. Meanwhile, lower-proficiency learners gained confidence through scaffolded peer support. Structured group debates on moral topics or social issues in the Arab world also proved effective. Students had to prepare arguments, listen critically, and respond in real time using target language expressions. These debates encouraged spontaneous language use and helped students move beyond memorized phrases into authentic communication.

In this setup, teachers became facilitators who monitored group dynamics, provided strategic language input, and ensured that all voices were heard. This change in teacher role contributed to more democratic and inclusive classrooms. Students who were typically shy began to participate more actively, supported by the low-stakes environment of peer interaction. The collaborative model thus emerged not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a social equalizer, capable of empowering all learners regardless of their linguistic background.

4. Challenges to SCL and CL Implementation

Despite the successes, several challenges complicated the implementation of SCL and CL in Arabic language education. Teachers cited a lack of adequate professional development as a significant barrier (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). While many instructors were enthusiastic about adopting modern pedagogies, they struggled with designing tasks that balanced communicative goals with the structural intricacies of Arabic. For instance, integrating SCL while teaching verb conjugations or complex i'rab (case endings) was perceived as daunting without suitable models or materials.

Institutional limitations further constrained innovation (Laursen & Salter, 2006). Arabic curricula in many settings remain tightly bound to exam-oriented instruction or religious memorization frameworks, which discourage deviation from textbook-driven lessons. Teachers often felt pressured to complete a set syllabus within a limited timeframe, making it difficult to incorporate open-ended or exploratory learning experiences. In such environments, SCL and CL were often viewed as luxuries rather than necessities, used only when there was leftover time.

Additionally, physical classroom conditions posed logistical problems. Overcrowded rooms, lack of flexible furniture, and limited audio-visual resources made group work noisy, chaotic, or impractical. Teachers reported challenges in monitoring multiple groups simultaneously, especially in schools lacking teaching assistants or technological aids. From the student side, emotional barriers also surfaced. Learners unaccustomed to collaboration or open-ended tasks sometimes hesitated to participate, fearing peer judgment or personal embarrassment. These factors highlight the need for holistic reforms that include teacher training, curriculum flexibility, classroom redesign, and socio-emotional support systems to facilitate broader adoption of student-centered and collaborative approaches.

5. Influence of Teacher Beliefs and Institutional Norms

The success or failure of SCL and CL initiatives often hinged on teacher beliefs and the broader institutional climate. Teachers who adopted a constructivist view—seeing learning as an active, student-driven process—were more likely to implement these methods effectively. Such teachers trusted their students' capacity for self-direction, welcomed learner errors as opportunities for growth, and frequently reflected on their own teaching practices. Their classrooms were filled with experimentation, flexible pacing, and dialogue-driven instruction.

In contrast, teachers holding more traditional beliefs—where knowledge is delivered top-down—tended to be more skeptical of SCL and CL. Even when they attempted such methods, their practices often reverted to teacher-centered approaches midway through the lesson. For example, a collaborative task would begin with group instructions but quickly become a lecture as the teacher felt compelled to "correct" or "guide" every step. This inconsistency often confused students and diminished the autonomy necessary for genuine collaborative learning.

Institutional culture played a pivotal role as well. In schools where administrators promoted teacher autonomy, encouraged experimentation, and provided professional development resources, SCL and CL flourished. Some institutions even scheduled regular peer observations and collaborative planning sessions among teachers, which strengthened pedagogical coherence and mutual support. On the other hand, in bureaucratic or exam-

driven institutions, such initiatives struggled to gain traction. Teachers feared administrative pushback or negative evaluations if test scores dropped, deterring them from trying student-driven approaches.

The data suggest that fostering a collaborative and reflective culture among educators is just as important as training in SCL techniques. Teachers need safe spaces to share their experiences, learn from one another, and jointly solve instructional challenges. Only through such community-building efforts can SCL and CL transition from isolated experiments to standard practice in Arabic language education.

6. Implications for Arabic Language Pedagogy

The findings emphasize the transformative potential of student-centered and collaborative pedagogies in modern Arabic language instruction (Febriani et al., 2020). These approaches address many of the limitations of traditional methods by enhancing learner engagement, promoting practical language use, and creating more inclusive classrooms. However, their application must be contextually grounded, particularly given the linguistic complexity and sociocultural significance of Arabic.

