

Behaviorism Theory in a Language Environment: A Case Study of Arabic Language Proficiency at Pesantren Al-Bukhari, Southeast Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the application of behaviorism theory in the language environment and its impact on Arabic language proficiency among santri at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo. The research focuses on two main questions: (1) how behaviorism theory is implemented, and (2) what factors influence the effectiveness of this environment in enhancing students' mastery of the Arabic language.

Design/methods/approach – A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was used. Participants included santri and language program coordinators. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model: data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing.

Findings – The findings indicate that Skinner's behaviorist principles are implemented through various language programs, including daily Arabic conversations, vocabulary memorization, thematic speeches, and summarizing Arabic media. Reinforcement is applied through punishments or fines for rule violations. Internal factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and aspirations to study in the Middle East, along with external factors like the school environment, social interactions, and teacher support, contribute to the program's effectiveness.

Research implications/limitations – While the implementation is generally effective, challenges remain in student participation and limited learning facilities. This study is also limited in scope to a single pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and does not yet include the integration of digital technology. The study does not yet address the integration of digital technology.

Originality/value – This study confirms that behaviorism theory can effectively enhance Arabic language proficiency through reinforcement and habituation. It also highlights opportunities for integrating digital technology in similar educational contexts. Furthermore, the study opens opportunities for integrating behaviorism with digital technology in other educational institutions.

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Introduction

Learning constitutes a fundamental element within the field of educational sciences, encompassing both explicit and implicit objectives. It also serves as the primary reference point for the interaction between learners and educators, which unfolds through the integrated engagement of both psychological and physical activities (Hafi et al., 2024). Throughout the teaching and learning process, various educational approaches and theories have emerged, developed by scholars, including behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and humanism. This diversity of theories reflects distinct perspectives in explaining the learning process and its pedagogical implications, particularly in the acquisition of a second language (Mahmudi, 2016; Nuralim et al., 2023).

Among the prevailing theories, behaviorism has emerged as one of the most dominantly applied frameworks in the context of language learning, including the instruction of Arabic. This theory emphasizes that learning is a process of observable behavioral change, which occurs through practice, repetition, and reinforcement (Cahyo et al., 2025). From a behaviorist perspective, the learning process centers on the relationship between stimulus and response. Each learning action is perceived as a response to stimuli provided by the learning environment. Consequently, learning success heavily relies on the teacher's ability to manage stimuli and to provide reinforcement for the desired behaviors (Arisnaini, 2022; Maryam, 2024).

According to B.F. Skinner, learning occurs through the process of operant conditioning, in which behaviors that receive positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated (Hs, 2020). Skinner asserted that student behavior can be shaped through control over the environment that provides stimuli, as well as through appropriate and consistent reinforcement (Mahmudi, 2016; Primaningtyas, 2016). Behaviorist scholars argue that language acquisition occurs through five main stages: trial and error, memory, imitation, association, and analysis (Mahmudi, 2016).

Language learning, within the framework of behaviorism, is understood as a form of linguistic behavior that emerges from continuous interactions between stimulus and response, eventually forming habitual patterns (Habsy et al., 2023; Syamsiyah, 2017). Accordingly, Arabic language learning activities grounded in behaviorist principles tend to emphasize listening and speaking skills, as well as the active use of language in a supportive learning environment. Systematic drills and repeated exposure to material serve as the primary keys to successful language instruction (Arisnaini, 2022).

In its implementation, behaviorist-based learning is characterized by several features, such as the use of materials in the form of dialogues, repetition of idiomatic phrases, presentation of sentences within specific situational contexts, application of a deductive approach, emphasis on speech rather than grammatical structure, and the use of learning media such as language laboratories (Mursyidi, 2019). Learning programs developed in the form of modules or programmed instruction are also grounded in the principle of stimulus-response relationships, with reinforcement emphasized as a key factor in shaping behavior (Safaruddin, 2016). In this context, reinforcement may take the form of rewards, praise, or task reduction, all of which aim to strengthen the desired response (Fitriya et al., 2025).

