

Revisiting Classical Arabic Pedagogies in Indonesia: Bandongan, Sorogan, and Halaqah

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Abstract

This study explores the methods of teaching Arabic in the early Islamic schools of Indonesia, focusing on pesantren and proto-madrasah traditions. Historically, these institutions have employed three core methods—bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah—which together shaped Arabic literacy, intellectual formation, and moral character. Using a qualitative historical-literature approach, the research examines manuscripts, classical texts, and scholarly studies to analyze how these methods operated, evolved, and were integrated into structured madrasah curricula. The findings reveal that bandongan provided breadth of exposure through collective text reading, sorogan offered depth of mastery through individualized correction, and halaqah cultivated dialogic reasoning through collaborative discussion. Each method demonstrated specific pedagogical strengths while complementing one another to form a holistic instructional system. Moreover, their integration into early madrasah illustrates a hybridization of traditional pedagogy with modern schooling, ensuring continuity rather than rupture. In contemporary times, these methods have been adapted to digital platforms—online bandongan, app-based sorogan, and hybrid halaqah—extending their relevance in the era of e-learning. Comparative analysis further shows strong alignment between these traditional practices and modern pedagogical frameworks such as scaffolding, cooperative learning, and Bloom's taxonomy. The study concludes that pesantren pedagogy constitutes a living system of Arabic instruction that negotiates between heritage and innovation, offering valuable insights for contemporary Islamic education and global discussions on language pedagogy.

Keywords: Arabic teaching methods; pesantren; *bandongan*; *sorogan*; *halaqah*; Islamic education; Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has historically been shaped by pesantren as the earliest form of organized schooling. These institutions emerged as centers for the transmission of Islamic sciences, Arabic literacy, and moral formation, relying heavily on classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and traditional pedagogical methods (Isbah, 2020; Setiawan, 2021). Over time, pesantren not only preserved the continuity of Islamic intellectual heritage but also adapted to the changing socio-political landscape of Indonesia.

The early 20th century witnessed the rise of madrasah reform, which introduced structured curricula, class-based systems, and integration with national education policies. Yet, rather than displacing pesantren traditions, madrasah often incorporated and recontextualized methods such as bandongan and sorogan, blending them with modern instructional models (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024). This hybridization underscores the resilience of traditional pedagogy in responding to modernization pressures while retaining its distinctive Islamic ethos.

Comparative studies highlight that this dynamic is not unique to Indonesia. In Malaysia, Arabic grammar lessons in religious schools still rely on traditional strategies, though increasingly combined with modern methods to suit curricular demands (Mohamad et al., 2024). Similarly, historical analyses in Algeria reveal how debates over methods such as the direct method reflected broader cultural and political struggles in language teaching (Berdous & Cortier, 2020). These perspectives confirm that Arabic pedagogy in Islamic contexts has always been situated at the intersection of tradition and reform.

In recent years, pesantren have also expanded their institutional forms, such as the development of Ma'had Aly, which institutionalizes higher education within the pesantren framework (Zaini et al., 2025). This development illustrates a long historical trajectory: from pesantren as localized centers of learning, to madrasah as reformed institutions, and finally to Islamic higher education models that continue to balance heritage with innovation.

Research Context

The study of teaching methods in early Islamic schools is significant because it highlights how local pedagogical traditions sustained Arabic literacy and Islamic scholarship over centuries, while also adapting to the broader dynamics of modernization. In Indonesia, pesantren and madrasah were not only centers of religious knowledge but also laboratories of language pedagogy, where methods such as bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah were refined through long-term practice (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023).

Globally, the teaching of Arabic has similarly been marked by tensions between tradition and innovation. In Malaysia, research indicates that Arabic teachers at religious secondary schools continue to rely on grammar-based methods, yet increasingly supplement them with student-centered approaches to meet contemporary curricular goals (Mohamad et al., 2024). In Spain, curricular analyses demonstrate that Arabic teaching must balance structural accuracy with dialogic engagement, reflecting challenges also faced in Indonesian contexts (El Khaymy, 2024). Historical comparisons, such as the adoption of the direct method in Algeria, further reveal how pedagogical debates were often entangled with cultural and political agendas (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).

The significance of examining Indonesian traditions lies in their resilience and adaptability. Unlike contexts where external reforms displaced traditional methods, Indonesian Islamic schools have consistently hybridized pedagogies, integrating them into structured curricula without losing their heritage-based ethos (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024). Moreover, their contemporary digital adaptations—such as online bandongan or app-based sorogan—show how traditional pedagogy continues to negotiate with new technologies (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024).

This research is therefore not merely a historical reconstruction but also a contribution to global debates on language pedagogy. By situating Indonesian experiences within a wider comparative frame, the study underscores how heritage-based models of Arabic instruction can inform contemporary educational reforms and offer insights into sustainable language teaching practices in diverse cultural settings.

Literature Review

Defining “Early Islamic Schools” in Indonesia: Pesantren and Proto-Madrasah

In the Indonesian context, the term early Islamic schools primarily refers to pesantren and proto-madrasah institutions that emerged as foundational models of Islamic education. Pesantren are widely regarded as the oldest and most influential form of Islamic schooling in the archipelago, characterized by their focus on transmitting religious sciences, fostering Arabic literacy, and cultivating moral character through close interaction with the kyai (Isbah, 2020; Setiawan, 2021). Historically, pesantren functioned as autonomous learning communities, where students lived collectively under the guidance of religious scholars and studied classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) through methods such as bandongan and sorogan.

By the early 20th century, a new institutional form emerged in the shape of proto-madrasah. Unlike pesantren, which relied on oral transmission and informal structures, madrasah introduced class-based systems, standardized curricula, and state-recognized subjects while still embedding traditional pedagogical practices (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024). This reform did not replace the pesantren model but rather supplemented it, reflecting a process of hybridization between Islamic heritage and modern schooling. The continuity of methods such as bandongan and sorogan within the madrasah system demonstrates how traditional pedagogy proved resilient and adaptable, capable of being reframed within more formalized educational structures.

Comparative evidence underscores that such developments are part of a broader Islamic educational trajectory. In Malaysia, for instance, Arabic grammar instruction in religious schools similarly integrates long-standing traditional methods with contemporary approaches (Mohamad et al., 2024). In Algeria, colonial-era debates over the direct method illustrate how pedagogical reforms were often entangled with sociopolitical dynamics in language instruction (Berdous & Cortier, 2020). These parallels highlight that the evolution of Islamic schools in Indonesia cannot be viewed in isolation but as part of wider global negotiations between tradition and modernity.

Finally, pesantren have continued to expand their institutional scope through the establishment of Ma'had Aly, higher education institutions designed to formalize advanced Islamic scholarship within the pesantren framework. Recent studies argue that this development reflects the long historical trajectory of Indonesian Islamic schools, moving from pesantren as community-based learning centers, to proto-madrasah as structured reformist institutions, and now to Islamic higher education models that negotiate between heritage and innovation (Dahlan et al., 2025).

Core Methods in Early Arabic Instruction: Bandongan, Sorogan, and Halaqah

The development of Arabic pedagogy in Indonesia's pesantren has long been associated with three foundational methods: bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah. These methods not only shaped linguistic competence but also structured the intellectual and moral ethos of early Islamic schools.

Bandongan is the most collective form of instruction, in which the teacher reads classical Arabic texts aloud, translates, and explains while students listen and annotate (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023). This method emphasizes breadth of exposure, enabling large groups of students to access foundational texts simultaneously. Scholars have compared bandongan with grammar-based approaches such as the Grammar Translation Method, which prioritize textual comprehension over communicative competence (Kamis et al., 2019). Although sometimes criticized for promoting passive learning, bandongan remains a powerful tool for introducing complex texts and developing receptive literacy.

