

Improving Arabic Reading Comprehension (Muthala'ah) Through the Random Text Strategy: A Classroom Action Research at an Islamic Teacher Training College

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This classroom action research describes how the Random Text strategy affects students' learning activity and measures its improvement of Arabic reading comprehension (muthala'ah) among one class of female students at an Islamic boarding school in Riau, Indonesia. **Methodology:** A two-cycle Classroom Action Research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model (planning, acting, observing, reflecting) was conducted with 18 purposively selected Grade 2C female students in 2020/2021. Data were collected through a validated four-domain observation rubric scored by two observers and an achievement test, then analysed descriptively as percentages and class means. **Main Findings:** Learning activity increased from 65.97% in Cycle I to 77.08% in Cycle II (an increase of 11.11 percentage points). The class mean achievement score rose from 7.83 to 8.56, and the proportion of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria improved from 88.9% to 100.0%. Engagement gains were clearest in the verbal and social domains. **Novelty/Originality of this study:** While the Random Text strategy has been used for Hadith content, EFL reading, and junior-high reading, this study is the first to apply and evaluate it for higher-order Arabic reading comprehension (muthala'ah) within an immersive KMI boarding-school context, offering a context-specific, classroom-tested account rather than a generalised efficacy claim.



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A. Introduction

The acquisition of Arabic as a foreign language remains a foundational pillar of educational curricula within Islamic boarding schools across the Indonesian archipelago. Arabic functions not merely as a utilitarian medium of international communication, but rather as an indispensable ontological tool for accessing classical religious texts, engaging with Islamic jurisprudence, and fostering a unified, trans-national Islamic identity (Akmaliah et al., 2021; Suryadarma, Wahyudi, et al., 2024). The sacred texts of Islam, predominantly the Qur'an and the Hadith, are intrinsically bound to their original Arabic morphology and syntax, rendering the language an inescapable prerequisite for authentic religious scholarship and textual exegesis.

Consequently, the pedagogical frameworks deployed to teach Arabic in non-native environments must navigate a highly complex duality. Educators must instill rigorous grammatical and morphological precision while simultaneously fostering fluid, functional communicative competence that bridges the gap between classical, standard, and conversational dialects (Harisca et al., 2023; Madi, 2023). Within the Indonesian educational landscape, this dual mandate is most prominently and successfully pursued within the traditional and modern *Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) system, an institutional model

that has historically served as the vanguard of Arabic literacy and Islamic intellectualism in Southeast Asia (Habibi, 2019; Rochmat et al., 2023).

The immersive environment of the boarding school provides a unique sociolinguistic ecosystem where language acquisition is not restricted to formal classroom hours but is integrated into the daily residential and religious life of the students (Muttaqin et al., 2024; Suryadarma, Wahyudi, et al., 2024). The institutional setting for this specific investigation is situated within the paradigm of modern Islamic boarding schools, specifically those adopting the highly structured *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* (KMI) educational system (Syarifah, 2016). Originating from the foundational pedagogical reforms at the Modern Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School, the KMI curriculum represents an eclectic, highly regimented educational model that hybridizes traditional Islamic sciences (*al-ulum al-islamiyah*) with intensive linguistic training (*al-ulum al-lughawiyah*) and general academic disciplines (*al-ulum al-'ammah*) (Cecep et al., 2024; Zaid, 2012).

Institutions like the Khadimul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, located in the Riau archipelago, have integrated this specific KMI structure to cultivate a fully immersive, bilingual educational environment. Within the KMI ecosystem, the Arabic language is not merely a subject isolated within a specific timetable; it functions as the operational language of instruction, daily administration, residential communication, and public oration (Rahma, 2021). However, the ambitious objectives of the KMI curriculum inevitably encounter complex pedagogical friction at the classroom level, particularly concerning the acquisition of advanced literacy and reading comprehension skills.

Language proficiency is universally categorized into four primary domains: listening (*Istima'*), speaking (*Kalam*), reading (*Qira'ah*), and writing (*Kitabah*) (Masqon, 2014). In the specialized nomenclature of the KMI curriculum, the advanced study of reading comprehension is formally designated as *Muthala'ah*. While general *Qira'ah* instruction often emphasizes the foundational mechanics of decoding Arabic script, phonetic articulation, and basic vocabulary acquisition, *Muthala'ah* demands a profound, analytical engagement with complex, unvocalized texts (Nuraeni & Ammar, 2020; Suryadarma, Aldini, et al., 2024).

Despite the theoretical robustness and elevated goals of the *Muthala'ah* curriculum, empirical observations conducted at the Khadimul Ummah Islamic Boarding School in Riau, specifically within the Grade 2C female cohort, revealed systemic pedagogical deficiencies and suboptimal academic outcomes. Student performance in the *Muthala'ah* subject consistently stagnated, failing to achieve parity with parallel class cohorts within the same institution (Khatimah, 2021).

Quantitative baseline assessments indicated that a significant portion of the Grade 2C class failed to meet the institutional Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC), the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM), which was structurally established at a baseline score of five (5.0) out of ten (Rahma, 2021). Besides that, instructional delivery was characterized by monotonous, traditional, teacher-centered methodologies that neglected the deployment of dynamic learning media or varied, student-centered instructional strategies (Khatimah, 2021). The resultant classroom atmosphere was one of profound passivity, where students experienced cognitive fatigue, diminished enthusiasm, and a critical lack of participatory agency during the crucial stages of language processing. The students were physically present, but cognitively disengaged from the rigorous analytical demands of the Arabic text.

To disrupt this cycle of academic underperformance, linguistic disengagement, and low self-efficacy, an urgent pedagogical intervention was mandated. The intervention

required a strategic paradigm shift away from passive linguistic reception toward an architecture of active, collaborative, and highly stimulating intellectual engagement (Amel & Afaf, 2025). Consequently, the Random Text active learning strategy was identified, adapted, and implemented as a targeted pedagogical mechanism to revitalize the *Muthala'ah* learning environment, dismantle student anxiety, and elevate reading comprehension outcomes.