One of the significant contexts for the application of behaviorist theory in Arabic language learning is the pesantren environment. Pesantren are traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that not only provide religious instruction but also

cultivate students' character and Arabic language proficiency. Mastery of the Arabic language is a fundamental competence for santri, both as a means of communication and as a tool for accessing Islamic teachings directly from their original texts.

One effective approach to enhancing students' proficiency in Arabic is through the creation of a language-rich environment, or *bi'ah lughawiyah*. This environment enables students (santri) to use Arabic in their daily lives, both in formal settings such as classroom instruction and in informal contexts such as conversations in dormitories or prayer halls (Awwaludin et al., 2022). *Huda's_*(2017) study indicates that the internalization of Arabic language culture and the implementation of systematic language-environment strategies can foster a sustained culture of communication among santri, thereby accelerating natural and functional language acquisition.

Language environments are generally classified into two categories: formal and informal. Formal environments are typically found in educational settings such as schools or other institutional contexts, where the target language is taught systematically by instructors through textbooks and structured learning materials. In contrast, informal environments are more spontaneous and occur in natural social settings, such as peer interactions, daily conversations, or extracurricular activities. Although not architecturally designed, informal environments offer significant opportunities for students to practice using the target language in authentic contexts (Gotama, 2023; Sukma, 2021).

In the context of Arabic language instruction in pesantren, the creation of both formal and informal environments where Arabic is actively used is essential to support the habituation process. Unfortunately, numerous challenges persist in its implementation. Several factors contribute to the slow progress of Arabic language acquisition in pesantren, including low student motivation, suboptimal teacher competence, the irrelevance of learning materials, and unsupportive learning environments (Arisnaini, 2022).

Previous studies have also emphasized the importance of classroom management in establishing a conducive learning environment. In the context of Arabic language learning, classroom management can be carried out using approaches aligned with the objectives of the language program, such as authoritative, rule-based, emotional-relational, or pluralistic approaches. Each of these approaches may be adapted to suit the needs and characteristics of the students (Quasi, 2016). Effective classroom management within a language-rich environment will foster the development of positive language habits among students.

Research on the development of *bi'ah lughawiyah* in the pesantren context has been conducted by several scholars. *Addaeroby_ & Febriani_*(2024), for instance, demonstrated that the application of Skinner's behaviorist principles in teaching maharah kalam (speaking skills) had a significant impact on students' speaking proficiency. The study highlighted the importance of repetition, reinforcement, and practical application within the classroom context; however, it did not thoroughly explore the dynamics of the language environment beyond the classroom setting.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by *Masnun* (2025) revealed the active role of the Qism al-Lughah (Language Division) in shaping the Arabic language environment in modern pesantren. They emphasized the importance of language use regulations and systematic supervision; however, their approach remained primarily structural-organizational in nature and did not sufficiently incorporate learning theory principles, such as behaviorism, into its application.

The research by [Arisnaini \(2022\)](#) also examined the implementation of behaviorist-structuralist theory in Arabic language instruction, focusing on sentence pattern repetition and structural manipulation. Nevertheless, this study was primarily centered on classroom teaching techniques and did not address the integration of behaviorist theory with the sustained development of bi'ah lughawiyyah within the pesantren environment.

[Huda \(2025\)](#), through his study at Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah, emphasized the importance of internalizing Arabic language culture through daily habituation. However, the study did not provide an in-depth examination of the role of behaviorist learning theory in shaping such an environment, nor did it explore how internal and external factors influence its development.

Complementing this, [Runtoni's \(2023\)](#) research analyzed both behaviorist and cognitivist approaches in Arabic language learning. The findings highlighted that behaviorist-based strategies tend to be more effective in beginner-level language learning contexts, although their success is highly dependent on the design of the learning environment and the availability of social support.

Therefore, behaviorist theory—which emphasizes stimulus, response, repetition, and reinforcement—holds strong relevance in the development of Arabic language environments in pesantren. Through the structured formation of language habits, supported by teacher control and positive reinforcement, santri can gradually enhance their Arabic language proficiency.

Nevertheless, the implementation of behaviorist theory within the pesantren environment has not been extensively examined. There remains a research gap concerning the specific application of behaviorist principles in the creation of Arabic language environments, as well as the various factors that influence the effectiveness of such environments in enhancing students' language skills.

