



The Creativity of Teachers as *Rûḥ al-Mudarris*: Observations of Arabic Language Teachers at Pesantren Modern

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Abstract

This study examines teachers' creativity as *rûḥ al-mudarris*, specifically in Arabic Language Teaching at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah. Based on the conceptual framework of KH Imam Zarkasyi, which emphasizes the teacher's spirits over methods and materials, this study aims to explore how Arab teachers practice creativity not merely as a technical skill but as a living commitment to teaching. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis with the participation of teachers, supervisors, and stakeholder. The findings show that teachers' creativity manifests in three main forms: (1) thorough and flexible appropriation of the subject matter; (2) adaptive and participatory classroom management; and (3) intuitive and empathetic interpersonal interactions with students, colleagues, and parents. These forms of creativity emerge from teachers' awareness of their role as educators, mentors, and facilitators of meaningful learning. This study concludes that teacher creativity, based on the *ruḥ al-mudarris*, is not an added value, but rather a fundamental force that enlivens the learning environment and fosters a collaborative educational ecosystem. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening teachers' creativity through institutional culture, professional development, and pedagogical leadership in Pesantren.

Keywords: Teacher Creativity, *Rûḥ al-Mudarris*, Arabic Language Education, Pesantren, Professionalism development.

إبداع المعلمين كروح التدريس : ملاحظات على معلمي اللغة العربية في المعهد العصري

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة إبداع المعلمين بوصفه روح التدريس، وتحديدًا في تدريس اللغة العربية في معهد الروضة الحسنة. وانطلاقًا من الإطار المفاهيمي لصاحب السمو الإمام الزركاشي، الذي يُركز على روح المعلم أكثر من الأساليب والمواد، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية ممارسة المعلمين العرب للإبداع ليس كمجرد مهارة تقنية، بل كالتزام حيّ بالتدريس. وباستخدام منهج وصفي نوعي، جُمعت البيانات من خلال ملاحظات صفية، ومقابلات شبه منظمة، وتحليل وثائقي بمشاركة المعلمين والمشرفين وأصحاب المصلحة. وتُظهر النتائج أن إبداع المعلمين يتجلى في ثلاثة أشكال رئيسية: (١) استيعاب شامل ومرن للمادة الدراسية؛ (٢) إدارة صفية تكيفية وتشاركية؛ (٣) تفاعلات شخصية بديهة ومتعاطفة مع الطلاب والزلاء وأولياء الأمور. وتنبثق هذه الأشكال من الإبداع من وعي المعلمين بدورهم كمربين وموجهين وميسرين للتعليم الهادف. تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن إبداع المعلم، القائم على روح المدرس، ليس قيمة مضافة فحسب، بل هو قوة أساسية تُحيي بيئة التعلم وتُعزز نظامًا تعليميًا تعاونيًا. وتؤكد هذه النتائج على أهمية تعزيز إبداع المعلمين من خلال الثقافة المؤسسية والتطوير المهني والقيادة التربوية في المعاهد الدينية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: إبداع المعلم وروح التدريس و تعليم اللغة العربية والمعهد والتطوير المهني

INTRODUCTION

While teacher creativity in foreign language education has received much attention in research, Calafato argues that these discussions are still dominated by methodological and technical perspectives.²⁰ Teacher creativity is equated with their ability to

²⁰ Raees Calafato, "Literature in Language Education: Exploring Teachers' Beliefs, Practices, Creativity, and Literary Competence," *Pedagogies: An International Journal* 19, no. 1 (January 2024): 80–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2022.2164500>.

introduce innovative teaching strategies¹, communicative activities² or learning games³, and technology integration⁴ to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Within this framework, creativity is reduced to the ability to design engaging learning experiences and respond flexibly to classroom challenges.⁵ This view stands in stark contrast to that of Jones and Richards, who argue that creativity in foreign language education should not be limited to the exceptional skills of individual teachers but should be considered an integral part of daily pedagogical practice. As they emphasize, «*all education involves creative action*,»⁶ particularly in the way teachers make didactic decisions, design classroom interactions, and transform routine activities into meaningful learning experiences. Although this perspective has broadened the concept of creativity beyond artistic expression or unconventional teaching methods, research should continue to conceptualize teacher creativity primarily within pedagogical and cognitive frameworks, and pay little attention to its spiritual, relational, and cultural dimensions.

¹ Leanne Hinton, "Language Revitalization and Language Pedagogy: New Teaching and Learning Strategies," *Language and Education* 25, no. 4 (July 2011): 307–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.577220>.

² Yuejiao Zhang and Karla Saari Kitalong, "Influences on Creativity in Technical Communication: Invention, Motivation, and Constraints," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (July 2015): 199–216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2015.1043028>.

