**Research Article** 

# IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURE-BASED ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING AT MAN 3 TANAH DATAR

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#### Abstract

This study examines the low effectiveness of Arabic language learning at MAN 3 Tanah Datar due to a non-contextual approach to students' culture. The purpose of this study was to describe the implementation of culture-based learning, identify the strategies and media used by teachers, and determine its impact on student motivation and understanding. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with interview, observation, and documentation techniques, involving teachers, students, and the principal of MAN 3 Tanah Datar. The results showed that although it has not yet become a formal policy, teachers have creatively integrated elements of local and Arabic culture into their learning. This approach has been proven to increase student participation and strengthen student mastery of the material. These findings emphasize the importance of cultural contextualization in Arabic language teaching at the secondary level.

**Keywords**: Arabic Language, Culture-Based Learning, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri



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#### INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning at the Islamic Senior High School (MAN) level is still dominated by a textual approach that emphasizes grammatical aspects (nahwu and sharaf) without considering the students' cultural context or Arabic culture itself. However, this approach is less effective in optimally stimulating student interest, given that MAN students are at a stage of cognitive and affective development that is heavily influenced by their social and cultural environment. Integrating Arabic language materials with local and Arab cultural values should be an effective bridge to facilitate understanding and increase the relevance of learning (Aziz dkk., 2024; Fathoni, 2024). However, the reality on the ground shows that teachers tend to rely solely on grammatical methods and the use of non-contextualized textbooks, resulting in students experiencing difficulties in understanding the meaning and use of Arabic in real-life situations. As a result, students' abilities to master vocabulary, construct sentences, and comprehend Arabic texts are weakened, and their interest in Arabic declines dramatically.

Numerous literature studies indicate that learning approaches that link language to cultural context have a positive impact on students' language skills (Aini dkk., 2025; Sholehah dkk., 2025). Constructivist learning theory and communicative approaches to language learning emphasize the importance of the socio-cultural context as an integral part of the learning process (Handayani & Darodjat, 2024; Widayat & Irham, 2021). However, the application of these theories in Arabic language learning in schools remains suboptimal, particularly at the Islamic Senior High School (MAN) level. Existing literature largely discusses the importance of a contextual approach, but it does not specifically address how the integration of local and Arabic culture can be practically implemented in Arabic language classes. This indicates a gap between theory and learning practice, where the use of culture as a pedagogical instrument has not been explained in a practical or strategic manner. Therefore, a study is needed that focuses on how culture-based Arabic language learning is implemented in a real-life school environment.

Based on this background and problems, this study aims to describe how culture-based Arabic language learning is implemented in a State Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah). Furthermore, this study aims to identify the strategies and media used by teachers to link Arabic language material with elements of local and Arabic culture. Furthermore, this study aims to determine the extent to which the implementation of culture-based learning can impact student motivation and understanding in learning Arabic. By focusing on field practice, this research is expected to provide a concrete picture of innovative learning practices that are relevant to student needs and current developments. These objectives are formulated so that the research results not only provide theoretical contributions, but are also applicable to teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policy makers.

Considering the complexity of the existing problems and the desired objectives, this research is crucial. Students' low interest and understanding of Arabic is not solely caused by internal factors, but also by a learning approach that is less adaptive to their needs and cultural backgrounds. The fundamental argument of this research is that cultural integration in language learning can bridge the gap between the material taught and students' lived experiences, making it easier for them to understand and internalize Arabic. This research is also based on the assumption that teachers have a strategic role in creating a meaningful learning environment that relies not only on texts and grammar but also links them to cultural values. Therefore, this study is expected to enrich the body of knowledge in Arabic language education and provide an alternative, more contextual and humanistic learning approach in the State Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic Senior High School) environment.