Based on the background above, this article aims to examine how behaviorist theory is applied within a language-rich environment to enhance students' Arabic language proficiency at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, Southeast Sulawesi. Specifically, this study seeks to address two main research questions: (1) how are the principles of behaviorist theory implemented in a language environment to support Arabic language learning? and (2) what factors influence the effectiveness of the language environment in improving Arabic language acquisition?

This study was conducted at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, located in East Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, which is known for its active implementation of the bi'ah lughawiyyah system. It is expected that the findings of this study will enrich the understanding of behaviorist approaches in the development of Arabic language environments and serve as a valuable reference for Islamic education practitioners in designing effective language learning strategies.

Methods

1. Research Approach and Type

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the meaning, processes, and dynamics of learning activities at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, East Kolaka, Southeast Sulawesi, particularly regarding the application of behaviorism learning theory in a language environment to improve Arabic language proficiency. Descriptive research

aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe phenomena, events, and social conditions observed in the field.

2. Research Location and Subjects

The study was conducted at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, located in East Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The research subjects included the pesantren leader (kyai), teachers, language program administrators, and students (santri) who were directly involved in Arabic language learning activities and the management of the Arabic language environment.

3. Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected using the following techniques: (1) Participatory observation, conducted to directly observe the daily language-related activities among the students; (2) In-depth interviews, carried out in a semi-structured manner with key informants such as the pesantren leader, Arabic language teachers, language program administrators, and santri; (3) Document analysis, performed on supporting materials such as program manuals, activity schedules, evaluation reports, and internal regulations related to the language environment.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, consisting of three stages:

- (1) **Data reduction**, involving the process of selecting, filtering, and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives;
- (2) **Data display**, presented in the form of structured and systematic descriptive narratives;
- (3) **Conclusion drawing and verification**, carried out inductively by identifying emerging patterns, relationships, and meanings from the field data.

5. Data Validity

To ensure data validity, triangulation was employed, including triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, in order to test the credibility of information from different perspectives. In addition, the following steps were taken: (1) Member checking, i.e., confirming the data and interpretations with the respective informants; (2) Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, aimed at strengthening contextual understanding and ensuring accurate data representation.

This methodological approach is expected to yield a comprehensive, in-depth, and credible depiction of the implementation of behaviorist learning theory in the context of Arabic language instruction within the pesantren setting.

Result

1. Behaviorism Theory in the Language Environment to Enhance Arabic Language Proficiency

At Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, both male and female students are provided with dormitory facilities that accommodate various additional activities, including language-based programs aimed at supporting and improving students' language skills. These additional activities include *vocaban* (vocabulary drilling), *muhadatsah*

(conversation practice), *muhadlroroh* (public speaking or speech practice), *tasyiji'l lughoh* (language motivation activities), and watching Arabic-language films. These activities are organized on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

To facilitate the implementation of each program, a team of student coordinators is assigned specifically to manage the language activities. Viewed from the perspective of behaviorism theory, the language activities implemented within the dormitory environment of Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo reflect the behaviorist approach, particularly in the following aspects:

1.1. Types of Stimulus Provided to Students at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo

The two foreign languages used in this context are Arabic and English. A specific schedule is implemented, where students are required to speak Arabic on certain days and English on others. The stimulus applied in this language-based approach lies in the students' need to comprehend what is being said in order to provide an appropriate response during interactions with others.

One of the key activities is vocabulary drilling, which involves the collective pronunciation of selected vocabulary items. This activity is conducted cooperatively in the mosque after the *'isha* prayer. The students begin by sitting in orderly rows, after which one of the male or female language coordinators—those entrusted with the responsibility of managing language activities—presents the material and writes the vocabulary (*mufrodat*) on the board or designated surface.

The students are instructed to copy the vocabulary items into their notebooks and then memorize them. Once they have memorized the vocabulary, they are called individually to recite it (*setor mufrodat*) before returning to the dormitory for dinner preparation. For students who have not yet memorized the assigned vocabulary that evening, the coordinators provide an opportunity to recite it after dinner in the dormitory. If they are still unable to recite it, an additional session is provided after the *Subh* prayer, which includes vocabulary recitation and speaking practice in either Arabic or English.