³ Jasmine Luk, "Bilingual Language Play and Local Creativity in Hong Kong," *International Journal of Multilingualism* 10, no. 3 (August 2013): 236–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2013.808200>.

⁴ Zachary Kaiser, "Creativity as Computation: Teaching Design in the Age of Automation," *Design and Culture* 11, no. 2 (May 2019): 173–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2019.1609279>.

⁵ Xiaqi Feng et al., "Navigating Dilemmas: University Educators' Journeys in Creativity Teaching," *Teaching in Higher Education* 30, no. 5 (July 2025): 1235–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2024.2436359>.

⁶ Rodney H. Jones and Jack C. Richards, eds., *Creativity in Language Teaching: Perspectives Form Research and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

Similar trends are observable in the methodology of Arabic language teaching. Earlier research into creativity in Arabic language teaching largely defines creativity in terms of didactic innovation (as in the studies by Tuada et al.⁷ and Nurcholis et al.), digital integration (Ulinnuha⁸ and Mufidah⁹), active learning strategies (Widyadhana et al.)¹⁰, and communicative pedagogy. Creativity is therefore often defined as the ability of teachers to develop methods, media, and classroom activities that make language learning more engaging and effective. The aforementioned studies, with their investigation into the use of social media, integrative approaches, deconstructive pedagogy, dramatization, musicality, and other interactive learning practices, have undoubtedly contributed to the further development of contemporary methodology in Arabic language teaching. These studies, however, need to be supplemented by an investigation into the pedagogical ethos, based on the moral commitment, social presence, and pedagogical worldview of teachers, to understand how teachers embody creativity as part of their professional identity and spiritual responsibility, particularly in pesantren, which will

⁷ Linura Tuada et al., "Deconstructing Arabic Language Learning: A Bridge between Philosophical Analysis and Pedagogical Innovation," *Lisanudhad: Jurnal Bahasa, Pembelajaran Dan Sastra Arab* 12, no. 2 (2025): 81–100, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21111/lisanudhad.v12i2.47>.

⁸ Ahmad Nurcholis et al., "Arabic Language Learning through Musicalization, Drama, and Sholawat in Fostering Religious Muslim Intellectuals at UIN Maliki Malang and UII Dalwa Pasuruan," *Lisanudhad: Jurnal Bahasa, Pembelajaran Dan Sastra Arab* 12, no. 2 (2025): 1–22, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21111/lisanudhad.v12i2.40>.

⁹ Inayah Fitri Ulinnuha and Nuril Mufidah, "The Use of Albert Bandura's Method for Learning Arabic Speaking Skill Using TikTok," *Lisanudhad: Jurnal Bahasa, Pembelajaran Dan Sastra Arab* 12, no. 2 (2025): 23–50, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21111/lisanudhad.v12i2.40>.

¹⁰ Ainur Rizqi Widyadhana et al., "The Cognitive Approach in Learning to Read Arabic Texts: A Philosophical and Pedagogical Analysis," *Lisanudhad: Jurnal Bahasa, Pembelajaran Dan Sastra Arab* 12, no. 2 (2025): 161–83, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21111/lisanudhad.v12i2.41>.

form the subject of this research.

The selection of pesantren as a research area is significant because the creativity of teachers in this educational environment is shaped not only academically, but also morally and spiritually. Within the context of Pesantren Modern in Indonesia, Arabic education occupies a unique and strategic position. Arabic is not only taught as a foreign language or school subject, but also serves as a language for religious instruction, daily communication, institutional culture, and the identity formation of the students.¹¹ This position requires teachers to go beyond their formal teaching duties and assume a broader pedagogical role that encompasses intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions equally. In this educational environment, creativity cannot be reduced to methodological variation or classroom entertainment. Rather, it becomes a pedagogical necessity, in which teachers reconcile Islamic values, institutional discipline, the emotional needs of the students, and lively communication practices.¹² Therefore, in this study, pesantrens are not only considered as research locations, but also as educational cultures that differ in their views on education, learning, and creativity.

To explore these dimensions more extensively, this study utilizes the concept of *rūḥ al-mudarris* as an interpretive framework for understanding the creativity of Arabic education teachers in pesantren. Rooted in the educational philosophy of pesantrens, particularly the thought of Imam Zarkasyi, this concept emphasizes

¹¹ Kamal Yusuf, Muhammad Al-Mubassyr, and Taufiqurrohman Taufiqurrohman, "Arabic in the Linguistic Landscape of Indonesian Pesantren: A Symbol of Religious Moderation/Al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah min Manṣūr al-Mashhad al-Lughawī fī al-Ma'āhid al-Islāmiyyah bi Indūnisiyā: Ramz li al-Wasa'iyyah al-Dīniyyah," *ALSUNIYAT: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Arab* 8, no. 1 (n.d.): 137–59, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17509/alsuniyat.v8i1.80292>.