To actualize the principles of active learning within the specific context of Arabic reading comprehension, the Random Text strategy, alternatively referenced in broader international linguistic literature as the scrambled text, broken text, or jumbled sentences strategy, was adopted as the primary intervention mechanism (Rahmawati et al., 2021). The Random Text strategy is defined as a highly active, collaborative learning procedure wherein a coherent, unified reading passage is deliberately fractured into separated, disjointed segments, sentences, or paragraphs (Azizah et al., 2021). It offers profound pedagogical advantages tailored specifically to the challenges of Arabic language acquisition. It effectively eradicates the paralyzing classroom monotony often associated with traditional reading drills, establishing a vibrant, highly interactive learning atmosphere (Syafiqoh et al., 2026). It enforces peer-to-peer collaboration, mandating that students combine their fragmented linguistic resources to solve complex textual dilemmas, thereby lowering the affective filter and reducing performance anxiety.

Furthermore, the collaborative deciphering of the text aids significantly in illuminating opaque vocabulary and decoding complex Arabic sentence structures that might overwhelm a solitary, unsupported learner (Rima, 2015). A comprehensive review of the contemporary literature reveals a growing interest in innovative pedagogical interventions for Arabic language acquisition. Studies have extensively investigated foundational vocabulary acquisition, digital integration, and general teacher-centered methodologies in religious institutions.

A few researchers focused on basic communicative games or technological enhancements for language labs. There have been limited studies concerned with the empirical application of advanced, puzzle-based collaborative cognitive strategies, specifically the Random Text strategy, for higher-order Arabic reading comprehension (*Muthala'ah*) within the immersive environment of modern Islamic boarding schools. Prior studies have applied the Random Text strategy in different contexts: to a Hadith subject at a Gontor institution (Azizah et al., 2021), to general and EFL reading instruction (Rahmawati et al., 2021), and to seventh-grade reading at a junior high school (Syafiqoh et al., 2026). However, its application to higher-order Arabic reading comprehension (*muthala'ah*) within an immersive KMI boarding-school environment has not yet been examined. This study addresses that specific gap.

Accordingly, the study addresses two research questions: (RQ1) How does the Random Text strategy affect the progression of students' learning activity across two action-research cycles? and (RQ2) To what extent does it improve students' *muthala'ah* achievement, measured by the class mean score and the rate of MMC attainment? It is hypothesised that the iterative application of the strategy will improve both engagement and achievement from Cycle I to Cycle II. Therefore, this research intends to fill this specific pedagogical gap by deploying and evaluating this strategy. The objectives of this research are to analyze the progression of student engagement dynamics and to measure the tangible improvement of academic outcomes in Arabic reading comprehension following the cyclical intervention.

could be checked to support reliability. Quantitative data regarding learning outcomes were objectively measured via post-intervention cognitive assessments (tests) specifically designed to evaluate vocabulary retention, syntactical logic, and narrative comprehension of the *Muthala'ah* material. The achievement test's content validity was established by the subject specialist, the institutional MMC was set at 5.0 out of 10, and institutional permission and students' informed consent were obtained before data collection.

Success criteria were defined a priori: a cycle was considered successful when the mean learning-activity score reached at least 75% and at least 85% of students met the MMC, and the intervention was judged effective if both indicators increased from Cycle I to Cycle II. Data were then analysed descriptively. The learning-activity percentage for each cycle was computed as the total active behaviours observed across the four rubric domains divided by the maximum possible rubric score, expressed as a percentage, while achievement was summarised as the class mean score and the percentage of students meeting the MMC. Because the design is a single-group, descriptive CAR, no inferential statistical test was applied; the results are interpreted as practical improvements rather than statistically inferred effects, with inter-observer agreement supporting the trustworthiness of the observational data.

C. Result and Discussion

Result

The rigorous execution of the Classroom Action Research over the two planned cycles yielded comprehensive, highly affirmative data streams. The empirical results confirmed a pronounced, positive trajectory in both the behavioral dynamics of student engagement, captured here as student learning activity, and the tangible acquisition of complex Arabic linguistic competencies, captured as *muthala'ah* achievement. To present the evidence transparently, this section first describes the observational findings on learning activity, then the cognitive findings on achievement, and finally consolidates both data streams in a comparative table. Throughout, the description distinguishes what the observation rubric and the achievement test recorded from the interpretation that is reserved for the discussion. The findings of this research can be organised under the following two headings.

Student Learning Activity

The structured observational data captured a profound and progressive shift in the classroom culture generated by the introduction of the Random Text strategy. Before the intervention, the baseline classroom had been dominated by a teacher-centred routine in which the instructor read and translated the passage while the majority of students copied meanings passively, rarely initiating questions and seldom interacting with one another. Against this passive baseline, the rubric recorded a clear movement toward active, participatory behaviour once the strategy was introduced, and a further consolidation of that behaviour in the second cycle. The four observation domains, physical, mental, verbal, and social engagement, each contributed to this overall movement, although they did not all advance at the same pace.

During the implementation of Cycle I, the cumulative metric for student learning activity registered at an average of 65.97%. While this figure represented a quantifiable improvement over the baseline passivity associated with the traditional, teacher-centered methodology, critical qualitative observations revealed significant, anticipated operational friction. The abrupt transition to a highly collaborative, puzzle-solving modality initially induced a degree of cognitive and social disorientation among the students who had been accustomed to receiving the text rather than reconstructing it.

Upon the instructor's directive to form collaborative units, the students exhibited notable sluggishness, hesitation, and a reluctance to assume active roles. The internal group dynamics during the textual reconstruction phase were frequently characterized by confusion and a lack of decisive intellectual leadership. Students struggled to adapt to the rigorous demands of collaborative syntactic negotiation, often waiting for peer confirmation before committing to a structural decision. Consequently, the overall activity profile in the first cycle, while elevated from the baseline, remained somewhat inconsistent and fell short of the optimal, fluid engagement that the success criterion of 75% would have required.

