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Language Circles as a Collaborative Pedagogical Practice for Developing Arabic Translation Competence: A Qualitative Study at Al-Fitrah

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Abstract

Translation instruction in Arabic language education is frequently constrained by limited opportunities for authentic practice, heterogeneous learner backgrounds, and dependence on textbook-based activities. This study explores how language circles (ḥalaqāt lughawiyyah), implemented sin a dedicated Arabic language room, support the teaching and practice of translation among upper-secondary students at Al-Fitrah Salafi Islamic Boarding School in Surabaya, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the researcher conducted preliminary observation on 7 June 2025 and fieldwork from 14 June to 10 July 2025, drawing on classroom and circle observations, interviews with Arabic-language teachers and students, and institutional documentation. The findings describe a structured, collaborative sequence: formation of three or four circles, topic and vocabulary preparation, joint translation of Arabic passages, task distribution within groups, public presentation of translations, comparative teacher feedback, and motivational reinforcement. Participants were observed engaging in vocabulary discussion, dictionary consultation, peer correction, and explanation of short Arabic texts. Teachers perceived circle participants as better prepared to understand classroom texts, while the programme offered a supplementary practice space beyond limited formal lesson time. Nevertheless, inconsistent progression targets, mixed school-year groups, and the absence of systematically reported pre- and post-assessment data restrict conclusions about measurable gains. The study contributes a context-sensitive description of how peer-mediated translation activities can be organised in an Indonesian pesantren and recommends explicit progression criteria and evidence-based formative assessment.

Keywords: *Arabic language education; language circles; pesantren; qualitative study; translation competence*.

Introduction

Developing translation competence requires more than the memorisation of lexical equivalents. Learners must interpret meaning in

context, consider grammatical relationships, select appropriate expressions, and review alternative formulations. In Arabic language classrooms, these activities intersect with vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, oral explanation, and learners' willingness to participate. Research on collaborative translation and second-language learning indicates that opportunities for negotiation, reflection, and peer interaction can support metacognitive engagement and linguistic development.[1]

In residential Islamic educational institutions, however, the intensity of language exposure varies according to curriculum, staffing, and the alignment between classroom learning and extracurricular programmes. The original field account at Al-Fitrah Salafi Islamic Boarding School, Surabaya, identifies approximately 90 minutes of Arabic instruction per class per week in formal schooling, insufficient opportunities for extended practice, limited teaching materials, and variation in students' educational backgrounds. These constraints contribute to students' difficulties in expressing ideas in Arabic and interpreting Arabic passages independently. Rather than assuming that technological translation facilities alone can resolve the problem, the institution developed supplementary activities in an Arabic language room (ḥujrat al-lughah al-ʿarabiyyah).

One such activity is the language circle, or ḥalaqah lughawiyyah: a small, teacher-guided group in which learners practise vocabulary, conversation, speeches, and translation. This is not equivalent to an automated translation exercise or a passive recitation session. In the programme observed, students jointly negotiate Arabic source-text meanings, distribute subtasks, present translations, and receive corrections. Peer-supported tasks and guided feedback have been associated with language engagement and confidence in other contexts, although those findings cannot be assumed to transfer directly to a

[1] M. Li and R. Yuan, "Enhancing students' metacognitive development in higher education: A classroom-based inquiry," *International Journal of Educational Research* 112 (2022): 101947, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.101947; C.-J. Lai and L.-Y. Chang, "The effects of students' employment of translation principles and techniques on English–Chinese sight translation performance: An eye-tracking and interview study," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 8, no. 1 (2023): 100542, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100542; L. Zhang, "Empowering Chinese college students in English as a foreign language writing classes: Translanguaging with translation methods," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023): 1118261, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1118261.

pesantren setting.[2]

Existing research offers useful but incomplete comparisons. Collaborative translation has been examined as an avenue for metacognitive learning in higher education,[3] translation-based classroom tasks have been linked to learners' language awareness,[4] and guided feedback in translator training has received increasing attention.[5] Arabic language learning additionally presents distinct motivational and linguistic conditions.[6] Less is documented, within the research consulted here, about the day-to-day organisation of informal Arabic translation circles at upper-secondary level in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. The present case therefore addresses an implementation and contextualisation gap rather than claiming to establish a new universal instructional theory.

