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PERCEPTION OF NON-ARABIC LANGUAGE STUDENTS ON ARABIC LANGUAGE COURSES AT STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES IN INDONESIA: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITH NVIVO SOFTWARE ANALYSIS

تصورات طلبة التخصصات غير العربية حول مقررات اللغة العربية في الجامعات الإسلامية الحكومية الإندونيسية: دراسة نوعية بالاعتماد على تحليل بيانات برنامج NVivo

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ABSTRACT

Arabic has a central position as the foundation of science and identity in Islamic higher education, especially in State Islamic Universities. This research aims to reveal the perception of non-Arab students towards the Arabic language courses required at the State Islamic University. With a qualitative-descriptive approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students from three different study programs and analyzed using NVivo software. The results show that the majority of students realize the urgency of the Arabic language as the key to understanding Islamic literature, supporting academic competence, and being relevant to professional needs, such as sharia economics and basic education. However, learning Arabic is faced with methodological challenges (rigid teaching methods, lack of practice) and personal challenges (lack of initial experience, grammatical difficulties). Students develop self-paced (visual aids, online courses) and collaborative (group discussions, cross-disciplinary consultation) strategies to overcome these barriers. These findings emphasize the need for contextual, integrative, and practice-based curriculum innovation, as well as the use of learning technologies. With an adaptive approach, learning Arabic at the State Islamic University can become more meaningful and relevant, reinforcing the language's role as a bridge between the Islamic scientific tradition and the needs of the global era.

Keywords: Perception; non-Arabic language students; Arabic Language Courses

مستخلص البحث

تحتلُّ اللغةُ العربيةُ مكانةً محوريةً بوصفها أساسًا للمعرفة والهوية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي الإسلامي، ولا سيما في الجامعات الإسلامية الحكومية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن تصورات الطلاب غير المتخصصين في اللغة العربية تجاه مقررات اللغة العربية الإلزامية في الجامعات الإسلامية الحكومية. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفيَّ النوعيَّ، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه منظَّمة مع طلاب من ثلاثة برامج دراسية مختلفة، ثم حُلِّلت باستخدام برنامج NVivo . وأظهرت النتائج أنَّ غالبية الطلاب يدركون أهمية اللغة العربية وضرورتها بوصفها مفتاحًا لفهم التراث الإسلامي، وداعمًا للكفايات الأكاديمية، وذات صلة بالاحتياجات المهنية في مجالات مثل الاقتصاد الشرعي والتعليم الأساسي. ومع ذلك، يواجه تعلم اللغة العربية تحدياتٍ منهجيةً تتمثل في جمود أساليب التدريس وقلة فرص الممارسة، إلى جانب تحديات شخصية تتمثل في ضعف الخبرة السابقة وصعوبة القواعد النحوية. وللتغلب على هذه المعوقات، يطوِّر الطلاب استراتيجياتٍ ذاتيةً، مثل الاستعانة بالوسائل البصرية والدورات التعليمية عبر الإنترنت، واستراتيجياتٍ تعاونيةً، مثل المناقشات الجماعية والاستشارات العابرة للتخصصات. وتؤكد هذه النتائج الحاجة إلى تطوير المناهج الدراسية بصورة سياقية وتكاملية قائمة على الممارسة، فضلًا عن توظيف التقنيات التعليمية الحديثة. ومن خلال تبني مقاربة تكيفية، يمكن أن يصبح تعليم اللغة العربية في الجامعات الإسلامية الحكومية أكثر فاعليةً ومعنىً وارتباطًا باحتياجات المتعلمين، بما يعزز دور اللغة العربية جسرًا يربط بين التراث العلمي الإسلامي ومتطلبات العصر العالمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التصورات؛ الطلاب غير المتخصصين في اللغة العربية؛ مقررات اللغة العربية.

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic has a central position as the foundation of science and identity in Islamic higher education, especially in State Islamic Universities. This research aims to reveal the perception of non-Arab students towards the Arabic language courses required at the State Islamic University. With a qualitative-descriptive approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students from three different study programs and analyzed using NVivo software. The results show that the majority of students realize the urgency of the Arabic language as the key to understanding Islamic literature, supporting academic competence, and being relevant to professional needs, such as sharia economics and basic education. However, learning Arabic is faced with methodological challenges (rigid teaching methods, lack of practice) and personal challenges (lack of initial experience, grammatical difficulties). Students develop self-paced (visual aids, online courses) and collaborative (group discussions, cross-disciplinary consultation) strategies to overcome these barriers. These findings emphasize the need for contextual, integrative, and practice-based curriculum innovation, as well as the use of learning technologies. With an adaptive approach, learning Arabic at the State Islamic University can become more meaningful and relevant, reinforcing the language's role as a bridge between the Islamic scientific tradition and the needs of the global era. (Rasyid, 2023; Salida & Zulpina, 2023). Therefore, the ability to understand Arabic is considered the main requirement to dive into Islamic values authentically and deeply (Andriani, 2015; Ridwan, 2023).