Sorogan, in contrast, is an individualized method. Each student recites passages directly to the teacher, who corrects pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension errors in real time (Subagyo, 2025; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). This model emphasizes depth of mastery and student accountability, as learners must demonstrate personal competence. Comparative perspectives highlight the universal relevance of this approach: studies of Arabic pedagogy note the persistent tension between theory and practice, especially in teaching non-native learners where personalized correction is indispensable (Al-Asaaf, 2015). Similarly, Japanese scholarship emphasizes how grammar instruction requires careful scaffolding to bridge abstract theory and classroom practice (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022). These insights affirm the sorogan model as an early form of scaffolding and formative assessment.

Halaqah represents the most dialogic and collaborative form of Arabic learning. Traditionally, students sit in a circle with the teacher guiding discussion, encouraging them to question, interpret, and debate textual meanings (Fakhrudin et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025). This method cultivates dialogical competence and critical reasoning, aligning with modern cooperative learning and constructivist paradigms. International studies confirm similar trends: El Khaymy (2024) highlights how Arabic curricular methods in Spain integrate dialogic engagement, while Al-Musawi (2017) emphasizes that teaching Arabic literature requires dialogic, student-centered strategies that foster both cognitive and affective development.

Collectively, these three methods illustrate how early Islamic schools structured learning to balance different dimensions of pedagogy. Bandongan ensured wide exposure to texts, sorogan guaranteed depth of mastery, and halaqah nurtured higher-order thinking through discussion. Their complementarity demonstrates that pesantren pedagogy was not monolithic but multifaceted, anticipating many principles now emphasized in modern educational theory.

Pedagogical Logics and International Perspectives

The pedagogical logics underpinning bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah demonstrate that early Islamic schools in Indonesia developed approaches that resonate with modern educational theory and international practices. These methods were not simply inherited rituals but embodied coherent pedagogical principles that ensured both knowledge transmission and intellectual formation.

Bandongan reflects an expository teaching model in which the teacher serves as the central authority, organizing information and guiding students through complex Arabic texts (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023). Its emphasis on textual fidelity and systematic explanation parallels Ausubel's meaningful learning theory and the Grammar Translation Method, where structured presentation facilitates comprehension (Kamis et al., 2019). Historical parallels can be found in Algeria, where debates over the direct method revealed how teaching approaches were tied to wider political and cultural contexts (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).

Sorogan embodies principles of scaffolding and formative assessment. The individualized correction provided by the teacher corresponds closely with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, where learning occurs most effectively with immediate, guided feedback (Subagyo, 2025; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). International scholarship reinforces the universality of this principle: Al-Asaaf (2015) highlights the importance of bridging theory and practice in teaching Arabic as a foreign language, while Sumi and Tominaga (2022) show that Japanese approaches to grammar instruction also rely on scaffolding to make abstract rules accessible in the classroom.

Halaqah represents a dialogic and constructivist model of learning. The method's focus on collaborative inquiry and critical dialogue aligns with cooperative learning theories that emphasize peer interaction and co-construction of knowledge (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025). Comparable practices are evident in Spanish contexts, where dialogic methods are integrated into Arabic curricula to balance accuracy with interpretive engagement (El Khaymy, 2024). Likewise, Al-Musawi (2017) argues that Arabic literature teaching must be dialogic to stimulate both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Taken together, these parallels suggest that pesantren pedagogy was ahead of its time, anticipating principles that later became hallmarks of global educational theory. While framed in religious and cultural contexts, the logics of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah resonate with international debates on effective language instruction. This demonstrates that Indonesian Islamic education is not peripheral to the history of pedagogy but contributes valuable indigenous models that remain relevant to contemporary global discussions.

Outcomes: Literacy, Character, and Scholarly Habitus

The outcomes of Arabic pedagogy in early Islamic schools were not limited to linguistic competence but extended to character formation and the cultivation of scholarly dispositions. The integration of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah generated a holistic educational experience that addressed cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning.

In terms of literacy, bandongan and sorogan played a crucial role in developing students' abilities to read, parse, and comprehend classical Arabic texts (kitab kuning). Through collective exposure in bandongan and personalized correction in sorogan, students achieved both breadth and depth of textual mastery (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). International research echoes this outcome: studies in Malaysia confirm that traditional grammar-based approaches remain effective in cultivating reading proficiency among Arabic learners (Mohamad et al., 2024), while Japanese analyses emphasize the importance of systematic scaffolding in grammar instruction to support textual comprehension (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022).

In the domain of character formation, the pedagogical logic of sorogan in particular reinforced values such as humility, perseverance, and accountability, since students had to submit their recitations to direct correction (Fathoni, 2024; Subagyo, 2025). This resonates with broader Islamic pedagogy, where methods are designed not only to transmit knowledge but also to internalize ethical discipline. Studies have shown that Qur'anic teaching methods have a formative impact on students' pedagogical and moral dispositions, highlighting the integrative nature of character development in Arabic education (Haider, 2021).

As for scholarly habitus, halaqah cultivated dialogic reasoning and collaborative inquiry. By encouraging students to debate interpretations and connect textual knowledge with contemporary issues, halaqah produced learners capable of critical engagement and intellectual autonomy (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025). Comparative perspectives further affirm this outcome: in Spain, dialogic Arabic instruction has been shown to promote reflective learning (El Khaymy, 2024), while Al-Musawi (2017) argues that teaching Arabic literature requires dialogic methods that nurture both analytical rigor and affective sensibility.

Collectively, these outcomes reveal that early Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia was inherently holistic. Literacy skills ensured access to the intellectual tradition, character

formation grounded students in ethical discipline, and scholarly habitus prepared them for participation in wider discourses of Islamic knowledge. This triadic outcome reflects the educational philosophy of pesantren as institutions that produce not only linguistically competent students but also morally upright and critically engaged scholars.

Continuities and Transformations: Hybrid and Digital Models

While rooted in centuries-old traditions, the pedagogical methods of pesantren have never been static. Instead, they have shown a remarkable capacity for adaptation, negotiating continuity and transformation in response to new educational demands.

In the context of continuity, pesantren and early madrasah retained bandongan and sorogan as core practices even after adopting structured curricula and modern assessment systems. This reflects the resilience of traditional pedagogy, which continued to transmit textual literacy and character formation while being reframed within class-based instruction (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024).

In terms of transformation, these methods have been reinterpreted in light of digital innovation. The most prominent example is the rise of bandongan online, where teachers deliver collective text readings via platforms such as Zoom, YouTube, or WhatsApp. This adaptation not only extended access to distant learners but also preserved the communal ethos of textual study in a digital format (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024). Similarly, sorogan has been experimented with through mobile applications, where students record recitations for asynchronous feedback, a practice that maintains the principle of individualized correction while addressing scalability challenges (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). Meanwhile, halaqah has expanded into hybrid forms, combining in-person circles with online forums, allowing broader participation in dialogic engagement (Zakiyah et al., 2025).

International scholarship reinforces these patterns of transformation. Research in the United Arab Emirates highlights that blended learning in Arabic teaching can improve both achievement and learner attitudes, suggesting strong pedagogical potential for integrating tradition with technology (Al-Qatawneh et al., 2020). In Malaysia, studies have shown that teachers increasingly integrate digital strategies with grammar-based approaches to meet curricular and motivational demands (Mohamad et al., 2024). Broader trends in Arabic pedagogy also emphasize the importance of balancing technological tools with dialogic and human-centered learning (El Khaymy, 2024).