¹² Yoyo Yoyo et al., "Cultural Perceptions of Santri on Arabic Language Learning," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2023): 187–98, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v9i2.24103>.

that the essence of education lies not only in teaching materials or methods, but ultimately in the «spirit» of the teacher himself.¹³ Within this framework, the teacher is viewed not merely as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a moral, relational, and spiritual presence that shapes the learning process as a whole. This perspective aligns with process-oriented approaches to creativity, such as those of Jones and Richards, which conceptualize creativity as the ability to respond to educational realities in a contextual manner through meaningful social interaction. Accordingly, in the context of pesantren, creativity should be considered not only as methodological innovation, but also as an expression of relational sensitivity, empathy, intuition, and value-oriented engagement with educational practice.

Based on this perspective, the present study argues that *rūh al-mudarris* offers an indigenous pedagogical framework capable of extending prevailing discussions of teacher creativity beyond technical dimensions toward a form of spiritual-relational pedagogical professionalism. In this study, teacher creativity is examined through three interconnected dimensions: (1) teachers' deep and flexible understanding of instructional materials, enabling the creative recontextualization of knowledge; (2) adaptive classroom management that encourages active participation and meaningful engagement; and (3) interpersonal interactions with students, colleagues, and parents grounded in empathy, intuition, and social responsibility. By focusing on these dimensions, this study seeks to explain how teacher creativity is manifested as *rūh al-mudarris* in the practice of Arabic language teaching at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, North Sumatra, Indonesia.

¹³ Imam Zarkasyi, *Al-Tarbiyah al-Amaliyah* (Gontor: Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, 2014), 14.

Arabic Language Teacher at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah

In this section, the author explains the theoretical framework of the Arabic teachers at the Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, in order to clarify their understanding of creativity as *rūḥ al-mudarris*. Arabic language teachers at the pesantren primarily teach through the book «*Durūs al-Lughah al-ʿArabiyyah*» by Imam Zarkasyi and Imam Subani. Although the subject explicitly refers to the Arabic language (*Al-Lughah Al-ʿArabiyyah*), it should be noted that numerous subjects at Pesantren promote students' Arabic communicative skills, including *Insya*, *Muthalaḥ*, *Imla*, *Nahwu*, *Sharf*, *Balaghah*, *Tarjamah*, and *Khat*. Subjects are also taught in Arabic within the framework of Islamic religious education.¹⁴ Similarly, the 24-hour pesantren program for students, called "*bī'ah Arabiyyah*" by Rahmi et al., significantly influences their communicative skills through this environmental conditioning, in which the daily use of Arabic by the students is an established principle of the pesantren.¹⁵ In this context, Masqon's observation regarding Arabic education at PMDG Gontor, which has become a phenomenon at many modern Pesantrens, is interesting. The Arabic teachers are themselves graduates of these schools and thus contribute directly to the success of the collective language development.¹⁶ This observation gains significance when it is later noted that criticism of Arabic education in Pesantren Modern,

¹⁴ Manshuruddin Manshuruddin, Tumiran Tumiran, and Muhammad Yunan, "Application Values of Character Education in the Modern Pesantren System and Culture (Study at Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan)," *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 8, no. 12 (2021): 295–307.

¹⁵ Wiza Nova Rahmi and Asti Nazhyfa, "Educational Transformation: From Boarding School to Pesantren with Bi'ah Arabiyyah," *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 49–60.

¹⁶ Dihyatun Masqon, "Muassasah Dâr Al-Salâm Gontor Wa Dauruhâ Fî T a'lim al-Ghah al-ʿArabiyyah Li-al-Nâtîqîn Bi Ghairihâ Bi Ma'ad Gontor Namudhajan," *TSAQAFAH* 10, no. 1 (2014): 167–200.

which utilize direct methods, offers suggestions for improving teacher competence, as Fauzi demonstrated in his documentation of the conditions at the Pesantren Syamsul Ulum in Sukabumi.¹⁷ This emphasizes the need to improve the working conditions of teachers who have graduated from modern Pesantren, even though these schools themselves have implemented two exemplary educational programs: *Amaliyah Tadrîs* and *Dars Naqd*.¹⁸ A mechanism for improving the quality of education for teachers can also be identified at the Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, as Harahap and Ritonga have explained.¹⁹ They stated that Pesantrens strive to attract highly qualified graduates while simultaneously improving the quality of the admitted students. This quality improvement encompasses understanding the subject matter and mastering teaching methods, as described by Utari et al. regarding pedagogical content knowledge.²⁰ They explained that teaching competence must go hand in hand with a deep understanding of the subject matter, and conversely, that the subject matter is easier to understand when presented by qualified teachers. In this context, the teacher's exemplary behavior is of crucial importance. Rasyidin and Harahap illustrated how Pesantrens require their teachers to continue teaching Arabic, even if the students do not understand the language.²¹ This dedication will

¹⁷ Muhammad Ridwan Fauzi, "Implementasi Metode Langsung Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Pondok Pesantren Syamsul 'Ulum Sukabumi," *Tarbiyatu Wa Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 01 (2019): 1–13.