In the trajectory of the history of Islamic science, Arabic has become the main introduction in the study of Islamic sciences such as theology, fiqh, Sufism, and philosophy. This language has long been a means of transmitting knowledge from scholars to the next generation (Gajah, Inayah, & Haryuni, 2023; Rahman & Maisurah, 2024). Apart from being the language of instruction in classical Islamic educational institutions, Arabic is also the key to accessing the Islamic scientific heritage stored in thousands of classical manuscripts (Fahrurrozi, 2021; Sahrir, Osman, & Muhammad, 2022). This shows that learning Arabic not only touches on linguistic aspects, but also becomes the foundation of understanding Islamic identity and civilization.

At the global level, Arabic is recognized as an official language in more than twenty countries and is one of the working languages of the United Nations (Fauzan, Muriyatmoko, & Utama, 2020; Ginting, Ginting, & Ritonga, 2023). The widespread

spread of Islam and the increase in religious awareness in various countries have also encouraged the growth of interest in learning Arabic, both in Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Bin-Tahir, 2021; Rafsanjani & Handican, 2023). Educational institutions then responded to this need by organizing various Arabic language learning programs for academic, religious, and cross-cultural communication purposes (Jawad, M, Amin, & Wekke, 2024; Sakdiah & Sihombing, 2023).

In Indonesia, especially within the State Islamic University (UIN), mastery of Arabic is essential to understand Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an, Hadith, and turats books. With the majority of Indonesia's population being Muslim, learning Arabic is one of the important instruments in strengthening students' academic and religious competence (Andriani, 2015; Fahrurrozi, 2021; Nasution & Lubis, 2023). Not only that, mastery of the Arabic language is also an intellectual capital that can deepen understanding of morality and authentic Islamic values, which are urgently needed in the midst of the challenges of globalization.

However, non-Arabic students at UIN often experience various obstacles in the Arabic learning process. Problems such as difficulty understanding grammar, morphological terms, and less adaptive teaching methods are the main obstacles in learning (Annisa & Safii, 2023; Sulaikho, Yasmar, & Umam, 2023). On the other hand, the limited use of technology and communicative approaches in teaching also worsens students' learning experiences, making them feel unconfident and unmotivated (Ginting et al., 2023; Noviani & Hasan, 2023; Sehra, 2022).

In response to this, various approaches based on perception theory in educational psychology can be used to understand how students interpret the Arabic learning process. Perception theory emphasizes that a person's understanding of an object or situation is highly dependent on previous experiences, internal motivations, and social context. In this case, Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism are relevant to explain how students form meanings of learning based on interactions with their environment, including the influence of lecturers, learning media, and teaching methods.

Thus, it is necessary to design an Arabic language curriculum and learning strategy that is able to accommodate the specific needs of students majoring in non-Arabic languages. Communication-based learning, the use of digital media, and a contextual approach are needed to increase the interest and effectiveness of Arabic learning in the UIN environment. This study aims to identify the perception of non-Arabic language

students towards Arabic courses, as a basis for developing a more adaptive, relevant, and meaningful teaching strategy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, which aims to reveal in depth the perception of non-Arabic students towards Arabic courses as compulsory courses at the State Islamic University (UIN). This approach was chosen because it was able to capture social realities from the perspective of the participants, including the experiences, meanings, and challenges they faced during the Arabic learning process.

The informants in this study were selected purposively with the following criteria: (1) active students from non-Arabic majors, (2) have attended at least one semester of Arabic courses, and (3) are willing to be informants in this study. The number of informants is adjusted to the principle of data saturation, which is when the data obtained has been repeated and no longer shows significant new information. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews designed to explore students' perceptions, motivations, barriers, and general views of Arabic courses. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the informant, then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using NVivo 15 software as an aid in the process of coding and grouping data based on emerging themes. NVivo was chosen because it has the ability to organize qualitative data systematically, making it easier for researchers to identify relevant patterns, relationships, and thematic categories. The analysis process was carried out in stages: (1) importing interview transcripts into NVivo, (2) open-coding important quotes, (3) grouping the code into sub-themes and main themes, and (4) interpreting the findings based on the research context.

To maintain the validity of the data, this study applied the triangulation technique of sources and methods, and conducted member checking by asking for confirmation from the informant regarding the correctness of the researcher's interpretation of the data provided. In addition, peer debriefing and transparent recording of the analysis process (audit trail) are also used to ensure consistency and credibility of findings. By using NVivo as an analysis tool, this study is expected to provide a more structured and in-depth picture of the perception of non-Arabic language students towards Arabic courses,

as well as provide input for the development of curriculum and learning strategies in Islamic universities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study aims to examine the perception of non-majoring in Arabic Language Education students towards the urgency of learning Arabic at the State Islamic University (UIN). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten students from three different study programs, namely Qur'an and Tafsir (Ushuluddin), Sharia Banking (FEBI), and PGMI (FITK). The results of the analysis using NVivo software show five main interrelated themes.

