



## BEYOND DECODING: INTEGRATING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) METHOD TO ENHANCE MAHARAH AL-QIRA'AH

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to analyze the application of the communicative language teaching (CLT) method in enhancing Arabic reading skills (*maharah al-qira'ah*) in students. The method used was qualitative using Miles and Huberman's analysis from data of observations, interviews, and documenties. The results of the study showed that the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in teaching reading skills at MTsN 3 Kota Palu has been proven to have a significant impact on improving students' communicative and holistic reading abilities through systematic implementation and the use of interactive and meaningful learning strategies. The research findings indicated that the success of CLT is largely determined by systematic teaching implementation through introductory, core, and concluding stages, as well as the use of communicative strategies such as loud reading, repetitive reading, reducing reading anxiety, text chunking, and collaborative reading. This study reinforces CLT's position as a flexible and contextual approach in Arabic language learning, while also providing a practical contribution in the form of an implementation model that teachers can use as a reference. The strengths of this study lie in its comprehensive and contextual analysis and the integration of religious values into learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning plays a crucial role in the field of education, particularly in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs (Sanusi et al., 2024; Alzahrani & Almalki, 2025; Balqis Khusnul Khotimah et al., 2025; Kamilatus Salsabila, 2025). One of the fundamental skills that students must master in Arabic language learning is *maharah al-qirā'ah*, or reading proficiency (Najiyah et al., 2026; Rusli et al., 2025; Zaenuri et al., 2025). This skill not only serves to understand religious texts but also forms the foundation for developing comprehensive Arabic language proficiency, including communication aspects

(Abdullah, 2025; Asse et al., 2024; Safrudin et al., 2024). Furthermore, reading skills contribute to strengthening students' literacy, making them an integral part of Arabic language learning (Khatib-Abbas & Lipka, 2025; Shahbari-Kassem et al., 2024). The urgency of mastering *maharah al-qirā'ah* makes it a competency that every student must possess. However, in practice, the teaching of Arabic reading skills still faces various challenges. Students often struggle to understand sentence structure, master vocabulary, and read Arabic texts well and correctly. This indicates a gap between learning expectations and the reality on the ground.

Various studies have highlighted these issues. Soliman & Khalil (2024) and Zaharuddin et al. (2025) stated that students' difficulties in learning *maharah al-qirā'ah* include aspects of grammar comprehension, vocabulary, and written forms. In line with this, Alrashoudi et al. (2025); Chan (2024); Fikri et al. (2023) found that poor vocabulary mastery and difficulties in pronouncing texts are the main obstacles in Arabic language learning. This situation indicates that the learning approaches used have not been fully capable of accommodating students' learning needs. Similar issues were also observed among students at MTsN 3 Palu. Based on observation results, many students struggled with reading and understanding Arabic texts. Other contributing factors include a lack of variety in teaching methods, differences in students' educational backgrounds, as well as low motivation and interest in learning.

Although various studies have identified a range of challenges in teaching Arabic reading skills, there remains a significant theoretical gap in comprehensively explaining the relationship between the teaching approaches used and improvements in Arabic reading skills. Previous studies have tended to focus on student-related issues, such as limited vocabulary, understanding of language structure, and low motivation to learn (Machmudah et al., 2026; Maliyanah & Fitriani, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2026). However, few have developed a theoretical framework that integrates appropriate learning strategies to systematically address these issues. Furthermore, there is no conceptual model that specifically links the characteristics of Arabic language learning with an adaptive approach to the needs of a heterogeneous student population in madrasahs. Consequently, there is a gap between problem identification and theory-based pedagogical solutions, necessitating further research to formulate a learning approach that is not only practically relevant but also conceptually robust in enhancing students' reading proficiency.

In this context, MTsN 3 Palu formulated a learning strategy for *maharah al-qirā'ah* by integrating it with the communicative language teaching (CLT) method. This approach was chosen because it focuses on the functional and communicative use of language, thereby potentially bridging the gap between text comprehension and real-world language practice (Aswad et al., 2024; Chen & Shuib, 2026; Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024; Wei et al., 2024). By integrating CLT principles into reading instruction, it is hoped that a more interactive, contextual, and responsive learning framework will emerge to address students' needs. This synergy is not only aimed at enhancing text comprehension skills but also at

fostering students' active engagement in the learning process, thereby enabling reading skills to develop more optimally from both cognitive and communicative perspectives. This approach has proven effective in improving students' language skills through meaningful and contextual interactions (H. Liu & Jin, 2024 and Tian, 2025). Research by Adhinugraha et al. (2024) and Manshur & Athiyah (2023) also indicates that the implementation of CLT can improve students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. By actively involving students in communicative activities, CLT helps them understand the meaning of vocabulary and the content of texts more deeply.

