

Arabic Language Learning Design Based on Student Islamic Boarding School

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Arabic Language, Learning Design, Language Learning, STID Mohammad Natsir, Student Islamic Boarding School	This study aims to find out how the design of Arabic Language Learning at Mohammad Natsir Institute of <i>Da'wah</i> , inhibiting factors of learning Arabic, and the steps to overcome these obstacles. The research uses a qualitative approach. The data collection employs observation techniques, interviews, and documentation. Checking the validity of the data uses three techniques, namely the extension of the researcher's presence, observational persistence, and triangulation. For data analysis, three stages are used: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. Based on the results of the analysis, the conclusions are as follows: First, the design of the students' Arabic learning is applied from the first semester to the fourth semester, especially for the students of the first and second semesters who must focus on learning Arabic, so that Indonesian language courses are studied in the next semester. Second, the inhibiting factor of Arabic learning is that the initial ability of the students is still very low, and the core issue is that the resources who become the mobilizer and the figure in language have not been instrumental in building Arabic language skills. Thirdly, some steps have been taken, such as increasing the hours of Arabic lessons, specializing Arabic materials in the first and second semesters, classifying students by ability, providing additional materials to students with special needs, and making extracurricular programs, playing Arabic audio, and translating some announcements both spoken and written in Arabic.

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic language education faces significant challenges globally, particularly in non-Arabic speaking regions where it is taught as a foreign language. Internationally, research indicates that Arabic language learners often struggle with communication competence, with studies in Southeast Asia showing that only 35–40% of students achieve functional proficiency despite years of formal instruction (Ma, Mat, Mufidah, & Jaafar, 2025). This challenge is particularly pronounced in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, where Arabic is taught primarily for religious purposes but lacks sufficient emphasis on practical communicative skills (Azzahrah, Syarifudin, Rahmat, & Yuenchon, 2025). The gap between instructional objectives and actual learning outcomes has raised concerns about curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and learning environment effectiveness in producing competent Arabic speakers (Azzahrah et al., 2025; Siregar, 2025). Arabic has an important position for Muslims in Indonesia. For example, from the aspect of worship, the implementation of prayer, *Dhikr*, reading the Qur'an, and *Qauliyah* worships all use Arabic intermediaries.

Meanwhile, from the aspect of language as a means of communication, according to research by the Institute of International Languages of the University of Indonesia, Arabic accounts for around 40–60% of vocabulary or (around 2,000–3,000 words). However, despite its religious significance, empirical studies reveal that Indonesian students' Arabic proficiency remains suboptimal, with communicative competence—defined as the ability to use Arabic effectively in authentic contexts—averaging only 2.8 out of 5.0 on standardized assessments. This underscores the urgent need to redesign Arabic language learning programs to enhance not only linguistic knowledge but also functional communication skills and learning motivation among students (Almelhes, 2024; Uno, 2025).

Arabic is also one of the forms of script and language that is developing in the Southeast Asian region, especially in the coastal areas of Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and Kalimantan (Azman & Supriadi, 2025; Kadam, 2025). Classical texts such as *Hikayat*, religious books, government correspondence, and trade documents are written in Malay Arabic (Braginsky, 2024; Harun, Arifai, & Hasan, 2024).

In the realm of education in Indonesia, especially Islamic education, Arabic has been introduced from kindergarten (partially) to higher education. Various portraits of the implementation of Arabic language education in Islamic educational institutions at least show that there is a serious effort to advance the system and its quality (Ardianysah, Ihsan, & Satyaningrum, 2024; Ilyas, Rasmi, & Rusydi, 2024).

As time went by and the introduction of the modern education system and social changes due to globalization, the use of Arabic began to regress (Al Sharoufi & Al-Kandari, 2025; Yıkıcı, 2025). Indonesian as a national language and foreign languages such as English are now more dominant in the realm of education, media, and digital communication (Hamdiah & Ahnaf, 2024; Suhendi, 2025).

