

## THE ROLE OF ARABIC IN STRENGTHENING CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

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### Article Info

Received: May 15, 2025

Revised: May 27, 2025

Accepted: June 15, 2025

Online Version: June 30, 2025

### Abstract

Arabic is a language that grows and develops in Arab countries, especially in the Middle East region. It is in essence the language of religion and the language of unity for Muslims around the world. It was in this language that the Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, was revealed, and with it the Prophet Muhammad also carried out his duty of devotion to mankind. Therefore, in its development, Arabic was also named an international language by the United Nations on December 18, 1973 in recognition of its role and consistency as a language of culture and unity of the people. The coronation is also a sign that Arabic is also actively used as a regular communication medium in the association of nations at all levels. Therefore, Arabic cannot be separated from Islam, whose mission is to be a strength over the diversity of the ummah. In addition to being a life-regulation, it is also a guideline for modern civilization. This is seen vertically where the worship of a Muslim will not be valid if it is said other than in Arabic. And horizontally, Arabic becomes a language that has a noble diction of meaning and honors each other. Therefore, as long as the language becomes the obligatory language of a Muslim, it is undoubtedly its role as a unifying language and strengthening of brotherhood between individuals and groups.

**Keywords:** Arabic Language, Cultural and Religious Identity, Islamic Unity



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Journal Homepage

<https://journal.zmsadra.or.id/index.php/jqa>

How to cite:

Azizah, N., Al-Harbi, M., & Meliano, M. (2025). The Role of Arabic in Strengthening Cultural and Religious Identity. *Journal Qaul 'Arabiyy*, 1(1), 9–16. <https://doi.org/XX.XXXXX/jqa.v1i1.1420>

Published by:

Yayasan Zia Mulla Sadra

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## INTRODUCTION

Arabic in its definition Ghalayin states that it is a series of sentences used by Arabs to express their thoughts and feelings. Ibrahim Anis in his work *Language between Nationalism and Internationalism* emphasizes that language is a system of phonetic symbols that people commonly use to communicate with each other. ((Al-Ghalayin, 2005)

The development of Arabic seems to be increasingly widespread in international relations, so that since 1973 this language has been officially recognized as a legal language to be used within the United Nations. Arabic is also the language that has the most attributes. In addition to being the language of the holy book of the Qur'an and Hadith, Arabic is the language of religion and Muslims, the official language of the United Nations (UN), the national language of more than 25 countries in the Middle East region, *lughah al-dhâd*, and the language of socio-cultural heritage (*lughah al-turâts*). Arabic is also seen as a very original language, lacking a childhood as well as a period of life (Akib, 2016).

Arabic is a language spoken by the people who inhabit the Arabian peninsula, in the southwestern part of the Asian continent. After traveling for centuries, Arabic is now the official language of various countries, such as Al-Jazair, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Already, Syria, Tunisia, Jordan, and other countries in the Arabian peninsula (Subhi, 2007).

Arabic is one of the world languages that has experienced development in line with the social development of society and science. It is known that language exists and develops through signs and imitates the sounds of nature around it, such as; gusts of wind, thunder, splashing of water etc. (Nur, 2014). While other experts view that language exists because it is the inspiration of Allah Ta'ala, where a person is born with the provision of language. The following verse shows how the Qur'an provides information about the origin of the language; Quraish Shihab said in his commentary that Allah taught Adam the names of objects in their entirety, that is, to give him the potential knowledge of the names or words used to designate objects, or to teach him to know the functions of objects. This verse informs that in addition to the potential to know the functions and characteristics of things, Allah also bestows the potential to speak. After God created Adam and taught him the names and properties of things so that he could live and benefit from nature, God showed these things to the angels." Mention the names and properties of these things if you think you know better, that you have the right of the caliph and there is no one better than you, because your obedience and worship are right," Allah said to the angels.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a literature review (library research). Library research is research whose object is searched with various library information such as books, scientific journals, magazines, newspapers, and documents (Sari, 2020). This research is different from other studies that require observation or interviews in data acquisition. This research is one of the types of approaches in qualitative research. The purpose of this study is to obtain descriptive data. Data collection techniques with documentation techniques with data sources obtained from previous scientific works that have been published both from journals, proceedings, theses, theses and dissertations related to the use of social media in learning Arabic. The data analysis technique and drawing conclusions with three steps, namely: editing, organizing and inference. The researcher first collects data related to the research, then the data is grouped and compared between one writing and another that has the same as this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arabic is a family of Semitic languages and has the most speakers. The Semites and their language were descended from the son of the Prophet Noah named Sam. This lineage of Sam gave birth to various languages, including the Akkadiyyah, Kan'an, Ethiopian, Arabic and so on. According to experts, the languages of the world, which are estimated to number almost 3000 languages, are best grouped with theories based on kinship, namely the Indo-European, Semitic-Hemite and Turanian language families (Harahap, 2021).