Nevertheless, studies specifically examining the application of communicative language teaching (CLT) in improving reading skills remain limited and have not been explored in depth. Research from Elayyan & Talafha (2023) and Nurbayan et al. (2025) showed that CLT contributed significantly to improving Arabic reading ability at the secondary school level. While, Lestari & Margana (2024) and Y. Liu (2025) also concluded that the communicative approach can positively promote the development of students' reading skills. However, both studies tended to place CLT within the general framework of language learning, without detailing the mechanisms of its implementation in the context of Arabic reading skills, which possess distinctive linguistic characteristics. The CLT mechanisms in this study refer to the following indicators: Reading Aloud, Pre-Reading the Text, Eliminating Reading Distractions, Breaking the Text into Smaller Sections, Contextual Cues and Analysis, Group Activities, and Vocabulary Reinforcement.

These limitations indicate conceptual and practical gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding how CLT can be specifically adapted to support the development of reading skills. Therefore, further research is needed that not only tests the effectiveness of CLT but also formulates an implementation model that is operational, contextual, and flexible, in line with the needs and characteristics of students at various educational levels. Thus, this study has the potential to make a new contribution to enriching the body of knowledge on Arabic language learning, particularly in integrating the communicative approach with reading skills in a more targeted and practical manner. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in improving the reading skills of students at MTsN 3 Palu, with the hypothesis that the application of this method can improve students' reading skills more effectively and contextually.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. This approach was utilized to conduct an in-depth analysis of the Al-Qiraah skill learning process at MTsN 3 Palu through the communicative language teaching method. The qualitative research design allows the researcher to comprehensively explore the meanings, processes, and dynamics occurring in Arabic language learning activities, thereby providing a complete picture of the implementation of this method in the field. This research was conducted at

MTsN 3 Palu. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the school possesses characteristics relevant to the research focus, particularly regarding Arabic language learning and the existence of issues related to students' reading skills (*maharah al-qirā'ah*).

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, involving 10 informants consisting of 1 school principal, 1 Arabic language teacher, and 8 students, chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives; the school principal provided information regarding policies and learning support, the teacher served as the instructional implementer, and the students acted as the primary subjects who directly experienced the *maharah al-qirā'ah* learning process. The research data included primary data obtained through direct interaction with informants in the form of interviews and observations, as well as secondary data sourced from documents related to the implementation of the CLT method. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to ensure comprehensive and valid data. Subsequently, data analysis utilized Miles and Huberman's model.