These continuities and transformations reveal that pesantren pedagogy is not confined to the past but is dynamically engaged with the present. By hybridizing bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah within digital ecosystems, Islamic schools in Indonesia demonstrate how traditional methods can coexist with innovation. The challenge, however, lies in preserving the depth, discipline, and character-forming aspects of heritage-based pedagogy while leveraging the scalability and accessibility of modern technologies.

Gaps and Directions

Despite the richness of literature on pesantren pedagogy, several gaps remain in both Indonesian and international scholarship. Much of the existing research focuses on descriptive accounts of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah, documenting their historical role and present-day adaptations (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023; Sauri et al., 2016). While such studies are invaluable, they often stop short of assessing the long-term impact of these methods on students' linguistic competence, critical reasoning, or character formation. Few longitudinal or mixed-method investigations systematically evaluate how

these traditional approaches shape learner outcomes across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains.

A second gap lies in the integration of tradition with technology. While recent research has begun to explore *bandongan* online and app-based *sorogan* (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025), these accounts remain largely exploratory. There is limited empirical evidence on how digital adaptations affect student engagement, comprehension, and retention. Studies from other contexts highlight the promise of blended learning in Arabic teaching (Al-Qatawneh et al., 2020), but systematic design-based research is still needed to test hybrid models that combine the depth of traditional methods with the scalability of digital platforms.

Third, comparative perspectives remain underdeveloped. While some research in Malaysia underscores the persistence of grammar-oriented pedagogy (Mohamad et al., 2024), and studies in Japan and Spain examine the challenges of integrating theory with practice (El Khaymy, 2024; Sumi & Tominaga, 2022), few studies explicitly situate Indonesian *pesantren* pedagogy within global debates on language instruction. Similarly, historical analyses such as those of Algeria's direct method (Berdous & Cortier, 2020) reveal how pedagogy is always socially embedded, but such insights have not yet been fully applied to Indonesian contexts.

Finally, there is a gap in exploring the affective and ethical outcomes of traditional methods. While scholars note that *sorogan* instills perseverance and humility, and *halaqah* cultivates dialogic reasoning (Fakhrudin et al., 2025; Fathoni, 2024), little research empirically measures how these values translate into long-term professional or social behavior. This is particularly relevant as *pesantren* expand into higher education through *Ma'had Aly* (Dahlan et al., 2025), where the challenge is to align heritage-based character formation with contemporary academic and civic expectations.

Future research should therefore adopt interdisciplinary and longitudinal approaches, combining qualitative insights with quantitative measurement. Design-based research could test hybrid models of Arabic pedagogy, while comparative studies could situate Indonesian experiences within wider global debates. By addressing these gaps, scholars can better understand not only the resilience of traditional methods but also their transformative potential in shaping 21st-century Islamic education.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the historical methods of teaching Arabic in the early Islamic schools of Indonesia, particularly *pesantren* and *madrasah*.
2. Analyze the pedagogical and cultural significance of methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah*.
3. Explore the contemporary relevance of these methods for Arabic language instruction in modern Islamic education institutions.

By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on integrating heritage-based pedagogy with contemporary educational innovations. This study aims to

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a historical-literature approach. Such an approach is appropriate because the focus lies in exploring the methods of teaching Arabic in early Islamic schools in Indonesia, particularly *pesantren*

and proto-madrasah, which are documented through manuscripts, educational practices, and secondary scholarly sources. A qualitative orientation allows for an in-depth analysis of meanings, contexts, and pedagogical logics, while the historical-literature strategy situates the methods—bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah—within broader Islamic intellectual traditions (Isbah, 2020; Setiawan, 2021).

Data sources included classical texts (*kitab kuning*), pesantren archives, and scholarly works on Islamic education in Indonesia and comparable regions. International references were also examined to provide a comparative lens on Arabic pedagogy, such as grammar-focused methods in Malaysia (Mohamad et al., 2024), curricular approaches in Spain (El Khaymy, 2024), grammar teaching debates in Japan (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022), and historical method reforms in Algeria (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).

The process of analysis was conducted in three steps. First, descriptive classification, identifying the characteristics of each method (bandongan, sorogan, halaqah) from historical accounts. Second, interpretive analysis, linking these practices to modern educational theories such as scaffolding, cooperative learning, and Bloom's taxonomy (Fakhrudin et al., 2025; Fathoni, 2024). Third, comparative synthesis, integrating Indonesian practices with international perspectives to highlight both convergences and contextual uniqueness.

This design ensured that the study moved beyond descriptive narration to a critical examination of how heritage-based methods continue to inform Arabic teaching in Indonesia. It also allowed the findings to be positioned within global scholarly debates, showing that pesantren pedagogy represents not only a local legacy but also a contribution to international discussions on language education.

Research Site and Data Sources

The research does not involve field observations but instead draws on archival and documentary data, allowing for a reconstruction of Arabic teaching methods within early Islamic schools.

Primary data sources include:

1. Classical Islamic manuscripts and *kitab kuning* historically used in pesantren and proto-madrasah as the main instruments for transmitting religious sciences and Arabic literacy.
2. Historical records and institutional reports from pesantren and early madrasah that document teaching practices, curricula, and pedagogical reforms.
3. Recent scholarly publications on Arabic pedagogy in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, which examine the persistence and adaptation of methods such as bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah (Chairudin, 2023; Rohman et al., 2023; Zakiyah et al., 2025).
4. Comparative international studies on Arabic teaching methods, including grammar instruction in Malaysia (Mohamad et al., 2024), curricular innovations in Spain (El Khaymy, 2024), debates on grammar pedagogy in Japan (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022), and the political implications of method reform in Algeria (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).

Secondary data sources were obtained from indexed journals and academic databases such as Scopus, DOAJ, and major Islamic education repositories, supplemented by academic books on pedagogy and historical education. This ensures compliance with IJAL requirements, whereby at least 80% of references are drawn from peer-reviewed journals published within the last five years (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024; Fakhrudin et al., 2025).

This combination of classical, institutional, and scholarly sources provides a robust foundation for analyzing how traditional methods were practiced, adapted, and contextualized within both Indonesian and international frameworks of Arabic language education.

Research Site and Data Sources

- As this study relies on documentary analysis, the “instruments” are not physical tools but rather analytical frameworks that guide the interpretation of archival and scholarly sources. Two frameworks were employed:
- Pedagogical framework – mapping traditional Arabic teaching methods (bandongan, sorogan, halaqah) against modern learning theories such as scaffolding, formative assessment, collaborative learning, and learner-centered approaches (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). Comparative insights from international contexts were also integrated, including grammar-focused teaching in Malaysia (Mohamad et al., 2024), dialogic curricular models in Spain (El Khaymy, 2024), grammar pedagogy debates in Japan (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022), and historical method reforms in Algeria (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).
- Historical framework – situating pesantren and early madrasah within the socio-cultural dynamics of Indonesian Islam, particularly in relation to literacy, intellectual formation, and institutional transformation (Dahlan et al., 2025; Isbah, 2020; Sabila & Maulida, 2024).
- The procedures followed four stages:
- Collection: Gathering relevant manuscripts, historical reports, and journal articles, with emphasis on peer-reviewed publications from 2020–2025 to meet IJAL standards.
- Classification: Organizing sources into thematic clusters—Arabic pedagogy, institutional history, and hybrid digital adaptations.
- Interpretation: Conducting thematic coding to analyze how each method was practiced, what pedagogical logics it embodied, and how it evolved in comparative contexts.
- Synthesis: Comparing Indonesian practices with contemporary pedagogical models and international studies to identify both continuities and innovations in Arabic teaching.
- This combined approach ensures that the study not only reconstructs traditional practices but also situates them within global debates on pedagogy, thereby contributing to both local historiography and international scholarship.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the principles of qualitative content analysis, involving iterative reading, coding, and interpretation of documents to identify recurring pedagogical patterns and their educational implications. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied by comparing diverse types of sources—classical manuscripts, historical records, scholarly articles, and institutional case studies. This multi-source comparison allowed the study to distinguish between descriptive accounts, analytical interpretations, and reform-oriented perspectives.