¹⁸ Arridha Harahap, "Dars Naqd: Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Guru Di Pondok Pesantren," *Bahsun Ilmy: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020): 25–32.

¹⁹ Radinal Mukhtar Harahap and Abdullah Sani Ritonga, "Manajemen Profesi Guru Berbasis Kaderisasi: Konsepsi Dan Aplikasi Di Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan," *Bidayah: Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 2023, 221–29.

²⁰ Dalia Utari, Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, and Abdullah Sani Ritonga, "Kompetensi Guru Pesantren Modern (Studi Tentang Pedagogical Content Knowledge)," *Nuris Journal of Education and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 139–46.

²¹ Rasyidin Rasyidin and Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, "Guru Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Studi Penerapan Metode Keteladanan," *AT TARAKIB: Jurnal*

ultimately lead to every student acquiring Arabic language skills comparable to the way their native language is taught. Moreover, the use of digital devices is expected to increase students' enthusiasm and passion for learning Arabic.²²

This description shows that pesantren have a very high degree of dedication to Arabic teachers. This article examines the opposite situation: How do Arabic teachers at Pesantren deal with the prevailing theory that teaching at an Pesantren first and foremost requires that ideas and ideals regarding the implementation of education be aligned, and that these subsequently be sincerely and diligently pursued to educate students? These ideas and ideals are understood here as *rūḥ al-mudarris* and are clearly expressed in the creativity of the teachers studied.

Still related to the conception of Arabic language teachers in Pesantren, due to the environmental conditioning in the 24-hour boarding program, teachers are also required to be skilled at communicating the condition and progress of students' learning achievements to parents. In such conditions, Arabic language teachers are also positioned as guardian teachers who replace the role of parents in supervising, protecting, guiding, teaching and adapting to the Pesantren environment.²³ Such attitudes will be even more visible and highlighted, considering that boarding life also requires special treatment related to factors of discomfort, discomfort, and other problems. Based on the explanation above,

Bahasa Arab 1, no. 1 (2023): 35–47.

²² Rasyidin Rasyidin and Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, "Digitalisasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Gerakan Peningkatan Antusias Santri Dan Narasi Adaptasi Pesantren Terhadap Perkembangan Teknologi," *Journal on Education* 6, no. 2 (2024): 12976–84.

²³ Evarianta Ginting, "Pengaruh Sikap Dan Perilaku Persuasif Guru Terhadap Motivasi Berbahasa Arab Santri Di Pesantren Ar Raudlatul Hasanah Medan" (Doctoral Dissertation, Universitas Medan Area, 2021).

the research on teacher creativity is expanded to include aspects of social interactions carried out by teachers with parents in striving for the success of Arabic language learning.

***Rūḥ al-mudarris* to the Teachers of Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah**

In the context of Pesantren, the concept of *rūḥ al-mudarris* is inextricably linked to the ideas of Imam Zarkasyi, the founder of the Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG). Zarkasyi formulated the idealism of teaching in four main components: *al-māddah* (teaching material), *al-ṭarīqah* (method), *al-mudarris* (the figure of the teacher himself), and *rūḥ al-mudarris* (the soul of the teacher). He expressed this colloquially as: *al-māddah muhimmah wa al-ṭarīqah ahammu min al-māddah, wa al-mudarris ahammu min al-ṭarīqah, wa rūḥ al-mudarris ahammu min al-mudarris nafsihi*. This means that, although content is important, the method is more important than content, the teacher is more important than the teaching method, and the teacher's attitude is more important than the teacher themselves. This proposition clarifies that success in education depends to a significant extent on the inner qualities and charisma of the teacher, and not solely on subject knowledge or mastery of the material. In this view, «*Rūḥ al-Mudarris*» forms the core of idealism in education and guides teachers in all their professional activities, from teaching practice and competence development to their social relationships, with the aim of holistic education.

