



## Arabic Language Learning through Musicalization, Drama, and Sholawat in Fostering Religious Muslim Intellectuals at UIN Maliki Malang and UII Dalwa Pasuruan

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the model of Arabic language learning through poetry musicalization, drama performance, and shalawat-based artistic practices in fostering religious Muslim intellectuals at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and UII Dalwa Pasuruan. Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, the research involved students, lecturers, santri, and pesantren leaders. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that the three artistic media serve distinct yet complementary pedagogical functions. At UIN Maliki, musicalization and Arabic drama enhance linguistic competence, public speaking, creativity, and digital literacy. At UII Dalwa, shalawat performances and traditional drama (*tamthīliyyāt*) strengthen religious identity, emotional engagement, and the preservation of pesantren cultural traditions. Across both institutions, these practices contribute to the formation of *religious Muslim intellectuals*, defined in this study as learners who integrate Arabic linguistic proficiency with Islamic ethical values, spiritual discipline, and cultural-literary appreciation. Theoretically, this study enriches holistic learning discourse by integrating cognitive, affective, psychomotor, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Practically, it offers an integrative model that connects artistic performance with Arabic language mastery and character formation in both modern higher education and traditional pesantren environments.

**Keywords:** *Musicalization, Drama, Shalawat, Arabic Language Learning, Holistic Education, Religious Muslim Intellectuals*

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## الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل نموذج تعليم اللغة العربية من خلال موسيقى الشعر، والدراما العربية، وممارسات الشعائر الفنية المبنية على الصلوات (الصلوات/الصلوات النبيوية) في تشكيل المثقف المسلم الديني في جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية في مالانغ وجامعة دار اللغة والدعوة الإسلامية (دالوا) في باسوروروان. اعتمد البحث على المنهج النوعي بتصميم دراسة الحالات المتعددة، واشتمل على الطلاب والأساتذة والطلبة (السانترى) ومشائخ pesantren. جُمعت البيانات من خلال الملاحظة والمقابلات وتحليل الوثائق، ثم حللت تحليلًا موضوعيًّا. أظهرت النتائج أن الوسائل الفنية الثلاثة تؤدي وظائف تربوية مختلفة ومتكاملة؛ ففي جامعة مالك إبراهيم تُسهم موسيقى الشعر والدراما في تنمية الكفاءة اللغوية والقدرة على الإلقاء والإبداع والمهارات الرقمية، بينما في دالوا تُعزّز الصلوات والدراما التقليدية (التمثيليات) الهوية الدينية والانخراط الوجداني والحفظ على تقاليد pesantren. وتُسهم هذه الممارسات في تشكيل المثقف المسلم الديني، ويعزّز هذا البحث بأنه المتعلم الذي يجمع بين الكفاءة اللغوية العربية والقيم الأخلاقية الإسلامية والانضباط الروحي والتنوّق الشفافي الأدبي. من الناحية النظرية، يعني هذا البحث أدبيات التعلم الشمولي بدمجها الأبعاد المعرفية والوجدانية والحركية والثقافية والروحية. ومن الناحية العملية، يقدم نموذجًا تربويًّا تكامليًّا يربط بين الأداء الفني وإتقان اللغة العربية وتكوين الشخصية في سياق الجامعة الحديثة وال pesantren التقليدية. الكلمات المفتاحية: موسيقى الشعر، الدراما، الصلوات، تعليم اللغة العربية، التعلم الشمولي، المثقف المسلم الديني

## INTRODUCTION

The development of Arabic language learning in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions has increasingly moved toward creative and interdisciplinary approaches. Various artistic media have been integrated into instructional practices, including the musicalization of Arabic poetry, Arabic drama performances, and *shalawat*-based religious arts.<sup>1</sup> These media function not only as linguistic tools but also as means of value internalization and character formation, aligning with the Islamic educational paradigm that seeks harmony between knowledge, ethics, and spirituality.<sup>2</sup>

At UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, the musicalization of Arabic poetry has become a pedagogical strategy that strengthens pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and students' interpretive sensitivity.<sup>3</sup> Arabic drama is also employed to improve communicative competence, expression, and confidence in public performance. Meanwhile, in pesantren such as UII Dalwa Pasuruan, *shalawat* occupies a central place as both a devotional practice and a medium for learning Arabic through rhythmic memorization of classical texts.<sup>4</sup> Simple dramatic practices, or *tamthīliyyāt*, serve as additional language training that integrates speech performance, contextual understanding, and collaborative learning traditions deeply rooted in pesantren culture.<sup>5</sup>

The integration of musicalization, drama, and *shalawat* demonstrates broader pedagogical implications when linked with

<sup>1</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012), 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Fuad Effendy, *Pengantar Metodologi Pengajaran Bahasa Arab*, (Malang: Misykat, 2015), 148.