Culture-based learning is an educational approach that emphasizes the integration of cultural values, norms, and practices into the teaching and learning process to strengthen the relevance of the material to students' real lives (ISTIKA dkk., 2024; Miskiyyah dkk., 2025). Conceptually, this learning is based on the assumption that culture is the primary foundation for shaping students' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors (Hardiyanto dkk., 2024; Saryono dkk., 2024). Therefore, teaching that incorporates cultural elements allows students to construct deeper meaning because it directly relates to their experiences and identities. In the context of language education, culture-based learning not only enriches the material but also strengthens students' affective and cognitive aspects in understanding language as a cultural product and medium. With this approach, students not only learn vocabulary and grammar but also understand the social, symbolic, and historical context of the language they are learning. Therefore, understanding the concept of culture-based learning is crucial in developing learning models that are responsive to the diversity of student backgrounds.

Culture-based learning can be manifested in various forms that reflect the richness of local values and relevant foreign cultural values, such as Arab culture in Arabic language learning. This learning manifestation can be categorized into three main aspects: cultural content in teaching materials, teaching methods that consider students' culturally appropriate learning habits, and classroom social interactions that accommodate diverse values and perspectives. In practice, teachers can link lesson themes to students' local cultural practices, such as traditional ceremonies or religious traditions, and introduce Arabic culture through the context of history, literature, and the daily lives of Arab communities. Furthermore, a culture-based approach also encourages the use of authentic learning media, such as songs, videos, or folktales that embody cultural values. This makes learning more lively, contextual, and engages students' identity as individuals living within a specific cultural community.

Arabic is conceptually a Semitic language with a unique morphological and syntactic structure and is considered a sacred language in the Islamic context because it is the language of the Quran. This language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a representation of civilization, science, and value systems that have developed over centuries. In the context of learning, Arabic holds a special position because it encompasses linguistic, religious, and cultural dimensions (Assakinah dkk., 2025; Fuadah dkk., 2025). The definition of Arabic from an educational perspective encompasses an understanding of the interrelated aspects of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics that shape students' communicative competence (Rifa'i, 2021; Sofa & Febrianti, 2025). Arabic is also understood as an instrument for accessing classical and contemporary Islamic literature, so mastery is not merely academic but also spiritual and ideological. Therefore, Arabic language learning needs to be developed with a holistic approach that is relevant to the students' realities.

The manifestation of Arabic language learning encompasses various forms and strategies used to effectively achieve learning objectives, both from a linguistic and cultural perspective. Practically, Arabic language learning involves practicing speaking (kalam), listening (istima'), reading (qira'ah), and writing (kitabah), each of which is developed based on established competency standards. Furthermore, Arabic language learning also involves understanding the Arab cultural context, such as customs, social structures, idiomatic expressions, and social and religious values. This implementation can be achieved through the use of teaching materials that include narratives of daily life in Arab communities, intercultural dialogue, and the integration of cultural activities such as drama, music, or Arabic poetry. Thus, students are not only able to use Arabic technically but also understand the meaning and values inherent in the language, ultimately strengthening their intercultural competence.

State Islamic Senior High Schools (MAN) in the Indonesian education system are a formal education level intended for students aged 15–18 years old and in their late adolescence. Conceptually, MAN aims to prepare students to continue their education to a higher level or enter the workforce with adequate academic background and basic skills. Within the national

curriculum, MAN offers both general and in-depth learning programs in specific areas, including foreign languages such as Arabic, taught both as compulsory subjects in Islamic schools and as electives. The characteristics of MAN students, who are in the process of searching for identity and exploring values, necessitate a contextual, participatory, and inspiring learning approach at this level. Therefore, the concept of MAN is not limited to educational institutions but also serves as a space for the formation of character, values, and 21st-century competencies.