In this sense, the concept of «*Rūḥ al-Mudarris*» can be seen as consistent with the general holistic approach to education, which is also prevalent in the West and considers ethical, spiritual, and relational dimensions as integral components of the learning and teaching process. In the Western educational debate, for example, terms such as pedagogical charisma, teacher charisma, and moral vision are used to describe how teachers should behave in the

classroom.²⁴ *Ruh al-Mudarris*, however, is not merely a style or personality trait, but an inner dedication stemming from the integrity of values, spiritual devotion, and sincerity in education. Gontor, for example, introduced the concept of self-realization for her teachers to emphasize that education in this environment takes place entirely within the context of the worship of Allah Ta'ala.²⁵ They do not receive a conventional salary but fulfill their teaching and educational duties out of dedication, based on the principles of sincerity and responsibility towards the community. This distinguishes the professionalism of teachers in Pesantren from the general model of professionalism. Professionalism within the framework of *Ruh al-Mudarris* is an expression of the moral and spiritual values that characterize the teacher.²⁶

Saputra, in his article, emphasizes that *rūḥ al-mudarris* represents the deepest dimension of the teacher's professionalism. It transcends institutional structures and curricula and serves as a source of energy that ensures the continuity of education under diverse circumstances. A teacher with this spirit will continue to teach despite limitations, even without material recognition, and will be a role model in every interaction with students.²⁷ In Arabic education at Pesantren, the spirit of the youth is of crucial importance, since Arabic is not only a means of communication but also a language for

²⁴ Noel L. Clemente, "Pedagogical Virtues: An Account of The Intellectual Virtues of a Teacher," *Episteme* 21, no. 2 (2024): 683–97; Andrea Sunyol and Peter Browning, "The 'Pedagogy of Personality': Becoming Better People in The English Language Teaching and Learning Space," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2024, no. 285 (2024): 133–53.

²⁵ Nice Durroh, "Wakaf Diri Di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Dalam Perspektif Fiqh Dan UU No. 41 Tahun 2004," *Ejournal INSKLUSIF* 1 (2016): 41.

²⁶ Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, "Idealisme, Keikhlasan, Dan Komitmen: Pemaknaan Profesi Guru Di Lingkungan Pesantren Modern," *Idrak: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2022): 357–70.

²⁷ Kurniawan Dwi Saputra, "The Teacher's Spirit as The Core: The Philosophy of Professionalism in Imam Zarkasyi's Thought," *At-Ta'dib* 17, no. 1 (2022): 1–17.

understanding religious doctrines and thereby influences the quality of worship. An Arabic teacher at an Pesantren must be able to bring this language to life as an integral part of the students' lives.

According to Imam Zarkasyi, an Arabic teacher should embody not only pedagogical competence but also moral, intellectual, psychological, and professional integrity as part of the educational mission. An ideal teacher is characterized by good morals, sincerity, discipline, enthusiasm, patience, fairness, and genuine care for students, while simultaneously serving as a moral exemplar in daily life. Professionally, the teacher must possess mastery of teaching methods, educational psychology, lesson planning, classroom management, and proficiency in the language being taught, including the ability to communicate knowledge clearly and effectively. Zarkasyi also emphasizes the importance of continuous intellectual development through reading and seeking references, adaptive teaching that considers students' abilities and contextual needs, and the capacity to create active, engaging, and well-controlled learning environments. In addition, teachers are expected to maintain physical and mental well-being, present themselves properly, solve educational problems wisely, and cultivate a supportive personality that encourages students' participation and values their opinions. Altogether, these characteristics reflect Zarkasyi's view that the essence of teaching lies not merely in technical instruction, but in the teacher's holistic personality and spiritual-professional presence in the learning process.²⁸

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore how teacher creativity is manifested as ruh al-mudarris in Arabic language teaching at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah,

²⁸ Zarkasyi, *Al-Tarbiyah al-Amaliyah*.

Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The pesantren was selected because Arabic functions not only as an academic subject but also as a language of daily communication within pesantren environment. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Participants were purposively selected and consisted of one institutional supervisor, one senior mentor teacher, and ten novice Arabic language teachers actively involved in Arabic instruction. Classroom observations focused on teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom interactions, and creative instructional responses during learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' understandings of creativity, professional responsibility, and the meaning of *rūḥ al-mudarris* within pesantren educational culture. Supporting documents, including institutional programs and teaching materials, were also examined to contextualize the findings. Data were analyzed thematically through repeated reading, coding, categorization, and interpretation of patterns related to three analytical dimensions: teachers' understanding of instructional materials, adaptive classroom management, and social interactions in supporting Arabic language learning. To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed data triangulation, member checking, and thick contextual description. Ethical considerations were maintained through voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of participants' identities.

FINDINGS

Teacher Creativity to Grow Potential

In this section, the author describes how the creativity of the teachers at the Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah transforms into *rūḥ al-mudarris*. The first form of creativity is the continuous striving of every teacher to further develop his or her individual potential. Pesantren already possesses

institutional mechanisms for this purpose. What arises from the teachers' own consciousness can be described as boundless creativity, because it becomes their essence. This creativity manifests itself, at least in part, in their dedication to improving their pedagogical, personal, social, and professional skills.

First, the teachers at the Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah improve their pedagogical skills. As mentioned earlier, most of them are pesantren alumni. This means that their pedagogical skills are already present and that they have received training in *Amaliyah Tadrīs* and *Dars Naqd*. These pedagogical skills are continuously developed through informal guidance, in which teachers exchange ideas with experienced colleagues regarding effective teaching methods and strategies.