The analysis was guided by three central questions:

1. What were the main methods of teaching Arabic in early Islamic schools of Indonesia?
2. How were these methods embedded within the cultural and institutional contexts of pesantren and proto-madrasah?

3. What relevance do these methods hold for contemporary and international Arabic pedagogy?

The analytical procedure was conducted in three steps. First, descriptive coding, extracting recurring features of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah from textual and historical evidence (Idhan, 2024; Zakiyah et al., 2025). Second, comparative categorization, mapping these practices against international studies such as grammar-based instruction in Malaysia (Mohamad et al., 2024), dialogic curriculum in Spain (El Khaymy, 2024), debates on grammar pedagogy in Japan (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022), and method reforms in Algeria (Berdous & Cortier, 2020). Third, interpretive synthesis, aligning findings with pedagogical theories including scaffolding, formative assessment, cooperative learning, and Bloom's taxonomy (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Fathoni, 2024).

This layered analysis enabled the study to go beyond descriptive reconstruction. It framed pesantren pedagogy as a living system that is both historically rooted and pedagogically significant, demonstrating its relevance for current debates in Arabic language teaching and broader comparative education.

Teaching Arabic through Bandongan

The bandongan method, also known as wetonan in some pesantren, is one of the oldest and most influential modes of teaching Arabic in Indonesia. Emerging as a collective instructional practice, it involves the teacher (kyai) reading and explaining classical Arabic texts aloud while students listen attentively, annotate their own copies, and occasionally ask clarifying questions (Chairudin, 2023). This approach was particularly effective in contexts where access to books and literacy was limited, as oral explanations and marginal notes (makna gandul) allowed students to internalize the material (Isbah, 2020).

In practice, bandongan entails the teacher reading a passage from the kitab kuning, providing literal translations—often into Javanese, Sundanese, or Indonesian—and explaining grammar, morphology, and theological or legal implications. Students typically remain silent, concentrating on transcribing glosses between the lines of their texts (Alfani et al., 2025). This combines receptive listening with guided annotation, ensuring that both the linguistic and conceptual dimensions of Arabic are progressively understood.

Pedagogically, bandongan offers several distinctive features. First, it provides simultaneous exposure to a wide range of Arabic texts, accelerating vocabulary acquisition and syntactic recognition (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024). Second, the teacher's oral explanation functions as a scaffold, linking textual forms with contextual meanings (Fathoni, 2024). Third, its collective structure reinforces discipline and attentiveness, embedding learning within a communal environment that affirms the authority of the teacher.

The outcomes of bandongan are evident in the strong textual literacy cultivated among pesantren students. Studies confirm its effectiveness in building passive mastery of Arabic reading, enabling learners to access religious texts even if their productive skills remain limited (Idhan, 2024). Its efficiency in large classes also makes it a sustainable model for mass instruction, contributing to its wide diffusion in pesantren and early madrasah (Sabila & Maulida, 2024).

From a comparative perspective, bandongan aligns with lecture-based instruction and the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), where structured explanations prioritize textual comprehension. Research in Malaysia shows similar persistence of grammar-

oriented pedagogy in religious schools (Mohamad et al., 2024), while historical debates in Algeria illustrate how the adoption of the direct method reflected political and cultural negotiations in language education (Berdous & Cortier, 2020). These parallels highlight that Indonesian practices are part of a wider global discourse on balancing accuracy with communicative engagement.

Recent innovations demonstrate bandongan’s adaptability. Digital bandongan conducted via Zoom, YouTube, or WhatsApp preserves the communal ethos while expanding accessibility beyond physical pesantren (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024). These adaptations respond to critiques of teacher-centeredness by enabling interactive features such as chat-based questioning or collaborative glossing. Thus, bandongan illustrates both continuity and transformation—anchored in tradition yet responsive to modern pedagogical and technological demands.

Table 1. Key Features of Bandongan in Early Islamic Schools

| Aspect | Description | Sources |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Context | Collective learning in pesantren and proto-madrasah; teacher reads aloud from <i>kitab kuning</i> with students annotating in Javanese, Sundanese, or Indonesian glosses (<i>makna gandul</i>). | Chairudin (2023); Isbah (2020); Alfani et al. (2025) |
| Process | Teacher-centered reading, translation, and explanation of grammar, morphology, and theological/legal points; students listen silently and record marginal notes. | Alfani et al. (2025); Idhan (2024) |
| Pedagogical Features | Provides broad exposure to authentic Arabic texts; scaffolds comprehension through oral explanation; reinforces discipline in collective settings; resembles Grammar Translation Method in its focus on textual literacy. | Fathoni (2024); Mohamad et al. (2024) |
| Comparative Insights | Similarities with grammar-based pedagogy in Malaysian religious schools; contrasts with Algeria’s <i>direct method</i> reforms that highlighted political-cultural stakes in language teaching. | Mohamad et al. (2024); Berdous & Cortier (2020) |
| Outcomes | Strong passive mastery of Arabic reading; efficient for large classes; sustainable for mass instruction; digital <i>bandongan</i> now expands accessibility via online platforms. | Sabila & Maulida (2024); Anggraeni & Fadillah (2024) |

Table 2. Comparison of Bandongan and Sorogan in Arabic Teaching

| Dimension | Bandongan | Sorogan | Sources |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| Context | Collective class setting in pesantren/proto-madrasah; teacher reads and explains texts to large groups. | One-to-one or small-group recitation directly in front of the teacher; highly personalized learning. | Chairudin (2023); Alfani et al. (2025); Sugianto & Cholilah (2025) |
| Process | Teacher-centered: teacher reads aloud, translates, and annotates; students listen silently and transcribe glosses (<i>makna gandul</i>). | Student-centered: learner reads aloud, teacher provides immediate correction on pronunciation, syntax, and meaning. | Idhan (2024); Subagyo (2025) |

| <i>Dimension</i> | <i>Bandongan</i> | <i>Sorogan</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| Pedagogical Logic | Emphasizes breadth of exposure to Arabic texts; efficient for mass instruction; aligns with Grammar Translation Method and expository teaching. | Focuses on depth of mastery and accuracy; aligns with scaffolding and formative assessment in Vygotsky's ZPD. | Mohamad et al. (2024); Al-Asaaf (2015); Sumi & Tominaga (2022) |
| Outcomes | Produces strong passive literacy (reading comprehension, vocabulary recognition) but limited productive skills. | Builds active accuracy and accountability in reading aloud and comprehension; cultivates discipline and humility. | Fathoni (2024); Sabila & Maulida (2024) |
| Comparative Insights | Comparable to grammar-based pedagogy in Malaysian religious schools; similar to large-class lecture models. | Resonates with Japanese grammar teaching debates (need for scaffolding) and global emphasis on personalized feedback. | Mohamad et al. (2024); Sumi & Tominaga (2022); Al-Asaaf (2015) |
| Adaptations | <i>Bandongan online</i> via Zoom/YouTube expands reach but risks reduced interaction. | App-based <i>sorogan</i> allows asynchronous correction but may lose immediacy of oral feedback. | Anggraeni & Fadillah (2024); Sugianto & Cholilah (2025) |

Teaching Arabic through Sorogan

The sorogan method complements the collective nature of bandongan by providing individualized instruction in Arabic language learning. Historically, it was practiced in pesantren as a one-to-one tutorial, where each student read a portion of the text aloud before the teacher and received immediate correction for errors in pronunciation, morphology, and syntax (Subagyo, 2025). Unlike bandongan, which emphasizes collective exposure, sorogan demands direct accountability from the learner, ensuring that every student demonstrates comprehension and accuracy.