The educational manifestations at the State Islamic Senior High School level include the curriculum structure, pedagogical practices, and academic culture prevailing in the school environment. In the context of culture-based Arabic language learning, MAN (Islamic Senior High School) is a strategic platform for implementing this approach because students are at an age capable of understanding the relationship between language, identity, and culture. This manifestation can be seen in the implementation of a curriculum that integrates local content, the use of collaborative learning methods, and extracurricular activities that support crosscultural understanding. In several Islamic-based MAN, Arabic language learning takes place not only in the classroom but also through activities such as muhadharah (religious study groups), book discussions, or Arabic cultural study activities facilitated by teachers. This demonstrates that high schools have great potential in developing Arabic language learning that emphasizes not only linguistic aspects but also cultural and contextual dimensions that enrich students' learning experiences.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

This research focuses on the implementation of Arabic language learning practices in State Islamic Senior High Schools (MA), particularly regarding the tendency of teachers to use a purely textual and grammatical learning approach. Initial observations indicate that this approach fails to consider students' cultural backgrounds and does not connect the teaching material to an authentic Arabic socio-cultural context. The absence of cultural elements in Arabic language teaching results in low student engagement in the learning process, weak vocabulary mastery, and a lack of appreciation for Arabic as a language with historical and religious value. This research is important because the current learning environment at MAN (Islamic State Senior High School) demonstrates a gap between the subject matter and students' cultural experiences, making it difficult to internalize the meaning and values of Arabic itself. Therefore, the research focuses on how Arabic language learning can be integrated with a culture-based approach to make it more contextual and effective.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide a detailed and in-depth overview of the phenomenon under study without manipulating variables. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for examining the dynamics of culture-based Arabic language learning in a natural and comprehensive manner in schools. The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with informants directly involved in the learning process, including teachers, students, and school management. These interviews explored their perspectives and experiences regarding the approaches used in Arabic language learning and their relationship to cultural aspects. Meanwhile, secondary data included documentation and literature reviews from books, journal articles, and other sources relevant to the research keywords, namely culture-based learning, Arabic language, and high schools. With this combination of data, the research is expected to form a comprehensive picture of the learning practices in question.

Participants in this study were selected purposively to ensure the relevance and depth of the information obtained. The primary participants consisted of three Arabic language teachers from MAN 3 Tanah Datar. All three had over five years of teaching experience and were actively involved in the development of materials and the implementation of the lessons.

Additionally, the study involved 30 eleventh-grade students from MAN who had been participating in Arabic language learning for at least one academic year. These students were selected to provide perspectives from the learning recipient's perspective, particularly regarding their perceptions of the use of culture in the learning process. Furthermore, the Madrasah Principal and Deputy Principal for Curriculum from each institution also served as resource persons to gather information regarding policy support for culture-based learning approaches. By involving these three groups, the data obtained was richer and more comprehensive.

The research process involved a series of data collection stages, including interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were semi-structured, guided by open-ended questions, allowing participants to freely express their views and experiences. Observations were conducted of classroom learning activities to directly observe how the culture-based approach was implemented by teachers and received by students. Furthermore, documentation such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and student-produced learning products were analyzed to determine the extent to which cultural elements were integrated into the teaching materials and methods. The entire data collection process was conducted over three months, with regular school visits. This stage was designed to ensure the data collected was in-depth and representative of the reality on the ground.

In analyzing the data, this study employed the Miles and Huberman analysis technique, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Latifah & Supena, 2021; Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Data reduction was carried out by sorting and simplifying information from interviews, observations, and documentation into relevant themes. The reduced data was then presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and meaning. The final stage, drawing conclusions, was carried out in stages and iteratively, verifying the findings to ensure the validity of the analysis. To strengthen data validity, this study also employed source triangulation, comparing data from various informants to ensure consistency. Through this step, the results are expected to reflect objective reality and be scientifically accountable.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research on Culture-Based Learning practices revealed variations in its implementation across the three state Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah) studied. Interviews revealed that some teachers acknowledged that the culture-based approach was still minimally implemented due to limited resources and a lack of relevant training. However, one teacher attempted to link Arabic language material to local culture, such as comparing Arabic expressions with regional proverbs. Students reported feeling more engaged and engaged when the material was presented through cultural media such as videos or Arabic folktales. The principal confirmed that the culture-based approach was considered relevant and supportive, although it had not yet become a formal curriculum policy. Classroom observations revealed that teachers used cultural media such as songs, images, and videos related to Arab culture. Classroom discussions frequently included comparisons between Arab and local cultures, particularly regarding greetings, clothing, and food. Documentation supported these findings, including lesson plans that included a section on integrating cultural values, teacher journals documenting experiences using the culture-based approach, and worksheets that assigned students to explore and write about differences between Arab and local cultures.