The veil of history and the origin of the Arabic language can be traced to the time before or after the arrival of Islam. Looking at its historical aspects, it turns out that Arabic has similarities with cognate languages spoken by the Hebri, Habasyi, Aramiyyah and others. The starting point of the progress and rapid development of the Arabic language began since the revelation of the Quran in Arabic which is the greatest miracle in this world. Arabic has indirectly become the language of communication for Muslims around the world in addition to the hadith of the Prophet being immortalized in Arabic. All aspects of Islamic science and the spread of Islamic da'wah to all corners of the earth, use the medium of Arabic, both oral and written (Sukarba, 2019).

In addition, Arabic as the language of the Quraysh Arabic tribe which was standard at that time, was a language that had reached the peak of maturity and maturity. This is evident from the use of Arabic as a literary and unifying language during the Jahiliyyah period, besides that Arabic is still a language that is able to accommodate the needs of its users and absorb various scientific and technological developments in various fields (Wahab, 2014).

Arabic can be divided into two parts: First, the extinct Arabic (Al-'Arabiyyah Badi'ah), which is the language that has been spoken by Arab families living in the northern part of Hedjaz and adjacent to the borders of Armenia. Second, the surviving Arabic language (al-'arabiyyahal-baqiyah), which is a language that is still used by the Arabs as a literary, oral, and written language. This language grew in the lands of Hedjaz and Nejd, then spread throughout the country (Al-Fisyawi, 2002).

### Arabic as the language of Islamic culture

Cultural diversity is influenced by the variety of languages used. The geographical differences of a region or layer and the social environment greatly affect language diversity. Language is an important component of culture. Because it is through this language medium that all aspects of culture are transferred orally and in writing. It is difficult to understand the nuances and meanings in a culture without understanding the language. Just like the Arabic language which has dozens of names for dates ranging from those that are still on the tree, those that have just been picked, to those that have dried (Isnaini, 2018).

Through language, humans can think systematically and systemically that help humans express what is in their minds, so that the mind and language are tools for action. Language as an embodiment of a form of thought can also be a tool to develop and perfect that thought. In other words, language can help human thinking to think more systematically.

Arabic has long been established as a culture in the language of life. Because, it has been used and has been functioning since the time of the prophet Adam Alaihisslam. People who dive into Arabic, will prove that this language is a means to form noble morals and cut dirty tempers. Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Know that attention to the Arabic language will have a great effect on one's intellectual, moral, and religious power with a very strong and real influence. Likewise, it will have a positive effect to try to emulate the early generation of this ummah from among the companions, tabi'in and imitate them, will increase the power of intelligence, religion and ethics" (Al-Fisyawi, 2002).

Muslims believe that Arabic is more special than others. Because Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, the rules of Islam. The language used in worship, Islamic science and literature since the prophet Muhammad was sent and divine revelation came down, and the language of hadith. The relationship between Arabic and Islam makes it special from other languages in terms of language. And its relationship with the Qur'an also makes reason strong and eternal. Many scholars exert their abilities in revealing the secrets of the Qur'an. Arabic has a special feature not only because of the language brought by Islam. However, Arabic has something unique to study from other languages.