A teacher said: *«Asking questions and seeking advice from experienced colleagues is the most practical way to ensure that my teaching methods are suitable. I do this often, not only to test myself, but also to strengthen my pedagogical approach. Being a teacher in training is absolutely different from being a fully qualified teacher.»*

Another teacher said: *«We really have to be creative. For example, if I notice that the students I teach are getting bored or tired, I try to lighten the mood a bit. My supervisor suggested an icebreaker or a break. I increasingly use teaching materials that I create myself on YouTube, or I try out reading material myself.»*

Another teacher said: *«When I became a teacher, the principal advised me to prepare my lessons thoroughly. I then decided to pursue a university education, because that way I could expand my knowledge while teaching. It turned out that teaching is indeed the most effective way to learn.»*

These statements were confirmed after consultation with those responsible for learning activities at the Pesantren. The source explained: *«Pesantren strives to continuously improve the skills of its teachers. This is achieved through 'Kamisan' (a mandatory meeting of all teachers with the director every Thursday), as well as scheduled mentoring sessions and*

competency assessments every semester. However, because the pesantren is a family-like institution, informal mentoring proves to be much more effective. We therefore explicitly encourage this type of mentoring.»

This statement demonstrates the positive efforts stemming from every teacher's awareness of the need to continuously improve their pedagogical skills in the classroom.

*The second aspect, personality, becomes indirectly clear from the aforementioned interviews. Several teachers at Pesantren have taken the initiative to pursue further studies and expand their skills through bachelor's degree programs. The same applies to the third competency, social competence. Every teacher enjoys learning informally from experienced colleagues. This situation and its description illustrate the creativity associated with the continuous development of one's own potential. Professional competence, on the other hand, is the sum of the awareness that every teacher at Pesantren develops in order to be able to respond effectively to his or her situation as a «real» teacher, after completing the training as a practicing teacher according to the curriculum of *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah*.*

Teacher Creativity to Make Learning Activities Fun

Conceptually, making enjoyable learning a reality is certainly the teacher's duty and function. However, not every teacher is committed to making it a reality. Numerous academic discourses and perspectives have addressed this issue. One of the problems is the demand to complete teaching materials, which often clashes with the allotted teaching timeframe. Some teachers ultimately focus on completing the material and neglect teaching methods that make learning enjoyable. A resource person, who supervises Arabic language learning, stated, *«They must go hand in hand. It's not optional; choosing one necessarily neglects the other. We are committed to ensuring the completion of the teaching material through enjoyable learning in the classroom.»*

This statement was confirmed by observations conducted in this study. The adoption of the direct method (*al-thariqah al-hadisah*) in Arabic language learning is certainly influential. This is because the direct method demands maximum teacher involvement in guiding the students' active participation. In one observation, for example, a teacher led his students around the Pesantren to teach them about (هذا - ذلك). The teacher ran toward the object he wanted to explain in Arabic and declared (هذا), then ran away from the object and shouted (ذلك), followed by all the students.

In another observation, this study found that teachers did not even use Indonesian in their teaching. They stated that this was part of established teaching discipline. The response that was then seen was creative teaching, involving students running together and then shouting (جرى - يجري). Then, a teacher would point to a student and shout (أنت تجري), then tap a student on the shoulder, pointing to the student who had run before him and shouting (هو يجري). This was a very creative form of *fi'l* and *dhamir* learning.

Similarly, findings demonstrate teachers' creative use of learning media. To explain the organs of the body (جسم الإنسان), a teacher brought a scarecrow and asked each student to name the organs they knew in Arabic. The teacher also asked the students to explain the organs in complete sentences (الجملة المفيدة). This way, each student became actively involved in the learning, and it was certainly enjoyable.

Relatedly, Pesantren have provided tools for teachers to use, albeit in limited quantities. In this regard, one teacher can take turns teaching with the other. Some teachers also chose to combine two classes and teach together, which also appeared to have a different impact on the passion and enthusiasm of the students, driven to excel compared to the other class. «*Pesantren provide teachers with the freedom to express their creativity as long as it ensures students continue learning and enjoy their learning activities.*» That's what the source who holds the policy for organizing education said.

Teacher Creativity to Make Learning a Shared Activity

In Pesantren, teachers are central to the learning process. Although this view is criticized by some who argue that the focus should be on the students, Pesantren adhere to this approach. This is because student-centered learning does not undermine the crucial role of the teachers. This applies particularly to Arabic education, where teachers actively communicate in the language and encourage less active students to participate. This involvement reinforces every teacher's conviction that the success of their teaching also depends on other students, colleagues, and even parents.