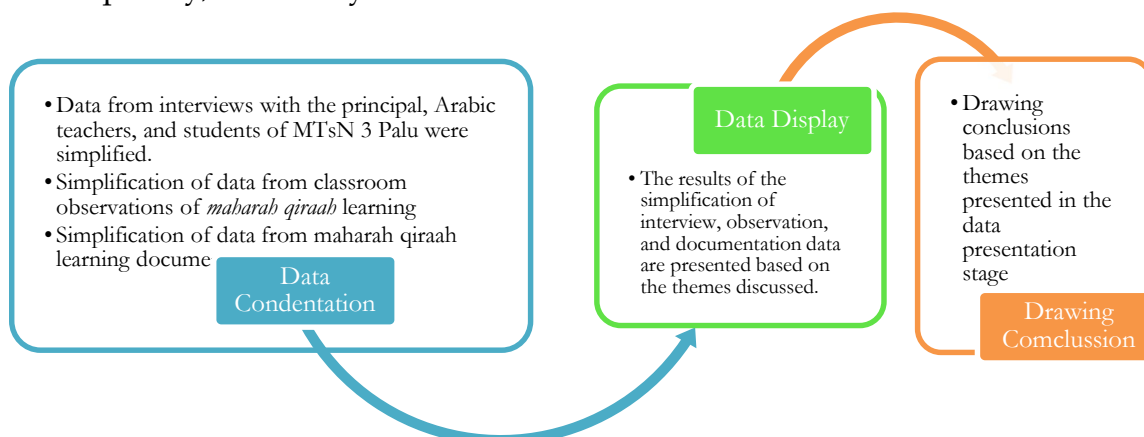


Figure 1. Data Analysis Flowchart

That process of analysis which encompasses the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and the systematic drawing of conclusions based on patterns, cause-and-effect relationships, and the regularity of findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in language learning, especially in the context of Arabic language learning in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, requires comprehensive planning and careful preparation before the learning process is implemented. This preparation is a fundamental aspect that cannot be ignored by educators, given that the success of CLT implementation depends heavily on the extent to which teachers are able to design, manage, and evaluate learning activities oriented towards developing students' communicative competence.

Communicative competence in this case includes the ability to understand and use language effectively in various real-life contexts, both orally and in

writing. With structured planning based on student needs, the learning process will be effective, efficient, and focused, as well as aligned with the instructional objectives set out in the curriculum.

**Table 1. Main Stages of Maharah Alqiraah Learning Using the CLT Method**

Stages	Teacher's Role	Student Activities	CLT Method' Role
Preliminary stage	Opening the class, motivating students, conducting an introductory activity, and stating objectives	Responding to greetings, saying a prayer, reviewing the material	Building communicative and readiness and establishing the learning context
Core activity stage	Facilitator, guide for reading and discussion activities	Reading texts, understanding, discussing, responding	Active interaction, practical and meaningful use of language
Closing stage	Summarize, ask reflective questions, provide overview of the next topic	Summarize, answer questions, reflect	Reinforce understanding and the meaning of communication

The implementation of the CLT method at MTsN 3 Kota Palu, as observed in the field and through in-depth interviews with Arabic language teachers, showed that the application of this method is carried out systematically several learning implementation processes, namely the preliminary stage, the core activity stage, and the closing stage above.

### **The Preliminary Activities of Communicative Language Teaching**

Introductory activities in the learning process were a crucial initial stage in building the mental, emotional, and cognitive readiness of students before entering into the core of the material to be studied. In the context of applying the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in Arabic language learning at MTsN 3 Kota Palu, preliminary activities did not only serve as an initial routine, but also became a strategic part of building a conducive, communicative, and meaningful learning-oriented classroom atmosphere. This stage reflected a holistic pedagogical approach, in which teachers did not only focus on cognitive aspects but also pay attention to the affective and social aspects of students.

Based on interviews with Arabic teachers at MTsN 3 Kota Palu, preliminary activities began with the teacher entering the classroom and greeting the students, followed by an invitation to recite a prayer together. This practice did not only represent the religious values that are an integral part of the madrasah environment, but also creates a smooth transition from non-academic activities to learning activities. After that, the teacher took attendance to ensure student attendance while building personal rapport with students through direct interaction.

The next step was to motivate students. Teachers strove to foster enthusiasm for learning by conveying the importance of the material to be studied, both academically and in terms of its practical benefits in everyday life. This motivation was not merely ceremonial, but is linked to actual contexts that

are relevant to the students' experiences, thereby increasing their active involvement in learning. In addition, teachers also conducted apperception activities, which involve reviewing or revisiting the material studied in the previous session. The purpose of apperception was to activate students' schemata or prior knowledge, so that they had a sufficient cognitive foundation to receive the new material that will be presented.

Teachers also explicitly conveyed the objectives and benefits of learning to students. Conveying these objectives is important in the framework of instructional transparency, where students are given a clear understanding of the expected learning outcomes. This was in line with the principles of the CLT method, which encourages conscious and purposeful learning, where students understand the reasons behind each activity and how these activities contribute to improving their communicative skills in Arabic. As explained by the Arabic teacher at MTsN 3 Kota Palu in an interview conducted by the author: "The application is the same as with other methods, namely starting with saying greetings, reading prayers, taking attendance, and providing motivation and apperception so that they remember the material from the previous meeting. After apperception, then convey the objectives and benefits of the learning that will be studied."

