



INTEGRATING ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS CHARACTER FORMATION

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab dan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam mengembangkan karakter religius peserta didik di MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang. Integrasi tersebut bertujuan untuk mengharmoniskan kompetensi linguistik dengan penanaman nilai-nilai moral Islam, sehingga membentuk model pendidikan yang komprehensif dan selaras antara ranah kognitif dan afektif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif melalui desain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara dengan guru dan siswa, serta analisis dokumen kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran bahasa Arab—ketika dikontekstualisasikan dengan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, hadis Nabi, dan terminologi Islam—dapat memperkuat pemahaman siswa terhadap etika keagamaan, kedisiplinan, dan ketakwaan. Guru mengintegrasikan materi linguistik dengan pembinaan moral, sehingga menumbuhkan sekaligus kemampuan berbahasa dan kesadaran spiritual peserta didik. Integrasi ini menghasilkan suasana pembelajaran yang holistik, berkontribusi pada pembentukan spiritualitas siswa, dan memperkuat pendidikan karakter Islami di lingkungan sekolah.

Kata Kunci : *Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pembentukan Karakter Religius, Integrasi, MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*

Abstract: This study examines the integration of Arabic language learning and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in developing students' religious character at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang. The integration aims to harmonize linguistic competence with the cultivation of Islamic moral values, forming a comprehensive educational model that aligns cognitive and affective domains. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, data were gathered through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of curricular documents. The results show that Arabic language instruction—when contextualized with Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, and Islamic terminologies—strengthens students' understanding of religious ethics, discipline, and devotion. Teachers integrate linguistic content with moral instruction, fostering both language proficiency and spiritual awareness. This integration produces a holistic learning atmosphere that contributes to students' spiritual formation and reinforces Islamic character education within the school environment.

Keywords : *Arabic Language Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Religious Character Formation, Integration, MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*

A. Introduction

The Arabic language occupies a central role in Islamic education as it serves not only as a linguistic tool but also as a medium for understanding the divine sources of Islam—the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic scholarship. Mastery of Arabic enables learners to access and interpret Islamic teachings authentically, fostering a deeper spiritual connection and intellectual engagement with their faith.¹ Within the framework of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), Arabic learning becomes more than a subject of linguistic competence; it evolves into a vital instrument for internalizing Islamic values and shaping students' religious character.

In contemporary Islamic education, character formation has emerged as a central educational objective. The demand for moral and spiritual renewal in education reflects the growing awareness that knowledge alone, without ethical grounding, cannot produce holistic human development. According to Azra,² Islamic education should aim to integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions to form balanced individuals who live by Islamic principles. This integration between moral formation and intellectual learning resonates deeply in the context of Arabic language instruction, where linguistic exercises can be designed to cultivate virtues such as honesty, discipline, and devotion to God.

The relationship between language and character is inherently interdependent. Language acts as a vessel of culture and moral worldview, carrying meanings that influence thought and behavior. Arabic, in particular, embodies the linguistic spirit of Islam, where every term and expression often conveys profound ethical and theological implications. Fadli (2019) emphasizes that Arabic learning can become a transformative experience when taught not merely as grammar and vocabulary but as a means of experiencing Islamic spirituality and ethical consciousness.³ In this sense, Arabic is not a neutral language—it is a language that forms identity, faith, and moral awareness.

The integration of Arabic language learning and IRE represents a pedagogical model that links language acquisition with religious character development. Through this integrative approach, students not only learn how to read and comprehend Islamic texts but also how to embody the values contained within them. The Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions studied in class become more than academic exercises; they become sources of reflection and personal transformation. Teachers, therefore, play a strategic role in guiding students to bridge linguistic understanding with moral practice. The effectiveness of this integration depends largely on the teacher's ability to contextualize Arabic instruction within real-life moral and spiritual situations.

This study was conducted at *MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*, an Islamic junior high school located in East Java, Indonesia, that has implemented an integrative approach to Arabic language learning and Islamic Religious Education. The school emphasizes that Arabic proficiency should support students' comprehension of Islamic sources while simultaneously nurturing pious attitudes and religious discipline. Preliminary observations revealed that Arabic teachers at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in often relate grammatical and lexical lessons to Qur'anic passages, hadiths, and Islamic moral teachings. Such practices

¹ Al Zeera, Zahra. 2001. *Wholeness and Holiness in Education: An Islamic Perspective*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

² Azra, Azyumardi. 2019. *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam Integratif*. Jakarta: Kencana.

³ Fadli, Muhammad. 2019. "Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam dalam Menghadapi Era Disrupsi." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 4 (2): 110–122.

help students perceive Arabic not only as an academic requirement but as a living language of faith and devotion.