If it is said that Arabic is the language of Islam, then the consequence is that to understand the Islamic religious sciences it is necessary to master Arabic. Because the source of Islamic religious knowledge is written in Arabic. So that Islam and Arabic are like two sides of a currency that cannot be separated. Meanwhile, if it is said that Arabic is a foreign language, then the consequence is that Arabic is positioned as a language of communication which is not a prerequisite for understanding the sciences of Islam.

### **Arabic, a Pillar of Diversity**

The important role of this language, being very dominant in the life of the nation, is proven to be used every day by more than 290 million people around the world. Since 2012, World Arabic Language Day has been celebrated every year on December 18. The relationship between Arabic and Islam is like two sides of a currency that are interconnected. In fact, Indonesian history records that the presence of Islam in the archipelago in the XVII century is believed to be the main reason for the grounding of Arabic in Indonesia and becoming a foreign language that has a linguistic influence on the Indonesian and literary aspects (Answer, 2018).

Although Arabic is synonymous with Muslims, Arabic language learners both in universities, International Language Institutes (LBI), Schools of Foreign Education (Sekdilu) and others are not all Muslims. They learn Arabic as a career requirement as a prospective diplomat, Arabic as a scientific language, and there are even learners who want to know Arabic only to encourage their curiosity about Islam.

As a religious and cultural language, it can be seen from the use of Arabic as the language of the holy book, the language of ritual (worship), the language of Islamic culture, and the language of science. As a ritual language, Arabic is used in adhan, prayer, and prayer. As a cultural language, it can be seen that its use in artistic expressions (sound arts, literary arts, drama arts, fine arts, and others), both traditional and modern, has recently developed rapidly and is appreciated by various segments of society. Nowadays, the study of Islamic archaeology is also beginning to receive attention because many historical relics in various parts of the archipelago are written in Arabic calligraphy.

Koentjaraningrat in Chaer and Leonie states that language is part of culture. So, the relationship between language and culture is a subordinate relationship because language is under the scope of culture. However, there are other opinions that say that language and culture have a coordinated relationship, that is, an equal relationship, which is of equal status. Thus, the relationship between language and culture is like conjoined twins, two phenomena that are very closely related to two sides of a currency, one side as a linguistic system and the other as a cultural system (Ash'Ari, 2016).

### **Arabic as a Unifier of Ethnic Diversity**

The Arabic language has gone through a long history of formative and development. Pre-Islamic Arab society consisted of several tribes and had a number of different dialects of the language (al-lahajat al-arabiyah alqadimah) that varied due to the differences and special conditions that existed in each region. (Nadwi, 2005) The Arabic language has undergone

various changes and developments in accordance with human civilization. The development of Arabic itself consists of several periods, including:

#### **Jahiliyah period**

In this period, the values of standardization of the formation of fusha Arabic emerged, with the existence of several important activities that have become the tradition of the Mecca people. The activity was in the form of a festival of Arabic poems (mu'alaqah) held at Uaz Market, Majanah, Zul Majah which finally encouraged the dissemination and spread of the Arabic language. In the end, these activities can form the standardization of Arabic fusha and its literature (Al-Fisyawi, 2002)

#### **Period permulan Islam**

The descent of the Qur'an by bringing a large number of new vocabulary has made Arabic a language that has been perfected both in mufradat, meaning, and grammatical of other sciences. The expansion of Islamic territories until the establishment of the Umayyad Empire. After the development of Islamic power, the Arab Muslims moved to a new country, until MasA Khulafa ar-Rashidin (Answer, 2018). Umayyad Period There was a mixture of Arabs and natives due to the expansion of Islamic territory. There were Arab attempts to spread Arabic to the region through civilized expansion. Practicing Arabization in various lives, the natives learned Arabic as a language of religion and association.