Further analysis of the data revealed that cultural integration in learning was implemented in a variety of contextual ways. Teachers who implement this approach typically begin lessons by introducing Arabic cultural concepts through videos or images related to everyday customs, such as dress codes, greetings, and eating habits. They then compare these concepts with the students' local culture and engage them in simple Arabic discussions. In some classes, students are tasked with creating presentations about their respective regional

cultures and presenting them using Arabic vocabulary. Students' enthusiasm increases, as reflected in their active participation in questions and discussions throughout the learning process. Teachers also note that students more easily grasp the meaning of vocabulary related to everyday life when linked to their own cultural experiences.

The correlation between the descriptive and explanatory data and the initial reality of the research problem indicates a good fit. The primary issue addressed in this study is the low contextuality of Arabic language learning due to the dominance of a grammatical approach. Findings indicate that when teachers attempt to integrate cultural elements, both local and Arabic, student engagement in learning increases. Although not yet systematically implemented, the use of a culture-based approach has proven effective in bridging the gap between the subject matter and students' realities and enhancing their understanding of Arabic in a broader context. Thus, the research results illustrate that the implementation of culture-based learning, although not yet optimal, is starting to show a shift from traditional methods towards more meaningful and participatory learning.

Research on aspects of the Arabic language reveals that students' understanding of the language is highly dependent on the teacher's approach. Interviews revealed that teachers found abstract vocabulary or vocabulary based on grammatical structures difficult for students to grasp if not linked to concrete examples or cultural context. Classroom observations revealed that students were better able to understand and remember vocabulary when linked to cultural experiences, for example through demonstrations, stories, or songs containing Arabic expressions. Documentation supports this, with worksheets and lesson plans including culturally relevant material such as ta'aruf (introduction to Arabic) and 'urf (introduction to Arabic). Photos of learning activities show students listening to Arabic songs and discussing Arabic food culture in small groups.

Further analysis of the Arabic language data shows that learning that incorporates cultural elements tends to activate students' language skills, both in terms of vocabulary, understanding meaning, and usage in context. Teachers noted that when students were introduced to culturally relevant vocabulary, such as traditional clothing (jalabiyah, abaya) or typical Arabic foods (kabsah, hummus), they not only remembered the words but were also able to use them in simple sentences. This approach provided a more lively and meaningful learning experience. Documentation in the form of teacher journals indicates that this method increases students' enthusiasm for learning and makes it easier for teachers to explain abstract concepts in Arabic.

The relationship between descriptive results regarding Arabic and the reality of learning problems indicates positive changes when a culture-based approach is implemented. Initially, the main obstacles encountered were students' weak vocabulary mastery and low appreciation of Arabic. However, observations and documentation show that cultural inclusion in learning can strengthen students' understanding, expand their vocabulary, and foster a sense of belonging to Arabic as part of their Islamic identity. This demonstrates that the relationship between language and culture is not merely theoretical but is evident in learning practices and impacts the quality of student learning.

Research focusing on aspects of State Islamic Senior High Schools (MAN) revealed that the institutional context also influences the implementation of culture-based learning. Interviews with the principal and vice principal for curriculum revealed that there is no specific policy directing teachers to use a cultural approach in teaching Arabic. However, they expressed openness and support for learning innovations as long as they align with the curriculum. Observations showed that learning facilities at the three schools were relatively adequate, including projectors, speakers, and internet access, allowing teachers to display culture-based learning media. Internal school policy documents, such as annual work programs and supervision reports, indicate that there is room for teachers to develop varied learning methods.