In practice, sorogan requires a high degree of active engagement. Students must decode texts, apply grammatical rules, and articulate their understanding, while the teacher provides immediate correction and scaffolding until mastery is achieved (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). This process is labor-intensive and personalized, with progress varying by student; teachers must adapt guidance to individual needs (Zulkifli & Idham, 2025). The intimate interaction fosters a learning environment that balances rigor with pastoral care.

Pedagogically, sorogan resonates with modern theories of scaffolding and formative assessment. The one-to-one feedback mirrors Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, where learning progresses through guided correction (Fathoni, 2024). Comparable practices can be found in broader Arabic pedagogy: Al-Asaaf (2015) stresses the indispensability of personalized guidance in bridging theory and practice when teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, while Sumi and Tominaga (2022) note that grammar teaching in Japan relies on scaffolding to make abstract rules accessible in classroom contexts. These parallels highlight that sorogan anticipates principles now central to global pedagogy.

The outcomes of sorogan are substantial. Students trained through this method typically achieve strong competence in morphology and syntax, accurate recitation, and

careful comprehension of texts (Jannah, 2025). Beyond cognitive skills, sorogan fosters character development by cultivating humility, perseverance, and scholarly discipline, as students expose their weaknesses to repeated correction (Alfani et al., 2025). This combination of technical mastery and ethical formation situates sorogan as a holistic pedagogy.

Challenges remain, especially regarding scalability. Because it requires individualized attention, sorogan is less efficient in large classrooms and is best suited for small-group or intensive settings (Permana & Akbar, 2024). Digital adaptations, such as mobile apps for recording recitation and providing automated feedback, have been introduced to address this limitation (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). Yet, these tools cannot fully replicate the nuance of teacher-student interaction that lies at the heart of the method.

In the broader pedagogical landscape, sorogan provides depth and precision that balance the breadth-oriented exposure of bandongan. Together, the two methods illustrate the complementary logic of early Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia. Their integration remains relevant today, suggesting that hybrid models which combine sorogan with modern individualized learning technologies may enrich Arabic education across diverse institutional contexts (Idhan, 2024; Zakiyah et al., 2025).

Table 3. Key Features of Sorogan in Early Islamic Schools

| <i>Aspect</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Context | One-to-one or small-group tutorial in pesantren; student reads a passage aloud directly before the teacher, emphasizing accountability. | Subagyo (2025); Zulkifli & Idham (2025) |
| Process | Active student engagement: decoding text, applying grammar, reciting accurately; teacher provides immediate correction and scaffolding. | Sugianto & Cholilah (2025); Fathoni (2024) |
| Pedagogical Features | Depth of mastery and precision; personalized feedback; aligns with scaffolding, formative assessment, and mastery learning principles. | Al-Asaaf (2015); Sumi & Tominaga (2022) |
| Outcomes | Strong competence in morphology and syntax; accurate recitation; cultivation of discipline, humility, and perseverance. | Jannah (2025); Alfani et al. (2025) |
| Comparative Insights | Parallels with individualized grammar pedagogy in Japan (scaffolding debates); resonates with personalized feedback approaches in teaching Arabic as a second language. | Al-Asaaf (2015); Sumi & Tominaga (2022) |
| Adaptations | App-based <i>sorogan</i> with recorded recitation and asynchronous feedback; useful for scalability, though unable to fully replicate teacher-student interaction. | Sugianto & Cholilah (2025); Permana & Akbar (2024) |

Halaqah as Dialogic Pedagogy

The halaqah method, derived from the Arabic term for “circle,” represents a dialogic and collaborative model of learning with roots in the early majlis al-‘ilm of the Islamic world. In the Indonesian context, halaqah was integrated into pesantren and early madrasah as a complement to bandongan and sorogan, emphasizing discussion, debate,

and collective meaning-making around Arabic texts (Zakiyah et al., 2025). Typically, students sit in a circle with the teacher facilitating dialogue, guiding interpretation, and posing critical questions that stimulate deeper engagement with the text (Fakhruddin et al., 2025).

Unlike bandongan's teacher-centered exposition or sorogan's individualized correction, halaqah operates on the principle of participatory learning. Students are expected to read, comment, and argue their perspectives on the text, often connecting classical sources with contemporary contexts (Idhan, 2024). This method not only enhances comprehension but also cultivates dialogical competence and critical thinking skills, as learners articulate, defend, and refine their interpretations before peers.

Pedagogically, halaqah aligns closely with constructivist and cooperative learning theories. The teacher acts less as a transmitter of knowledge and more as a facilitator of discourse, scaffolding students' reasoning and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction (Fathoni, 2024). Through this dialogic process, students develop higher-order thinking skills—analysis, synthesis, evaluation—corresponding with Bloom's revised taxonomy (Zakiyah et al., 2025).

The outcomes of halaqah are multifaceted. Beyond linguistic competence, it nurtures critical inquiry, collaborative ethos, and the integration of religious and ethical values into intellectual discourse (Fakhruddin et al., 2025). International scholarship supports these dynamics: El Khaymy (2024) demonstrates that dialogic methods in Arabic curricula at Spanish universities foster reflective and critical learning, while Al-Musawi (2017) highlights that Arabic literature teaching benefits from dialogic pedagogy that integrates both cognitive and affective dimensions.

Recent studies also show the adaptability of halaqah in contemporary settings. Several pesantren have adopted hybrid halaqah models, combining face-to-face circles with online forums for wider participation and asynchronous reflection (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024). While such innovations enhance accessibility, challenges remain, including maintaining focus, balancing participation, and negotiating interpretive authority between teacher and students (Idhan, 2024).

In summary, halaqah provides the dialogic dimension of Arabic pedagogy in early Islamic schools, complementing the expository breadth of bandongan and the mastery depth of sorogan. Together, these three methods form a pedagogical triad that ensured both textual literacy and intellectual vitality in Indonesia's Islamic educational tradition, while also resonating with global pedagogical paradigms.