Examined by domain, the first cycle showed an uneven profile. In the physical domain, students did move, distribute fragments, and arrange slips of text on their desks, so observable on-task action rose quickly; physical participation was the earliest behaviour to respond to the new format. In the mental domain, engagement was present but tentative: students read the fragments and attempted to order them, yet many paused frequently, re-read the same slip several times, and hesitated to test a hypothesis about sequence. In the verbal domain, talk remained quiet and limited, often confined to short confirmations or requests for help rather than reasoned argument about why one sentence should precede another. In the social domain, the groups were still learning how to distribute roles, and a few stronger students tended to dominate while quieter members deferred. This domain-level picture explains why the aggregate figure, though clearly above baseline, was still modest at the end of Cycle I.

By the implementation of Cycle II, however, a dramatic behavioral and psychological evolution was empirically observed. The cumulative metric for learning activity surged significantly, reaching 77.08%, thereby exceeding the a priori success threshold of 75%. The students had clearly internalized the mechanics, expectations, and benefits of the Random Text strategy. The initial lethargy and apprehension observed during group formation completely vanished; students mobilized into their collaborative units rapidly and with explicit, enthusiastic purpose, and the time lost to organisation in the first cycle was largely recovered.

The internal group discussions transformed from hesitant, whispered confusion into robust, confident linguistic debates regarding vocabulary meaning and sentence structure. Furthermore, a striking shift occurred during the public articulation phase of the lesson. The instructor was no longer required to arbitrarily select hesitant groups to present their findings; rather, an overwhelming majority of the collaborative units proactively volunteered, demonstrating a profound escalation in academic confidence, communicative courage, and ownership of the material.

The domain-level pattern in the second cycle confirmed where the gains were concentrated. Physical engagement, already high in Cycle I, was sustained and became more purposeful, with less aimless movement and more deliberate handling of the text fragments. Mental engagement deepened markedly: students now generated and tested hypotheses about sentence order with reference to grammatical cues rather than guessing, and they self-corrected when a reconstruction produced an incoherent meaning. The most visible advances, however, were in the verbal and social domains. Verbal engagement shifted from quiet confirmation to articulate justification, as students explained, in Arabic and about Arabic, why a connector, a pronoun, or a verb form required a particular position. Social engagement matured as roles within the groups equalised, quieter members contributed more frequently, and groups began to monitor their own collaboration. The concentration of

improvement in the verbal and social domains is the clearest behavioural signature of the intervention.

A comparative analysis of the observational data reveals an absolute increase of 11.11 percentage points in aggregate student learning activity between the first and second cycles, indicating a highly successful behavioral adaptation to the intervention. In Cycle I, the mean learning-activity score was 65.97%. Although this already exceeded the passive baseline of the traditional teacher-centred lessons, observation notes recorded initial disorientation: students were slow to form groups and hesitant to take active roles during the first reconstruction tasks. In Cycle II, after the procedure had been clarified and group transitions streamlined, the mean learning-activity score rose to 77.08%, an increase of 11.11 percentage points. The gain was most visible in the verbal and social domains, where students debated vocabulary and sentence order and volunteered to present without prompting.

Muthala'ah Achievement

The quantitative cognitive assessments administered at the conclusion of each instructional cycle provided clear evidence of academic maturation, mirroring the positive trajectory observed in the behavioral activity metrics. The achievement test addressed the three competencies the *muthala'ah* curriculum prioritises, namely vocabulary retention, syntactic logic, and narrative comprehension, so that the scores reflect comprehension of connected discourse rather than the recall of isolated words. In this way, the achievement measure was deliberately aligned with the same construct that the Random Text task was designed to exercise.

In Cycle I, the post-intervention assessment yielded an average class score of 7.83. When this aggregate performance was measured against the institutional Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) of 5.0, the data revealed that 16 out of the 18 students (constituting an 88.9% pass rate) successfully surpassed the required threshold. Conversely, 2 students (11.1%) failed to achieve the requisite competency level, indicating that while the strategy was broadly and immediately effective for the vast majority, a minor subset of learners required further temporal acclimation, differentiated instruction, or targeted peer scaffolding to navigate the cognitive load of the exercise. Notably, even at this first measurement the class mean already stood well above the modest mastery threshold, a point returned to among the limitations.

The subsequent cognitive assessment in Cycle II documented finalized academic success. The average class score escalated to 8.56, an increase of 0.73 points on the ten-point scale. Crucially, the final assessment revealed a 100.0% success rate; all 18 students within the Grade 2C cohort achieved individual scores that surpassed the MMC threshold, completely eradicating the failure observed in the first cycle and in the prior baseline measurements. The two students who had not met the criterion in Cycle I both reached mastery in Cycle II, which suggests that the additional cycle gave precisely those learners who needed more time the opportunity to consolidate the strategy.

Read together, the two measurements show that achievement improved in parallel with engagement. In Cycle I the class mean was 7.83, and 16 of 18 students (88.9%) met the MMC while 2 students (11.1%) did not. In Cycle II the class mean rose to 8.56, and all 18 students (100.0%) met the MMC, so that the achievement indicator, like the activity indicator, satisfied and surpassed its a priori success criterion of 85% attainment. Because only aggregate class means were available from the records, measures of dispersion such as the standard deviation or range could not be computed; this constraint is noted among the

and are reported qualitatively; they are intended to characterise the kind of behaviour observed rather than to assign separate numerical scores to each domain.

Table 2. Observed behavioural indicators by engagement domain across the two cycles

Engagement domain	Cycle I (observed behaviour)	Cycle II (observed behaviour)
Physical	On-task handling of text fragments emerged quickly; some aimless movement during slow group formation.	Purposeful, efficient handling of materials; rapid, organised transitions into groups.
Mental	Tentative ordering; frequent re-reading and hesitation to commit to a sequence.	Active hypothesis testing using grammatical cues; self-correction of incoherent orderings.
Verbal	Quiet, limited talk; mostly short confirmations and requests for help.	Articulate justification of sentence order; reasoned debate about connectors and pronouns.
Social	Uneven participation; stronger students dominated, quieter members deferred.	Equalised roles; broader participation and self-monitoring of collaboration.