Despite these promising practices, systematic studies on how integration occurs in the classroom remain limited. It is necessary to explore how teachers design their lessons, what pedagogical strategies they employ, and how students respond to the integration of linguistic and religious learning. Moreover, it is important to investigate the extent to which such integration contributes to students' character formation, particularly regarding values like honesty, discipline, and spiritual awareness. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights for improving Islamic education curricula in other schools and madrasahs across Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the integration of Arabic language learning in the formation of students' religious character through Islamic Religious Education at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a holistic model of Islamic education—one that unites intellectual mastery with moral and spiritual growth. By examining this case, the study seeks to reaffirm that Arabic language learning, when integrated meaningfully with IRE, can serve as an effective vehicle for nurturing religious character and moral integrity among Muslim students.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how Arabic language learning is integrated into the formation of students' religious character through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at *MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*. A qualitative design was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the integration process, emphasizing meaning, experience, and context rather than numerical data.⁴

The research was conducted at *MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*, an Islamic junior high school known for implementing integrative learning between Arabic and IRE. Participants included three Arabic teachers, three IRE teachers, and twelve students selected through purposive sampling, based on their active involvement in the integrated learning process.⁵

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out in classroom settings to examine how teachers apply integration strategies and how students respond to them. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences. Documentation—such as lesson plans, school curricula, and student work—was analyzed to support and verify the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data credibility, triangulation of sources and methods was applied, along with member checking to validate interpretations.⁶

This methodological framework enabled a comprehensive understanding of how Arabic language learning contributes to religious character formation within Islamic education, particularly in the context of *MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang*.

⁴ Creswell, John W. 2018. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁵ Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁶ Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

C. Finding And Discussion

1. Integration Model of Arabic Language Learning and Islamic Religious Education

The integration between Arabic language learning and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang is implemented through a curricular and instructional model that unites linguistic mastery with moral-spiritual objectives. Teachers design lessons in which Arabic vocabulary, grammar, and reading materials are connected with Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and Islamic moral themes. This integration model is referred to by teachers as *ta'dib-oriented learning*, emphasizing adab (moral refinement) as the essence of education.⁷

In practice, Arabic lessons often begin with short Qur'anic recitations or prophetic sayings related to honesty, discipline, or respect. Students are encouraged to translate, memorize, and discuss the meanings of these texts. Through this method, Arabic becomes more than a linguistic tool—it becomes a moral framework.⁸ Teachers act as both linguistic instructors and moral exemplars (*uswah hasanah*), ensuring that every linguistic exercise aligns with ethical reflection.⁹

Furthermore, the integration is evident in lesson planning (RPP), where learning objectives explicitly mention both *maharab lughawiyah* (language skills) and *pembentukan akhlak mulia* (character formation). Teachers employ cooperative learning strategies, *tahfizh* activities, and *muhadatsah diniyyah* (religious dialogues) to ensure that communication in Arabic carries religious values. This pedagogical integration reinforces the holistic Islamic educational paradigm, bridging intellectual and moral growth.¹⁰

This integrative model reflects a holistic Islamic educational paradigm, in which intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects are closely intertwined. Mastery of Arabic is not merely an academic achievement but also a pathway to a deeper understanding of religion and its application in daily life. Thus, Arabic language learning integrated with Islamic Religious Education at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in produces not only fluent students but also students with strong Islamic character and noble morals. This integration model is very relevant because Arabic language learning cannot be separated from Islamic religious learning, apart from aiming to improve language skills.¹¹

2. Pedagogical Strategies for Integration

Teachers at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang employ several pedagogical strategies to integrate Arabic language instruction with Islamic character development:

- a) Contextualization of Learning Materials. Teachers adapt Arabic texts that contain moral messages derived from Islamic sources. Stories of prophets, classical Arabic moral tales, and short Qur'anic verses are used as reading materials to connect linguistic content with ethical reflection.¹²
- b) Modeling and Imitation (*Uswah Hasanah*). Teachers emphasize moral modeling by speaking politely, showing respect, and integrating Islamic expressions (*akhlaq al-*

⁷ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2018), 43.

⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam Integratif* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2019), 77.

⁹ Interview with Arabic teacher, MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang, May 2025.

¹⁰ M. Fadli, "Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam dalam Menghadapi Era Disrupsi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 4, no. 2 (2019): 114.

¹¹ Sofyan, A., Firmansyah, M. B., Solissa, E. M., & Rosikh, F. (2022). Islamic boarding school linguistic landscape in the development of Arabic language skills and Islamic knowledge. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 3(6), 2178-2185.