If a student fails to follow the rules within the language environment, disciplinary action is applied. For male students, the punishment is in the form of *Jasus*, a symbolic sanction given to those who violate the agreed-upon language program policies. The *jasus* consists of a wooden block worn around the neck and must be used until the designated language period ends, typically lasting five days from Monday to Friday. For female students, a similar punishment is applied using a piece of cardboard with the phrase "I violated the language rule" written on it. The *jasus* is worn during their daily activities as a visible reminder.

This practice is supported by an interview with Ustadz Saparullah, who stated:

"The stimulus provided to students in the language program at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo is implemented in stages. Students receive language material, write it in their notebooks, and memorize it. Once they are ready, they recite the vocabulary one by one before dinner. If they are not ready, they are given additional opportunities after dinner or after the dawn (Subh) prayer, including speaking practice in Arabic or English." (Saparullah, Interview, February 23, 2022).

A student named Ahmad shared his experience with the *jasus* punishment:

"If we break the language rules, for example by speaking Indonesian outside of the permitted time, the language coordinator will immediately give us the jasus. For male students, it's a wooden block hung around the neck. At first, it was embarrassing

to wear it for five days, but over time it became a reminder not to repeat the mistake," he said with a smile. He added that the punishment helped the students become more disciplined and enthusiastic about using Arabic in their daily activities at the pesantren (Ahmad, Interview, February 23, 2022).

Based on the interviews with Ustadz Saparullah and Ahmad, it can be concluded that the application of stimulus in the language environment program at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo is systematically and continuously structured. The process begins with the delivery of language material, vocabulary transcription, memorization, and individual recitation. Additional opportunities are provided in the evening or after the dawn prayer for those who need more time to recite and practice conversational skills in Arabic or English.

Discipline is reinforced through a symbolic sanction known as *jasus*, which serves as a behavioral reminder for students who violate the language rules. As Ahmad mentioned, although it initially caused discomfort, the *jasus* eventually served as a motivating factor for greater consistency in Arabic language use. Thus, the combination of structured stimulus and symbolic reinforcement serves as an effective strategy in fostering a strong Arabic language culture within the pesantren environment.

1.2. Types of Responses from Students at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo

The students' responses to the stimuli provided in the language environment reflect their awareness of the importance of vocabulary mastery. They believe that memorizing foreign vocabulary—whether introduced in formal instruction or acquired informally through daily conversations with peers—is a crucial part of their life in the dormitory. Every language-related activity is closely tied to vocabulary, and the lack of sufficient vocabulary often hinders their ability to understand others, which in turn impairs their ability to respond appropriately and engage in meaningful interaction.

Another response observed among students is their effort to study the assigned topics for speeches or conversations. The obligation to practice dialogues in Muhadatsah sessions and to deliver structured discourse in speech activities (Muhadloroh) compels students to actively transform the vocabulary they have learned into coherent conversational and discursive texts.

Furthermore, students are required to understand and summarize foreign language utterances, especially from audiovisual media. One of the more challenging tasks is understanding Arabic-language films. As a result, students must pay close attention to every utterance made by their peers and to every line of dialogue in the films they watch. Listening to sentences in a foreign language, particularly Arabic, is a difficult task—especially when the speakers are native Arabic speakers. The difference between the formal Arabic (Fusha) typically learned in school and the colloquial Arabic used in daily communication requires students to concentrate fully and listen attentively to grasp meaning accurately.

Interview findings from Ustadzah Hisma revealed that,

"The responses we give to students are adjusted according to their individual conditions," she explained when interviewed at the language activity area. *"If a student can recite their memorized vocabulary fluently, we usually give immediate praise, such as 'MasyaAllah, excellent' or 'Keep it up, you're doing well.' This is a form of appreciation to help them feel recognized. However, if a student hasn't memorized the vocabulary or violates the language rules, we don't scold them harshly. Instead, we take a personal approach. We speak to them kindly, offer motivation, and help them*

understand the importance of language without feeling afraid. What matters most is that they remain enthusiastic about learning and feel supported,” she stated with great patience (*Hisma, Interview, February 23, 2022*).