Source: Authors' observation notes, 2021

The domain summary clarifies the meaning of the eleven-point aggregate gain. The physical domain responded earliest and was largely sustained, so it contributed relatively little to the increase between cycles. The mental domain deepened in quality, moving from tentative trial-and-error toward grammar-referenced reasoning. The largest and most consequential changes, however, occurred in the verbal and social domains, where quiet, uneven participation in Cycle I gave way to articulate justification and broadly shared collaboration in Cycle II. This pattern is consistent with the interpretation, developed in the discussion, that the strategy works principally by converting private decoding into public, collaborative reasoning about Arabic structure.

Performance across the Three Comprehension Competencies

The achievement test was constructed to assess three competencies that the *muthala'ah* curriculum prioritises, namely vocabulary retention, syntactic logic, and narrative comprehension. Although only aggregate class means were recorded, the qualitative pattern of student responses across the two cycles is informative. In Cycle I, the strongest performances were in vocabulary retention, which is the competency most directly supported by the immersive environment and the pre-task vocabulary activation, whereas syntactic logic and narrative comprehension were more variable, reflecting the same hesitancy observed in the mental domain of the activity data.

In Cycle II, the improvement in the class mean from 7.83 to 8.56 was accompanied by more even performance across the three competencies, with the clearest relative gains in syntactic logic and narrative comprehension. This pattern is coherent with the design of the Random Text task, which exercises precisely those discourse-level competencies by requiring students to infer sentence order, track referents, and reconstruct narrative coherence. The convergence between the competencies that the task trains and the competencies on which scores rose strengthens the case that the achievement gain reflects genuine comprehension development rather than improved test familiarity alone, although, as noted in the

limitations, this interpretation would be more secure with item-level data and a delayed post-test.

Session-by-Session Observation Narrative

A closer, session-level account adds texture to the aggregate figures. In the first session of Cycle I, the novelty of receiving a coherent passage in scrambled fragments produced visible surprise and some confusion. Groups spent a considerable share of the available time simply organising themselves and clarifying what was being asked, and several students initially treated the task as a guessing game, arranging fragments by intuition before being prompted to justify their choices grammatically. On-task physical behaviour was nonetheless high, and the session ended with most groups producing a partly correct reconstruction.

In the second session of Cycle I, familiarity with the format reduced the organisational delay, and discussion began to shift from guessing toward reasoning, with some groups beginning to point to connectors and pronouns as evidence for a particular order. However, participation remained uneven, a minority of confident students still carried most of the verbal load, and the noise generated by simultaneous group debate occasionally made it difficult for the observers to attribute contributions cleanly. These observations, recorded in the reflecting phase, directly informed the planning adjustments for the next cycle.

The first session of Cycle II showed the effect of those adjustments immediately. Because the procedure had been modelled at the outset and roles and time limits had been clarified, groups moved into reconstruction with little delay, and the quality of talk was noticeably higher from the start. Students referred spontaneously to grammatical cues, challenged one another's proposals, and revised their orderings when a sequence produced an incoherent meaning. The atmosphere was busier but more focused, and the observers noted markedly more even participation across group members.

By the final session of Cycle II, the behavioural profile had stabilised at a high level. Groups reconstructed the passages efficiently, presentation turns were claimed voluntarily and competently, and the classroom resembled a community of readers working on a shared problem rather than a set of individuals waiting to be corrected. The contrast between this session and the first session of Cycle I is the clearest qualitative expression of the eleven-point rise in measured activity and of the move to full mastery on the achievement test.

Summary of Evidence against the Pre-Specified Success Criteria

It is useful to evaluate the two cycles explicitly against the success criteria that were fixed before data collection, namely a mean learning-activity score of at least 75% and MMC attainment by at least 85% of students, with the further requirement that both indicators increase from Cycle I to Cycle II. In Cycle I, the activity criterion was not met, since the mean of 65.97% fell below the 75% threshold, whereas the achievement criterion was met, since 88.9% of students reached the MMC. Cycle I therefore satisfied one of the two conditions and is best characterised as a partial success that exposed clear targets for refinement.

In Cycle II, both criteria were satisfied: activity rose to 77.08%, clearing the 75% threshold, and MMC attainment reached 100.0%, well above the 85% requirement. Moreover, both indicators increased relative to Cycle I, fulfilling the comparative condition for judging the intervention effective. Read against its own a priori standards, then, the intervention succeeded fully only in the second cycle, and the gap between the two cycles is itself part of the evidence, since it shows where the strategy fell short before reflective refinement and how those shortfalls were closed.

Trustworthiness of the Observational Record

Because the activity findings rest on classroom observation, it is important to describe how the observational record was made trustworthy. Two observers scored each session independently using the same validated four-domain rubric, which allowed their records to be compared and points of disagreement to be discussed and reconciled rather than silently averaged. The use of a pre-designed rubric with defined indicators for the physical, mental, verbal, and social domains constrained the observers to attend to the same behaviours, reducing the idiosyncrasy that unaided observation can introduce (Usman et al., 2019). Continuous, session-by-session recording, rather than a single end-of-cycle impression, further anchored the activity percentages in concrete, time-stamped behaviour.

These procedures support, but do not fully guarantee, the dependability of the activity data. As noted among the limitations, the principal observer was also the teacher-researcher, which introduces a potential for observer expectancy, and formal inter-observer agreement statistics were not reported. The reconciliation of the two observers' notes and the use of a fixed rubric mitigate this risk and lend the qualitative descriptions reported above a defensible evidentiary basis, while leaving the formal quantification of agreement as a clear target for replication.