This statement showed that although the introductory activities have a relatively common pattern, in the context of CLT, their implementation is tailored to the goal of creating a communicative and interactive learning environment. Teachers act as guides and facilitators who not only convey information but also build students' overall readiness to learn, both emotionally, spiritually, and academically. Thus, preliminary activities in Arabic language learning using the CLT approach at MTsN 3 Kota Palu can be seen as an important foundation that determines the smoothness and effectiveness of the subsequent stages of learning.

### **The Core Activities of Communicative Language Teaching**

Core activities in *maharah al-qirā'ah* (reading skills) learning were the main phase in the learning process designed to actively involve students in reading and understanding Arabic texts. In the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, core activities focused on efforts to improve students' communicative competence through the use of real and meaningful language. Core activities were not merely a process of linguistic information transfer, but more than that, they are a means for students to build understanding, skills, and confidence in using Arabic functionally. Based on observations and in-depth interviews with Arabic teachers at MTsN 3 Palu City, teachers designed activities that required the active involvement of students in reading, understanding, and responding to Arabic texts communicatively.

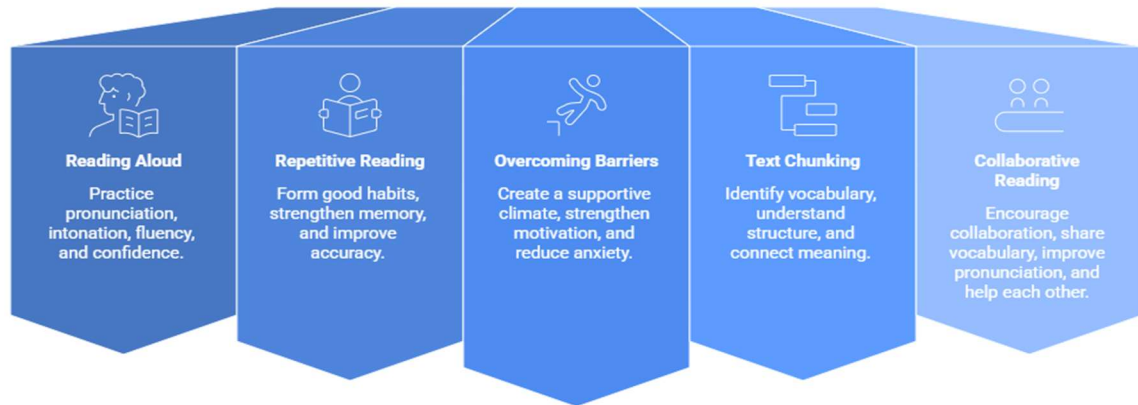


Figure 2. The Core Activities in the *Maharah Alqiraah* Learning Method Using the CLT Method

This process was divided into several strategic sub-activities that are carried out gradually and systematically:

**First Stage: Reading Aloud (Loud Reading).** In this first stage, students are instructed to read Arabic texts aloud in front of the class. This activity aims to practice pronunciation (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*) and intonation, strengthen fluency, and increase confidence in reading Arabic texts. By reading aloud, students not only practice phonological aspects, but also improve listening skills (*maharah istimā'*) for other students who are listening. Teachers play a central role in providing direct feedback on incorrect pronunciation and guiding students to correct mistakes that occur during the reading process. As explained by an Arabic teacher at MTsN 3 Kota Palu in an interview: "In *Maharah al-Qira'ah* lessons, students are given reading texts and are required to read them aloud clearly so that they can practice their pronunciation while also practicing the *maharah istima* of other students. This makes it easier for the teacher to correct their reading."

This statement showed that vocal reading is not only intended for individual training, but also involves the entire class as an active audience. This strengthens the spirit of collaboration and creates a communicative learning atmosphere. A similar statement was also made by Sindi Ramadhani, an eighth-grade student at MTsN 3 Kota Palu: "First, the teacher distributed Arabic texts, then asked us to read them one by one, after which he corrected our reading." This statement reflects the application of direct learning oriented towards strengthening basic Arabic reading skills.