A student named Wahdini also shared her experience participating in the language program at the pesantren:

“To become fluent in Arabic, memorizing mufrodat (vocabulary) is the most important part. Every time I encounter a new word, I write it in my notebook and memorize it. Sometimes I learn from my friends too—when we’re chatting and I hear a word I don’t understand, I ask them what it means,” she explained.

She added that *muhadatsah* and *muhadloroh* practice helped her get used to constructing vocabulary into proper sentences.

“At first it was difficult, especially when speaking in front of friends, but over time it became easier. The hardest part is watching Arabic films, because the vocabulary is often different from what we learn in class. So I really have to focus and listen carefully to understand the story,” she said. According to Wahdini, the process is indeed challenging, but it has greatly helped improve her Arabic skills gradually (*Wahdini, Interview, February 23, 2022*).

Based on the interviews with Ustadzah Hisma and the student Wahdini, it can be concluded that the success of Arabic language learning at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo is strongly influenced by the appropriate response strategies employed by the teachers and the genuine efforts of the students in responding to various forms of instructional stimulus. The appreciative and personal approach taken by the teachers—such as giving praise and motivation—has been proven to foster students’ confidence and enthusiasm for learning without causing psychological pressure.

Meanwhile, on the students’ side, their active responses—such as taking notes, memorizing *mufrodat*, and participating in *muhadatsah* and *muhadloroh* activities—demonstrate their awareness of the importance of vocabulary mastery and real language practice. The challenges they face, particularly in understanding Arabic from audiovisual sources like films, drive them to enhance their listening and concentration skills. This overall process reflects a synergy between the teachers’ humanistic guidance and the students’ active participation, which together form the foundation of an effective and meaningful Arabic language learning environment.

1.3. Types of Reinforcement Given to Students at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo

To support students in providing optimal responses to the various stimuli presented, the language department—under the supervision of the dormitory coordinator—implements several forms of reinforcement as follows:

(1) Punishment for students who intentionally or unintentionally violate the language policy.

A violation is defined as the use of Indonesian on designated foreign language days, as outlined in the one-day-one-language schedule. The implementation of such punishments encourages students to maximize their efforts in using all the foreign vocabulary they have acquired when speaking in daily interactions.

(2) Mandatory vocabulary memorization.

Students are not permitted to intentionally skip this responsibility, as the language coordinators maintain a record of those who have completed or failed to complete the assigned vocabulary. Once new vocabulary is distributed, students are given a specific period in which they must recite their memorization. If they fail to do so within the allotted time, the coordinators may record their names and summon them to receive disciplinary action in the field.

(3) Similarly, participation in *muhadatsah*, *muhadloroh*, and *tasyiji'l lughoh* activities is compulsory.

Each student is required to complete the assignments given to them. If a student, whether intentionally or unintentionally, fails to participate in these activities, the language coordinators will record their absence and eventually summon them to receive disciplinary action.

(4) The selection of a "Language Ambassador"

This is a form of reinforcement in the form of a reward granted to students who demonstrate the highest level of language proficiency in the dormitory. The selection criteria include vocabulary mastery, performance in quizzes, and active participation in various language-related activities conducted previously.

Regarding the forms of reinforcement implemented at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, Ustadzah Rani explained:

"If a student violates the language policy—such as speaking Indonesian on Arabic or English days—it is immediately noted and may result in sanctions. The purpose is not to punish, but to help them develop the habit of using foreign languages in their daily lives".

She further added that the obligation to memorize vocabulary cannot simply be neglected:

*"If a student fails to recite their vocabulary memorization, they are usually called and may be required to perform a disciplinary task in the field." Activities such as *muhadatsah* and *muhadloroh* are also strictly supervised, and students who are negligent will have their names recorded.*

"However, we also give rewards, such as selecting a language ambassador for active and high-achieving students. It serves as motivation for them to stay enthusiastic," she concluded (Rani, Interview, February 23, 2022).