Two questions guide the study: (1) How are language-circle activities implemented in the teaching of translation at Al-Fitrah? (2) What contributions and limitations of these activities are observable or reported in relation to students' translation practice? Because the available evidence is qualitative and lacks baseline and outcome scores, the second question concerns perceived and observed contributions rather than a numerical effect size.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Orientation

2.1. Translation competence as situated language practice

Translation competence may be understood pedagogically as a

[2] H. Alfadda et al., "Influence of psychological autonomy support of peer instruction: A novel interactive approach using Instagram in language learning," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 866354, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.866354; A. R. E. Shaddad and B. Jember, "A step toward effective language learning: An insight into the impacts of feedback-supported tasks and peer-work activities on learners' engagement, self-esteem, and language growth," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 9 (2024): article 39, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00261-5; L. Sippel and I. A. Martin, "Is corrective feedback during telecollaboration beneficial? The effects of peer and teacher corrections on L2 writing proficiency," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 64 (2024): 101098, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2024.101098.

[3] Li and Yuan, "Enhancing students' metacognitive development in higher", 101947; W. Yang, R. Muñoz Martín, and X. Wang, "Individual metacognition in technology-assisted collaborative translation: Comparing higher- and lower-achieving teams," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12 (2025): article 453, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04756-5.

[4] Zhang, "Empowering Chinese college students in English", 1118261.

[5] G. Chen and X. Wang, "Trainee translators' reflective thinking across assessment as learning activities: An epistemic network analysis approach," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 57 (2025): 101817, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101817; L. Zhang et al., "Exploring the impact of diverse feedback sources on learners' performance, motivation, and preference in a translation course: Tutor, peer, and GPT insight," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 59 (2026): 102042, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.102042.

[6] R. Calafato, "Charting the motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, language learning strategies, and achievement of multilingual university students learning Arabic as a foreign language," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 8 (2023): article 20, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00194-5; A. Alzahrani and H. Almalki, "Syntactic priming in the classroom: Using narratives to prime L2 Arabic speakers," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 9 (2024): article 68, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00292-y.

developing capacity to comprehend the source text, make justified lexical and syntactic choices, revise an emerging target text, and explain those choices. Learning activities that make these decisions visible are especially pertinent when students possess unequal vocabulary knowledge. In university-level studies, collaborative translation has fostered attention to planning, monitoring, and revision, while translation tasks have prompted students to reflect on the consequences of their linguistic decisions.[7] Critical work on digital translation tools further shows that selecting a first dictionary or automated output is not the same as evaluating contextual appropriateness.[8]

For the present study, translation competence is considered through the observable practices actually described in the field record: interpreting short Arabic passages, looking up unfamiliar vocabulary, proposing wording, correcting errors, and explaining the text. These practices are indicators of engagement with translation processes; in the absence of independently scored student translations, they cannot establish proficiency growth or translation accuracy gains.

2.2. Peer collaboration, feedback and learner engagement

Small-group language tasks can distribute cognitive work and make participation less dependent on teacher-fronted interaction. Studies of peer instruction and feedback-supported tasks report possible benefits for engagement, autonomy, and learner confidence.[9] Research on collaborative listening also describes how learners with different skill levels jointly monitor understanding.[10] Such studies are conceptually relevant to language circles because learners with differing prior experiences jointly solve translation problems.