Students' Perception of Arabic Language Courses

Based on the NVivo project map in figure 1, it shows that the perception of non-Arabic students towards Arabic courses at the State Islamic University is divided into two major categories, namely positive perception and negative or mixed perception. This visualization shows that students' perceptions are very diverse and influenced by the experience, needs, and relevance of the material to their respective study programs.

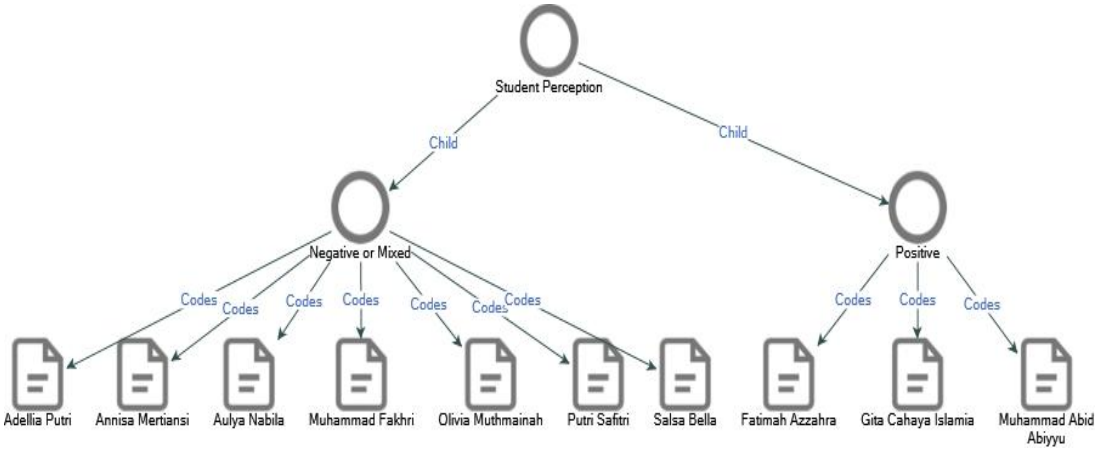


Figure 1. Project Map from NVivo Software

Positive Perception

In the positive perception category, students such as Azzahra, Islamia, and Abiyyu consider Arabic courses to be important and useful. They consider learning Arabic to be helpful in understanding Islamic literature and broadening their horizons. This is in line with the results of previous research which showed that non-Baahasa Arabic students view Arabic as the main need to understand religious teachings and Islamic sources. One of the interview excerpts that support this finding is

> "*Arabic is like a puzzle of the Qur'an. Each word holds the secret of a deep meaning. When I found out that this was a compulsory course, I was even excited because I could dismantle the 'code' of the holy verses." (Islamia, Students of the Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program).*
>
> "*As a prospective Islamic financial analyst, I am aware that Arabic is the key to dissecting*

international standard Islamic financial statements. Without it, we can only see the surface." (Abiyyu, a student of Sharia Banking Study Program).

"Arabic is a tool to ground Islamic values in learning. For example, inviting students to memorize Asmaul Husna while learning vocabulary." (Azzahra, Student of Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program).

These findings show that the majority of students at state Islamic campuses are aware of the importance of Arabic, both as a characteristic of the institution and as an academic and professional provision in the future. This positive perception is also supported by an innovative learning experience that is relevant to the needs of each study program.

Negative or Mixed Perceptions

On the other hand, there are also students who experience ambivalence or even negative perceptions of Arabic courses. This perception is usually influenced by unpleasant initial experiences, learning methods that are considered too monotonous or difficult, and the incompatibility of the material with their study needs. For example, Bella, a student of the Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program, admitted that she had felt less confident:

"I was nervous because I had never studied Arabic before, but I believe this is a challenge that needs to be faced."

Safitri, a student from the Sharia Banking Study Program, highlighted the initial mistake in understanding the essence of this course:

"At first I thought this was a memorization course. Apparently, it is applicable! For example, when learning the structure of Arabic sentences, I came to understand why the ijarah contract must be formulated in a very specific language."

Nabila, a student from the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program, assessed Arabic as a subject that initially felt heavy and rigid:

"At first I thought Arabic was too serious. Apparently, it can be taught through fairy tales or role-play games, such as market simulations using the words tsaman (price) or syukran (thank you)."

The results of this data analysis also show that there are groups of students who feel that Arabic assignments are quite heavy, methods are less varied, or the material is less relevant to their study program. However, these negative perceptions often turn into more positive ones as learning experiences become more contextual and

innovative.

The results of NVivo's analysis on positive Nodes were dominated by quotes highlighting the urgency, benefits, and inspiration of learning Arabic. The negative/mixed node contains quotes about initial anxiety, adaptation challenges, and criticism of the material's method and relevance. These results show that students' perceptions are greatly influenced by learning experiences, teaching methods, and the relevance of the material to their respective fields of study. In general, the perception of non-Arabic students towards Arabic courses at UIN tends to be positive, but it still leaves challenges that need to be responded to with curriculum innovations and teaching methods that are more adaptive and contextual.