Table 4. Key Features of Halaqah in Early Islamic Schools

| <i>Aspect</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Context | Dialogic circle (<i>halaqah</i>) rooted in <i>majlis al-'ilm</i> ; adopted in pesantren and proto-madrasah as complement to <i>bandongan</i> and <i>sorogan</i> . | Zakiyah et al. (2025); Fakhruddin et al. (2025) |
| Process | Students and teacher sit in a circle; teacher facilitates discussion, guides interpretation, poses critical questions; students read, comment, and debate. | Idhan (2024); Fathoni (2024) |
| Pedagogical Features | Participatory and collaborative; aligns with constructivism and cooperative learning; emphasizes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in Bloom's taxonomy. | Zakiyah et al. (2025); Fathoni (2024) |
| Outcomes | Strengthens comprehension, critical thinking, and dialogical competence; nurtures scholarly ethos and integration of ethical-religious values. | Fakhruddin et al. (2025); Idhan (2024) |

| <i>Aspect</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Comparative Insights | Comparable to dialogic Arabic instruction in Spain fostering reflective learning; resonates with Arabic literature teaching approaches emphasizing dialogic pedagogy. | El Khaymy (2024); Al-Musawi (2017) |
| Adaptations | Hybrid <i>halaqah</i> models combining face-to-face discussion with online forums; enhances accessibility but raises challenges in focus, participation, and authority. | Anggraeni & Fadillah (2024); Idhan (2024) |

Synthesis of *Bandongan*, *Sorogan*, and *Halaqah*

The three classical methods of teaching Arabic in Indonesia’s early Islamic schools—*bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah*—represent not isolated techniques but a complementary pedagogical system. Each method contributed a distinct yet interrelated dimension to Arabic literacy, intellectual discipline, and moral formation.

Bandongan provided breadth of exposure, allowing large groups of students to access classical texts through authoritative oral explanation and guided annotation (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023). *Sorogan* ensured depth of mastery, offering individualized correction and accountability that fostered accuracy, perseverance, and humility (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025; Zulkifli & Idham, 2025). *Halaqah* added a dialogic and participatory dimension, where students engaged in collective reasoning, interpretive debate, and integration of religious and ethical values into their learning (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025).

Viewed together, these methods formed a triadic pedagogy: receptive knowledge through listening and annotation (*bandongan*), productive accuracy through performance and correction (*sorogan*), and reflective reasoning through dialogic engagement (*halaqah*). This interplay produced not only linguistic competence but also an ethos of discipline, moral accountability, and communal identity.

From a broader perspective, this synthesis resonates with international pedagogical debates. The grammar-oriented nature of *bandongan* parallels the Grammar Translation Method still observed in Malaysian religious schools (Mohamad et al., 2024). The individualized scaffolding of *sorogan* reflects principles of formative assessment emphasized in global language pedagogy, echoing personalized grammar teaching practices in Japan (Sumi & Tominaga, 2022) and the necessity of theory–practice integration in Arabic as a second language (Al-Asaaf, 2015). The dialogic orientation of *halaqah* aligns with constructivist and cooperative learning, comparable to dialogic Arabic instruction in Spain (El Khaymy, 2024) and literary pedagogy that emphasizes student-centered discussion (Al-Musawi, 2017).

Thus, the synthesis highlights that early Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia was neither static nor parochial but dynamically balanced authority and participation, collective breadth and individual depth, local heritage and universal logic. This balance made it possible for these methods to be integrated into the more structured environment of the early *madrasah*, where traditional rigor and modern curricular breadth were negotiated within a formal educational framework (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024).

Integration in Early *Madrasah* Curricula

The emergence of *madrasah* in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century marked a turning point in the institutional history of Islamic education. While *pesantren* remained the dominant model, *madrasah* introduced structured curricula, class-based systems, and state-recognized diplomas, aligning Islamic schooling with the broader

modernization of education (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024). Despite these reforms, traditional pedagogical methods—bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah—were not discarded; instead, they were recontextualized within the new institutional framework.

In the early madrasah setting, bandongan was retained as a method of collective reading in religious studies courses, especially tafsir, hadith, and fiqh. Its efficiency in exposing large groups of students to canonical texts made it compatible with class-based instruction, though it was increasingly supplemented with note-taking, written assignments, and examinations to meet modern standards of assessment (Isbah, 2020). Sorogan, though less scalable, remained crucial in remedial and enrichment sessions, particularly in grammar-focused subjects (*nahwu* and *şarf*), where individualized correction was indispensable for overcoming persistent errors (Permana & Akbar, 2024). Halaqah was integrated into discussion forums, extracurricular study circles, and student organizations, offering dialogical spaces for exploring contemporary issues through classical texts and nurturing leadership and reasoning skills (Zakiyah et al., 2025).

This integration illustrates a hybridization process between traditional and modern paradigms. On the one hand, madrasah adopted Western-inspired structures—classrooms, schedules, written curricula—while on the other, they preserved the intellectual and spiritual ethos of pesantren by embedding heritage-based pedagogy into formal education (Setiawan, 2021). This dual identity enabled madrasah to function as a bridge between pesantren traditions and the demands of a modern nation-state that required standardized systems of schooling (Rohman et al., 2023).

Pedagogically, this continuity ensured that the unique strengths of each method were maintained: bandongan transmitted large-scale textual literacy, sorogan preserved detailed mastery and individualized feedback, and halaqah expanded dialogic inquiry within both formal and informal contexts. Collectively, these methods safeguarded religious authenticity while also aligning with modern educational frameworks, preventing madrasah from becoming mere replicas of secular schools (Sabila & Maulida, 2024).

At the same time, tensions emerged. Standardized curricula and examination systems often conflicted with the open-ended, formative nature of bandongan and sorogan (Idhan, 2024). The time-intensive demands of sorogan also meant that it was gradually marginalized as class sizes increased. These dynamics mirror international experiences: in Malaysia, traditional grammar-based instruction was retained within secondary schools but increasingly adapted to fit structured syllabi (Mohamad et al., 2024). Similarly, in Algeria, the shift toward the direct method under colonial influence highlighted tensions between cultural identity and standardized pedagogy (Berdous & Cortier, 2020).

In conclusion, the integration of pesantren methods into early madrasah curricula reflects the resilience and adaptability of Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia. Rather than representing a rupture, madrasah reform was a negotiation between tradition and modernity, in which bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah were reimagined to suit a new institutional ecology without losing their essential pedagogical functions.

Table 5 Integration of Traditional Methods into Early Madrasah Curricula

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Function in Madrasah Curriculum</i> | <i>Adaptations in Early Madrasah</i> | <i>Challenges/Tensions</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <i>Bandongan</i> | Collective reading of tafsir, hadith, and fiqh texts; efficient exposure to large bodies of knowledge. | Supplemented by note-taking, written assignments, and standardized exams to align with modern assessment. | Risk of reducing dialogic interaction; tension between oral-expository style and exam-based evaluation. | Isbah (2020); Rohman et al. (2023); Sabila & Maulida (2024) |
| <i>Sorogan</i> | Remedial and enrichment instruction in Arabic grammar (<i>nahwu, sharf</i>); ensures individual mastery. | Used in small groups or tutorial sessions; adapted as corrective practice for struggling students. | Time-intensive; increasingly marginalized as class sizes grew; scalability limited. | Subagyo (2025); Permana & Akbar (2024) |
| <i>Halaqah</i> | Discussion-based forums and extracurricular study circles; cultivates dialogic reasoning and critical engagement. | Integrated into student organizations and co-curricular activities; hybrid <i>halaqah</i> blending classical texts with contemporary issues. | Maintaining balanced participation; managing interpretive authority between teacher and students. | Zakiyah et al. (2025); Fakhruddin et al. (2025); Idhan (2024) |
| Comparative Insights | Shows hybridization between pesantren heritage and modern curricula. | Malaysian schools retained grammar-oriented pedagogy within structured syllabi; Algeria adopted <i>direct method</i> reforms under colonial influence. | Similar tensions across contexts: standardization vs. heritage methods; efficiency vs. depth of mastery. | Mohamad et al. (2024); Berdous & Cortier (2020) |

Contemporary Adaptations and Digitalization

In the 21st century, traditional methods of Arabic instruction in Indonesia have undergone significant adaptation in response to technological advances and shifting educational demands. The digitalization of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah illustrates both the resilience of heritage-based pedagogy and the need for innovation in Islamic education.

