

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

Mohammad Gading¹, Rudi Kemal Arrasin², Husna³, Khambali⁴
{mohammad_1205622094@mhs.unj.ac.id¹, rudi_1205622004@mhs.unj.ac.id²,
husna_1205622024@mhs.unj.ac.id³, khambali@unj.ac.id⁴}

PBA Universitas Negeri Jakarta¹²³⁴

Abstract. This study analyzes the implementation of Arabic Language Learning (ALL) in the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, designed to address the challenges of modern times and evolving educational needs. The Independent Curriculum emphasizes meaningful learning by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies aligned with Pancasila values and Islamic religious norms. Using a qualitative approach based on document and literature analysis, this study examines the readiness of educators to meet pedagogical and language standards and the pivotal role of a flexible curriculum in supporting contextual and communicative Arabic language learning. The findings reveal internal challenges, such as the lack of communicative approaches in Arabic teaching, and external challenges, including adapting to global shifts in Arabic language patterns. This study provides recommendations to enhance Arabic language learning by strengthening teacher competencies, fostering creativity, and developing adaptive curricula to meet both local and global demands effectively.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Arabic Learning, Merdeka Curricula.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has experienced 11 curriculum changes since its independence from the Netherlands (Arif and Makalalag, 2022; Irawan, 2022; Mukminin et al., 2019). This curriculum change is inevitable, several countries that have good quality education even routinely make curriculum changes such as Finland, Australia and South Africa (Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury, 2023) because basically learning in educational institutions must adapt to changing times (Arif and Makalalag, 2022; Hakim, 2017). Curriculum transformation is at least caused by internal and external factors (Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury, 2023). Entering the 21st century, the development of science and technology is very rapid, especially when information and communication technology or ICT emerged (Liu and Yu, 2023) where information and science can be easily accessed (Aslam, 2021) or also known as the disruptive era where human power is replaced by machines (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Of course, this change must be immediately anticipated by the government and educational institutions as those authorized to make educational regulations in order to direct education on the right track.

Simply put, curriculum can be interpreted as a way to achieve learning targets which contain elements of objectives, materials, methods and evaluation. (Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury, 2023; Mohanasundaram, 2018; Utami, 2020). The national curriculum of Education in Indonesia is currently called the Independent Curriculum (Kemendikud, 2024). In principle, the Independent curriculum with previous curricula still has general similarities, namely that it remains on the corridor of delivering students to have balanced abilities in cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Depdikbud, 2008, 1984; Depdikbud RI, 1993; Curriculum Center, 2022; Wahyudin, 2024). However, in its implementation, it requires different implementation treatments which cause policy changes. For example, the changes that occurred in the KTSP curriculum to the 2013 Curriculum, namely: the loss of national exams (Hakim, 2017), the loss of the role of the independent national education standards agency (BNSP) (Hasibuan, 2021), planning document models and others (Salma and Nadlrah Naimi, 2023; Supriatna et al., 2023). Thus, each curriculum product has a

specific focus which then has an effect on changes in management, approaches, methods and evaluation systems.

The Merdeka Curriculum places more emphasis on meaningful learning, which is different from the previous curriculum that focused on competencies. (Hakim, 2017; Hehakaya and Pollatu, 2022; Zarkasyi et al., 2023). Therefore, learning outcomes must be directed towards a graduate profile that is not only academically and psychomotorically competent but also balanced with the achievement of attitudes in accordance with Islamic religious norms and the Pancasila profile. The Merdeka Curriculum is expected to provide balance in learning practices at Educational Institutions based on local needs and wisdom.

Therefore, Arabic language learning in the independent curriculum is designed to aim at comprehensive language mastery that includes affective, cognitive, and psychomotor competencies. The combination of these competency targets can actually be realized in the form of statements as in language learning with a communicative approach, for example: "Students are able to speak polite Arabic at home" (Van J.A. Va and Trim J.L.M., 1998), which the teacher must then elaborate on in the learning process. Thus, the concept of the Arabic language learning approach is no longer based on the grammar and translation approach but should be based on the contextual or communicative approach. (Arif and Makalalag, 2022).