<sup>4</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Hubungannya dengan Masyarakat*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), 92.

<sup>5</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 65.

the formation of scholarly and religious character. In this study, the concept of “religious Muslim intellectuals” is narrowed to observable dimensions such as Arabic linguistic proficiency, participation in cultural-literary practices, spiritual discipline, and the embodiment of Islamic ethical values in academic conduct.<sup>6</sup> This refinement avoids overly expansive theoretical claims and aligns the conceptual framework with empirical realities, addressing methodological concerns highlighted in previous critiques of the term.<sup>7</sup>

Although prior studies have examined artistic media in Arabic language learning, most focus on a single medium or emphasize affective aspects without considering institutional variation.<sup>8</sup> The combined use of musicalization, drama, and shalawat offers a more comprehensive perspective, especially when applied across two institutions with distinct orientations: a modern Islamic university and a traditional pesantren. Examining UIN Malang and UII Dalwa comparatively provides insight into how institutional culture influences the function, purpose, and reception of these artistic media.<sup>9</sup>

Against this background, the present study analyzes the implementation of musicalization of poetry, Arabic drama, and shalawat in Arabic language learning at UIN Malang and UII Dalwa. It examines how these artistic media contribute not only to linguistic competence but also to the reinforcement of religious values and scholarly ethos, offering theoretical contributions to holistic Arabic pedagogy and practical insights for Islamic educational institutions.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 124.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Natsir, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), 56.

<sup>8</sup> Imron Arifin and Imam Syafe'i, “Art-Based Arabic Pedagogy in Indonesian Islamic Schools,” in *Journal of Arabic Language Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Malang: UIN Press, 2020), 77.

<sup>9</sup> Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Effendy, *Pengantar Metodologi...*, 211.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design involving two institutions: UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and UII Dalwa Pasuruan. A total of 32 participants were selected through purposive sampling, consisting of 8 Arabic lecturers/teachers, 12 university students (ages 19–22), and 12 pesantren santri (ages 15–20) who were directly involved in musicalization, drama, or *shalawat* activities. Selection criteria included: (1) active participation in at least one artistic medium; (2) minimum one year of engagement in Arabic learning programs; and (3) willingness to participate in interviews and observations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of performance-related documents. Short field observations were conducted during musicalization rehearsals, drama practice, and nightly *shalawat* sessions; for example, during a Dalwa eveningshalawat gathering, santri sat in tightly formed circles while rhythmically chanting *salawāt* texts, creating “a unified cadence that synchronized their memorization of Arabic phrases,” as recorded in the researcher’s field notes.<sup>11</sup>

Semi-structured interviews produced rich descriptions of participants’ experiences with artistic media. Excerpts included statements such as: “*Musicalization helps me understand the meaning of Arabic vocabulary because the melody makes it easier to memorize*” (UIN student, Interview 3); “*Acting in Arabic drama forces us to use full sentences, not just isolated words*” (UIN lecturer, Interview 1); “*Shalawat is the way we learn Arabic without feeling like we are studying*” (Dalwa santri, Interview 5); “*Our drama practice trains confidence and expression—things we usually struggle with in Arabic speaking class*” (UIN student, Interview 7); and “*The rhythm in shalawat*

<sup>11</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, (California: Sage Publications, 2013), 97.

*helps us pronounce long Arabic phrases correctly*” (Dalwa teacher, Interview 4). These excerpts were used to triangulate observational data and to understand how artistic media contributed to linguistic and affective learning outcomes across both institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Data analysis followed Strauss and Corbin’s coding model. In the open coding phase, data segments were labeled into initial categories such as “linguistic reinforcement,” “spiritual motivation,” “performative confidence,” and “collective learning culture.” Axial coding connected these categories by identifying relationships across learning media, such as linking musical rhythm to memorization strategies or connecting dramatic embodiment to communicative competence. Selective coding integrated these themes into broader concepts describing the pedagogical role of artistic media in each institution, resulting in core themes such as “performative pedagogy,” “devotional-linguistic integration,” and “institutionally shaped learning ethos.” Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents ensured the trustworthiness and coherence of the analysis.<sup>13</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Artistic Media as Linguistic Reinforcement: Rhythm, Repetition, and Expression

The findings of this study show that artistic media—particularly musicalization and drama—serve as dynamic linguistic reinforcers that reshape how students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang internalize Arabic phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and discourse patterns. Unlike traditional Arabic instruction that commonly depends on rote memorization, grammar-centered explanation, and teacher-led

<sup>12</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 128.