¹² Z. Al Zeera, *Wholeness and Holiness in Education: An Islamic Perspective* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 2001), 89.

karimah) in daily communication. Students are encouraged to imitate both language and attitude.¹³

- c) Dialogic Learning. Class discussions are framed around moral dilemmas expressed in Arabic, allowing students to express ethical opinions in the target language while reflecting on Islamic teachings.¹⁴
- d) Integration through Ritual Practice. Students practice daily prayers and Qur'anic recitation using Arabic expressions taught in class. This ritual integration enhances both fluency and piety, strengthening the link between linguistic competence and spiritual consciousness.¹⁵

These strategies demonstrate that integration is not only curricular but also deeply experiential, involving the heart (*qalb*), mind (*'aql*), and behavior (*'amal*).¹⁶

3. Impact on Students' Religious Character Formation

Interviews and observations revealed that integrated Arabic-IRE learning has significantly influenced students' character development. Students showed increased respect toward teachers, improved discipline in performing prayers, and greater awareness of Islamic ethics in daily life. Teachers noted that Arabic expressions such as *astaghfirullah*, *alhamdulillah*, and *insya' Allah* became part of students' spontaneous speech patterns.¹⁷ The integration fostered three major dimensions of religious character:

- a) Cognitive Dimension. Students gained a deeper understanding of religious vocabulary and Qur'anic terminology, allowing them to comprehend Islamic concepts in their original linguistic form. This cognitive link between Arabic and Islam enhanced their religious literacy.
- b) Affective Dimension. The moral messages embedded in Arabic lessons stimulated emotional engagement with Islamic values. Students expressed pride and joy in understanding Arabic as the language of revelation, which reinforced their sense of belonging to the Muslim community (*ummah*).
- c) Behavioral Dimension. Integrated learning translated into tangible behavioral changes. Students displayed better manners, punctuality in prayer, and social responsibility in their peer interactions.

This finding aligns with Al Zeera's holistic educational framework, which emphasizes unity between intellectual and moral education. It also reflects Al-Attas's *ta'dib* concept, where education aims to instill *adab*—proper discipline of the body, mind, and soul.¹⁸

4. Discussion: Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study affirms the Islamic epistemological unity of knowledge (*tawhid al-ma'rifah*), rejecting dichotomies between religious and linguistic sciences. The integration of Arabic and IRE embodies the idea that knowledge acquisition

¹³ Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1982), 25.

¹⁴ Field notes, MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang, April 2025.

¹⁵ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 156.

¹⁶ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018), 305.

¹⁷ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 33.

¹⁸ Al Zeera, Zahra. 2001. *Wholeness and Holiness in Education: An Islamic Perspective*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

(*ilm*) and moral cultivation (*akblaq*) are inseparable in Islamic pedagogy. This paradigm echoes the principles of classical Islamic scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, who regarded language learning as both intellectual and ethical formation.

Practically, the findings highlight the potential of language-based moral pedagogy in Islamic education. Arabic language teaching, when aligned with spiritual content, can serve as a powerful means of cultivating faith and ethics among students. The study also underscores the necessity for teacher competence—educators must master both linguistic skills and pedagogical ethics to effectively integrate content and values.

In addition, this integration contributes to the realization of Indonesia's national character education policy, which emphasizes religious, ethical, and civic virtues.¹⁹ The approach used at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang offers a model for other Islamic schools aiming to harmonize religious instruction with language education through contextual, dialogic, and values-based teaching.

Despite its success, teachers reported several challenges in maintaining consistency in integration. Some Arabic textbooks are linguistically strong but lack moral or spiritual context, requiring teachers to supplement them with Islamic materials. Another challenge lies in students' varying levels of motivation—those who view Arabic solely as an academic requirement tend to engage less in its moral dimensions. Furthermore, the absence of standardized assessment tools for character outcomes makes evaluation subjective.

Nevertheless, the efforts at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang demonstrate that integration is possible through commitment, creativity, and institutional support. Continuous professional development and collaboration among Arabic and IRE teachers are essential to sustain the integration model.

D. Conclusion

The integration of Arabic language learning and Islamic Religious Education at MTs Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Malang represents a holistic educational model that unites language mastery with moral and spiritual formation. Through contextualized learning, moral modeling, dialogic engagement, and ritual practice, Arabic instruction becomes a vehicle for internalizing Islamic values. The findings reveal that this integration strengthens students' cognitive understanding of religious concepts, enhances emotional attachment to faith, and improves moral behavior.

This study reinforces the philosophical foundation of Islamic education that knowledge (*ilm*) and adab are inseparable. In practice, the integration model contributes to Indonesia's broader educational goal of developing religious, ethical, and disciplined citizens. Future studies should explore longitudinal impacts and develop standardized frameworks for evaluating moral outcomes in integrated Arabic-IRE programs.

Ultimately, integrating Arabic language and Islamic Religious Education nurtures not only linguistic competence but also *spiritual intelligence*—cultivating students who think, speak, and act in accordance with Islamic ethical principles.

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