Challenges of Learning Arabic for Non-Arabic Language Majors

Figure 2 of the NVivo project map below visually clarifies the structure and distribution of learning challenges experienced by students not majoring in Arabic. The two main branches, namely "Methodological" and "Personal", show that learning barriers are not only technical-methodical, but also greatly influenced by students' personal readiness and experience. Each informant connected to each branch represents a variety of experiences and obstacles faced, so the solutions offered need to pay attention to these two aspects simultaneously.

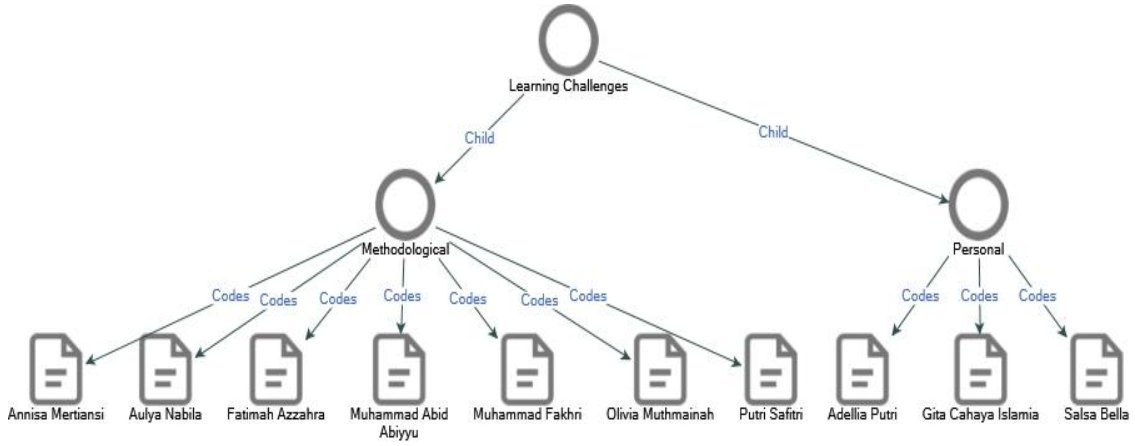


Figure 2. Project Map from NVivo Software

Methodological Challenges

Based on the visualization of the project map in gamnar 2, it shows that there are two challenges of learning Arabic for students majoring in non-Arabic language at the State Islamic University in Indonesia, namely methodological challenges and personal challenges. Methodological challenges are one of the main obstacles in learning Arabic for students not majoring in Arabic at the State Islamic University. Figure 2 of the NVivo Project map shows that this methodological challenge was experienced by many

informants, such as Mertiansi, Nabila, Azzahra, Abiyyu, Fakhri, Muthmainah, and Safitri.

Students highlighted the dominance of grammar-translation methods that are considered less effective for practicing conversational skills. Fakhri said:

"*The grammar-translation method... lack of conversational training.*"

In addition, time constraints are an obstacle in discussing the material in depth. Princess Safitri revealed:

"*Sometimes there's limited time to discuss the details.*"

Students also hope that there will be more practice simulations so that learning feels more applicative, as Olivia Muthmainah expressed:

"*I wish there were more practice simulations...*"

The visualization of the NVivo project map clearly divides these methodological challenges as the main branch of the "Learning Challenges", which are directly connected to various informants who are experiencing similar problems. These findings show that the limitations of methods, time, and lack of practice are significant obstacles in learning Arabic among students majoring in non-Arabic languages**.**

Personal Challenges

Personal challenges are also very prominent, as illustrated in Figure 2 of the NVivo project map which groups informants such as Putri, Islamia, and Bella under the "Personal" branch. These challenges include lack of previous experience of learning Arabic, difficulty understanding tashrif, and obstacles in teaching the material to a more basic level. Salsa Bella states:

"*I've never learned Arabic before...*"

Islamia adds:

"*Tashrif makes it again.*"

Meanwhile, Putri revealed the challenges in teaching practice:

"*It is difficult to explain tashrif to children.*"

The NVivo project map in figure 2 shows that these personal challenges stand parallel to methodological challenges as the two main branches of "Learning Challenges". Each branch is directly connected to the informant who experiences these obstacles, emphasizing that personal and methodological challenges complement each other and must be addressed simultaneously. Thus, the results of the NVivo project map reinforce the finding that the challenges of learning Arabic among non-major students are

multidimensional and interrelated, and require method innovation, practice improvement, and personal adaptation support so that learning outcomes become more optimal and relevant

Adaptation Strategies for Non-Arabic Language Students in Arabic Language Learning

Non-Arabic students at the State Islamic University face a variety of challenges in learning Arabic (see figure 3). However, based on the interview instrument and the NVivo coding structure, they developed two main patterns of adaptation strategies, namely independent strategies and collaborative strategies. This strategy emerged as a response to limited experience, less applicable learning methods, and specific needs according to their respective study programs.