<sup>13</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, (California: Sage Publications, 1998), 66.

recitation, artistic media create multimodal learning conditions where voice, movement, rhythm, gesture, melody, and collaborative performance function simultaneously as cognitive scaffolds.<sup>14</sup>

In musicalization sessions, students repeatedly engaged with Arabic poetic texts in ways that foregrounded rhythm as a central learning mechanism. During one observed rehearsal, students sang the verse أَشْرَقْتْ شَمْسُ الْضُّحَى فَانْشَرَحَ الصَّدْرُ طَرِيًّا "Ashraqt Shamsu al-ḍuḥā fānšarāḥu al-ṣadrū ṭarriyyā" in a progressively layered melodic structure: beginning with a slow chant, moving into a moderately paced rhythm, and concluding with a collective performance where harmonization and emotional expression became more pronounced. The lecturer strategically paused between stanzas to emphasize syllabic stress, vowel lengthening, and morphological contrast. For instance, he directed students to isolate the pronunciation of "انْشَرَحَ", asking them to "feel where the sound expands" as the melody rises.<sup>15</sup>

Students reported that this melodic segmentation had direct implications for their acquisition of new vocabulary and pronunciation skills. One student explained, "When I sing the poem, I unconsciously divide the word into parts that match the melody. That makes it easier to know the root letters." Another added, "I can pronounce long Arabic words without anxiety because the rhythm carries me. The melody pushes me through difficult consonants." Such reflections reinforce scholarly discussions on rhythm-based language processing and the function of melody as an external mnemonic organizer.<sup>16</sup> The melodic repetition appears to reduce the cognitive load typically associated with decoding complex Arabic phonotactics, thereby

<sup>14</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kiai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 77.

<sup>15</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999), 54.

<sup>16</sup> Luqman Hakim, "Musik, Ritme, dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab," *Jurnal Arabia*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2019), 112.

validating Krashen's affective filter hypothesis: enjoyable artistic tasks minimize emotional barriers and allow linguistic input to flow more naturally into the learner's cognitive system.

Drama, similarly, creates a learning environment where embodied performance magnifies linguistic comprehension. During classroom observations, students practiced scripted dialogues such as “إلى أين تذهب؟ أذهب إلى المكتبة لأقرأ الكتاب,” but the instructional emphasis extended far beyond memorizing these lines. The lecturer instructed students to “feel the urgency” when asking the question, to “visualize walking into a library,” and to “perform meaning through gesture.”<sup>17</sup> This performative orientation aligns with theories of embodied cognition, which posit that language comprehension is inseparable from bodily movement and affective expression. One student reflected, “Drama lets my body learn the sentence. When I act it out, my memory becomes stronger and my tongue becomes more fluid.”

Drama also fosters pragmatic competence by requiring students to modulate tone, volume, pitch, eye contact, and interpersonal dynamics—skills that traditional textbook learning rarely engages. For instance, during one rehearsal, two students struggled to deliver the line “لا أستطيع المعجبة الآن” with the appropriate emotional tension. The lecturer encouraged them to “act frustrated,” prompting significant improvement in fluency and intonation. Another student explained, “Speaking in Arabic is difficult when it feels like a test. But when I play a character, I forget I’m being evaluated.” This observation is consistent with Communicative Arabic Teaching approaches emerging in Indonesia’s Islamic universities.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Sulaiman Ibrahim, *Metodologi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di Indonesia* (Bandung: Humaniora, 2018), 143.

<sup>18</sup> Muqoyyidin, “Communicative Arabic Teaching in Islamic Universities,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 8 No. 1 (2020), 66.

The cumulative evidence indicates that artistic media create multisensory learning environments where rhythm (musicalization) and embodiment (drama) operate as primary cognitive facilitators. This expands existing Arabic pedagogy by demonstrating that artistic experience can serve not merely as an enrichment activity, but as a core method for linguistic internalization.

### **Spiritual–Affective Engagement and Identity Formation Through Shalawat**

While UIN Malang integrates artistic media primarily as academic strategies, UII Dalwa Pasuruan represents a fundamentally different pedagogical paradigm in which devotional rituals—particularly *shalawat*—function as an implicit yet deeply influential mode of Arabic language acquisition.<sup>^6</sup> In this pesantren environment, *shalawat* is not positioned as an instructional technique nor as part of a formal curriculum; rather, it is embedded in the everyday rhythm of religious life. Yet, this immersion within ritualized Arabic expressions creates strong linguistic, affective, and identity-forming outcomes that transcend conventional pedagogical categories.