In the implementation of the independent curriculum, competent and creative human resources or teachers are needed (Hehakaya and Pollatu, 2022). The implementation of the independent curriculum requires human resources or teachers who are not only competent but also creative. This means that teachers must possess pedagogical competence as indicated by a Teacher Certification and Arabic language competence as indicated by an Arabic proficiency certificate such as TOAFL. (Alfarisy, 2021; Lestariningsih, 2018). Meanwhile, to be creative, teachers must have the ability to design planning documents, teaching modules that are integrated with online learning media, implement learning with appropriate teaching methods, and conduct evaluations that are integrated with online learning media.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive analysis study that provides an overview of a phenomenon or phenomenon. This research uses a qualitative approach with document and library analysis, with data sources obtained from educational institution documents that regulate learning activities at the institution. In addition, the researcher is also part of the research source. In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to determine the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. One of the key elements of data collection in qualitative research is observing behavior by engaging in their activities (Creswell, n.d.). In this regard, Sugiyono even states that in qualitative research, the instrument is the person or human instrument, namely the researcher themselves. To be able to become an instrument, the researcher must have a broad theoretical background and insights, so they can ask questions, analyze, capture, and construct the social situation being studied to make it clearer and more meaningful. (Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1. Arabic Language Learning in the Independent Curriculum

As mentioned, although many curriculum changes have occurred, all curricula still share the common principle of educational goals that encompass students' mastery in the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. Regardless of the differences in the effects caused by the shift from the previous curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia, if the curriculum is viewed from a micro perspective, which considers the curriculum as a learning plan to achieve educational goals (Ainin, 2020), it becomes very important to examine the state of Arabic language learning in

Indonesia, as it has not yet achieved the expected impact. As mentioned in KMA 184 2019, the reasons for the emergence of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in Arabic language lessons, are as follows:

1. Internal challenges: 1) The first internal challenge in the development of the Arabic language curriculum is that Arabic language learning in madrasahs still tends to be structuralistic, less functional, and less communicative; 2) The Arabic language plays an important role as a bridge connecting a Muslim with authentic sources in understanding Islam, namely the Qur'an, Hadith, and the books of scholars; 3) A lack of mastery of the Arabic language, besides causing misunderstandings of the holy book, also reduces interest in studying Islam from its authentic sources.

2. External challenges: 1) Indonesia has a vision to be the center of Islamic studies in the world, therefore it must be able to respond to the trend of shifting Arabic from the fusha pattern to the 'amiyah pattern; 2) The number of Arabic language speakers is increasing significantly. More than 60 countries and 350 million people use Arabic as their daily communication language. Thus, Arabic is not only a language for "religious studies" but also used as a language for economics, tourism, politics, and global security; 3) The advancement of information technology in providing instant Islamic religious content has led to a tendency for the younger generation to have a lower interest in exploring Islamic religious knowledge from authentic sources, which are generally in Arabic. (Menteri Agama, 2019)

Among the products of the independent curriculum that make it different from the previous curriculum are "proportional and flexible." (Zarkasyi et al., 2023). Proportional in the sense that the central government provides the learning load, flexible in the sense that educational units can freely: 1) add subject names that align with local wisdom; 2) change the weight of lesson hours; 3) relocate time from one subject to another; 4) organize materials and media; 5) design learning. If the competencies demanded by the government are too low, the educational unit can set its own targets, but if they are too high for certain grade levels, the educational unit and/or teachers can use specific teaching models to help students who are lagging behind catch up. Therefore, it is hoped that this flexibility can address the workload expected from the independent curriculum.

1.1.1. Purpose

To formulate objectives in schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the references are: 1) the 2013 curriculum; 2) KMA 2019; 3) the school's vision and mission; 4) Analysis of student needs. The formulation of objectives to make them realistic and achievable needs to be documented in the form of a planning document or RPS. For example, analyzing the needs of first-grade MTs students in Jakarta. The first step is to identify the students' needs, which revealed that they require basic communication skills within the family; the second step is for the teacher to align this with the school's vision and mission, for example, the school's vision is to become an outstanding school in the field of technology. The third step is for the teacher to align this with KMA 2019, which emphasizes looking at competencies at each level and focusing on a communicative learning approach. The fourth step is for the teacher to align this with the 2013 curriculum, which includes strengthening the Pancasila profile, scientific approach, authentic assessment, technology utilization, project-based learning, and differentiated learning. Thus, based on the information and characteristics of the information above, the learning target can be narrated as follows: "Students are able to communicate basic simple information about themselves, their family, and their school politely."

1.1.2. Material and Media

The competency targets as described above can actually be directed to the high school level and even higher education institutions, and can be implemented not only in Jakarta, with the distinction being the quality of the material. The scope of the material for MTs students is at the level of memorization, understanding, and a bit of language practice, such as simple question and answer sessions without the need for in-depth analysis of language rules. In other words, the material presented is about everyday life that is very familiar. Then, the material for the DKI Jakarta area can

be distinguished, for example, by the varied transportation systems, the very dense environment, the large number of schools, the different Indonesian ethnic groups, and so on.