#### **Period Bani Abbasiyah**

The Abbasid government believed that the glory of the government could survive if it depended on the progress of Islam and the Arabic language. The progress of Islam is commanded by carrying out Qur'anic dissecting activities for the branches of scientific disciplines, both religious and other sciences (Nur, 2014). Bedouin Arabic which is natural in nature is still maintained and is seen as a high-quality and pure language that must be mastered by the sons and daughters of the Banu Abbas. In the 4th century Hijri, fusha Arabic had become a written language for administrative, cultural, and scientific purposes. Arabic began to be learned through books, so the fusha language developed and expanded.

Arabic is the main key to knowing Islamic knowledge and culture. Without Arabic, Arabic science and literature are difficult to understand. apart from being a religious language, Arabic is a language that unites various ethnic groups during the jahiliyyah period until now. Arabic does not belong to the Arabs or Muslims alone, but belongs to the entire ummah. This can be seen from its use in prayer and communication between nations.

#### **Debates and Opinions of Linguists**

The diversity of the Arabic language has been classified by its experts since ancient times based on ethnic diversity, geographical conditions, culture, and socio-cultural circumstances, among others. From this classification, a variety of dialects are born that are different in terms of phonetics, syntax, grammar, and vocabulary usage. In subsequent developments, one of the many dialects of Arabic was chosen to become the lingua franca, which is a language used in various formal settings, speeches, broadcasts and journalism, and official writings. Lingua franca as a common language (al-lugat al-musytarakah) which is used as a medium of communication between tribes, was born from interactions and meetings between members of various tribes through travel, trade, and various art and literary festivals. After going through a long process, the Quraish dialect was formed and selected as the lingua franca. The process then received mixed comments from a number of experts (Al-Fisyawi, 2002). Ibn Faris is of the view that the Quraish dialect was the most fluent, dominant dialect and understood by the various tribes throughout the Arabian Peninsula during the pre-Islamic period, among the various dialects of the Arab tribes at that time. In line with that, Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi is of the view that the Quraish dialect does outperform other dialects and becomes a cross-tribal literary language (Answer, 2018). Taha Husayn is of the view that the dominance of the Quraish dialect over other dialects only occurred in the pre-Islamic period because in the post-Islamic



period the Quraish dialect benefited from external factors, for example because the people were in Makkah.

Meanwhile, Abduh al-Rajihi did not recognize the Quraysh dialect as a lingua franca or common language for all Arab tribes. According to him, the assumption that the Quraish dialect is the lingua franca for all Arab tribes is only meant to glorify the tribe of Muhammad as a messenger. Al-Rajihi gives an example as proof of his argument, for example, the people of the Hijaz where the Quraish is one of the tribes tend to read the hamzah lightly, while the other tribes read it clearly. At the same time, the recitation of hamzah is clearly used in the legacy of pre-Islamic poetry and in the qira'at of the Qur'an more often than light or weak recitations. Arabic language expert, Ferguson, expressed his views regarding the urgency of Arabic, namely, it is one of the languages derived from the Syamiyah language which until now has an important influence and role, as well as the language with the largest quantity. Many historians state that Arabic was the language of the prophet Adam Alaihissalam. An atsar also mentions that Arabic is the language of the inhabitants of heaven, so it is Arabic that gives birth to the languages of the world. The language of the descendants of the prophet Noah Alaihissalam, such as Sami, Hami, and Jafit, is derived from Arabic.

This view seems to be different from that of other historians and linguists, for the mu'arrikh and linguists, Arabic comes from a human race and a language family that has a major role in the history of ancient civilization, namely the Semites. The descendants moved from their homeland to settle in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, forming new languages and nations, such as Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Armenians, Tunisians and others.