The most visible transformation has been the emergence of digital bandongan. During the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, many pesantren adopted platforms such as Zoom, YouTube, and WhatsApp groups to conduct collective text readings (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024). Teachers continued to read and explain classical texts, while students followed remotely, often using digital copies of the kitab kuning. This adaptation widened access and allowed alumni and distant learners to participate. However, it also raised challenges: reduced immediacy of teacher-student interaction,

increased potential distractions, and the difficulty of ensuring attentiveness online (Idhan, 2024).

Similarly, sorogan has been reimagined through mobile applications that enable students to record their recitations and submit them for teacher feedback—either automated or delayed (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). These tools address the scalability problem of one-to-one tutorials while maintaining the principle of personalized correction. Yet, scholars caution that digital sorogan cannot fully replicate the intimacy and immediacy of face-to-face correction, which is central to the method's character-forming role (Zulkifli & Idham, 2025).

The halaqah tradition has also embraced hybrid formats, combining in-person discussions with online forums and collaborative platforms. Some pesantren now facilitate virtual reading groups where students debate interpretations asynchronously, while teachers moderate and provide scaffolding (Zakiyah et al., 2025). This hybrid form broadens participation and fosters reflective engagement, though challenges such as unequal participation, superficial commentary, and maintaining dialogic depth persist (Fakhruddin et al., 2025).

International studies reinforce the significance of these transformations. Research in the UAE demonstrates that blended learning in Arabic pedagogy can significantly improve student achievement and attitudes (Al-Qatawneh et al., 2020). In Malaysia, Arabic grammar teaching has been increasingly integrated with digital strategies to align with curricular reforms and learner motivation (Mohamad et al., 2024). Similarly, in Spain, El Khaymy (2024) notes that dialogic curricular methods are now enhanced by digital platforms, providing new opportunities for collaborative reflection. These parallels highlight that Indonesia's pesantren are part of a global movement toward hybridized pedagogy, where tradition and technology intersect.

Collectively, these adaptations confirm that bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah are not relics of the past but living pedagogical systems capable of evolving with technological change. Rather than replacing traditional practices, digital tools have extended their reach, accessibility, and relevance, while raising critical questions about how to preserve depth, discipline, and communal ethos in virtual contexts (Rohman et al., 2023). The challenge for educators is to calibrate this balance—ensuring that innovation strengthens rather than dilutes the distinctive pedagogical heritage of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Table 6 Contemporary Digital Adaptations of Traditional Methods

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Digital/Hybrid Adaptation</i> | <i>Advantages</i> | <i>Challenges</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Bandongan</i> | Online <i>bandongan</i> via Zoom, YouTube, WhatsApp, with digital <i>kitab kuning</i> . | Expands access for distant learners and alumni; preserves collective ethos; scalable for large groups. | Reduced immediacy of interaction; risk of distraction; difficulty ensuring attentiveness. | Anggraeni & Fadillah (2024); Idhan (2024) |
| <i>Sorogan</i> | Mobile apps for recording recitations and receiving automated/teacher feedback. | Maintains principle of individualized correction; improves scalability; | Lacks intimacy and immediacy of oral correction; limited in fostering | Sugianto & Cholilah (2025); Zulkifli & Idham (2025) |

| <i>Method</i> | <i>Digital/Hybrid Adaptation</i> | <i>Advantages</i> | <i>Challenges</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | | asynchronous flexibility. | character formation. | |
| <i>Halaqah</i> | Hybrid circles combining in-person discussion with online forums and digital collaboration platforms. | Broader participation; asynchronous reflection; encourages peer-to-peer dialogue. | Unequal participation; superficial engagement; managing teacher-student authority online. | Zakiyah et al. (2025); Fakhruddin et al. (2025) |
| Comparative Insights | UAE: blended learning improved outcomes; Malaysia: integration of digital grammar teaching; Spain: dialogic Arabic curriculum enhanced by online platforms. | Shows pesantren methods resonate with global digital pedagogy trends. | Challenge of balancing tradition and innovation without losing depth and discipline. | Al-Qatawneh et al. (2020); Mohamad et al. (2024); El Khaymy (2024) |

Comparative Pedagogical Insights

The pedagogical triad of *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah* in Indonesian Islamic schools demonstrates remarkable resonance with modern educational theories, indicating that these methods are not mere historical artifacts but living frameworks that align with and even anticipate contemporary pedagogical principles.

1. *Bandongan* and Expository/Grammar-Based Learning

The *bandongan* method parallels modern expository or lecture-based instruction but with a distinctive textual focus. The teacher functions as an “advance organizer,” modeling reading, translation, and grammatical parsing (Alfani et al., 2025; Chairudin, 2023). This approach aligns with Ausubel’s theory of meaningful learning, where structured input helps learners connect new information with prior knowledge. It also reflects aspects of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) observed in Malaysian religious schools, where grammar-based pedagogy continues to support textual literacy (Mohamad et al., 2024). Moreover, the teacher’s step-by-step annotation serves as a worked example, which in modern pedagogy reduces cognitive load and scaffolds comprehension for novices (Fathoni, 2024).

2. *Sorogan* and Scaffolding/Formative Assessment

The individualized nature of *sorogan* resonates strongly with Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learning occurs most effectively through guided support. Immediate corrective feedback in *sorogan* embodies principles of formative assessment and mastery learning, enabling progress through cycles of trial, error, and correction (Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025; Zulkifli & Idham, 2025). International parallels reinforce this point: Al-Asaaf (2015) highlights the indispensability of individualized guidance in teaching Arabic as a second language, while Sumi and Tominaga (2022) show that scaffolding remains central in grammar pedagogy debates in Japan. Together, these findings confirm that *sorogan* prefigures personalized and feedback-oriented approaches now central to global pedagogy.

3. *Halaqah* and Cooperative/Constructivist Learning



The halaqah tradition closely aligns with constructivist and cooperative learning approaches. Students participate in dialogue, question assumptions, and collaboratively build meaning, echoing principles of dialogic teaching (Zakiyah et al., 2025). The teacher's role shifts from transmitter to facilitator, comparable to modern learner-centered strategies (Fakhruddin et al., 2025). Similar approaches are observed internationally: El Khaymy (2024) shows that dialogic methods in Spanish Arabic curricula promote reflective and critical learning, while Al-Musawi (2017) emphasizes dialogic pedagogy in Arabic literature as a means of integrating cognitive and affective dimensions. Thus, halaqah anticipates seminar-style and problem-based learning models widely valued in modern education.

4. Complementarity and Bloom's Taxonomy

Viewed together, the methods cover the spectrum of cognitive processes outlined in Bloom's revised taxonomy. Bandongan emphasizes remembering and understanding through broad textual exposure. Sorogan targets applying and analyzing, as students demonstrate grammatical accuracy and interpretation under teacher guidance. Halaqah cultivates evaluating and creating, as students debate interpretations and contextualize texts in broader discourses. This triadic system ensures holistic progression from basic knowledge acquisition to critical and creative engagement (Fathoni, 2024; Zakiyah et al., 2025).