Feedback is another central element. Teacher correction can clarify

[7] Li and Yuan, "Enhancing students' metacognitive development in higher", 101947; Lai and Chang, "The effects of students' employment of", 100542; Yang et al., "Individual metacognition in technology-assisted collaborative translation", article 453.
[8] N. Musk and S. van der Meij, "Critical interactional strategies for selecting candidate translations in online translation tools in collaborative EFL writing tasks," *Linguistics and Education* 80 (2024): 101290, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2024.101290.
[9] Alfadda et al., "Influence of psychological autonomy support of", 866354; N. Pourdana, "Impacts of computer-assisted diagnostic assessment on sustainability of L2 learners' collaborative writing improvement and their engagement modes," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 7 (2022): article 11, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00139-4; Shaddad and Jember, "A step toward effective language learning", article 39.
[10] E. Shamsi and H. Bozorgian, "Collaborative listening using multimedia through metacognitive instruction: A case study with less-skilled and more-skilled EFL learners," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* (2024), https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00248-8.

grammatical or semantic choices; peers can identify alternative meanings and invite explanation. Yet feedback quality depends on task structure, learners' prior knowledge, and the guidance provided.[11] Evidence from translation instruction specifically suggests that guided peer feedback merits more attention than unguided exchange.[12] In the Al-Fitrah case, the teacher's comparison of group products provides a readily observable occasion for formative feedback.

2.3. Arabic learning contexts, motivation and the role of technology

Arabic learning outcomes are shaped not only by instructional tasks but also by learner motivation, self-efficacy, vocabulary beliefs, and the wider learning environment.[13] Teacher support and peer relations may affect participation and psychological safety.[14] Recent work has also investigated educational technology, machine translation, and AI-assisted feedback.[15] Such research provides contemporary context but does not constitute evidence that AI tools were used in the present field site. The documented Al-Fitrah practice relied on face-to-face circles, conventional

11 X. V. Ha, L. T. Nguyen, and B. P. Hung, "Oral corrective feedback in English as a foreign language classrooms: A teaching and learning perspective," *Heliyon* 7, no. 7 (2021): e07550, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07550; Y. Sun, G. Lan, and L. Zhang, "Pedagogical values of translingual practices in improving student feedback literacy in academic writing," *Assessing Writing* 56 (2023): 100715, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100715; C. X. Peng, "Beyond accuracy gains: Investigating the impact of individual and collaborative feedback processing on L2 writing development," *Assessing Writing* 61 (2024): 100876, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2024.100876.

[12] Chen and Wang, "Trainee translators' reflective thinking across assessment", 101817; Zhang et al., "Exploring the impact of diverse feedback", 102042.

[13] Calafato, "Charting the motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, language", article 20; H. A. Alshumrani, "Unveiling vocabulary teaching and learning beliefs of teachers and learners in an EFL context," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 9 (2024): article 20, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00242-0.

[14] D. Wu and X. Dong, "Autonomy support, peer relations, and teacher–student interactions: Implications for psychological well-being in language learning," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1358776, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1358776; D. Yin and L. Luo, "The influence of perceived teacher support on online English learning engagement among Chinese university students: A cross-sectional study on the mediating effects of self-regulation," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1246958, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1246958.

[15] Y. Wei, "Toward technology-based education and English as a foreign language motivation: A review of literature," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 870540, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.870540; W. Wiboolyasarin et al., "Synergizing collaborative writing and AI feedback: An investigation into enhancing L2 writing proficiency in wiki-based environments," *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence* 6 (2024): 100228, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100228; X. Xu, F. Sun, and W. Hu, "Integrating human expertise with GenAI: Insights into a collaborative feedback approach in translation education," *System* 129 (2025): 103600, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103600; B. Kong and C. He, "Deep learning and fuzzy algorithm in improving the effectiveness of college English translation teaching," *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence* 8 (2025): 100378, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2025.100378; H. Tran, P. Crosthwaite, and Q. H. P. Pham, "Students' self-determination in using machine translation and generative AI tools for English for academic purposes," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 78 (2025): 101578, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2025.101578; W. Xue, "The effects of AI-collaborative translation workshop on translation competence and learner engagement: An empirical study in a Chinese university translation course," *Frontiers in Psychology* 17 (2026): 1918404, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1918404; S. Chen and T. Zhou, "Beyond intention: A cognitive-affective-ethical framework for translation students' in-task acceptance of AI-generated feedback," *Acta Psychologica* 268 (2026): 107269, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2026.107269.

vocabulary preparation, dictionary consultation, and teacher feedback.