Learning media is anything that can be used to convey messages, thereby stimulating students' attention, interest, thoughts, and feelings in learning activities to achieve learning objectives. (Andriani et al., 2022; Hikmah, 2019). Thus, the teacher, text, audio, visual, video, and environment also serve as media. (Gemilang and Listiana, 2020; Hikmah, 2019; Smaldino et al., 2019). Material and media become an inseparable unity. Media is anything that helps students master learning objectives. The 2013 curriculum emphasizes that learning activities should involve online technology.

Teaching module (Siagian et al., 2023) Mastering several types of platforms to be able to create various online learning media such as visual editing in Photoshop, film editing in Filmora, internet operation skills like hosting and domain, and the Moodle online learning platform to deliver various materials, assignments, and online learning evaluations. Gerlach and Ely (in Ibrahim, 2001) state that learning media play an important role in the design and use of systematic learning. In general, media are any person, material, or event that creates conditions allowing learners to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

1.1.3. Method

To convey the established competency targets as well as the prepared materials and media, the learning methods that must be implemented according to the 2013 curriculum are differentiated learning methods, project-based methods, and creativity and innovation-based methods. Therefore, the materials must not only focus on mastery of understanding but also direct practices that reflect the students' real-life situations.

1.1.4. Evaluation

The evaluation system with a differentiated learning approach and/or learning using a project-based approach must be based on authentic evaluation in three domains, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Assessment in the cognitive domain is carried out using several techniques, including; written, oral, assignments and also using appropriate instruments to assess the cognitive field. Educators assess the ability of students' knowledge aspects through written, oral, and assignment tests. Competency assessments related to attitudes consist of five; receiving or paying attention, responding or responding, assessing or appreciating, organizing or managing, and character, the assessment techniques of which are carried out by means of: self-assessment observation, peer assessment, journals (small notes). Assessment in the psychomotor domain as stated by Kunandar, there are five levels, namely: Imitation, Manipulation, Precision, Articulation, Naturalization which can be done through performance, projects, and portfolios. (Achmad et al., 2022)

1.2. Arabic Language Teachers

Data showing the competence of Arabic language teachers in the 2010/2011 academic year indicates that 30.7% of MI teachers are not professional, and 52.7% of MA teachers do not have the appropriate specialization. (Ainin, 2020). No matter how good the curriculum is, as long as the teachers lack competence, education in Indonesia will never develop and progress, especially Arabic language teachers who must have qualifications in the field of education and Arabic language. The mandate of KMA 183 that Arabic language learning should be conducted applicatively and create a language environment will be difficult to implement if the teachers are not competent in both pedagogy and the Arabic language.

To carry out the burdens and tasks contained in the curriculum, it is necessary to have human resources or teachers who not only possess competencies in the field of pedagogy and Arabic language but also creative and innovative teachers. (Arif and Makalalag, 2022). Pedagogical competence includes: (1) understanding students in depth; (2) designing learning, including understanding the foundations of education for the purpose of learning; (3) implementing the learning process; (4) designing and conducting learning evaluations; and (5) developing students to

actualize their various potentials. (Fatimah, 2020). Meanwhile, language competence can be measured through standardized Arabic language tests or TOAFL, as well as other foreign languages such as TOEFL or IELTS for English, Youth Chinese Test (YCT) for Mandarin, JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) for Japanese, or basic foreign language proficiency levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 CEFR.

Or further, Brown in Lestarisngsih states that the competencies that teachers must possess are as follows: 1) teachers are expected to have excellent knowledge of language teaching approaches, 2) understand and use various language teaching techniques, 3) efficiently design and implement teaching plans, 4) continuously monitor students' understanding of lessons and make adjustments when needed, 5) know students' needs for language knowledge, 6) provide maximum feedback, 7) stimulate interaction among students, cooperation, and group work, 8) use appropriate classroom management principles, 9) have effective and clear presentation skills, 10) creatively adapt materials from textbooks, audiovisuals, and other teaching aids, 11) be able to create innovative teaching materials when needed, and 12) use intrinsic and interactive motivation techniques in test preparation. (Lestariningsih, 2018)

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Arabic Language Learning (ABL) in the Independent Curriculum offers an opportunity to create learning that is more contextual, communicative, and relevant to the needs of the times. Although the curriculum in Indonesia has undergone many changes from the 1947 *Rentjana Peladjaran* curriculum to the 2024 *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it has not changed the learning objectives, namely providing students with balanced abilities in the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. The success of this implementation is highly dependent on the readiness of competent and creative educators, as well as policy support that provides flexibility in planning and implementing learning. It's just that in the 2024 curriculum there are special directions for Arabic language learning, namely internal challenges, such as less communicative teaching methods, and external challenges, such as adaptation to the function of Arabic, are the main concerns. By strengthening the pedagogical and Arabic language competencies of teachers, as well as optimizing a flexible curriculum, ABL in the Independent Curriculum can meet students' needs and support the development of a modern curriculum effectively.

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