Therefore, it is necessary to make a serious effort from Islamic educational institutions to redesign Arabic language learning (Retnawati, Rahmatullah, Djidu, & Apino, 2020; Ritonga, Widodo, & Nurdianto, 2021). The Mohammad Natsir *Da'wah* College of Sciences is one of the many Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that focus on the field of *Da'wah*. This leads the administrators to design Arabic language learning to produce graduates who have good knowledge and understanding of Islam to be deployed in the community (Othman & Yaakub, 2025; Solahudeen, Nurudeen, Shehu, & Yahya, 2025).

Previous research includes in this section, various previous studies on Arabic language learning design in Islamic boarding schools are found. According to (Nasution & Zulheddi, 2018) in his research. This research consists of three findings, namely Arabic language learning at UIN North Sumatra Medan still needs to be improved because 48% of lecturers have not encouraged active learning and the learning process is still teacher-centered.

Given the identified challenges and research gap, this study aims to: (1) comprehensively describe and analyze the Arabic language learning design at STID Mohammad Natsir, encompassing curriculum structure, learning objectives, instructional media, teaching methods, and evaluation systems; (2) identify facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction within the institutional context; and (3) propose evidence-based strategies for optimizing the Arabic learning design to enhance students' communicative competence, Islamic knowledge integration, and *Da'wah* effectiveness. The benefits of this

research are multifaceted. Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on foreign language instructional design by providing a holistic framework that integrates linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual factors specific to Islamic higher education settings, thereby addressing the identified research gap. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for STID Mohammad Natsir administrators and Arabic instructors to refine curriculum design, enhance teaching methodologies, and create more conducive learning environments. For policymakers in Islamic education, the research provides evidence-based recommendations for Arabic language program development that balances religious objectives with communicative competence. For students, improved learning design promises enhanced Arabic proficiency, increased motivation, and better preparation for *Da'wah* careers that increasingly require multilingual communication skills. Finally, for the broader academic community, this study exemplifies rigorous qualitative case study methodology in educational research, offering a replicable model for investigating language program design in specialized institutional contexts.

METHOD

The research method used in this study was a qualitative research approach with a case study design (Sanjaya, 2015). The study aimed to describe all language learning activities at STID Mohammad Natsir. The object of the study was the design of language learning at STID Mohammad Natsir, both academic and non-academic. The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observations, and documentation techniques (Sugiyono, 2010). This study employed the Miles and Huberman model analysis technique, namely data reduction, followed by data display, and ending with data verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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Learning design is the preparation of making a decision in the form of steps to solve a problem or the implementation of a job that is aimed at achieving certain goals. Herbert Simon defines design as a problem-solving process. The goal of a design is to achieve the best solution in solving the problem by utilizing a certain amount of available information (Vienna Sanjaya: 2011).

a. Arabic Curriculum

Composition of Arabic courses in the first semester: *Muhâdatsah* 4 credits, *Qawâ'id* 2 credits, *Khat and Imlâ'* 1 credit, semester II: *Muhâdatsah* 3 credits, *Qawâ'id* 3 credits, *Khat and Imlâ'* 1 credit, semester III: *Muhâdatsah* 2 credits, *Qawâ'id* 2 credits, *If* 1 credit, *Qirâ'ah Nushûsh* 2 credits and in semester IV: *Muhâdatsah* 2 credits, *Qawâ'id* 2 credits, *If you are* 1 credit, *Qirâ'ah Nushûsh* 1 credits and *Fan fî At-Tarjamah* 1 credit. As for extracurricular activities, several things are carried out, namely *Taqwiyah Al-Lughah* (language reinforcement), *Nasyâth Lughawi* including reading Arabic verses, speeches and competitions, and *Ta'lîm* delivered by native Arabic speakers. With the focus of learning materials and the density of meetings in the classroom, it will have a significant influence on improving language skills, both listening (*Al-Istimâ'*), speak (*Al-Kalâm*), reading (*Al-Qirâ'ah*) and writing (*Al-Kitâbah*) and habits (*ta'wîd/habit*) in language will be awakened.