Regarding the role of other students, one teacher explained: «*Collegial learning is very easy to implement in pesantrens. Strictly speaking, all students must stay in the boarding 24 hours a day. I advise students who already understand the material to explain it to their classmates who do not quite grasp it yet. I also encourage students to collect signatures from their classmates, for example, as a token of appreciation for the shared learning experience.*» Another teacher explained: “*Collaborative learning is certainly important, but you have to understand that some students prefer a quiet learning style, while others prefer a livelier one. I do not force them to learn in a specific room or with a specific person. Even if they want to learn in a different room with other students, I give them that freedom; their role is to consult with me to ensure they understand each other.*”

In addition to collaboration among students, the research also revealed collaboration among teachers. Reports on student progress and performance serve as an important tool in this process. Each class is supported by 15 to 24 teachers who actively participate in discussing the students' progress. “*Every teacher keeps a list of colleagues who teach the same class. This enables them to share information regarding classroom management,*” according to the source, who oversees the implementation of the educational policy.

Parents are also involved in this process. Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah uses a transparent information system that parents/guardians can

consult directly to monitor their children's academic progress. The school regularly invites parents/guardians to keep them informed of their children's progress. Although parents do not live with their children in the pesantren, they contribute significantly to the success of every student.

Discussion: Creativity is *Rūh al-mudarris*

The findings of this study suggest that creativity in pesantren-based Arabic language education should not be understood merely as methodological innovation or instructional variation. Rather, creativity emerges as *rūh al-mudarris*, namely a spiritually grounded pedagogical disposition manifested through self-development, classroom embodiment, and relational engagement within the ethical culture of pesantren. In this context, creativity is not positioned as an additional teaching competence possessed only by certain talented teachers, but as an integral dimension of the teacher's identity and educational responsibility. The findings therefore extend prevailing discussions of teacher creativity, which largely emphasize pedagogical techniques, technological integration, or classroom innovation, by demonstrating that creativity in pesantren is deeply connected to moral commitment, collective responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. In summary, the conceptualization of teacher creativity referred to in Figure I.

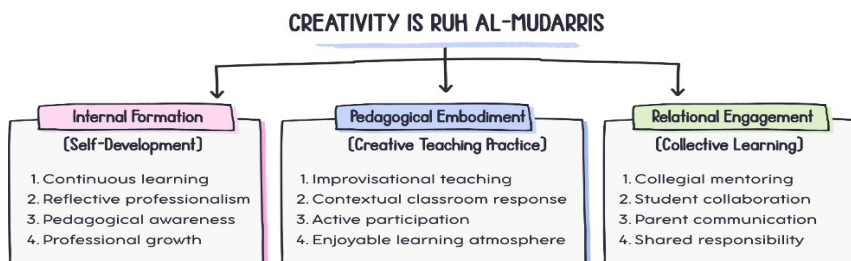


Figure 1. The Dimensions of Teacher Creativity as *Rūh al-Mudarris* (Source: Developed by the author based on research findings.)

The first important finding concerns creativity as a form of internal formation. The teachers observed in this study continuously attempted to improve themselves through informal mentoring,

collegial discussions, further study, reflective preparation, and pedagogical adaptation. Such practices indicate that creativity is rooted not merely in spontaneous classroom performance, but in the teacher's awareness of the need for continuous self-development. This finding resonates with Jones and Richards' view that creativity is embedded in everyday pedagogical action rather than limited to extraordinary instructional performance.²⁹ However, within the pesantren context, the findings reveal a broader dimension: self-development is not only a professional obligation but also part of moral and spiritual dedication. Teachers improve themselves because teaching is viewed as a form of service and responsibility toward students, the institution, and religious values.³⁰ Creativity therefore becomes inseparable from the process of becoming a teacher itself. In this sense, the findings demonstrate that *rūḥ al-mudarris* operates as an internal pedagogical consciousness that continuously drives teachers to learn, adapt, and improve.

The findings further show that creativity is embodied pedagogically through adaptive and contextual teaching practices. Teachers employed various forms of improvisation, movement-based learning, environmental interaction, collaborative teaching, and communicative classroom engagement to sustain students' participation in Arabic learning. Such practices confirm that creativity in language teaching is closely related to the teacher's ability to transform routine instructional activities into meaningful learning experiences.³¹ Nevertheless, unlike many contemporary

²⁹ Jones and Richards, *Creativity in Language Teaching: Perspectives Form Research and Practice*.

³⁰ Saputra, "The Teacher's Spirit as The Core: The Philosophy of Professionalism in Imam Zarkasyi's Thought."