It is evident that the language program implemented in the dormitories emphasizes creating an immersive linguistic environment by habituating students to using foreign languages—Arabic and English—on a rotational basis. From Monday to Friday during the first week, students are required to speak Arabic. On Saturday and Sunday, they revert to their respective regional languages. In the second week, Monday to Friday is designated for English use, while weekends are again reserved for local languages.

Violations of this language policy are met with the *jasus* sanction, in the form of a cardboard or wooden placard worn around the neck of the student who broke the rule. This symbolic punishment aims to motivate students to take language learning seriously and apply it consistently in their daily activities at the pesantren.

This entire reinforcement system is not intended as mere discipline but as a strategic effort to cultivate the habit of foreign language communication among

students. When students become accustomed to speaking in a foreign language, their proficiency improves naturally over time.

2. Factors Influencing the Language Environment in Enhancing Arabic Language Proficiency

The factors that influence the language environment in improving Arabic language proficiency are divided into two main categories: internal factors and external factors. These are explained as follows:

2.1. Internal Factors

Internal factors include students' self-confidence, motivation to learn Arabic, individual learning styles, and their aspiration to continue their studies in the Middle East. This aligns with the results of an interview with Ustadz Saparullah, who stated:

"One of the influencing factors in Arabic language learning is the internal factor. Many students are persistent in learning, and their self-confidence is quite good. Although new students tend to be shy at first, over time they manage to adapt well to their environment. Some of them even have strong aspirations to pursue higher education in the Middle East, especially since there are alumni from Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo who have continued their studies in the Middle East and in Malaysia. This inspires current students and motivates them to improve their Arabic language proficiency." (Saparullah, Interview, February 23, 2022)

It can be concluded from this interview that internal motivation, student interest, and learning ability are key drivers in supporting the improvement of Arabic language mastery. These internal aspects help determine how effectively students engage with and respond to the language environment provided by the pesantren.

2.2. External Factors

External factors include the pesantren's environment such as the school (*madrasah*), dormitory life, peer interaction among students, limited participation in Arabic language activities, and inadequate facilities. These aspects align with the interview results with Ustadzah Eva, who stated:

*"External factors play a significant role in shaping a conducive Arabic language environment in the pesantren. Programs such as *yaum lughawi* (language day), mandatory vocabulary recitation (setor mufrodat), *muhadatsah* (conversational practice), and speech activities help students become accustomed to using Arabic".*

She further added, *"Support from teachers and language program coordinators is also essential—not only for supervision but also for personal guidance and motivation. Peer interaction contributes positively as well; students remind each other and even form study groups. In addition, learning media such as mini dictionaries, daily vocabulary boards, and Arabic-language films enrich students' exposure to the language." (Eva, Interview, February 23, 2022)*

Based on the interview with Ustadzah Eva, it can be concluded that external factors play an important role in shaping and reinforcing the Arabic language environment at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo. The school setting, dormitory environment, peer interaction, and structured programs such as the Arabic-speaking environment, *muhadatsah*, and vocabulary recitation obligations directly encourage students to actively use Arabic.

Moreover, the support of teachers and language coordinators—who not only supervise but also offer personal guidance—serves as a reinforcement in the language learning process. However, challenges remain, such as the low participation of students in language-based activities and the limited availability of learning media and facilities. These issues need to be addressed to optimize and broaden the development of a consistent and effective Arabic language environment.

It is important to note that a response is a reaction given following a stimulus, whether in the form of acceptance, rejection, indifference, or the expression of opinions or attitudes. Based on the activities provided as stimulus, students may respond by showing acceptance—fulfilling all assigned tasks and obligations—or rejection, such as violating rules or failing to complete given assignments (Sayyidaturrohimah & Budianto, 2023).

Discussion

Based on the research findings, it was discovered that the combined application of behaviorism learning theory and Bandura's social learning theory significantly contributes to the formation of student behavior. Behaviorism theory has proven effective in shaping desired behaviors through the stimulus–response mechanism, where appropriate behavior is positively reinforced, while inappropriate behavior receives measured negative consequences.