The empirical data extracted from both the qualitative observations and the quantitative assessments consistently support the fundamental research hypothesis. The iterative, refined application of the Random Text strategy was accompanied by a progressive and holistic enhancement in both the behavioral enthusiasm of the students and their verifiable cognitive mastery of the Arabic *Muthala'ah* curriculum. Both pre-specified success criteria, a mean learning-activity score of at least 75% and MMC attainment of at least 85%, were met in Cycle II but not in Cycle I, which indicates that the second, reflectively refined cycle was decisive in moving the class from partial to full success.

Discussion

The robust empirical results generated by this CAR investigation provide multi-layered insights into the cognitive mechanisms, psychological barriers, and socio-cultural dynamics that govern foreign language acquisition within an immersive educational environment. The transition of the Grade 2C cohort from widespread academic stagnation and pronounced linguistic anxiety to a 100.0% mastery rate is not merely a statistical fluctuation. Rather, it is indicative of a fundamental and largely successful realignment of the pedagogical interface between the student, the text, and the instructor. The following discussion interprets the findings along five interrelated lines, namely the cognitive, the socio-collaborative, the reading-specific, the reflective-procedural, and the institutional, before acknowledging the study's limitations.

Cognitive Reconstruction and the Acceleration of Syntactic Awareness

The primary and most impactful efficacy of the Random Text strategy lies in its deliberate manipulation of cognitive load and its mandatory activation of higher-order analytical processing (Azizah et al., 2021). In traditional, passive *Muthala'ah* instruction, students facing a difficult foreign-language text frequently default to passive decoding, sequentially translating isolated words without necessarily synthesizing the overarching semantic architecture or grammatical logic of the narrative. When translation fails, comprehension halts entirely. The Random Text strategy systematically disrupts this passive, linear fragility (Syafiqoh et al., 2026). By presenting the text as a fractured, non-sequential puzzle, the intervention forces the learner to actively engage with the structural logic of the Arabic language in order to create meaning.

To successfully reassemble the fragmented sentences into a cohesive paragraph, students cannot rely solely on basic vocabulary translation (Feby, 2023); they must actively deploy and test their knowledge of Arabic morphology (*sharf*) and syntax (*nahw*). They are compelled by the parameters of the task to recognize transitional markers, identify pronoun referents, understand logical connectors, and anticipate the inherent structural templates of Arabic prose and dialogue. This continuous, iterative process of hypothesis generation, structural testing, and peer debate deepens their grammatical intuition and solidifies their semantic comprehension far more effectively than passive listening.

The domain-level observations reported in the findings support this cognitive reading. The deepening of mental engagement between Cycle I and Cycle II, from tentative re-reading toward grammar-referenced hypothesis testing and self-correction, is precisely the behavioural trace one would expect if the task were recruiting morphological and syntactic knowledge rather than word-level translation alone. The parallel leap in the average assessment score from 7.83 to 8.56 is consistent with this enhanced, active structural mastery. In short, the strategy appears to have moved learners from reading words to deciphering language, and the achievement gain is the measurable counterpart of that qualitative shift.

The Socio-Collaborative Dimension of Language Acquisition

Beyond individual cognitive processing, the success of the intervention is heavily predicated on its socio-collaborative architecture (Cheng et al., 2021). The anxiety, fear of failure, and perceived difficulty surrounding Arabic reading comprehension, which had previously depressed both learning outcomes and activity levels in Grade 2C, were progressively mitigated through the strategic deployment of heterogeneous group work. The collaborative format redistributed the cognitive and emotional burden of the task from the isolated individual to the group, and this redistribution is visible in the maturation of the social domain across the two cycles.

In accordance with social-constructivist theories of education, learning is optimally facilitated when situated within a collaborative zone of proximal development (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023; Anwar et al., 2024). The Random Text strategy leverages the power of peer scaffolding (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2021). During the initial implementation in Cycle I, the documented confusion and hesitation were symptomatic of students adjusting to the demands of collaborative negotiation; in effect, they were learning how to learn together. By Cycle II, the groups had established more effective internal communication protocols, mutual trust, and shared objectives, which is why the social and verbal domains advanced most.

The collaborative environment provided an essential psychological safety net; individual linguistic deficits, vocabulary gaps, or grammatical misunderstandings were compensated for by the collective knowledge and deductive reasoning of the group (Jarvenoja et al., 2020; Umi et al., 2023). Consequently, the paralyzing anxiety associated with singular, individual failure was replaced by the shared momentum of collective problem-solving (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023). This psychological shift from fear to empowerment was empirically observable in the increase in volunteerism, energetic debate, and public-speaking confidence during the presentation phases of Cycle II. The strategy thus transformed the classroom from an arena of individual evaluation into a community of shared linguistic inquiry, and the recovery of the two previously unsuccessful students is consistent with the protective effect of that community.

Random Text Strategy and Arabic Reading-Comprehension Development

The effectiveness of the Random Text strategy can also be interpreted from the perspective of Arabic reading-comprehension development. Reading comprehension in Arabic, particularly in *muthala'ah* classes, involves more than decoding vocabulary and translating individual words; it requires readers to construct meaning by identifying textual cohesion, syntactic relationships, referential connections, and discourse organization (Nuraeni & Ammar, 2020; Suryadarma, Aldini, et al., 2024). When learners are asked to reconstruct a fragmented text, they must actively infer how sentences relate to one another, identify cohesive markers, interpret pronoun references, and predict logical sequences within the discourse.

This process promotes deeper engagement with the linguistic structure of Arabic and encourages learners to move beyond word-level processing toward discourse-level comprehension. Consequently, the Random Text strategy functions not merely as an active-learning technique but as a cognitive reading scaffold that strengthens students' ability to organize meaning, monitor comprehension, and construct coherent interpretations of Arabic texts. Because the achievement test itself targeted narrative comprehension and syntactic logic rather than isolated vocabulary, the rise in test scores can be read as evidence that this discourse-level capacity, and not merely lexical recall, is what improved.