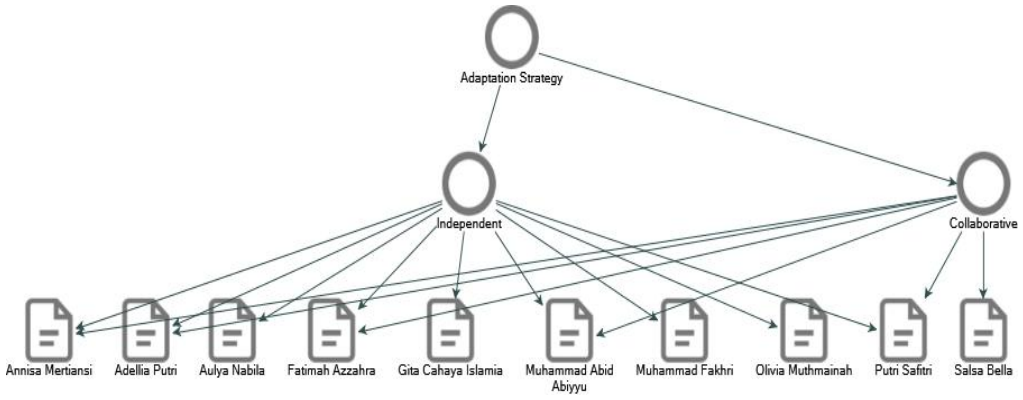


Figure 3. Project Map from NVivo Software

The NVivo project map in figure 3 above shows the two main paths of adaptation strategies for non-Arabic students, namely independent strategies and collaborative strategies. Each pathway is directly connected to informants from various study programs, emphasizing that adaptation is both personal and social, and both complement each other in facing the challenges of learning Arabic.

Independent Strategy

Students develop various forms of independent strategies to adapt to Arabic material that is considered difficult or unfamiliar. Fakhri, a student of the Qur'an and Tafsir Study Program, said:

> "*Make your own mini dictionary and stick it on the wall of the room. Every time I read a verse, I wrote down new words.*"

This strategy facilitates the process of repetition and enriches vocabulary gradually. Islam also optimizes visualization as a learning tool:

> "*I made a colorful tashrif table and pasted it on my laptop. Every time I read a verse, I mark the verb and look for the archetype.*"

In addition, students from the field of Islamic economics like Abiyyu choose to deepen their Arabic language skills through online courses and international networking:

"*Take online business Arabic courses and discussions with international students.*"

This independent strategy seems dominant on the project map, where almost all informants have a path to the "Independent" node, indicating that individual efforts are the main foundation of students' initial adaptation.

Collaborative Strategy

In addition to independent strategies, students are also actively developing collaborative strategies. Bella, for example, relies on discussions and study groups:

"*Discuss with lecturers and read a comparison of scholarly interpretations. I also joined an Arabic study group on campus.*"

Cross-disciplinary collaboration is also an effective solution, as Azzahra does:

"*Learn from the literature on educational inclusion and collaborate with students majoring in Special Education.*"

Putri added the learning dimension of professional practice through online media:

"*Learn from videos of professional MI teachers on YouTube and consult with lecturers on learning methodology.*"

The NVivo project map shows that collaborative strategies are linked to multiple informants, signaling the importance of social support, discussion, and cross-source learning in overcoming learning barriers. The project map in figure 3 illustrates that students do not only choose one strategy path, but often combine the two flexibly. For example, a student can create a mini dictionary (independent) while also being active in a study group (collaborative). This reinforces the finding that effective adaptation occurs when students are able to balance individual and collaborative efforts.

These diverse adaptation strategies have a positive impact on the learning process. Students who are active independently tend to master basic vocabulary and structures more quickly, while those who actively collaborate gain a broader and contextual understanding. Collaboration also facilitates the exchange of experiences, enriches learning methods, and increases motivation. Adaptation strategies are also influenced by the specific needs of the study program. Students of the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program, for example, collaborate more to design creative learning media, while students of the Sharia Banking Study Program tend to look for independent

learning resources that are relevant to the world of work. This is reflected in the project map that links strategy nodes with informant documents from various backgrounds.

Thus, the results of the NVivo project map make it clear that the adaptation strategies of non-Arabic students are very diverse and complementary. An independent and collaborative approach goes hand in hand, supported by personal motivation, social networks, and access to relevant learning resources. Project map visualization not only enriches the analysis, but also provides a solid foundation for the development of learning policies that are more adaptive and responsive to the needs of students across departments.

The Relevance of Arabic Language Courses to Study Programs

The analysis of the NVivo project map in figure 4 below shows two main branches in the relevance of Arabic learning for non-Arabic students at UIN: "According to Study Program" and "Need Adjustment". Each branch is directly connected to informants from a diverse range of study programs, reinforcing the finding that perceptions of relevance and material adjustment needs are strongly influenced by students' academic backgrounds.