On the other hand, Bandura's social learning theory posits that learners acquire knowledge not only through direct experience, but also through observational learning, by watching models such as teachers, peers, or media representations. This process involves cognitive information processing and the internalization of values displayed by the observed models.

The combined application of both theories results in the development of positive and adaptive learning behaviors, enabling students to comprehend information, imitate positive actions, and select behaviors aligned with instructional goals. These findings affirm that the integration of direct reinforcement and observational learning enhances the effectiveness of learning in a holistic manner (Habsy et al., 2023).

The Behaviorist-Structuralist Theory represents the intersection of behaviorist psychology and structuralist linguistics. This theory assumes that the pattern drill method is an effective approach in language instruction. It also posits that repeated practice of patterns will lead to the formation of habitual language use and will help students acquire the target language by simultaneously understanding its structure and grammatical rules, both theoretically and practically (Arisnaini, 2022).

Research on the application of Behaviorist-Structuralist theory in Arabic language learning shows that several instructional models can be effectively implemented based on this perspective. These include: repeating Arabic utterances and dialogues, practicing sentence patterns with substituted nouns or verbs, drilling expanded sentence structures, and manipulating nominal or verbal sentence forms (Ainiy et al., 2022).

Further research findings highlight the significant role of Qismu al-Lughah (Language Department) in supporting new students. The department provides daily vocabulary to improve Arabic proficiency, organizes daily speaking practice, creates an active language environment, supervises and monitors new students through designated language inspectors, enforces disciplinary actions for violators, and conducts language competitions (Fajar, 2025).

Research conducted at the KMI Boys Division of Modern Arrisalah International Program in Slahung, Ponorogo, also found that language courts implemented by Qismu al-Lughah play a vital role in maintaining the quality of foreign language skills among new students. Through structured activities, including vocabulary reinforcement and monitored conversational practice (*muhadatsah*), students are immersed in an environment that promotes linguistic discipline and engagement (Amin, 2021).

These studies confirm that Qismu al-Lughah can function effectively when it systematically applies core components such as: (1) daily vocabulary provision, (2) routine speaking exercises, (3) active language environment formation, (4) daily monitoring through language investigators, (5) sanctions for rule violations, and (6) language contests that encourage competitive and meaningful use of Arabic.

Meanwhile, studies on the application of Skinner's behavioral learning theory in Arabic speaking skill instruction show that behavioral learning is defined as a change in behavior resulting from the interaction between stimulus and response. This includes: (1) the application of behaviorism in speaking instruction, (2) introducing and maintaining a conducive learning environment, (3) using appropriate and supportive teaching methods, and (4) providing reinforcement as positive feedback for students' linguistic behavior (Addaeroby & Febriani, 2024).

Additional findings regarding Arabic speaking skill strategies based on the behavioral approach indicate that teachers present frequent Arabic vocabulary or sentence stimuli. Students respond by imitating and repeating these patterns regularly (repetition), which provides reinforcement that strengthens memory and facilitates the application of the learned content under teacher supervision (Aminah, 2025).

One of the most decisive factors in the success of the language learning process is the learning environment, particularly the linguistic environment. The purpose of establishing an Arabic language environment is to introduce and familiarize students with communicative use of Arabic through conversational practice, discussions, seminars, lectures, written expressions, and reinforcement of classroom-acquired language. It also aims to foster creativity and Arabic language activities that integrate theory and practice in a relaxed, informal, and enjoyable setting (Siregar, 2022).

Despite various strategies and models applied, there are still factors that hinder the development of Arabic language learning in pesantren and Islamic educational institutions. These include students' low motivation, unqualified teachers, irrelevant materials, and an unsupportive learning environment. Such conditions result in pesantren graduates who lack comprehensive mastery of Arabic and demonstrate limited motivation in studying the language (Arisnaini, 2022).

Barriers to the effectiveness of the Qismul Lughah (Language Division) in fostering Arabic language skills among students can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal challenges include the lack of strong Arabic-speaking role models within the Qismul Lughah and inconsistency in enforcing language policies. Meanwhile, external barriers stem from insufficient support from pesantren leadership, low student motivation, and peer influence (Nurazizah & Mulhendra, 2024).

