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Comparative Analysis of Task Based Learning and Direct Methods in Teaching Maharah Kalam at Higher Education

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Abstract

Proficiency in maharah kalam is a core competency in Arabic language learning at the tertiary level. However, the main challenge lies in the weak integration between theory and language practice. This study aims to compare the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Direct Method in developing maharah kalam. The research was conducted with a qualitative approach through a literature study, reviewing scientific articles, academic books, and relevant research results. The analysis was done descriptively-comparatively on the characteristics, application, advantages, and limitations of both methods. The results showed that TBL promotes contextual communication skills through authentic tasks, improving fluency and the ability to negotiate meaning. In contrast, the Direct Method is effective in practicing spontaneity of speech and pronunciation through structured repetition. Each method has advantages that suit the characteristics of learners in higher education. The integration of the two, tailored to situational needs and learning objectives, is recommended as a more adaptive and effective strategy for the development of maharah kalam. The findings provide a practical contribution to the development of Arabic language learning models that are relevant and responsive to global challenges.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning; Direct Method; Maharah Kalam

A. Introduction

Mastery of maharah kalam is the core of productive Arabic language competence. This skill requires students to be able to speak with the right structure and the right context (Astina et al., 2025). Universities as academic institutions have the responsibility to improve these skills. The main challenge in learning kalam is the weak integration between theory and practice. Students often have difficulty expressing their thoughts orally in Arabic (Hanifiyah et al., 2023). Mastering the maharatul kalam not only requires the ability to communicate orally, but also requires an understanding of language structure, vocabulary, and the application of character values in the learning process (Sobriyah, 2022).

Teaching methods have an important role in achieving student competence. Task Based

Learning (TBL) and Direct Method are two widely used approaches. TBL emphasizes real activities and communicative tasks to achieve language goals. Direct Method requires full use of the target language without translation (*View of Fa'aliyah Namudazi At Ta'lim At Ta'awuni As Ilah Al Bithoqoh Fi Ta'liimi Mahaarah Al Kalam Ladai Tulab As Shofi Al Asyir Fil Madrasah Atsanawiyah Al Islamiyah Nahdhotil Ulama Mranggen Demak*, n.d.). This difference in approach raises questions about the effectiveness of both at the college level (Rochmat, 2023). Research in Ma'had Umar bin Khattab Sidoarjo shows that the application of the Direct Method is still in the development stage, so the full use of Arabic is not optimal (Nuzula & Fauji, 2022).

Previous research has shown that TBL is effective in improving language skills at various levels. Research (Kosim et al., 2024) prove improvement of Arabic language skills through the application of TBL. (Ariyani, 2022) found similar results in English teaching with improved student scores. This shows that TBL is relevant for strengthening maharah kalam. Task-oriented activities can stimulate real communication in learning.

The Direct Method has long been used in Arabic language learning in various institutions. Research (Salim, 2021) show the success of the application of this method in Islamic boarding schools. (Prastuti & Ma'arif, 2024) also noted the effectiveness of this method in improving students' kalam ability. (Rochmat, 2023) Finding a student's positive response to the use of hands-on methods. The success of this method is influenced by the intensity of the exercise and the role of the teacher as a facilitator.

Both methods have different focuses in their approach to language learning. TBL emphasizes more on solving problems through real tasks. The Direct Method emphasizes direct mastery through repetition and intensive practice. Colleges have more complex characteristics of learners. Comparative analysis between the two methods needs to be carried out systematically. This research is important to determine the most appropriate method in the context of higher education (Sari et al., 2024). Both of these methods evolved in response to diverse learning needs. TBL is here to overcome the weaknesses of conventional methods that are less applicable in real situations. The Direct Method emerged as a reaction to the dominance of translation methods that rely too much on the mother tongue. Research shows that each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. The selection and application of methods need to be adjusted to the teaching objectives, characteristics of students, and the learning context (Beshiri, 2024)

Previous studies have not discussed much about the comparison of the two methods in the context of kalam learning in higher education. Most research focuses on one method and at the primary and secondary education levels. The context of learning Arabic in higher education

has more specific challenges. Students are required to think critically and be active in academic communication. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of these two methods in a comparative and in-depth manner.