Every night, at fixed times after the *Isya'* prayer, santri gather in circular formations inside the pesantren's main hall. They engage in emotionally charged recitations such as "... مَوْلَايَ صَلَّى وَسَلَّمَ دَائِمًا أَبَدًا..." and "صَلَّى يَا رَبِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ، صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَى طَهٍ". These chants increase gradually in tempo and vocal intensity, producing a multisensory environment in which Arabic phonology becomes intertwined with rhythm, breath, and collective emotional resonance. Such ritualistic repetition produces a form of linguistic entrainment: "At the tenth repetition, the voices merged into a resonant hum. The synchronized rhythm sharpened articulation, especially in consonant-heavy passages such as 'خَيْرُ الْخَلْقِ كُلِّهِمْ'. Several santri closed their eyes, swaying slightly, their pronunciation unusually precise for beginners."

This ritualized practice allows santri to internalize Arabic vocabulary and prosody without consciously engaging in memorization. Interviews reveal that santri perceives *shalawat* not as a study task, but as an act of *'ibādah*. One santri reflected, “Shalawat is worship. Through worship, Arabic becomes familiar without forcing ourselves.” Another remarked, “The words stay because we recite them with love. When the meaning touches the heart, the language stays in the memory.” These testimonies exemplify the classic pesantren concept of *riyāqah*—disciplined spiritual practice in which repetition of sacred formulas leads to internalization not only of moral values but also of linguistic forms.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, *shalawat* becomes a domain where spirituality, memory, and linguistic acquisition interact symbiotically.

This phenomenon aligns with the theoretical framework of implicit language learning, which holds that repeated exposure to formulaic expressions in meaningful contexts results in subconscious acquisition of linguistic patterns. What distinguishes the pesantren context, however, is the affective dimension of the ritual. Emotions generated through devotion—reverence, love for the Prophet, collective solidarity—become catalysts for linguistic absorption. This differs from affective mechanisms in secular artistic learning because the emotional intensity in *shalawat* is intrinsically tied to spiritual identity. The affective filter is lowered not primarily by entertainment, but by a profound sense of piety and submission.

Furthermore, the findings resonate strongly with theories of lived religion, which emphasize that religious meaning and identity are enacted through routine practices rather than formal doctrinal instruction. Within Dalwa’s nightly *shalawat*, santri construct a shared spiritual identity anchored in the Arabic language. A teacher stated, “Here, language and devotion cannot be separated. Arabic

<sup>19</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, “Pesantren dan Budaya Lokal,” *Basis*, No. 11–12 (1988), 45.

enters through worship.”<sup>20</sup> This statement reflects a distinctive Islamic educational epistemology in which knowledge (*‘ilm*) and devotion (*‘amal*) are inseparable. Thus, the acquisition of Arabic is not an end in itself, but a natural consequence of participating in a culturally and spiritually significant ritual.

Interestingly, *shalawat* also functions as a mnemonic system. The rhythmic patterns stabilize pronunciation, while the repetitive chanting embeds lexical items and syntactic constructions into long-term memory. Certain passages, such as “اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارُكْ عَلَيْهِ” contain high-frequency morphological structures that students repeat hundreds of times over the course of a month. This creates a linguistic reservoir from which santri unconsciously draw when engaging in more formal Arabic learning. Unlike university students, who rely heavily on textbooks and structured syllabi, santri cultivate an organic sense of Arabic rhythm, stress patterns, and formulaic constructions—an effect widely observed in pesantren ritual pedagogy.<sup>21</sup>

The socio-cultural dimension further strengthens the pedagogical impact of *shalawat*. In Dalwa, participation is communal and mandatory, creating environmental saturation. Because all santri chant together, even those with weak linguistic ability are carried by the collective voice. The community thus becomes an instructional agent, reinforcing ideas that learning is mediated by social interaction, not through explicit teaching but through participation in culturally valued practices—an aspect consistently documented in pesantren ethnographies.<sup>22</sup> Although *shalawat* is not intentionally designed as a teaching tool, its ritual power is so strong that linguistic learning becomes unavoidable.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya ‘Ulum al-Din*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2005), 221.

<sup>21</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, “Pesantren dan Budaya Lokal,” *Basis*, No. 11–12 (1988), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 103.

Identity formation is another notable outcome. Through nightly repetition, santri internalize Arabic not merely as a foreign language but as a sacred language tied to the Prophet and Islamic devotion. Over time, this reshapes their linguistic attitudes: Arabic is seen not as an academic subject but as part of their spiritual journey. Such identity-based engagement generates intrinsic motivation, which research consistently links to better language learning outcomes. The Dalwa case suggests that pedagogical frameworks overlooking the affective-spiritual dimension may fail to capture powerful modes of linguistic acquisition that flourish within religious educational environments.