**Second Stage: Repetitive Reading.** After the initial stage of reading aloud, the activity continues with repetitive reading (repetition drills). Repetition is an important technique in language learning, especially in helping students form good reading habits, strengthen their memory of language structures, and improve accuracy in pronunciation. In practice, the teacher first gives an example of correct reading, then the students are asked to imitate it together, and then read individually in turns. Mr. As'ari, an Arabic teacher for grade VIII at MTsN 3 Palu City, explained: "I ask the students to read the text repeatedly. First, I read the text myself, then the students imitate it together. After that, I ask several students to read it themselves. This way, students will get used to it and

learn how to pronounce it, what the intonation is like, and the correct articulation of the letters."

Third Stage: Overcoming Reading Barriers (Reducing Reading Anxiety). In practice, many students face emotional barriers such as nervousness, lack of confidence, or tension when asked to read Arabic texts. These psychological barriers, if not handled properly, can have a negative impact on the development of students' reading skills. Therefore, teachers at MTsN 3 Kota Palu actively strive to create a fun and inclusive classroom atmosphere through the use of ice breakers, educational games, and other affective approaches. As explained by an Arabic teacher: "My way of eliminating reading distractions is by providing games or ice breakers that are still related to the material of the day, so that the children can refocus on their learning." "With this approach, teachers not only build cognitive skills but also create a classroom climate that supports students' emotional development, strengthens learning motivation, and reduces the pressure that often arises in foreign language learning.

Fourth Stage: Text Chunking. The next strategy in the core activity is to break the text down into smaller parts, such as phrases, sentences, or short paragraphs. This technique is known as chunking, which involves dividing complex information into simpler parts to facilitate cognitive processing by students. This strategy is particularly relevant for students with low levels of comprehension, as it allows them to focus on understanding one part of the text at a time without feeling overwhelmed. As explained by Mr. As'ari: "For reading texts, I usually divide a story into several paragraphs or sentences before asking students to read it. That way, students will not feel overwhelmed when reading." Through this technique, students can more easily identify new vocabulary, understand sentence structure, and connect the meanings between sections more comprehensively. This also accelerates the achievement of the *maharah al-qira'ah* learning objectives, which emphasize not only reading fluency but also a comprehensive understanding of the text content.

Fifth Stage: Collaborative Reading. The final stage in the core activity is the implementation of small group-based learning. This strategy aims to encourage collaboration among students in understanding texts, sharing vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and helping each other complete reading tasks. Collaborative learning creates a dynamic classroom atmosphere and accommodates differences in learning styles among students. Students who have difficulty reading can learn from their peers in a more relaxed and pressure-free environment. The Arabic teacher explains: "Sometimes I give group assignments by dividing them into several groups, then I ask each group to come to the front and read the text I have given to each group." Furthermore, the teacher also uses interactive methods such as arranging text pieces in groups: "I distribute pieces of Arabic text, then ask each group to put the pieces together into a story and then read the text in front of the class."

This activity not only trains cooperation, but also develops critical thinking skills, increases courage to perform in public, and strengthens social relationships in the learning process. Reza, an eighth grader, said: "I prefer

learning in groups, because I am usually afraid to ask the teacher questions. So with group assignments, my friends can teach me if I don't know how to read it. In addition, the work is completed faster because it is done together."

This testimony reinforces that group-based learning is not only academically effective, but also has a positive impact on the motivation and confidence of students.

### The Closing Activities of Communicative Language Teaching

The closing stage in the learning process played an important role in consolidating students' understanding of the material that has been studied and providing space for reflection on the learning experience. At this stage, teachers took several systematic steps, namely summarizing the learning material, holding a reflection session through open-ended questions related to the topics that have been discussed, and providing an overview of the material that will be taught in the next meeting. These activities are intended to strengthen students' absorption of the material while building their mental readiness to face new material. As a form of reinforcing religious and cultural values of the school, the lesson is closed with a group prayer and ends with a greeting.



Figure 3. The Maharah Al-Qiraah Learning Process

### Discussion

The application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in teaching reading skills at MTsN 3 Palu City has shown significant results in improving students' communicative and holistic reading abilities. Based on the research data, the implementation of CLT was carried out systematically. This stage has proven effective in creating optimal learning readiness and increasing student engagement in the learning process. In the core stage, as the central component of CLT implementation, teachers employ various strategies such as loud reading, repetitive reading, reducing reading anxiety, text chunking, and collaborative reading. These strategies align with research findings that directly impact improvements in students' reading skills, including pronunciation, fluency, and text comprehension.