³¹ Harahap, "Idealisme, Keikhlasan, Dan Komitmen: Pemaknaan Profesi Guru Di Lingkungan Pesantren Modern"; Rasyidin and Harahap, "Digitalisasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Gerakan Peningkatan Antusias Santri Dan Narasi Adaptasi Pesantren Terhadap Perkembangan Teknologi."

discussions that define creativity primarily through technological innovation or sophisticated pedagogical design, the findings indicate that creativity in pesantren frequently emerges from situational responsiveness and embodied interaction. Teachers creatively adjusted their methods according to students' emotional conditions, classroom atmosphere, and learning readiness. This reflects a process-oriented understanding of creativity, where pedagogical decisions are shaped contextually through direct interaction rather than rigid planning alone.

The findings also reveal that creativity in pesantren is fundamentally relational and collective. Teachers did not perceive successful learning as an individual achievement, but as a shared educational responsibility involving colleagues, students, and parents. Collegial mentoring among teachers functioned as an important mechanism for pedagogical development, while collaborative learning among students was actively encouraged through peer interaction and collective participation.³² At the same time, communication with parents became part of the educational process due to the pesantren structure of pesantren life. These findings demonstrate that creativity is socially distributed across the educational environment rather than located solely within individual teachers. This perspective differs from dominant approaches in creativity studies that often emphasize individual autonomy and personal innovation. In the pesantren context, creativity develops within a communal pedagogical culture characterized by mutual responsibility, emotional closeness, and collective educational commitment.

Another important finding concerns the role of pesantren culture itself in sustaining creativity. The ethical and spiritual environment of pesantren enables creativity to function as a moral

³² Harahap, "Dars Naqd: Strategi Peningkatan Mutu Guru Di Pondok Pesantren."

practice rather than merely instructional performance. Institutional traditions such as Kamisan, informal mentoring, discipline in Arabic communication, and collective supervision create a pedagogical ecology that encourages teachers to continuously embody educational values in daily practice.³³ Creativity therefore becomes normalized within the culture of pesantren rather than treated as exceptional behavior. This finding strengthens the argument that educational creativity cannot be separated from the socio-cultural environment in which teaching occurs. In pesantren, creativity grows through institutional ethos, communal interaction, and spiritual orientation simultaneously.

The concept of *rūḥ al-mudarris* proposed in this study therefore offers an indigenous pedagogical framework for understanding teacher professionalism in Pesantren.³⁴ Unlike dominant models of professionalism that focus primarily on technical competence, measurable performance, or institutional certification, *rūḥ al-mudarris* emphasizes the integration of pedagogical competence, moral presence, relational sensitivity, and spiritual dedication. Creativity within this framework is not merely the ability to create innovative classroom techniques, but the ability to sustain meaningful educational relationships and cultivate students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. In this regard, the study contributes to broader discussions on teacher creativity by demonstrating that pedagogical professionalism in pesantren cannot be adequately understood through cognitive or methodological perspectives alone.

Ultimately, this study argues that creativity in pesantren-

³³ Rahmi and Nazhyfa, "Educational Transformation: From Boarding School to Pesantren with Bi'ah Arabiyah."

³⁴ Harahap, "Idealisme, Keikhlasan, Dan Komitmen: Pemaknaan Profesi Guru Di Lingkungan Pesantren Modern"; Saputra, "The Teacher's Spirit as The Core: The Philosophy of Professionalism in Imam Zarkasyi's Thought."

based Arabic language teaching represents a form of ethical-spiritual pedagogy. Creativity is manifested not only in what teachers do in the classroom, but also in how they position themselves as educators within a broader moral and communal mission. The concept of *rūḥ al-mudarris* therefore expands contemporary understandings of teacher creativity beyond technical innovation toward a holistic pedagogical orientation grounded in sincerity, responsibility, empathy, and educational devotion.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that creativity in pesantren-based Arabic language education extends beyond methodological innovation and functions as a spiritual-relational dimension of teacher professionalism. Within the educational culture of Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, creativity emerges through what this study conceptualizes as *rūḥ al-mudarris*, namely the moral, pedagogical, and relational disposition that shapes teachers' engagement with students, colleagues, and the broader pesantren environment. Creativity is therefore manifested not only in adaptive classroom practices, but also in sincerity, empathy, collegiality, and sustained commitment to students' holistic development.

The findings further indicate that teacher creativity develops collectively within the pesantren system through informal mentoring, collaborative learning practices, peer interaction, and continuous communication with parents. In this context, creativity becomes embedded in the everyday pedagogical culture of the pesantren rather than functioning merely as an individual instructional skill. This study therefore argues that *rūḥ al-mudarris* offers an indigenous pedagogical framework that broadens prevailing discussions of teacher creativity beyond technical competence toward a form of spiritual-relational professionalism grounded in Islamic educational values.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to a qualitative exploration within a single pesantren context. Future research may therefore examine how *rūḥ al-mudarris* operates across different pesantren traditions and educational settings, particularly in relation to students' linguistic, emotional, moral, and spiritual development in contemporary Islamic education.

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