Badawi mentioned five varieties of Arabic. But, broadly speaking, there are at least three varieties of Arabic that coexist; Classical Arabic is the most prestigious variety because it is the language of the Quran. It is well defined as it has been codified by early Arabic grammarians. The consensus among traditional Arabic grammarians is that this grammar is complete because it describes a closed corpus i.e., Arabic heritage religion and literature. Everyday dialects are well defined, not because they are fully codified, but because they are acquired naturally by their native speakers. Each Arabic-speaking country has its own dialect that is used mainly in daily communication. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

A form of Arabic used among educated Arabic speakers in formal situations. It is not a well-defined variety because, unlike everyday dialects, it is not anyone's native language. And unlike classical Arabic, it has not been fully explained and described. Ahmed Godamy, a linguist and lecturer at Cairo University, said in recent decades, many Western government entities have announced that they consider Arabic to be one of the most important languages in their investigations. Therefore, they encourage their staff to learn Arabic and offer programs to support them in the learning process. In fact, Arabic carries all the characteristics that cause the aforementioned difficulties for foreign learners. However, we should not rush to criticize Arabic excessively, since this characteristic may be the reason why the Arabic language lasted about 15 decades, and still exists, almost without radical changes in its morphology, syntax, phonology .

Chrysaor Jordan, a writer on the Quora app also said On the other hand, Arabic has much fewer vowels than English or Dutch. And although in Dutch we cannot distinguish "sin" from "shad", Arabic speakers will at least be equally challenged to distinguish "and" from "duin". Each language has some features that other languages don't have. No language has everything. It is true that the Qur'an is only poetic in Arabic. It is equally true that Dante only rhymed in Medieval Italian, and Shakespeare only rhymed in Elizabethan English.

According to Andrew McKenzie, a Doctoral and linguist at the University of Kansas, United States, linguists have a consensus. That no language is the most perfect according to any criteria, including the clearest and easiest to understand. There is no reliable way to measure clarity. Even if we can define it correctly. What is known is that Arabic, like every

other language observed in the world, is full of ambiguity, ambiguity of implicit propositions, and other factors that make things less clear, but necessary by actual grammar.

## CONCLUSION

Cultural diversity must be influenced by the variety of languages used. Through language, humans can think systematically and systemically that help humans express what is in their minds, so that the mind and language are tools for action. Arabic is an Islamic language and has several advantages, even according to Ibn Kathir, Arabic is the most noble language. It has glorified humans, given the advantages of all animals by speaking, and glorified Arabic as the most beautiful language. And it is enough as the primacy of the Arabic language because with this language the Qur'an descends, as well as as the language of the inhabitants of Heaven. Arabic is the most important language, the widest in scope and the best language, because it is the language used since the time of the prophet Adam Alaihissalam.

People who dive into Arabic, will prove that this language is a means to form noble morals and cut dirty tempers. In this regard, Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Know that attention to the Arabic language will have a great effect on (a person's) intellectual, moral, religious power with a very strong and real influence. Allah SWT chose Arabic as the language of His Holy Book, not only because the society in which the Prophet Muhammad was ordained as an apostle was an Arabic-speaking society (bi lisân qawmihi), but also because Arabic was considered adaptive, suitable and expressive. A divine message that is eternal and universal. Many scholars exert their abilities in revealing the secrets of the Qur'an. Arabic has a special feature not only because of the language brought by Islam. If it is said that Arabic is the language of Islam, then the consequence is that to understand the Islamic religious sciences it is necessary to master Arabic. So that Islam and Arabic are like two sides of a currency that cannot be separated.

The descent of the Qur'an by bringing a large number of new vocabulary has made Arabic a language that has been perfected both in mufradat, meaning, and grammatical of other sciences. There was a mixture of Arabs and natives due to the expansion of Islamic territory. There were Arab attempts to spread Arabic to the region through civilized expansion. The progress of Islam is decreed by carrying out Qur'anic dissecting activities for branches of scientific disciplines, both religious and other sciences. Bedouin Arabic which is natural in nature is still maintained and is seen as a high-quality and pure language that must be mastered by the sons and daughters of the Banu Abbas. Therefore, Arabic is the main key to knowing Islamic knowledge and culture. Without Arabic, Arabic science and literature are difficult to understand. The diversity of the Arabic language has been classified by its experts since ancient times based on ethnic diversity, geographical conditions, culture, and socio-cultural circumstances, among others. Lingua franca as a common language (al-lugat al-musytarakah) which is used as a medium of communication between tribes, was born from interactions and meetings between members of various tribes through travel, trade, and various art and literary festivals.

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