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Methode

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to characterise the implementation of language-circle activities in a natural instructional setting. The research site was the Arabic language room within Al-Fitrah Salafi Islamic Boarding School, Surabaya. Preliminary observation occurred on 7 June 2025; the principal fieldwork period is reported as 14 June–10 July 2025. 'Upper-secondary' refers to students' formal-school level; the observed students' Arabic proficiency was characterised in the original field account as intermediate, not advanced.

The original study names Arabic teachers, a translation teacher, and a small, unspecified number of students as informants. It reports classroom and circle observations, interviews, and review of institutional documentation. An interview with an extracurricular Arabic teacher, Ustadh Kamal al-Qamar, and observation are associated with 7 June 2025; the original footnotes also refer to a teacher interview with Ustadh Mulyadi on 8 June 2025. No complete participant roster, interview transcripts, or number of students is supplied in the manuscript. To maintain fidelity, these details are not reconstructed here.

Five research encounters are outlined in the source manuscript, summarised in Table 1. They concern teacher and student interviews and repeated observation of the Arabic language room and translation circles. The terms first through fifth refer to the sequence shown in the source record, without inferring exact calendar dates for every encounter.

Table 1. Sequence of field encounters (translated from the original manuscript)

Encounter	Recorded period	Reported activity
1	First	Interview with Ustadh Kamal al-Qamar
2	Second	Interview with students in the Arabic language room
3	Third	Observation of linguistic activities in the Arabic language room
4	Fourth	Observation of translation teaching within a language circle
5	Fifth	Follow-up observation of translation teaching within a language circle

As described in the original manuscript, the researcher organised observation, interview, and documentation material descriptively, classified information according to the activities studied, displayed the resulting descriptions, and drew interpretive conclusions. Observation, interview, and documentary evidence were brought together as a form of methodological triangulation. Current qualitative methodological scholarship stresses the importance of documenting analytic decisions and

distinguishing description from interpretation.[16] The existing field report, however, does not provide a full coding audit trail or verbatim interview excerpts. Therefore, this revised article presents analytic categories traceable to the reported observations but does not claim to have conducted a new independent coding or inter-rater reliability analysis.

The source states that observation followed institutional permission from the Arabic-language care division. It does not report a formal ethics-committee identifier, written informed-consent procedures, or photographic release arrangements. These matters should be confirmed by the author before journal submission, especially if photographs identifiable to participants are retained. Student names and individual learning records are not reproduced..

Results and Discussions

4.1. Institutional conditions and the rationale for language circles

The field account portrays the school's Arabic programme as an ongoing institutional effort to improve learning, while also identifying seven practical constraints: limited formal instructional time (approximately one and a half hours per class each week); inadequate learning media; insufficient opportunities for sustained language practice; weak coordination between boarding-school affairs and formal schooling; a shortage of specialised Arabic teachers; limited teacher-led language activities and games; and heterogeneous student entry backgrounds. Some students had previously attended other Islamic boarding schools, whereas others came from general schools. Teachers associated these conditions with difficulties in vocabulary comprehension, accurate Arabic pronunciation, and translation of written passages.

The Arabic language room was organised as an additional language environment rather than a substitute for formal classes. Its programmes were described as daily, weekly, and annual, and included memorisation of vocabulary, conversation, public speaking, and translation. Different circles had their own names. The institutional arrangement was coordinated through the boarding school's education and Arabic-language divisions, with room leadership and circle organisers responsible for activities.

4.2. Organisation of translation activities

Observation identified a repeated instructional routine. A teacher greeted learners, opened the session with the basmalah and prayer, referred to the day and date, introduced daily expressions, and explained the activity in Arabic, with translation support where needed. Students were divided into three or four circles. The teacher then introduced a topic drawn from everyday situations,

[16] D. Byrne, "A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis," *Quality & Quantity* 56 (2022): 1391–1412, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y; V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Is thematic analysis used well in health psychology? A critical review of published research, with recommendations for quality practice and reporting," *Health Psychology Review* 17, no. 4 (2023): 695–718, https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2022.2161594.

news items, or short contemporary Arabic texts; related vocabulary was written on the board and briefly memorised.