Analytically, there is a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the implementation of the CLT strategy and improvements in students' reading skills. A communicative and transparent introductory phase contributes to increased student readiness and motivation to learn, which ultimately influences the effectiveness of the core phase. The implementation of loud reading and repetitive reading has been shown to improve reading fluency, while strategies for reducing reading anxiety lower students' anxiety levels, thereby supporting the language acquisition process (Kultas, 2026; Oakley, 2024; Rodríguez-Fuentes et al., 2025; Zourou et al., 2025). Furthermore, the use of text chunking facilitates students' understanding of text structure and meaning. While, collaborative reading not only strengthens social interaction which is central to communicative competence in CLT. But, also enhances students' critical thinking and collaboration skills, as articulated by Amumpuni et al. (2025); Salmanova (2025) and Yang et al. (2025) in their research. In essence, these findings indicate a paradigm shift in reading instruction from a traditional translation-oriented approach toward a meaning- and communication-based approach. This underscores that Arabic language learning should not focus solely on linguistic aspects but also on the ability to use the language in real-world contexts (Nahar et al., 2024; Syuhadak et al., 2025).

When compared to previous studies, the results of this study are consistent with those of Pirom & Lerdpreedakorn (2025); Ridwan et al. (2024); and Talibo et al. (2025), which demonstrated improvements in reading ability in both micro- and macro-level aspects. Furthermore, this study also confirmed previous research conducted by Jaslie S. Sitoy & Ramir Philip Jones V. Sonsona (2024); Wang & Razak (2026) and Wei et al. (2024), which asserted that CLT is effective in enhancing students' communicative competence. However, this study is unique in the madrasah context, which integrates religious values into learning and faces specific challenges in the form of heterogeneity in students' basic Arabic reading skills. Therefore, this study not only confirms existing theories but also enriches the body of research by demonstrating that the success of CLT is significantly influenced by students' initial readiness and teachers' ability to adapt learning strategies.

Based on these findings, the success of implementing Communicative Language Teaching is not solely determined by the inherent strengths of the approach itself, but is highly dependent on students' initial readiness and teachers' ability to adapt instructional strategies to the context. Although CLT has generally been proven effective in improving reading ability and communicative competence, its effectiveness becomes more complex within the madrasah setting, which has distinctive characteristics such as the integration of religious values and the heterogeneity of students' basic Arabic reading skills. Therefore, the implementation of CLT must be contextually adapted to optimize students' potential while addressing specific challenges, so that it not only replicates the success of previous studies but also contributes new insights that are more relevant to the madrasah learning context.

This study made significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept of CLT as a flexible and contextual approach to Arabic language learning. Practically, this study offers a structured and practical model for implementing CLT that teachers can use as a reference in teaching *mahārah al-qirā'ah*. The recommended action plan includes enhancing teacher competencies through continuous training on managing communicative activities and competency-based assessment, strengthening students' foundational skills through supportive programs such as tahsin, developing authentic teaching materials relevant to students' lives, and implementing differentiated instruction strategies to accommodate students' varying abilities. Furthermore, the optimization of formative assessment is necessary to measure students' communicative abilities more comprehensively. Thus, the implementation of CLT not only improves students' reading skills but also shapes them into communicative, confident Arabic language learners with critical thinking skills.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in teaching reading skills at MTsN 3 Kota Palu has been proven to have a significant impact on improving students' communicative and holistic reading abilities through systematic implementation and the use of interactive and meaningful learning strategies. The research findings indicate that the success of CLT is largely determined by systematic teaching implementation through introductory, core, and concluding stages, as well as the use of communicative strategies such as loud reading, repetitive reading, reducing reading anxiety, text chunking, and collaborative reading. This study reinforces CLT's position as a flexible and contextual approach in Arabic language learning, while also providing a practical contribution in the form of an implementation model that teachers can use as a reference.

The strengths of this study lie in its comprehensive and contextual analysis and the integration of religious values into learning. However, its limitations include the absence of quantitative measurement of improvements in student proficiency, the limited scope of the study location, and the insufficient examination of a competency-based evaluation system. Therefore, future research is recommended to use a mixed-methods approach, expand the scope of the study location, develop more comprehensive evaluation instruments, and explore the integration of learning technologies to strengthen the effectiveness of CLT implementation in the future.

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