In the behaviorist framework, stimulus refers to the actions or input provided by the teacher, while response is the behavior or reaction demonstrated by the student. Therefore, both the instruction given by the teacher and the resulting student performance must be observable and measurable. One additional key component in behaviorism is

reinforcement, which refers to anything that strengthens the likelihood of a response. Increased reinforcement typically results in a stronger response. Conversely, even when demands are reduced, reinforcement can still maintain response strength. For instance, when students are given more tasks, they tend to study harder as a reaction to the challenge (Maryam, 2024).

There are many variables that influence the success of language learning, but one of the most significant and arguably the most decisive factor is the language environment itself. The primary objective of establishing an Arabic language environment is to habituate students to use Arabic communicatively—through conversation practice, discussions, seminars, lectures, and written expression. Providing reinforcement for acquired language skills nurtures creativity and enables students to engage in Arabic activities that integrate both theory and practice within a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere (Adi, 2020).

Research findings on the development of Arabic language learning methods using a behavioral analysis approach combined with cognitive theory indicate that language instruction is fundamentally grounded in two interdependent and complementary theoretical domains: language theory and learning theory. These two pillars form the basis for Arabic language teaching. Among the most well-known linguistic learning theories applied in Arabic instruction are behaviorist theory and cognitive theory, both of which offer distinct perspectives on language acquisition. Behaviorism places greater emphasis on external factors, while cognitive theory focuses more on internal cognitive processes involved in learning (Runtoni, 2023).

Research on the role of educational psychology in Arabic language instruction further highlights its critical importance, similar to its role in other language education contexts. Several reasons support the relevance of educational psychology in this field, including: (1) Understanding the learning process, (2) Enhancing student motivation and engagement, (3) Promoting effective classroom management, (4) Providing appropriate assessment and feedback, and (5) Addressing students' special learning needs.

By integrating principles of educational psychology into instruction, Arabic language teachers can create a supportive, motivating, and effective learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of their students (Mardani & Susiawati, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on Skinner's behavioral theory, the form of stimulus provided through various activities at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo involves encouraging students to understand conversations using foreign languages in accordance with the language environment program. The corresponding response required from the students is to memorize new vocabulary, engage in conversations and verbal expressions based on specific topics, and comprehend Arabic-language speeches and films.

Reinforcement is applied in the form of disciplinary measures for those who fail to meet these expectations, thereby compelling students to fulfill their responsibilities diligently. Additionally, the pesantren organizes a Language Ambassador selection program to continuously promote the correct and effective use of language among students.

The study identified two key factors influencing the success of the Arabic language environment: internal and external factors. Internal factors include students' levels of self-confidence, motivation to learn Arabic, learning styles, and aspirations to pursue higher education in the Middle East. External factors play a crucial role in shaping the Arabic

language environment at the pesantren, through the support of the dormitory setting, social interaction, and the implementation of structured language programs.

However, limited student participation and inadequate learning facilities remain challenges that need to be addressed in order to further enhance students' Arabic language proficiency. These findings underscore the importance of integrating structured stimulus-response-reinforcement strategies with a supportive and consistent language environment to achieve more effective Arabic language learning outcomes.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

All authors contributed significantly to this research. Khofifah was fully responsible for designing the study and describing the research findings. Agung Setiyawan served as the advisor in the writing of this paper. Mujahid Al-Ghifari formulated the second research question and contributed to the development of the discussion section. Achmad Khairul Umam contributed to writing the discussion and conclusion sections. All authors approved the final manuscript and take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of this research.

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Data availability statement

The data used in this study include observations, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted at Pesantren Al-Bukhari Wesalo, East Kolaka, during a community engagement period. Interviews were carried out with informants, including male and female teachers (ustadz and ustadzah) and students (santri). Documentation consisted of written materials, images, and other supporting documents relevant to this research. For further information or to request access to the data, please contact the corresponding author at alazharkhofifah@gmail.com.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretations of this study.

Additional information

This study highlights how behaviorist theory is applied in the language environment to enhance Arabic language proficiency. Future research may explore Arabic language instruction integrated with digital technologies in modern pesantren and Islamic schools.

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