A translation task followed. In the reported format, learners worked with a passage containing approximately ten meaningful sentences or three short paragraphs. Within each circle, participants consulted a dictionary, drafted translations, and checked one another's choices. The teacher provided a seven-minute presentation allocation. Once the group work was complete, a representative wrote the group's translation on the board. The teacher read and compared the competing versions, corrected errors, and invited students to consider which renderings were more appropriate or elegant. The session ended with encouragement to speak without embarrassment, attendance recording, praise to God, and a final greeting.

The full sequence, translated and synthesised from the original fifteen-step account, is shown in Table 2. Its analytical value lies in specifying what the label 'language circle' means in practice: collaborative interpretation, visible product presentation, and comparison-based feedback.

Table 2. Observed instructional sequence of the Arabic translation circles

Phase	**Steps recorded in the field account**	**Instructional function**
Opening and orientation	Greetings; prayer; date and daily expressions; explanation of procedures; formation of three or four circles	Establishes routine and clarifies task expectations
Vocabulary preparation	Topic selection from daily life or contemporary texts; related vocabulary on the board; brief memorisation	Activates relevant lexical resources
Collaborative translation	Groups translate approximately ten sentences or three short paragraphs; members use dictionaries, draft and check wording	Encourages negotiation and division of labour
Presentation and feedback	Seven-minute presentation allocation; representative writes output; teacher compares versions and corrects errors	Makes decisions visible and provides formative feedback
Closing	Teacher offers encouragement; records attendance; closes with praise and greetings	Supports confidence and regular participation

4.3. Teacher involvement and scheduling

The source lists five teachers or organisers associated with the language programme, shown in Table 3. It also identifies routine translation-related activities on Mondays and Thursdays and a translation contest at the end of the academic year, as shown in Table 4. These schedules indicate an intended link between short, recurring activities and a broader extracurricular event; the source does not establish participation frequency for each individual learner.

Table 3. Arabic-language instructors and circle organisers (from the original institutional table)

No.	**Name (English transliteration)**	**Role reported**
1	Ustadh Kamal al-Qamar	Extracurricular Arabic teacher
2	Ustadh Saif al-Arif	Extracurricular Arabic teacher

No.	Name (English transliteration)	Role reported
3	Ustadh Mulyadi	Formal-school teacher
4	Ustadh Abd al-Samad	Circle organiser and teacher
5	Ustadh Tariq	Circle organiser and teacher

Table 4. Translation-related activity schedule (from the original institutional table)

Day / timing	Activity	Topic or material
Monday	Vocabulary memorisation and translation of short expressions	Selected sayings, short poetry, or songs; memorisation material
Thursday	Vocabulary memorisation and story translation	Interesting or humorous stories prepared from available sources by the teacher
End of academic year	Translation competition	Topics prepared by the organising committee

4.4. Observed engagement and perceived benefits

The observational account notes that circle participants could communicate with one another in Arabic to some degree, express short opinions in standard Arabic, and explain selected Arabic texts through translation. In the group task, students carried out differentiated roles rather than relying solely on direct teacher explanation. The source describes learners as showing interest, willingness, and enthusiasm during the translation sessions; these observations are consistent with the activity's supportive, collaborative character but do not represent measured psychological scales.

Teachers reported that students participating in the Arabic language room generally understood instructional texts better than some non-participating students in the formal school. The source also cites growing participation in translation competitions and changing winners from year to year as indirect signs of interest. These are anecdotal programme indicators, not controlled comparisons or scores on a validated translation assessment. The evidence therefore supports a modest finding: the language circles created additional and visibly participatory opportunities to practise translation and discuss meaning.