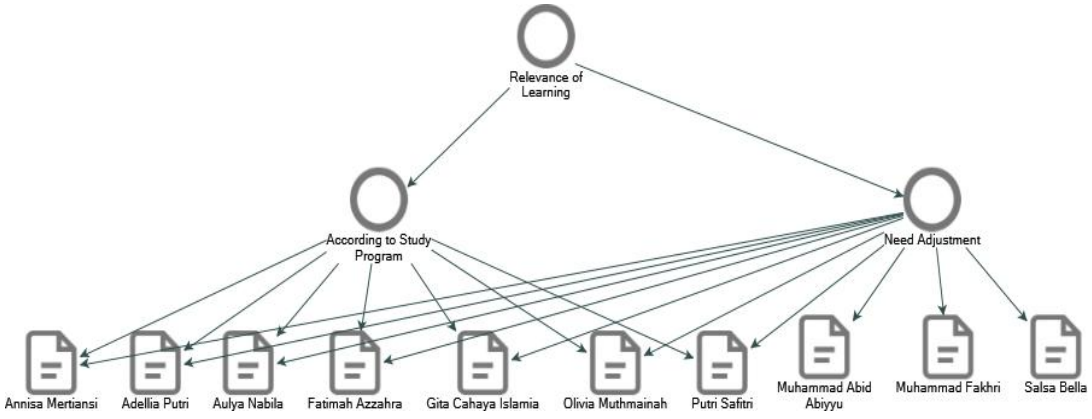


Figure 4. Project Map from NVivo Software

Arabic courses within the State Islamic University (UIN) have a very strong relevance to various study programs, especially those based on Islam and education. Mastery of Arabic supports the formation of students' Islamic competence, as many major literature sources in Islamic studies use Arabic as their native language. This is also confirmed by the perception of students, where they realize the importance of understanding the original text directly rather than relying solely on translations, which are often influenced by the translator's interpretation.

For students of the Tafsir Science Study Program, Arabic is seen as the main foundation of their knowledge. Islamia asserts: Arabic courses within the State Islamic University (UIN) have a very strong relevance to various study programs, especially

those based on Islam and education. Mastery of Arabic supports the formation of students' Islamic competence, as many major literature sources in Islamic studies use Arabic as their native language. This is also confirmed by the perception of students, where they realize the importance of understanding the original text directly rather than relying solely on translations, which are often influenced by the translator's interpretation.

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For students of the Tafsir Science Study Program, Arabic is seen as the main foundation of their knowledge. Islamia asserts:

"*Arabic is the life of the science of interpretation. Without it, we can only repeat other people's opinions.*"

While Bella added:

"*Mandatory! If you want to become an interpreter, Arabic is the main weapon. Without it, we are like doctors without a stethoscope.*"

This shows that the ability to access and interpret the Qur'an and the classical books is highly dependent on mastery of the language. Without a good understanding of Arabic, students will simply repeat the opinions of others and miss out on the opportunity to conduct independent analysis of the source text.

In the field of sharia economics, the relevance of Arabic is also very prominent. Muthmainah said:

"*Mandatory! Many AAOIFI (International Sharia Accounting) standards use Arabic. Without this, we could be left behind.*"

Abiyyu added:

"*As a prospective Islamic financial analyst, I am aware that Arabic is the key to dissecting international standard Islamic financial statements. Without it, we can only see the*

surface."

Many international standards, such as AAOIFI (Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions), use Arabic in official documents and financial statements. Therefore, Islamic banking students consider mastery of Arabic as a mandatory requirement so as not to be left behind in understanding global Islamic financial regulations and practices.

In the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education (PGMI) study program, Arabic is very relevant to strengthen students' religious foundations at the elementary level. Annisa Mertiansi said:

"*Arabic is a tool to build the religious foundation of MI students. For example, teaching daily prayers in Arabic.*"

Nabila added:

"*Very relevant! For example, integrating Arabic in science or social studies MI learning, such as saying animal names in Arabic.*"

Azzahra asserted:

"*The essence of PGMI! Arabic helps MI students understand daily worship, such as prayer before meals or prayers.*"

However, the results of the study also show the need to adjust Arabic material to be more contextual and in accordance with the needs of each study program. Muhammad Fakhri highlighted:

"*Very relevant! But the material should focus on the text of interpretation, not general conversation.*"

Azzahra suggests:

"*The material should be related to the local cultural context, such as naming regional foods in Arabic.*"

Muthmainah also asserted:

"*Must! The material should focus on the vocabulary of sharia economics, not everyday conversations.*"

Abiyyu added:

"*Yes, focus on materials such as writing sharia financing proposals in Arabic.*"

The use of innovative learning media, such as e-learning-based applications, is also considered very helpful in increasing access and motivation to learn Arabic. Fun and interactive learning designs can strengthen understanding, improve communication, and create a positive learning atmosphere, as Azzahra expressed:

"*The material should be related to the student's life, such as vocabulary about family or the*

school environment."

Overall, the relevance of Arabic courses to study programs at UIN is very high, especially to equip students with the academic, professional, and cultural competencies needed in the era of globalization. Adjusting the curriculum and teaching methods to be more contextual and applicative is key to ensuring that learning Arabic truly supports the needs and goals of each study program.