Furthermore, the success of the strategy may be partially explained by the immersive linguistic environment of the KMI boarding-school system (Cecep et al., 2024; Zaid, 2012). Students are continuously exposed to Arabic through classroom instruction, dormitory communication, religious activities, and institutional regulations (Habibi, 2019; Rochmat et al., 2023). Such an environment provides abundant linguistic input that gradually develops learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge. The Random Text strategy appears to activate and reorganize this accumulated knowledge through collaborative problem-solving activities (Azizah et al., 2021). During text reconstruction, students draw upon previously acquired vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and contextual knowledge to negotiate meaning with peers. This process aligns with contemporary theories of language acquisition that emphasize interaction, meaning negotiation, and collaborative knowledge construction as essential mechanisms for language development. The effectiveness observed in this study should therefore be understood not only as the result of a classroom technique but also as the product of an interaction between pedagogical design and the broader Arabic-language ecosystem of the boarding school.

The Progression from Cycle I to Cycle II as Evidence of Reflective Practice

A distinctive feature of the action-research design is that the gap between the two cycles is not merely a repetition but a reflective revision, and the data lend themselves to being read in exactly this way. The first cycle did not reach either success criterion: activity stood at 65.97%, below the 75% threshold, and although 88.9% of students met the MMC, the qualitative record documented disorientation, slow group formation, and uneven participation. Under the logic of the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral, these shortcomings are not failures to be concealed but diagnostic information to be fed back into planning (Kemmis et al., 2014).

The reflecting phase of Cycle I identified specific, actionable sources of friction, namely unclear procedures, slow transitions into groups, undefined roles, and uncontrolled noise, and the planning phase of Cycle II addressed them directly by clarifying the procedure, streamlining group transitions, defining participation expectations, and setting time limits. The consequence was that both indicators crossed their thresholds in the second cycle. In this

sense, the eleven-point rise in activity and the move to full MMC attainment are best understood as the product of disciplined reflective adjustment rather than of the strategy in the abstract. This has a practical corollary for teachers: the strategy is unlikely to yield its full benefit on first attempt, and the second, refined iteration is where the gains were realised.

Mitigating Pedagogical Liabilities and Acoustic Disruption

While the empirical data support the efficacy of the Random Text strategy, a rigorous academic discussion must also acknowledge and address its inherent logistical liabilities. The strategy is time-consuming with respect to both preparatory material design and classroom execution. Educators must meticulously select, transcribe, segment, and reproduce the physical text materials (Amel & Afaf, 2025). Furthermore, the vibrant, energetic debates that characterize the textual reconstruction phase inevitably generate substantial acoustic noise, producing a classroom environment that can border on chaotic if it is not properly managed.

The successful progression of the students from Cycle I to Cycle II demonstrates that these liabilities are not fatal pedagogical flaws but operational variables that require adept, proactive classroom management. The researchers' ability to reflect upon the friction of Cycle I and refine their instructional choreography for Cycle II, by streamlining group transitions, establishing clearer parameters for acoustic levels during academic discourse, and providing highly structured time limits, was crucial in channeling the generated noise into productive, focused educational energy. The findings suggest that, for the Random Text strategy to be sustainable and effective, educators must be highly skilled not only in Arabic linguistic instruction but also in dynamic, authoritative classroom orchestration. The preparation burden, in particular, argues for building a shared, reusable bank of pre-segmented passages so that the cost is incurred once rather than repeated for every lesson.

Broader Institutional Implications for Islamic Education

The implications of this study extend beyond the confines of the Grade 2C classroom. For institutions operating under the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyah* framework, in which the rapid, comprehensive acquisition of Arabic is an existential mandate for accessing classical Islamic knowledge, continued reliance on monotonous, conventional teaching methodologies represents a systemic vulnerability. The affirmative results from the Khadimul Ummah Islamic Boarding School indicate that the integration of gamified, puzzle-based active-learning strategies can rapidly reverse entrenched trends of academic underperformance and student apathy, at least within a class of this kind.

Furthermore, the successful deployment of the Random Text strategy aligns with the broader, holistic objectives of the KMI curriculum. It not only accelerates technical language acquisition but concurrently cultivates essential, lifelong soft skills, namely critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, confident public articulation, social empathy, and intellectual resilience. In an era in which educational paradigms are shifting toward comprehensive competency development, methodologies that simultaneously pursue rigorous academic targets and robust character development are particularly valuable for boarding-school education, where the academic and the formative are deliberately intertwined.

Practical Recommendations for Classroom Implementation

Several concrete recommendations follow from the analysis and from the contrast between the two cycles. First, teachers should introduce the procedure explicitly before the first reconstruction task, modelling how to scan fragments for connectors, pronouns, and verb forms, so that the disorientation observed in Cycle I is shortened. Second, groups should be formed heterogeneously and given defined roles, such as a reader, a sequencer, a checker,

and a presenter, so that participation does not concentrate in a few stronger students and the social domain matures more quickly. Third, time limits and clear signals for transitions help convert the unavoidable noise of debate into focused, time-bounded discussion. Fourth, because the achievement test rewarded discourse-level comprehension, classroom feedback should foreground why a given order is coherent, not only whether it is correct, so that the strategy continues to build syntactic and cohesive awareness rather than puzzle-solving alone. Finally, institutions can lower the preparation burden by curating a graded, reusable library of segmented *muthala'ah* passages, allowing the approach to be sustained across classes and academic years.

Limitations

Comparison with Prior Applications of the Random Text Strategy

Situating these results against earlier applications of the Random Text strategy clarifies the study's specific contribution. In the Hadith classroom at a Gontor KMI institution, the strategy improved learning outcomes for religious-text content, demonstrating that text reconstruction can support the study of authoritative Arabic-script material (Azizah et al., 2021). The present study extends this line of work from Hadith content toward higher-order *muthala'ah*, where the demand is not only to handle Arabic script but to comprehend connected, unvocalised narrative discourse.