4.5. Challenges identified in the implementation

The main weakness reported in the original study was the absence of sequenced translation targets from one period to the next. Because circles brought together selected learners from different upper-secondary school years, task difficulty was not consistently aligned with their formal grade or prior competence. Programme success was inferred mainly from competitions, participation, and teacher perceptions. These indicators cannot identify which component of the intervention produced change or whether translation quality improved over time. The absence of documented learner counts, comparable samples, scored translation products, and clear criteria for accuracy or fluency further limits outcome interpretation.



Figure 1. Formal classroom learning environment at Al-Fitrah (photograph retained from the original manuscript).



Figure 2. Arabic language-circle learning activity (photograph retained from the original manuscript).



Figure 3. A second view of the Arabic language circle (photograph retained from the original manuscript).

5.1. Translation circles as socially organised practice

The Al-Fitrah case suggests that the principal instructional contribution of the language circle was the relocation of translation work from an individual, textbook-oriented assignment to a socially organised process. Before a final version reached the board, learners had to retrieve vocabulary, interpret a source passage, propose wording, and reconcile competing formulations. This process resembles the task negotiation and metacognitive monitoring discussed by Li and Yuan[17] and Yang et al.[18], although the present data do not permit confirmation that the same cognitive development occurred among Al-Fitrah learners.

The group's division of responsibilities also clarifies why a small-circle format can be feasible under resource constraints. Dictionary consultation, drafting, and peer checking were not sequential duties performed exclusively by the teacher: they were distributed among students. That structure created occasions for learners to explain lexical or grammatical choices in their own words. Work on collaborative translation tools likewise emphasises the need to evaluate and discuss candidate renderings rather than accept an initial answer uncritically.[19] The same principle applies here even without digital tools.

5.2. The pedagogical role of feedback and confidence

Public presentation and instructor comparison were prominent in the documented routine. Feedback was therefore not restricted to privately receiving a corrected answer; students could observe alternative group products and hear a reason for correction. This is compatible with broader findings that guided, collaborative feedback can help learners interpret and apply advice.[20]

[17] Li and Yuan, "Enhancing students' metacognitive development in higher", 101947.

[18] Yang et al., "Individual metacognition in technology-assisted collaborative translation", article 453.

[19] Musk and van der Meij, "Critical interactional strategies for selecting candidate", 101290; Tran et al., "Students' self-determination in using machine translation", 101578.

[20] Ha et al., "Oral corrective feedback in English as", e07550; Sun et al., "Pedagogical values of translingual practices in", 100715; Peng, "Beyond accuracy gains: Investigating the impact", 100876.

Research in translation classrooms likewise stresses the value of instructor mediation when learners encounter uncertain or incomplete feedback.[21]

The teacher also explicitly encouraged participants not to fear mistakes or feel embarrassed about speaking. Motivational research cautions that persistence and perceived support are important components of language participation.[22] In Al-Fitrah, however, no confidence questionnaires or interview transcripts are available. The most defensible interpretation is that encouragement was built into the pedagogy and learners were described as enthusiastic, not that a quantified increase in self-confidence was demonstrated.

5.3. Contributions and limits in the pesantren context

The distinctive feature of this case lies in the connection between formal schooling and a dedicated extracurricular Arabic language environment. The circle provided extra exposure to translation tasks where formal classes were constrained by time, uneven preparation, and limited materials. The programme also retained familiar religious-school practices, including opening prayers and collective greetings, while incorporating interactive group work. This contextual adaptation may be useful for other pesantren seeking low-cost strategies for additional language practice, but transferability depends on staffing, timetable integration, and students' starting abilities.