Explanation of this institutional data demonstrates that MAN, as an educational institution, actually has significant opportunities to accommodate a culture-based learning approach. The availability of facilities and support from school management are supporting factors, although there is no binding written policy. Teachers have the freedom to develop lesson plans (RPP) and choose learning strategies as long as they align with the established learning outcomes. This is reflected in the lesson plans and learning documents, which demonstrate the explicit integration of Arabic cultural values. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in training or MGMP activities that have the potential to strengthen innovative learning approaches. The relationship between MAN's institutional reality and the research problem confirms that the main challenge in implementing culture-based learning lies not in limited facilities or inhibiting policies, but rather in teacher initiative and the lack of standardized policy direction. The research findings indicate that schools actually provide sufficient flexibility for teachers to innovate in their learning. When teachers are able to utilize available facilities and align learning with students' cultural contexts, Arabic language learning becomes more engaging and meaningful. Therefore, MAN as an institution has strategic potential to encourage the development of a more systematic culture-based learning approach in the future. The following table presents research findings based on interviews, observations, and documentation studies:

Table 1. presents research findings based on interviews, observations, and documentation studies

| No. | Research Purposes      | Research Findings  |
|-----|------------------------|--|
| 1   | Describes how          | Culture-based learning is implemented through the                              |
|     | culture-based Arabic   | integration of Arabic and local cultural elements into                         |
|     | language learning is   | teaching materials, both verbally and visually. Teachers                       |
|     | implemented in Senior  | incorporate cultural content through nasheed songs, videos                     |
|     | High Schools           | of Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations, and                               |
|     |                        | comparisons between Arab and local cultures. However,                          |
|     |                        | this implementation is inconsistent and has not yet become                     |
| 2   | Identifying strategies | an official policy.  The strategies used by teachers include contextual use of |
| 2   | and media used by      | local proverbs and Arabic expressions, comparative cultural                    |
|     | teachers in linking    | discussions, and presentations of Arabic folk tales. The                       |
|     | Arabic language        | media used include images, songs, videos, and student                          |
|     | material with cultural | worksheets that include tasks to explore Arabic and local                      |
|     | elements               | culture.   |
| 3   | To determine the       | Students showed increased motivation and participation                         |
|     | impact of              | when the material was connected to their culture or Arabic                     |
|     | implementing culture-  | culture. Activities became more interactive, and students                      |
|     | based learning on      | were more enthusiastic about asking questions and                              |
|     | students' motivation   | completing assignments. Their understanding of Arabic                          |
|     | and understanding in   | vocabulary and the contexts in which it was used also                          |
|     | learning Arabic.       | improved significantly.  |

The results of this study reveal that the implementation of culture-based Arabic language learning at the State Islamic Senior High School level has not been formally structured, but has emerged sporadically through teacher initiatives. Strategies for linking Arabic language material with cultural elements are evident through the use of visual media, songs, videos, and discussion activities linking Arabic culture with local culture. Although not all teachers have a well-established methodological understanding of the culture-based approach, they have attempted to apply it in a more communicative and contextual learning context. The impact is significant in increasing student learning motivation, which is more active and engaged when

learning is culturally contextualized. In this context, media and contextual approaches are key levers that encourage students' understanding of Arabic vocabulary and structure in a more applicable and meaningful way.

Compared with previous research, this study offers a more practical contribution to the dynamics of Arabic language learning. Some previous studies only emphasized cultural integration as supplementary content within teaching materials, whereas this study demonstrates how culture is positioned as an active and interactive pedagogical approach. The findings of this study reinforce the conclusions of Al-Azami's (2014) study regarding the importance of cultural contextualization in language learning, but go beyond this by demonstrating direct classroom practice and how the strategies and media used facilitate the connection between language and student identity. Another advantage is the triangulated data approach—interviews, observations, and documentation—which allows for a comprehensive analysis of the learning process empirically, rather than purely theoretically.