This research offers a new contribution in the field of Arabic language learning methods. Comparative analysis provides empirical information for higher education policymakers. The results of the research can be the basis for choosing more effective methods. This scientific approach is expected to produce a relevant and adaptive kalam learning model. This is important in supporting optimal learning outcomes.

Maharah kalam cannot be taught by mere theory. An approach that encourages active interaction and direct use of language is needed (Munir, 2022). A combination of communicative tasks and hands-on exercises can be the ideal solution. This research will test the advantages of each method through qualitative and quantitative approaches. Empirical validation will help strengthen the pedagogical basis in kalam teaching (Hanifiyah et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on Task-Based Learning and the Direct Method, most existing studies examine these approaches in isolation and are predominantly conducted at primary or secondary education levels. Empirical and conceptual discussions that systematically compare both methods within the context of Arabic speaking instruction at higher education remain limited. This gap is critical, considering that university students are expected not only to communicate fluently but also to engage in academic discourse, critical reasoning, and contextual language use. Therefore, a comparative and theory-driven analysis is necessary to identify pedagogically appropriate strategies for developing maharah kalam in tertiary education.

In the context of the era of globalization, the ability to speak Arabic is an important need. Students are expected to be able to establish cross-cultural communication in the academic and professional worlds. The effectiveness of teaching methods will determine students' readiness to face global challenges. This study has a high urgency to be studied in depth. The results of the research are expected to provide appropriate pedagogical recommendations.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative comparative literature review design. Data sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last five years and authoritative academic books published within the last ten years, focusing on Task-Based Learning and the Direct Method in Arabic language instruction. The selection criteria include relevance to maharah kalam, clarity of methodological description, and applicability to higher education contexts.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic and descriptive-comparative techniques. The reviewed literature was categorized into analytical dimensions, including pedagogical focus, instructional procedures, learning outcomes, strengths, limitations, and contextual suitability. This systematic comparison enables a theoretically grounded evaluation of both methods and supports the formulation of pedagogical recommendations for Arabic speaking instruction at the tertiary level.

C. Result and Discussion

This study explores the comparative effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and the Direct Method in teaching *maharah kalam* at the tertiary level. Both methods possess distinctive pedagogical features and respond differently to learners' communicative needs. Several themes emerged from the literature, including teaching focus, strengths, limitations, and suitability in higher education. These themes provide a structured framework to analyze the two methods in parallel. The following table presents a detailed comparison of both approaches across multiple instructional and contextual factors.

Tabel 1.1 Comparison of both approaches across multiple instructional and contextual factors

Aspect	Task-Based Learning (TBL)	Direct Method
Learning Focus	Based on authentic tasks to build communicative skills	Based on direct conversation without translation
Main Advantage	Encourages meaningful communication, language use in real contexts (Saswati & Arifin, 2024)	Trains spontaneity and good pronunciation (Syahril dkk; Mubarok dkk)
Main Weakness	Requires thorough planning and more complex evaluation (Fazuhra & Muhammad Samin, 2022)	Limited to vocabulary directly understood by students (Mandalika, 2023)
Teacher's Role	Facilitator of tasks and reflector of student learning outcomes	Direct controller of verbal interaction in class
Suitable Context	Suitable for project-based activities and group work	Suitable for small classes with structured repetition
Evaluation Aspect	Assessed from the process and outcomes of communication tasks	Assessed from spontaneous speaking ability and pronunciation (Syahril et al., 2023)

Relevance to <i>Maharah Kalam</i>	Highly suitable for practicing fluency, negotiating meaning, and contextual responses	Suitable for developing habitual use of basic sentence patterns
Implementation Challenges	Requires technological support and student readiness (Manan & Nasri, 2024)	Less suitable for students with limited vocabulary (Fazuhra & Muhammad Samin, 2022)

The comparison chart clearly indicates that Task-Based Learning offers a more dynamic and context-driven approach to speaking instruction. Students benefit from collaborative tasks that foster fluency and interactional competence. On the other hand, the Direct Method is beneficial for laying foundational oral patterns and pronunciation skills. Each method demonstrates potential when adapted to learner needs and classroom environments. Further pedagogical implications and strategy recommendations will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Discussion

1. Characteristics of Task-Based Learning and Direct Method in Teaching Speaking Skills

Arabic language learning requires suitable methods to develop speaking skills effectively and efficiently. Adinda et al., (2024) emphasize that psycholinguistics plays a crucial role in addressing students' cognitive and affective challenges in acquiring the Arabic language. Sarif et al., (2025) explain that a task-based learning approach combined with drilling methods significantly improves students' vocabulary and pronunciation. This shows the need to adapt methods that align with students' learning processes and communication contexts.