Expectations for the Curriculum and Teaching Methods

The results of the NVivo project map in figure 5 below show two main branches in the expectations of non-Arabic students at the State Islamic University, namely Contextual Curriculum and Creative Method. Each branch is directly connected to various informants from across study programs, which reinforces the finding that expectations for Arabic learning are collective but specific to the needs and academic backgrounds of students.

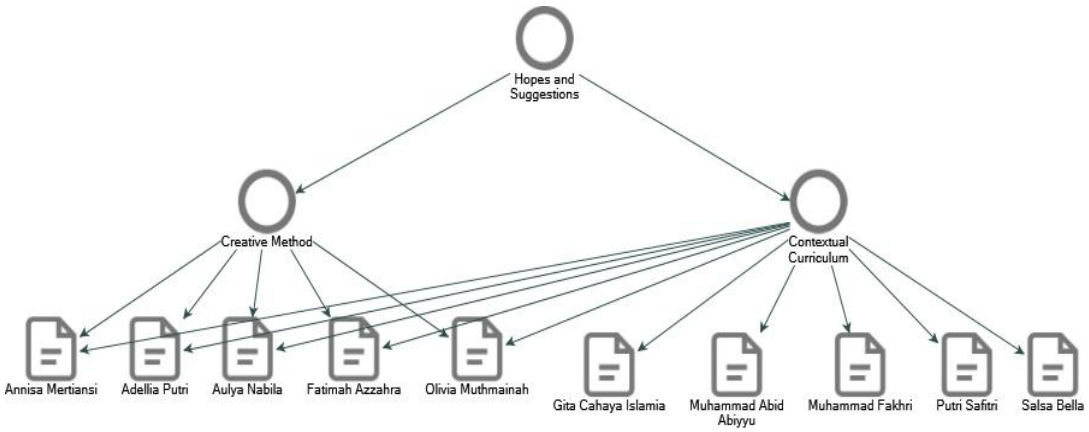


Figure 5. Project Map from NVivo Software

Contextual Curriculum

Students hope that the Arabic curriculum is not only general, but is truly integrated with the needs and scientific context of each study program. Islamia, a student of the Qur'an and Tafsir study program emphasized:

"*Integrate Arabic courses with Ulumul Qur'an studies to make them more contextual.*"

Fakhri also proposed:

"*Integrate the practice of analyzing the text of the Qur'an from the beginning semester.*"

Meanwhile, for basic education, Putri, a student of the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program, emphasized:

"*Focus on applicative materials for MI children, such as daily conversations or simple Islamic stories.*"

Contextualization also touches on aspects of technology and the world of work.

Abiyyu, a student of the Sharia Banking Study Program suggested: "*Integrate AI translator specifically for Islamic banking terms for self-training.*"

Muthmainah added:

"*Create a practice module to read Islamic finance documents in Arabic, such as Islamic financial statements.*"

Mertiansi, a student of the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program also hopes:

"*Integrate Arabic courses with art skills (coloring, drawing) for fun learning.*"

The NVivo project map shows that all informants from various study programs are connected to the "Contextual Curriculum" node, indicating the collective expectation of a curriculum that is relevant, applicative, and responsive to the times.

Creative Methods

In the "Creative Method" branch, students demand innovative, participatory, and fun teaching methods. Azzahra, a student of the Madrasah Ibtida'iyah Teacher Education Study Program, proposed:

"*Hold an Arabic learning media design competition between PGMI students to increase creativity.*"

Putri emphasized the importance of fun teaching practices:

"*Increase the practice of microteaching Arabic with creative media, such as hand puppets or hijaiyah letter puzzles.*"

Mertiansi highlights the importance of technology training:

"*Hold a workshop on creating technology-based Arabic learning media, such as Canva or interactive PowerPoint.*"

Nabila also hopes:

"*Increase field visits to leading MIs that have creative Arabic language programs.*"

The NVivo project map shows that the "Creative Method" node connects students from various backgrounds, signaling the need for cross-program learning for active, collaborative, and technology-based learning. The project map visualization confirms that students' expectations and suggestions are evenly distributed between two major themes: contextual curriculum development and the application of creative methods. Each informant is connected to one or both of those key nodes, reinforcing the argument that curriculum innovation and teaching methods are a real and urgent need in the non-Arabic language student environment.

Thus, the results of the NVivo project map enrich the analysis by clarifying that the contextual curriculum is expected to be integrated with the science of the study

program, technological developments, and the needs of the world of work. Creative methods are expected to be able to create an active, fun, and innovative learning atmosphere, both through digital media, microteaching, and teaching media design competitions. The visualization of the project map strengthens the finding that student expectations are collective, cross-study programs, and very specific according to their individual needs. With the implementation of the curriculum and methods that meet these expectations, Arabic learning at UIN can become more meaningful, applicative, and relevant to equip students to face academic and professional challenges in the future.