b. Learning Objectives

Each formulation of learning objectives is always developed based on the competencies or performance that must be possessed by students when they finish learning. In general, the competence that must be possessed by graduates is to be able to become a *dii* who has sufficient mastery of religious knowledge, so that mastery of Arabic is something that they must master. So if it is associated with the orientation of learning Arabic, it is expected that students in learning Arabic have a religious/religious orientation. So that the motivation that is often given by teachers when in the process of teaching and learning activities is more religious motivation, so that intrinsic learning motivation will be built in students. Students who have intrinsic motivation in carrying out the learning process in general will show continuous performance in achieving the desired competencies (Eric Jense: 2011).

c. Learning Media

The learning process is a communication activity that involves four users, namely communicators, communicators, messages and media. The communicator is the element of the messenger, which in this case is the teacher, the communicator is the element that is given the message, namely the student, the message is the material given and the media is the tool used to convey the message (Acep Hermawan: 2014). The use of media in language teaching is the starting point of the theory that the totality of the percentage of knowledge, skills and attitudes possessed by a person is the most and highest through the senses of sight and direct experience of doing it themselves, while the rest is through the senses of hearing and other senses. In this case, STID Mohammad Natsir is trying to prepare the media needed to support the language learning process, for example audio media (*al-Wasâil al-Bashariyah*), visual media (*al-Wasâil al-Bashariyah*) and audio-visual media (*al-Wasâil al-Sam'iyyah al-Wasâil al-Bashariyah/Language Laboratory*). However, these media are not available in the classroom so their use is not optimal. In fact, to support learning with the textbooks used today, the existence of these media in the classroom, especially audio media, is very urgent. This can help students to improve *Makharij al-Huruf* and accustomed them to hear Arabic from their native speakers (*Al-Nâthiq al-Ashli/native speaker*) thus helping them in imitating *Lahjah* (dialect) speaks like the native speaker. Therefore, the existence of learning media and maximizing the existing ones is very helpful for both teachers in delivering material and can also arouse the joy and joy of students and renew their enthusiasm, can strengthen knowledge, enliven lessons because the use of media requires movement and work.

d. Textbooks

Textbooks must pay attention to the principles of presenting Arabic material as a foreign language will be a problem in achieving goals. Textbooks *Al-'Arabiyyah Baina Yadaik* is one of the books that are widely used in learning Arabic in Indonesia. This textbook is perfect for learning Arabic for beginners, because it is arranged with a *tadarruj* (step by step) in teaching Arabic according to the student's ability level. For beginner levels of the book *Al-'Arabiyyah Baina Yadaik* It starts with a simple and short dialogue so that it is very easy for students to imitate and memorize it, the vocabulary (*Mufradat*) are visualized through pictures so as to avoid the use of translations for beginners and they become familiar with Arabic. The book is also equipped with mp3 audio for each dialogue, reading text and listening exercises, this can help students to improve *Makharij al-Huruf* and accustomed

them to hear Arabic from their native speakers (*Al-Nâthiq al-Ashli/native speaker*) thus helping them in imitating *Lahjah* (dialect) speaks like the native speaker. However, the absence of media to play the audio in the classroom results in listening exercises often neglected. This book combines 4 language skills and is presented sequentially starting from listening (*Sigh.*), speak (*Kalâm*), reading (*Qirâ'ah*) and writing (*Kitâbah*). Then this book is supplemented with exercises (*Tadrîbat*) in each language skill item, this makes it easier for teachers to find out the extent of students' mastery of Arabic material.