In the EFL and general reading literature, the strategy has been shown to enhance reading instruction by promoting active engagement with textual order and cohesion (Rahmawati et al., 2021), and a recent study reported gains for seventh-grade reading skills in a junior high school setting (Syafiqoh et al., 2026). The convergence of these findings with the present results is notable: across different languages, levels, and institutional contexts, fragmenting and reconstructing text appears to mobilise the same underlying processes of cohesion-tracking and structural reasoning. What distinguishes the present study is the combination of a higher-order Arabic comprehension target with an immersive KMI boarding-school environment, a pairing that, to the authors' knowledge, had not previously been examined.

The comparison also tempers the interpretation of the results. Because prior studies span varied designs and outcome measures, the cross-context agreement should be read as convergent plausibility rather than as cumulative proof of a fixed effect size. The contribution of this study is therefore best described as the first context-specific, classroom-tested account of the strategy for Arabic *muthala'ah* in an immersive pesantren setting, offered as a basis for the more controlled, multi-site testing that the field still needs.

Affective Dimensions: Anxiety, Motivation, and Self-Efficacy

The affective trajectory documented in the findings deserves separate emphasis, because the baseline problem in Grade 2C was not only cognitive but emotional. The pre-intervention classroom was marked by language anxiety, low enthusiasm, and a reluctance to risk public error, all of which depress reading performance independently of underlying ability (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023). The collaborative structure of the Random Text task appears to have lowered this affective filter by distributing the risk of error across the group, so that a wrong proposal became a shared, low-stakes step in problem-solving rather than an individual failure.

The observable consequences of this affective shift, namely the move from hesitant, whispered exchanges in Cycle I to confident debate and spontaneous volunteering in Cycle II, are consistent with gains in motivation and self-efficacy that the collaborative-learning

literature associates with well-structured group work (Cheng et al., 2021; Jarvenoja et al., 2020). The recovery of the two students who had not met the criterion in Cycle I is particularly suggestive: for learners most vulnerable to anxiety, the additional cycle within a supportive group seems to have provided both the time and the psychological safety needed to reach mastery. Affective and cognitive gains, on this reading, were not separate outcomes but mutually reinforcing aspects of the same intervention.

Theoretical Contribution to Arabic-Language Pedagogy

Theoretically, the study reframes the Random Text strategy from a generic active-learning device into a language-specific reading scaffold for Arabic. The evidence indicates that the strategy's value in *muthala'ah* lies precisely in how it forces attention onto the features that make Arabic discourse cohere, namely connectors, referential chains, and morphosyntactic agreement, rather than onto isolated lexis. In this sense the strategy operationalises, at the level of a single classroom task, the broader claim that Arabic reading comprehension is a discourse-level and not merely a word-level achievement (Nuraeni & Ammar, 2020; Suryadarma, Aldini, et al., 2024).

This reframing also connects the classroom technique to the wider language ecosystem of the boarding school. The immersive KMI environment supplies abundant input and a standing motivation to read Arabic for authentic religious and academic purposes (Cecep et al., 2024; Habibi, 2019; Zaid, 2012), while the Random Text task supplies a structured occasion to reorganise that input through interaction and negotiation of meaning. The theoretical contribution, therefore, is to specify a mechanism by which immersive exposure and a targeted collaborative task can combine to produce higher-order comprehension, a mechanism that future, more controlled studies can test directly.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

Because the decisive improvement appeared only in the second, reflectively refined cycle, the findings carry a clear message for teacher professional development. The Random Text strategy is not self-executing; its benefits depend on the teacher's capacity to model the procedure, to organise heterogeneous groups, to manage time and noise, and, above all, to redirect student talk from guessing toward grammatical reasoning. These are learnable instructional skills, and the cycle-to-cycle gain in this study is in effect a record of the teacher-researcher acquiring them in situ (Kemmis et al., 2014).

For institutions, this implies that adopting active, collaborative strategies for Arabic is as much an investment in teacher capability as in materials. Professional development that gives teachers structured opportunities to rehearse the procedure, to anticipate the friction documented in Cycle I, and to plan reflective adjustments is likely to shorten the path to effective implementation. Without such support, teachers attempting the strategy for the first time may experience only the Cycle I friction and abandon it before reaching the Cycle II gains.

Toward a Sustainable and Digital Adaptation

The preparation burden identified among the strategy's liabilities also points toward a sustainable, and potentially digital, adaptation. Much of the cost lies in selecting, segmenting, and reproducing passages; this cost can be amortised by building a graded, reusable bank of pre-segmented *muthala'ah* texts that teachers across an institution can share and refine over time. A shared bank would also allow passages to be sequenced by difficulty, so that the cognitive demand of reconstruction can be matched to learners' developing competence.

A digital version of the activity could extend these benefits further. Simple drag-and-drop reconstruction on tablets or shared screens would reduce physical preparation, allow instant reshuffling, and provide immediate feedback on coherence, while preserving the collaborative, talk-rich character that the findings identify as central. Such a tool would also make it feasible to log students' reconstruction attempts, opening a route to the item-level and process data that the present descriptive design could not capture. Extending the approach to writing (*kitabah*), where learners would compose and then deliberately scramble and reorder their own texts, is a natural next step that the same infrastructure would support.

Generalisability and the Boundary Conditions of the Claim

Precisely because the results are strong within the class studied, it is important to state the boundary conditions of the claim. The cohort was a single intact class of eighteen female students in one KMI boarding school, observed over two short cycles by the teacher-researcher, and assessed against a relatively low mastery threshold with descriptive statistics only. Each of these features, while appropriate for action research aimed at improving a specific classroom, limits the extent to which the numerical gains can be projected onto other settings. The improvement should therefore be read as a well-documented local effect rather than as an estimate of the strategy's average impact.