3.2 Discussion

This research reveals the complexity of the perception of non-Arabic Language Education students towards Arabic language learning at the State Islamic University (UIN), confirming the central position of this language as the foundation of Islamic science. As the main key to understanding the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature, mastery of Arabic is not only an academic but also a spiritual necessity (Rasyid, 2023; Salida & Zulpina, 2023). This is reflected in the view of Qur'an and Tafsir students who refer to Arabic as the "life of interpretation," or Islamic Banking students who see it as a tool for analyzing international financial documents (Andriani, 2015; Fahrurrozi, 2021). However, this enthusiasm does not necessarily eliminate the challenges that arise. Early learning experiences that are marked by grammatical difficulties such as tashrif, monotonous teaching methods, and time constraints often create anxiety, especially for those who have not had a prior knowledge of Arabic (Ritonga, Suib, & Zaky, 2023; Sulaikho et al., 2023). A PGMI student, for example, admitted to feeling overwhelmed at first, but slowly discovered the practical value of the language through creative simulations in the classroom, according to the findings Nidia et al (2022) about the transformation of perception through contextual learning.

This perception dynamic is inseparable from the context of each discipline. Students from study programs that are closely related to religious texts tend to see the relevance of Arabic more quickly, while those from the field of Islamic economics or education take longer to connect the material to professional needs. This fact hints at a gap between the existing curriculum and student expectations, as criticized by Annisa & Safii (2023) which emphasizes the need for specific materials such as ijarah contract analysis for economics students or game-based teaching techniques for prospective educators. This claim is in line with the findings Cahyarani & Fauji (2024) on the

importance of cross-cultural interaction in increasing learning motivation, and Burhanuddin (2024) that encourage communication-based methods for active engagement.

The methodological and personal challenges identified through NVivo analysis make clear the need for a multidimensional approach. The dominance of grammar-translation methods that focus on memorizing grammatical structures is considered to be less encouraging for practical communication skills (Ritonga et al., 2023). On the other hand, the limitations of the students' initial experience—such as unfamiliarity with the Arabic letter—exacerbate the lack of confidence, as revealed Habibi (2018) about technical errors in Arabic writing. However, students are not passive in facing these obstacles. They develop adaptive strategies, both independently such as creating mini dictionaries and visual tashrif tables, or collaboratively through study group discussions or cross-department consultations (Nerita, Ananda, & Mukhaiyar, 2023). A student even utilizes online courses and international networking to deepen their understanding of Islamic finance terms, reflecting the principle of constructivism in which knowledge is built through social and cognitive interaction (Saifudin, 2021).

The student adaptation efforts highlight the potential for a more responsive curriculum. Participants consistently called for innovations in learning methods—such as the integration of digital technologies, real-life case simulations, or teaching media design competitions—that not only make the learning process more engaging, but also strengthen the relevance of Arabic to the professional world (Novitasari, Sabarudin, & Nurhapsari Pradnya Paramita, 2025). For example, the use of AI translators for financial document translation exercises or microteaching practices with hand puppet media for prospective teachers, is in line with the recommendations Jihada & Musa (2023) about the development of needs-based modules. However, its implementation requires institutional commitment in providing resources and training for lecturers, given the findings of the Noviani & Hasan (2023) about the limitations of teaching technology mastery.

In the end, the findings of this study confirm that Arabic remains an irreplaceable pillar in Islamic higher education, even though it has to adapt to the challenges of the times. Students' positive perception of the urgency of this language—which is rooted in an awareness of religious and professional values—is a great asset for the development of a more integrative curriculum (Mubarak, 2018; Suroiyah & Zakiyah, 2021). The next step requires a synergy between the needs of the discipline, the creativity of teaching

methods, and psychological support for students, as advocated Pratiwi & Maunah (2024) in designing an inclusive learning environment. By designing contextual, interactive, and problem-solving-oriented learning, the State Islamic University can transform challenges into opportunities to strengthen its role as a center of excellence for Islamic studies relevant to global dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that Arabic plays a crucial role as the foundation of Islamic science within the State Islamic University (UIN), both as a tool for understanding religious texts and as an academic-professional competence. The majority of non-major students are aware of the urgency of this language, especially in the context of Qur'an studies, sharia economics, and basic education. However, learning Arabic faces multidimensional challenges, such as difficulties in mastering complex grammar, rigid teaching methods, and material incompatibility with the needs of the study program. Initial negative perceptions often shift to positive when students discover the practical relevance of the language through contextual approaches, such as creative simulation or technology integration.

Independent adaptation strategies (creation of visual aids, online courses) and collaborative (group discussions, cross-disciplinary consultations) are the key for students to overcome obstacles. These findings highlight the need for responsive curriculum innovations, such as field-specific materials, practice-based methods, and the use of technology to increase learning engagement. By designing interactive, contextual, and needs-oriented learning, UIN can strengthen the position of Arabic as a bridge between Islamic scientific traditions and the demands of the global era, while ensuring its relevance for future generations of Muslims.

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