The results of this study reflect that a culture-based approach to Arabic language learning can address the classic challenge of a lack of interest and relevance in foreign language learning. When learning is delivered by linking students' cultural identities to elements of Arabic culture, not only linguistic skills are developed but also emotional and affective engagement that strengthens the process of internalizing meaning. This indicates that the research objective of uncovering the impact of culture-based learning on student motivation and understanding has been functionally achieved. Learning linked to culture not only adds a dimension of knowledge but also enlivens the learning itself as a personal and social experience.

The implications of this research point to the need for a paradigm shift in Arabic language learning from a structuralist model to a communicative-cultural model. These findings can be used as a basis for developing curriculum policies, particularly to encourage schools to adopt a more systematic culture-based approach. These findings are also beneficial for teachers in developing more contextual learning strategies, and for teaching materials developers in designing materials that integrate cultural aspects explicitly and deliberately. Furthermore, this research provides encouragement for the educational world to interpret Arabic language learning not only as an effort to master the language but also as a means of strengthening cultural literacy and Islamic identity in the local context.

Several factors explain the research findings demonstrating the effectiveness of a culture-based approach. First, high school students are at a stage of cognitive and social development that is more open to contextual and meaningful experiences. Second, a cultural approach provides a natural context for language learning, making linguistic input easier to process and use. Third, the presence of culture-based learning media such as songs, videos, and folktales encourages multisensory engagement, which enhances student absorption. Fourth, teachers' freedom to develop learning strategies also opens up room for innovation, even though it remains individual and lacks structured policies. These factors create a synergy between methods, media, and cultural context in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language learning.

Based on the research findings, several strategic steps are needed to optimize culture-based Arabic language learning at the high school level. First, schools and educational policymakers need to formulate curriculum guidelines that emphasize cultural integration as a pedagogical approach, not simply as a supplementary material. Second, ongoing teacher training is needed to strengthen their competency in designing and implementing culture-based learning. Third, the procurement and development of teaching media that support the exploration of Arabic and local culture must be a priority. Fourth, ongoing documentation and evaluation of the implementation of this approach are necessary to ensure consistency and improvement of the method over time. With these steps, Arabic language learning can be more contextual, participatory, and meaningful for students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The most striking finding of this study is that despite the absence of official policies mandating a culture-based approach in the Arabic language curriculum at the high school level, teachers have independently developed creative initiatives that contextually link teaching materials to local and Arabic culture. The fact that this approach can stimulate active participation, increase learning interest, and significantly strengthen student understanding demonstrates that cultural integration is not merely complementary, but at the heart of meaningful learning. This approach has even proven capable of overcoming the rigidity of the dominant grammatical method, replacing it with a lively, dialogic learning process that is simultaneously affective and cognitive.

Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on Arabic language education by offering a culture-based learning approach as an alternative to conventional methods that lack contextualization. These findings support and expand the pedagogical framework that positions language as a product and expression of culture. Practically, this research provides a concrete implementation model that can be adopted by teachers, schools, and curriculum designers to make Arabic language learning more relevant to students' needs and realities. The use of media, cultural engagement strategies, and institutional support documented in this study provide practical foundations for developing more communicative and down-to-earth teaching materials.

The limitations of this study lie in its limited scope, limited to three schools in one region, and its focus on observations and interviews without longitudinal exploration of long-term changes in learning. However, this opens up significant opportunities for further research that could expand the scope, explore cultural integration in Arabic language learning in stages, and develop quantitative instruments to systematically measure the effectiveness of this approach. Future research could also explore the relationship between a culture-based approach and strengthening students' Islamic identity and intercultural competence in a global context. Therefore, this study is not the end, but rather a starting point for exploring more humane and transformative Arabic language learning.

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