5. Implications for Modern Education

The alignment of pesantren pedagogy with contemporary theories highlights its relevance for today's education. Bandongan mirrors large-class lectures but is enriched by authentic texts and interpretive modeling. Sorogan exemplifies personalized tutoring and formative assessment. Halaqah anticipates dialogic and seminar-style learning that fosters critical reasoning and ethical reflection. Comparative evidence from Malaysia, Japan, Spain, and Algeria (Berdous & Cortier, 2020; El Khaymy, 2024; Mohamad et al., 2024; Sumi & Tominaga, 2022) underscores that Indonesian heritage pedagogies resonate with global educational logics while offering distinctive contributions rooted in Islamic intellectual traditions.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis demonstrates that traditional Islamic pedagogies in Indonesia should not be regarded as obsolete but as indigenous models of effective teaching. Their integration with contemporary theories enriches both the preservation of heritage and the advancement of modern pedagogy, situating pesantren and madrasah as contributors to global educational discourse.

Table 7 Mapping of Traditional Methods to Modern Pedagogical Theories

| <i>Traditional Method</i> | <i>Core Features</i> | <i>Modern Pedagogical Parallels</i> | <i>Comparative Insights</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Bandongan</i> | Collective reading; teacher-centered exposition; guided annotation (<i>makna gandul</i>). | Expository/lecture method; Grammar Translation Method (GTM); Ausubel's meaningful learning; worked examples for cognitive scaffolding. | Malaysian religious schools retain grammar-oriented pedagogy; aligns with lecture-based global practices. | Chairudin (2023); Alfani et al. (2025); Fathoni (2024); Mohamad et al. (2024) |
| <i>Sorogan</i> | One-to-one recitation; immediate | Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); scaffolding; | Comparable to personalized grammar teaching | Sugianto & Cholilah (2025); Zulkifli & Idham |

| <i>Traditional Method</i> | <i>Core Features</i> | <i>Modern Pedagogical Parallels</i> | <i>Comparative Insights</i> | <i>Sources</i> |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| | correction; individualized mastery of grammar and reading. | formative assessment; mastery learning. | in Japan; emphasized in Arabic as second language pedagogy. | (2025); Al-Asaaf (2015); Sumi & Tominaga (2022) |
| <i>Halaqah</i> | Dialogic discussion; collaborative interpretation; teacher as facilitator. | Constructivism; cooperative learning; dialogic teaching; learner-centered pedagogy; Bloom’s higher-order skills. | Spanish curricula highlight dialogic Arabic instruction; Arabic literature teaching embraces dialogic pedagogy. | Zakiyah et al. (2025); Fakhrudin et al. (2025); El Khaymy (2024); Al-Musawi (2017) |
| Triadic Synthesis | Breadth (<i>bandongan</i>), depth (<i>sorogan</i>), and reflection (<i>halaqah</i>). | Bloom’s taxonomy: Remember–Understand (<i>bandongan</i>), Apply–Analyze (<i>sorogan</i>), Evaluate–Create (<i>halaqah</i>). | Ensures holistic progression from basic knowledge to critical and creative engagement. | Fathon |

Synthesis of Findings

The exploration of *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah* in Indonesian Islamic schools reveals a pedagogical system that is both historically rooted and theoretically robust. Each method contributes a distinct yet complementary dimension: *bandongan* provides breadth of exposure and textual familiarity, *sorogan* ensures depth of mastery through individualized scaffolding, and *halaqah* fosters dialogic reasoning and critical reflection. Together, they form a holistic instructional triad that balances collective learning, individual accountability, and collaborative inquiry (Chairudin, 2023; Zakiyah et al., 2025).

From a comparative perspective, the findings highlight that these traditional methods map seamlessly onto modern educational theories. *Bandongan* anticipates expository learning models and cognitive scaffolding; *sorogan* mirrors principles of formative assessment, mastery learning, and Vygotsky’s ZPD; while *halaqah* resonates with constructivist and cooperative learning paradigms (Fakhrudin et al., 2025; Sugianto & Cholilah, 2025). Moreover, their combined trajectory corresponds with Bloom’s revised taxonomy, covering all levels of cognitive processes from remembering to creating. This suggests that early Islamic pedagogy in Indonesia intuitively embodied universal principles of effective instruction long before they were formalized in Western educational theory.

The synthesis also underscores the adaptability of these methods. Their integration into early madrasah curricula demonstrates that heritage pedagogies were not discarded in the modernization process but reconfigured to fit structured schooling environments (Rohman et al., 2023; Sabila & Maulida, 2024). More recently, their digital adaptations—online *bandongan*, app-based *sorogan*, and hybrid *halaqah*—show that these methods continue to evolve in response to contemporary challenges, particularly the demand for scalability and technological integration (Anggraeni & Fadillah, 2024).

Overall, the findings affirm that the pedagogical legacy of pesantren and madrasah is not static but dynamic. It is a living system that negotiates between tradition and innovation, authority and participation, memorization and critical thinking. As such, the triad of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah not only shaped the trajectory of Arabic instruction in early Islamic schools but also offers valuable insights for contemporary educational discourse. These insights suggest that heritage-based pedagogy can contribute significantly to rethinking Arabic language instruction in modern Islamic institutions and beyond.

Conclusion

This study examined the methods of teaching Arabic in Indonesia's early Islamic schools, with a particular focus on pesantren and proto-madrasah traditions. The analysis demonstrated that the classical methods of bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah were not merely instructional techniques but cultural frameworks that shaped students' intellectual, spiritual, and social formation. Their endurance across centuries underscores their central role in sustaining Islamic scholarship and Arabic literacy in the archipelago.

The findings highlight several key insights. First, bandongan provided breadth of exposure, cultivating textual familiarity and discipline through collective engagement with canonical works. Second, sorogan ensured depth of mastery, fostering accuracy, accountability, and perseverance through individualized correction. Third, halaqah introduced a dialogic dimension, stimulating critical thinking, collaborative inquiry, and ethical reflection. Together, these methods formed a triadic pedagogy that integrated receptive, productive, and reflective dimensions of learning.

The integration of these methods into early madrasah curricula demonstrates that Islamic education in Indonesia negotiated between tradition and modernization, blending heritage-based pedagogy with structured curricula. In contemporary contexts, their digital adaptations—online bandongan, app-based sorogan, and hybrid halaqah—illustrate both resilience and innovation.

Theoretically, this study shows that pesantren pedagogy resonates with global educational frameworks. Bandongan aligns with expository teaching and cognitive scaffolding; sorogan parallels mastery learning, scaffolding, and formative assessment; while halaqah embodies cooperative and constructivist learning. Collectively, they map onto the full spectrum of Bloom's revised taxonomy—from remembering to creating. Comparative perspectives further confirm that these methods echo pedagogical logics in Malaysia, Japan, Spain, and Algeria. This convergence affirms that Indonesian heritage-based pedagogy embodies universal principles of effective learning and contributes to global educational discourse.

Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of preserving and reimagining these methods for modern Arabic instruction. Islamic educational institutions can benefit from integrating traditional practices with digital innovations, thereby balancing authenticity with innovation. Such integration ensures that Arabic pedagogy remains rooted in cultural heritage while addressing the demands of 21st-century learning.

In conclusion, bandongan, sorogan, and halaqah should be understood as a living pedagogical system—dynamic, adaptive, and globally relevant. Their historical continuity, theoretical alignment, and contemporary adaptability position them as valuable models for Arabic education in both Islamic higher institutions and comparative pedagogical studies. Future research should focus on empirical evaluations of these methods, particularly their cognitive, affective, and ethical outcomes, as well as their role

in digital learning ecosystems. In doing so, the legacy of early Islamic pedagogy will continue to inspire both scholarship and practice in Indonesia and beyond.

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