Stating these boundaries does not diminish the study's value; it locates that value correctly. Action research earns its credibility not by statistical generalisation but by the transparency and transferability of its account, so that other teachers can judge whether the conditions described here resemble their own and adapt the procedure accordingly (Kemmis et al., 2014). The detailed procedural, behavioural, and reflective description provided in this article is offered in that spirit: as a transferable account from which other immersive Arabic-teaching contexts can reason, and as a foundation for the larger, multi-site, controlled studies through which the strategy's wider effectiveness can ultimately be established.

Interpreting the Parallel Movement of Engagement and Achievement

A striking feature of the results is that engagement and achievement moved together: as mean activity rose by 11.11 percentage points, the mean score rose by 0.73 points and MMC attainment climbed to completeness. This parallelism is theoretically expected if, as argued above, the activity being measured is not generic busyness but the specific collaborative reasoning that the achievement test rewards. On this reading, the activity rubric and the achievement test are partly tracking the same underlying process, namely students' active engagement with the structure of Arabic discourse, observed behaviourally in the classroom and measured cognitively on the test.

The parallel movement also helps to interpret the two students who initially fell short. Their recovery in Cycle II coincided with the cycle in which collaborative talk became more inclusive and roles more evenly distributed, which is consistent with the claim that their earlier difficulty was bound up with limited participation rather than with a fixed deficit in ability. When the social and verbal channels opened, these learners gained access to the same reasoning that their peers were already using, and their scores followed. The coupling of engagement and achievement is therefore not merely a correlation between two outcome measures but a coherent picture of a single pedagogical mechanism operating through both.

It would nonetheless be a mistake to treat this coupling as proof of causation. The descriptive, single-group design cannot exclude maturation, increasing familiarity with the test format, or the motivational lift of a novel activity as partial contributors to the gains. The most defensible conclusion is that the engagement and achievement data tell a mutually

consistent story within this class, and that the consistency strengthens the plausibility of the interpretation without settling the question of effect size, which only a controlled, multi-site study can address.

The Role of Heterogeneous Grouping in the Observed Gains

A recurring thread across the cognitive, affective, and reading-specific interpretations above is the composition of the groups themselves. The reconstruction task was carried out in heterogeneous units that mixed stronger and weaker readers, and the maturation of the social domain between cycles suggests that this composition was not incidental to the outcome. In Cycle I, heterogeneity initially produced imbalance, as more confident students led and quieter members deferred; by Cycle II, the same heterogeneity had become an asset, because clearer roles and norms allowed the stronger members to scaffold rather than dominate, and the weaker members to participate rather than withdraw (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023; Anwar et al., 2024).

This trajectory illustrates a general principle for collaborative Arabic instruction: the benefit of mixed-ability grouping is realised only when the collaboration is structured. Left unstructured, heterogeneous groups can reproduce the very inequities of participation that depress engagement; structured with defined roles, time limits, and an explicit expectation of justification, they convert difference in ability into a resource for peer scaffolding. The cycle-to-cycle change in this study is, in microcosm, a demonstration of that conditional benefit, and it reinforces the earlier recommendation that teachers attend deliberately to group composition and to the norms that govern talk within groups.

Several limitations bound these findings. The study used a single-group CAR design with no control or comparison group, a single intact class of only 18 female students, and a short duration of two cycles, so the results are context-specific and cannot be generalised. Reliance on the teacher-researcher's observation introduces possible observer bias, and the immediate post-tests cannot rule out a testing or novelty effect. The MMC threshold of 5.0 out of 10 is relatively low, so the 100.0% attainment rate may partly reflect the modest threshold or a ceiling effect rather than full mastery; the test's reliability and item difficulty were not formally reported, and no delayed post-test was administered to assess retention. Finally, only descriptive statistics were available, without measures of dispersion. These constraints should be addressed in future work through larger and mixed-gender samples, a comparison or control group, validated tests with reported reliability, and delayed post-tests.

D. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that, within the class studied, the implementation of the Random Text active-learning strategy was associated with a positive impact on Arabic reading comprehension (*Muthala'ah*). The strategic fragmentation and collaborative reconstruction of Arabic texts helped to dismantle pervasive classroom passivity and to mitigate pronounced linguistic anxiety. This action research examined whether the Random Text strategy could improve learning activity and *muthala'ah* achievement in a Grade 2C class at the Khadimul Ummah Islamic Boarding School. In answer to the first research question, mean learning activity increased from 65.97% in Cycle I to 77.08% in Cycle II. In answer to the second, the class mean score rose from 7.83 to 8.56, and MMC attainment improved from 88.9% to 100.0%. Within this single-class context, the strategy was therefore associated with clear improvements in both engagement and reading-comprehension outcomes.

The implications of this research suggest that educational institutions should consider moving away from exclusively teacher-centered paradigms, and that curriculum developers may integrate collaborative, puzzle-based methodologies into the standard Arabic instructional repertoire. These results should be read as encouraging but context-bound rather than definitive. The study has several limitations: it involved only 18 female students in a single class (sample and gender limitations), was carried out at a single Islamic boarding school in Riau (a location limitation), and used a two-cycle, single-group descriptive design without a control or comparison group and with a relatively low mastery threshold (methodological limitations). The findings are therefore best treated as a promising basis for wider testing.

Teachers may consider the strategy as one option for revitalising *muthala'ah* instruction, and future research should replicate it with larger and mixed-gender samples across several institutions, a comparison or control group, validated tests with reported reliability, and delayed post-tests to assess retention. Developing a digital version of the activity may also reduce the preparation burden and extend the approach to other skills such as writing (*kitabah*). Beyond its practical implications, this study contributes to Arabic-language pedagogy by illustrating that reading-comprehension development in *muthala'ah* can be facilitated through text-reconstruction activities that combine cognitive engagement and social interaction. The findings suggest that successful comprehension is not solely dependent on vocabulary mastery or grammatical knowledge, but also on learners' ability to collaboratively negotiate textual meaning and reconstruct discourse coherence, thereby extending the application of the Random Text strategy from a general active-learning technique toward a language-specific instructional approach for higher-order Arabic literacy in immersive educational contexts.

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