e. Learning Methods

The variety of Arabic teaching methods gives teachers the freedom to choose the right method to use in delivering the material. In teaching Arabic at STID, the most dominant method used is the direct method (*Ath-Tharîqah al-Mubâsyirah*). In principle, this direct method is very important in teaching foreign languages, because through this method students can directly practice language proficiency without using the mother tongue (the language of the environment). Although at first it seems difficult for students to imitate it, it is interesting for students (Tyre Yusuf: 1995). Basically, this method departs from one basic assumption, that learning a foreign language is not much different from learning a mother tongue, namely with the direct and intensive use of language in daily communication, where the stages start from listening to words, imitating orally, while composing and reading are developed later. This method is oriented towards the formation of learners' skills to be able to speak spontaneously with functional grammar and function to control the correctness of their speech to resemble the original speaker (¹Radliyah Zaenuddin: 2005). However, other methods are still used, such as the translation method, which is used when a teacher has difficulty giving the meaning of a word to the students. Therefore, basically the methods are not contradictory to each other, because each method has advantages and disadvantages. This is as Al-Khûlî said:

- a. Every foreign language teaching method has its advantages. This advantage can be used in teaching foreign languages.
- b. There is no perfect method and there is no bad method either, but they all have strengths and weaknesses. Certain methods may be able to overcome the weaknesses of certain methods.
- c. There is no single method that suits all objectives, all students, all teachers and all foreign language teaching programs.

The most important thing in teaching is to pay attention to the students and their needs, not to master the method without being based on the student and his needs (Muhammad 'Ali Al-Khuli: 2000). In this case, teachers are required to be careful in choosing methods so that the material presented can be understood well by all students.

f. Learning Evaluation

Arabic has four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, so in conducting evaluations must pay attention to these four skills. In evaluating Arabic language learning, there are two methods that are carried out at STID Mohammad Natsir, namely *Syafahî* (interview) which aims to measure listening and speaking skills, while *Tahrîrî* (writing) is to measure reading, comprehension and writing skills. From the results of research related

to learning evaluation, there are at least three types of evaluations that have been carried out in Arabic language learning at STID Mohammad Natsir, namely:

1. Diagnostic Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out in order to classify students in several classes according to the initial abilities they already possessed based on the Arabic written test scores that they had filled out when participating in the entrance selection at STID Mohammad Natsir. This is also in order to answer the problem of diversity of initial abilities possessed by students.

2. Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is an evaluation that is carried out at the end of each discussion of a subject/topic, and is intended to find out the extent to which a learning process has gone as planned. This kind of evaluation is carried out by Arabic teachers at STID Mohammad Natsir every time they complete a material, either by asking students to practice a conversation, make sentences with words that have been meaningful, and assign assignments to be done in the dormitory. From the results of this evaluation, an overview of who has succeeded and who is considered unsuccessful will be obtained for further appropriate actions to be taken. The follow-up to this evaluation is that for students who have not been successful, they will be given language reinforcement (*taqwiyyatul lughah*) which is carried out once a week.

3. Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation is an evaluation that is carried out at the end of each unit of time which covers more than one subject, and is intended to find out the extent to which students have been able to move from one unit to the next. In the context of learning Arabic at STID Mohammad Natsir, summative evaluation is usually carried out at the Final Semester Exam (UAS). Especially for the first semester (one), if the Arabic language score does not reach less than B (68), then the student is not entitled to continue to the next semester. Meanwhile, the Comprehensive exam is held at the end of semesters II and IV. In this exam, all Arabic materials will be united in one designation, namely Arabic, the implementation of this exam is in the form of interviews (*syafahî*) and writing (*tahrîrî*) while the minimum score is B (68). The questions at this stage of the exam include four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. The passing of this exam is decisive for students to move up to the next semester. If students fail, then they have the right to take a re-exam during the long vacation.

Inhibiting factors of the Arabic language

Learning Arabic with its various characteristics and motivation to learn it among non-Arab people still has many obstacles and problems faced because Arabic is still not an easy language to master completely.

The educational background and initial abilities possessed by some students are not in accordance with the syllabus applied. Because in the early stages of learning, students are required to be able to read Arabic texts. While some of them cannot read Arabic letters, of course this also interferes with the learning process in class late or even not achieving the competencies that have been set.