The cognitive approach in psycholinguistics helps explain how students understand and process Arabic sentence structures. Nugrahawan et al., (2024) reveal that applying TBL and PBL models in teaching Arabic grammar significantly improves students' cognitive abilities. (Pramesti et al., 2025) highlights the effectiveness of task-based and cooperative learning methods in increasing students' motivation to communicate in Arabic. These findings support the importance of structured yet flexible learning environments to foster speaking abilities.

Applied linguistics strengthens language competence through authentic and interaction-based communication strategies. (Arifin et al., 2023) identifies the direct method as highly effective for beginners due to its emphasis on immersive language exposure without translation. Both methods aim to place students in real or simulated communication situations.

Arabic language teaching methods continue to evolve to suit changing times and learners' needs. Mustafa, (2021) explains that methods such as grammar-translation, direct method, reading method, and audio-lingual remain relevant today. Rosfazila et al., (2023)

supports this by noting that the direct method fosters oral proficiency by immersing learners in contextual and concrete vocabulary. The inclusion of demonstrative tools and contextual learning enhances both understanding and retention.

(Taufik et al., 2024) emphasize that the direct method utilizes continuous Arabic-language interaction without using the native language. This approach mirrors the process of acquiring a first language through consistent and repetitive practice. Teachers explain meaning through images or gestures, supporting natural learning progression. Such strategies build speaking fluency and confidence among students.

2. The Effectiveness of Task Based Learning and Direct Method on the Development of Students' Speaking Skills

The Task-Based Learning method emphasizes active student involvement through authentic and meaningful communicative tasks. (Pramesti et al., 2025) states that this approach successfully increases students' motivation and engagement in speaking Arabic. Asty, (2025) report that TBL effectively develops four language skills comprehensively. This method encourages critical thinking and collaboration to solve real-life communicative tasks. As a result, students feel more confident using Arabic in various contexts.

On the other hand, the direct method focuses on using the target language without the mediation of the mother tongue in all learning activities. Arifin et al (2023) and Taufik et al (2024) emphasize that this method accelerates students' adaptation to Arabic structures and vocabulary. Intensive dialogue between teacher and student is central to this method. Teachers use real objects, pictures, and gestures to explain meanings without translation. This strategy brings second language learning closer to first language acquisition processes.

Task-Based Learning tends to allow more exploration of language through group work and solving communicative problems. Nugrahawan et al (2024) indicate that this method facilitates sentence formation based on personal experience. (Asty, 2025) explain that students actively discuss and exchange information during tasks. Learning becomes contextual as students learn from real communicative needs. This encourages the natural emergence of grammatical understanding during communication.

In contrast, the direct method is more structural in presenting material, focusing on intensive and repetitive speaking exercises. Mustafa (2021) state that this method suits beginners to familiarize them with phonology and grammar. Students imitate teacher speech and practice through repetitive dialogues. This increases fluency and mastery of sentence patterns spontaneously. Though peer interaction may be limited, teacher control over material delivery is strong.

Both methods have unique strengths and can complement each other in teaching speaking

skills. Pramesti et al (2025) show that combining task elements with direct communication yields optimal results. Real-life tasks can be designed using direct method features that emphasize repetition and oral use. Thus, students gain speaking experience from multiple instructional approaches. This integration helps learners become active, fluent, and confident Arabic speakers.

3. Challenges and Advantages of Each Method in the Context of Higher Education

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is widely favored for developing communicative competence in Arabic speaking skills (Saswati & Arifin, 2024). The structured stages of pre-task, task cycle, and post-task foster active student participation and task completion. Many students benefit from real-world tasks like interviews and role-plays that mimic authentic interactions. However, some challenges appear in grammar mastery and natural pronunciation during task-based activities. Certain students struggle to balance creative expression with accuracy in language output.

Direct Method prioritizes target language immersion and encourages spontaneous use without translation processes (Syahril et al., 2023). Fluent verbal responses become the goal, supported by gestures, visual aids, and immediate correction. Students often gain better listening and speaking intuition through frequent oral exposure. Nevertheless, some learners face difficulties understanding grammatical structures without explicit instruction (Mubarok et al., 2022). Class size and student proficiency diversity may hinder consistent oral participation.