Blended models that balance communicative tasks with targeted grammar instruction seem particularly promising. For instance, while group projects can help internalize vocabulary and real-life dialogue structures, mini-lessons or guided grammar workshops remain essential for teaching the nuanced morphological patterns unique to Arabic. A strategic combination of inductive and deductive methods ensures that both fluency and accuracy are developed harmoniously.

Teachers play a central role in making this transition. They must be equipped not only with methodological tools but also with reflective practices that help them adapt their approaches to diverse learner needs. Institutional support, in the form of ongoing training, curricular flexibility, and administrative encouragement, is likewise vital. Furthermore, involving students in reflective activities—such as peer feedback, learning journals, and self-assessment—can help sustain motivation and reinforce metacognitive skills.

Ultimately, the success of SCL and CL in Arabic language education depends on a systemic commitment to learner-centered principles. When students are treated as active participants and co-constructors of knowledge, their linguistic, emotional, and intellectual capacities are fully activated. This pedagogical shift not only improves learning outcomes but also aligns with the broader educational goal of forming thoughtful, capable, and socially responsible individuals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of Student-Centered Learning (SCL) and Collaborative Learning (CL) in Arabic language education demonstrates substantial promise in enhancing student engagement, autonomy, and communicative competence. Through various interactive methods such as role-playing, group reading, and experiential tasks, learners were empowered to take ownership of their educational journey and engage meaningfully with the Arabic language. The findings clearly illustrate that when students are given more responsibility and support to collaborate, they not only improve their language skills but also develop greater confidence, motivation, and critical thinking abilities.

However, the successful implementation of SCL and CL approaches requires thoughtful planning, institutional support, and ongoing teacher development. Challenges such as rigid curricula, large class sizes, and limited teacher training must be addressed to fully realize the benefits of these pedagogical strategies. By fostering a supportive learning environment, encouraging professional collaboration among teachers, and aligning instructional design with learners' needs, Arabic language classrooms can transition into dynamic, inclusive, and student-driven spaces that prepare learners for both academic and real-world communication.

REFERENCES

Febriani, S. R., Wargadinata, W., Syuhadak, S., & Ibrahim, F. M. A. (2020). Design of Arabic Learning for Senior High School in the 21st Century. *Jurnal Al-Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, *12*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.24042/albayan.v12i1.5886

G., M. L., T., D. S., & H., K. V. (2010). *Methods in educational research*. John Wiley & Sons.

Jordan, T. (2009). The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games and Learning. In *Information, Communication & Society* (Vol. 12, Issue 2). https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802552890

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *4*(2), 193–212. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2005.17268566

Laursen, K., & Salter, A. (2006). Open for innovation: the role of openness in explaining innovation performance among U.K. manufacturing firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, *27*(2), 131–150. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.507

Namaziandost, E., Shatalebi, V., & Nasri, M. (2019). The Impact of Cooperative Learning on Developing Speaking Ability and Motivation Toward Learning English. *Journal of Language and Education*, *5*(3), 83–101. https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2019.9809

Rahiem, M. D. H. (2024). Religion, Education, Science and Technology towards a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future. In *Religion, Education, Science and Technology towards a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future*. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003322054

Reichelt, M. (2024). *NNESTs, Teacher Education, Language Diversity, and Equality* (pp. 195–

206). https://doi.org/10.37514/INT-B.2024.2142.1.3

Singh, N. (2011). Student- centered learning (SCL) in classrooms — A comprehensive overview. *Educational Quest: An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences*, *2*(2), 275–282. http://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:eq&volume=2&issue=2&article=016&type=pdf

Sipman, G. (n.d.). *Enhancing Teacher Pedagogical Tact Through Intuition : a Design Study*. https://doi.org/10.3990/1.9789036551854

أسعد فندو, ح., & علي أحمد, ح. (2023). أساليب التعلم المتمحور حول الطالب مع الإشارة إلى دور المعلمين : دراسة نظرية. *مجلة العلوم الأساسية, 11*(18), 245–266. https://doi.org/10.31185/bsj.Vol11.Iss18.536