An important distinction is between increased opportunity to practise and demonstrated increased competence. The field account supplies substantial procedural detail but does not supply a rubric, paired translation samples, longitudinal assessments, or numerical results. Consequently, formulations such as 'the circles significantly improved translation competence' are not warranted by the available evidence. A more accurate conclusion is that the programme enabled repeated collaborative translation practice and was perceived favourably by teachers and learners. Evidence from other classroom interventions, including studies of Arabic learning, vocabulary beliefs, and comparative learning design, can motivate hypotheses for future investigation without substituting for local data.[23]

Contemporary digital translation studies provide a useful comparison rather than an explanation for the observed practice. AI-based tools can generate candidate translations or feedback, yet their instructional usefulness depends on learner agency and expert review.[24] The present case demonstrates that human-centred interactions—questioning, group negotiation, board presentation, and teacher guidance—are themselves identifiable instructional resources. It does not compare them experimentally with digital tools.

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[21] Xu et al., "Integrating human expertise with GenAI: Insights", 103600; Zhang et al., "Exploring the impact of diverse feedback", 102042.

[22] Y. Liu, "Investigating the role of English as a foreign language learners' academic motivation and language mindset in their grit: A theoretical review," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 872014, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.872014; E. Abdollahzadeh, M. A. Farsani, and M. Zandi, "The relationship between L2 motivation and transformative engagement in academic reading among EAP learners: Implications for reading self-regulation," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 944650, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.944650; Wu and Dong, "Autonomy support, peer relations, and teacher–student", 1358776.

[23] Calafato, "Charting the motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, language", article 20; Alshumrani, "Unveiling vocabulary teaching and learning beliefs", article 20; Alzahrani and Almalki, "Syntactic priming in the classroom: Using", article 68; Y. Wan, J. Lian, and Y. Zhou, "Injecting competition into online programming and Chinese-English translation classrooms," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1268734, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1268734; Wiboolyasarin et al., "Synergizing collaborative writing and AI feedback", 100228.

[24] Kong and He, "Deep learning and fuzzy algorithm in", 100378; Xu et al., "Integrating human expertise with GenAI: Insights", 103600; Xue, "The effects of AI-collaborative translation workshop", 1918404; Chen and Zhou, "Beyond intention: A cognitive-affective-ethical framework for", 107269.

A practical next step is to create a progression map aligned with the school years and students' Arabic proficiency. For each sequence of sessions, teachers could define vocabulary range, passage length, grammatical features, and translation-quality criteria. A short analytic rubric could distinguish semantic accuracy, lexical appropriateness, grammatical clarity, textual coherence, and justification of choices. Retaining anonymised first drafts, peer revisions, and final drafts would produce auditable evidence of learning trajectories; brief reflection prompts could capture students' translation decisions.[25]

Future research should document the number and characteristics of participants, recruitment criteria, task materials, session frequency, interview protocols, and steps in qualitative analysis. If the aim is to establish improvement, comparable pre- and post-translation tasks and an explicitly defined rating procedure are required. Researchers should also investigate differences between students with pesantren and general-school backgrounds and explore how cross-grade circles affect equitable participation.

The present study is limited by a single site, a short fieldwork period, unspecified interview and student counts, the absence of verbatim quotations, limited documentation of analytic procedures, and missing performance measures. Photographs document the setting but are not evidence of translation gains. Thus, its strongest contribution is a detailed, context-bound description of programme enactment rather than a causal effectiveness claim.

Conclusion

Language circles at Al-Fitrah Salafi Islamic Boarding School formed an extracurricular environment in which upper-secondary learners could practise Arabic translation through small-group discussion, vocabulary preparation, shared drafting, public presentation, and teacher-led correction. The study documents how three or four circles were organised, how short Arabic passages were assigned, how students divided translation responsibilities, and how instructors encouraged participation. These features provided opportunities for applied language work beyond the limited formal class timetable.

The available qualitative descriptions and teacher perceptions suggest educational promise, particularly for participatory translation practice and attention to meaning. Nonetheless, the source materials do not establish a measurable increase in translation competence. The most consequential improvement needed is the introduction of graduated learning objectives and transparent formative-assessment procedures.

[25] Chen and Wang, "Trainee translators' reflective thinking across assessment", 101817; Yang et al., "Individual metacognition in technology-assisted collaborative translation", article 453.

Further longitudinal and comparative research is necessary before the effectiveness of the circles can be asserted beyond this institutional case.

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