In addition to the problem of students' initial abilities and the lack of learning media in the classroom, the sustainability of Arabic material in the next semester is also something that needs to be considered. The Arabic language curriculum at the Mohammad Natsir *Da'wah* College of Sciences is only sufficient until the fourth semester, the rest of the students study courses that are in accordance with the educational program they are taking, although the courses are still related to religion, but the language they use is Indonesian. This makes their attention and knowledge of Arabic decrease or even non-existent when they have completed their first level education (S1) and of course contrary to the goal of learning Arabic.

In addition to the above factors, the informal environment factor is the main factor that inhibits the Arabic language at STID Mohammad Natsir. Informal environments, provide language acquisition naturally and mostly occur outside the classroom. This environment provides exposure to communication that is natural and more outside of the classroom. By being outside the classroom, language skills are expected to be obtained more than the knowledge of the language itself. Language acquisition is obtained from communication with teachers, coaches, other students, principals, parents, reading books, newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasts, on the street, playgrounds, movies and others. The real informal environment is the Arab country itself. If you are already in the Arabic language, then naturally a person will learn to understand and master the language. And try to communicate with people who use the language.

The informal environment of the Arabic language at the Mohammad Natsir College of Sciences is still constrained, the campus environment and dormitory are not conducive because it is a public area that can be freely accessed by the general public, and there are many student activities outside the dormitory. This causes students not to feel the need to listen, speak, read and write the Arabic they are learning.

Human resources, in this case, administrators and employees who are supposed to be models and figures in the language do not have enough Arabic language skills to build a language environment. What is most important for learners is not the second language system, but what can be used with this second language to interact with others.

Steps to overcome the Arabic language barrier

Of the various obstacles above, there are some that have not been found solutions. In general, several steps have been taken in order to overcome these obstacles, even if they are not directly, such as increasing the hours of Arabic lessons, specializing in Arabic language materials in semesters I and II, making classifications based on ability, providing additional materials to students with special needs and creating extracurricular programs, playing Arabic audio, translating announcements both verbally and written into Arabic.

For the current condition of the campus environment, of course it is very difficult to build an Arabic language environment. Even though the environment has a great influence on the success of learning Arabic. The environment in question is the environment where the student learns the language and where he or she lives. With an Arabic environment, students will be more motivated to learn and practice Arabic, so that in the end he or she will get used to speaking Arabic with reflexes.

This is in line with the opinion of the school of interactionism, adherents of this school consider that the occurrence of language mastery, both the first and second languages, is thanks to the interaction between the language input that is exposed to the learner and the internal abilities that the learner has. The evidence does show the importance of the interaction between the input and *the Language Acquisition Device* LAD. A child who has been equipped with LAD since birth, cannot automatically master a certain language without the presentation of appropriate input for his needs.

Therefore, the step that needs to be taken is to prepare human resources who will be the driving force and figures who have a positive attitude towards the Arabic language. Although the environment is not supportive, if the figures have started and set an example in their daily activities in these institutions, the language environment will be created by itself slowly. In addition, a strong desire and desire to be able to speak Arabic well and fluently is very important, so that anyone will be motivated to start and practice the language.

CONCLUSION

The Arabic Language Learning Design at the Mohammad Natsir *Da'wah* College of Sciences was developed to address challenges and improve students' Arabic proficiency. Implemented from semesters I to IV, the curriculum was adjusted to increase Arabic learning hours, focusing intensively on Arabic in the first two semesters while postponing Indonesian courses to later semesters. Extracurricular activities such as *nasyath lughawi*, *taqwiyyah al-lughah*, *ilqâ' al-kalimah*, and *ta'lim* supplemented intracurricular learning. However, challenges included students' low initial ability, insufficient learning media to support textbooks, and limited involvement of key language figures in fostering an informal Arabic environment. To overcome these, steps were taken such as increasing Arabic lesson hours, tailoring materials by student ability, offering additional support for special needs students, and incorporating Arabic audio and bilingual announcements. Future research could explore the long-term impact of these curricular and extracurricular interventions on students' communicative competence and the role of community engagement in creating immersive Arabic environments.

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