Arabic language instruction often faces difficulties related to curriculum misalignment and inadequate materials (Manan & Nasri, 2024). Educators encounter inconsistencies between language teaching goals and the methods implemented. Resource limitations restrict the integration of varied and engaging instructional strategies. Many learners feel discouraged due to the abstract nature of grammar-focused methods (Mubarok et al., 2022). Student motivation also suffers when methods do not connect with real communicative needs.

Psychological, sociocultural, and motivational factors impact method effectiveness in higher education (Mandalika, 2023). Low interest and lack of learning background affect students' language acquisition progress. Several students report feeling anxious or disconnected during structured Arabic sessions. Language attitudes are also shaped by perceived difficulty and lack of relevance to daily interactions (Syahril et al., 2023). Educators must consider learners' emotions and social contexts when selecting methods.

Grammar Translation and Audiolingual Methods still dominate in traditional institutions despite limited communicative outcomes. These methods emphasize repetition, memorization, and controlled sentence structures. Students may succeed in written tasks but lack verbal fluency and confidence. Excessive dependence on grammatical drills hinders creativity and

spontaneous language production. Educators must evaluate method appropriateness based on student goals and learning settings.

4. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations for Learning Strategies in Speaking Skills

Pedagogical strategies must adapt to student characteristics and contextual challenges in speaking Arabic (Haq, 2023). Methods should integrate student motivation, learning needs, and cultural relevance. Instructors are encouraged to diversify instruction by combining TBLT with interactive techniques. Activities like interviews, discussions, and presentations enhance practical language use and confidence (Saswati & Arifin, 2024). These approaches offer meaningful learning experiences aligned with real communication.

Arabic instruction requires systematic planning involving task sequencing, materials selection, and student-centered techniques (Manan & Nasri, 2024). Students benefit from structured learning that incorporates both strategy and meaningful content. Emphasis must shift from passive reception to active speaking through contextual tasks. Course design should balance grammar accuracy with spoken fluency and adaptability. Long-term engagement improves when activities relate to students' academic and personal goals.

Teachers should prioritize interest development through relevant content, positive feedback, and supportive environments (Fazuhra & Muhammad Samin, 2022). Learners gain speaking confidence when anxiety is reduced and expression is encouraged. Language instruction must address individual differences through multimodal techniques and scaffolded guidance. Repetition with variation, real-world tasks, and visual aids enhance understanding and output. Motivation increases when students find purpose and meaning in classroom communication.

TBLT enables language practice aligned with authentic use and has strong relevance in university contexts. However, grammar and pronunciation gaps require supplementary instruction and correction strategies. Educators must guide students in constructing coherent utterances with appropriate vocabulary and syntax. Role-playing and dialogue simulations help reinforce verbal routines and interactive strategies. Ongoing reflection and feedback sessions support continuous improvement in speaking performance.

Language education policy must encourage method flexibility, resource development, and teacher training. Curriculum planners should integrate multiple strategies suitable for diverse learners and institutional goals. Digital tools and cultural exposure can further support speaking skill development. Inter-institutional collaboration opens pathways for shared practices and innovation. The future of Arabic instruction depends on aligning pedagogy with evolving learner and academic demands.

The findings of this study demonstrate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) consistently contributes to the development of learners' speaking skills through active engagement in authentic tasks that emphasize meaningful communicative interaction. Previous empirical studies have confirmed that the implementation of TBLT significantly enhances learners' fluency, vocabulary development, and classroom participation through task-oriented strategies such as role-play and problem-solving activities, which not only strengthen linguistic competence but also foster higher levels of learning motivation. (Rahman et al., 2025)

D. Conclusion

The comparative analysis reveals that both Task-Based Learning and the Direct Method offer valuable yet distinct contributions to *maharah kalam* instruction in higher education. Task-Based Learning emphasizes contextual fluency through meaningful interaction, while the Direct Method strengthens verbal spontaneity via structured repetition. Each method demonstrates unique pedagogical strengths aligned with specific learner needs and instructional contexts. Therefore, rather than favoring one approach over the other, the integration of both methods based on situational relevance and learning objectives presents a more effective and adaptive strategy for developing students' Arabic speaking proficiency at the tertiary level.

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