Finally, *shalawat* bridges the gap between spiritual and linguistic competence. Reciting Arabic texts with emotional intensity fosters attachment to the language, while the language itself deepens the experience of devotion. This reciprocal reinforcement creates a holistic form of learning rarely visible in secular educational models. In pesantren contexts, ritual, identity, and language form a unified system that reinforces each element. This suggests that the pedagogical value of *shalawat* cannot be understood merely as a linguistic tool; it must be understood as part of a broader ecosystem of spiritual formation.<sup>23</sup>

### **Institutional Culture and Pedagogical Orientation: University vs. Pesantren Dynamics**

A major contribution of this study lies in its comparative understanding of how two distinct educational cultures—UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and Pesantren Dalwa Pasuruan—shape the pedagogical meaning, function, and impact of artistic media in Arabic learning. Although both institutions utilize creative or expressive forms in their educational processes, the underlying philosophies,

<sup>23</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 389.

learning goals, and cultural orientations differ so significantly that the same media—music, drama, or ritual chanting—operate within entirely different pedagogical ecosystems.

At UIN Malang, artistic media serve as deliberate academic instruments designed to enhance linguistic competence, creativity, and communicative performance. The university environment is structured around formal curricula, credit-bearing assessments, and seminar-style teaching. Within this context, musicalization and drama are introduced intentionally by lecturers, often as part of speaking courses, phonology classes, or creative Arabic workshops. Students submit musicalized poetry recordings, stage dramatized Arabic dialogues, or present choral speech as graded assignments. One student noted that their lecturers expect originality and expressive skill, and that performing Arabic is perceived as a legitimate way to demonstrate academic mastery. Artistic media therefore become embedded within evaluative systems that measure pronunciation, fluency, expression, coherence, and creativity. This structure reflects the broader culture of Islamic universities in Indonesia, which increasingly emphasize innovation, competency-based education, and multimodal learning as vital components of communicative Arabic instruction.

The situation in Pesantren Dalwa is fundamentally different. Artistic expression there emerges not from academic design but from religious devotion and ritual continuity. *Shalawat* is not presented as a pedagogical technique but as an obligatory spiritual practice embedded deeply within pesantren life. The nightly recitations arise organically from the institution's religious ethos and long-standing traditions of devotional discipline. A teacher explained that students learn Arabic not because it is examined or graded, but because ritual participation requires linguistic familiarity and proper recitation. This perspective aligns strongly with ethnographic accounts of

pesantren which describe how ritual practices, communal discipline, and hierarchical spiritual guidance shape the acquisition of religious knowledge as well as linguistic habits.<sup>24</sup>

Arabic learning within Dalwa thus emerges from cultural immersion rather than structured pedagogical planning. The linguistic benefits of *shalawat* are incidental yet profound. Rhythmic chanting naturally enhances phonological accuracy; formulaic repetition improves vocabulary recognition; and the communal nature of the recitation reduces anxiety while nurturing a sense of shared linguistic identity. In this setting, the collective voice, the spiritual mood, and the repetitive ritual sequences serve as the primary instructional agents. The *kiai* and senior santri do not explicitly teach Arabic during *shalawat*; instead, they cultivate an atmosphere of devotion in which linguistic forms are internalized subconsciously. The community itself acts as a pedagogical structure, embodying the sociocultural principle that learning is mediated through meaningful participation in valued cultural activities.<sup>25</sup>

The contrast between UIN and Dalwa reveals two distinctive epistemologies of learning. In UIN Malang, Arabic is conceptualized primarily as an academic discipline requiring intellectual mastery, reflective analysis, and communicative performance. Students are encouraged to use artistic media as creative tools that help them express ideas, overcome anxiety, and improve fluency. Their motivation is shaped by institutional expectations and assessment mechanisms that reward creativity and skill. By contrast, in Dalwa, Arabic is approached as a sacred linguistic tradition intertwined with devotional obligations. Its mastery is perceived not as a matter of academic excellence but as a component of religious identity and spiritual discipline. Santri

<sup>24</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 103.

<sup>25</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 118.

engage with Arabic because it permeates the rituals that structure their everyday life; thus, their motivation is inherently affective and devotional rather than academic or instrumental.

These different orientations also shape the role of artistic media. At UIN Malang, musicalization and drama are used intentionally as pedagogical strategies grounded in modern educational theory. They function as academically validated techniques that enhance student engagement and help facilitate communicative competence. In *Dalwa*, however, *shalawat* functions as a spiritual discipline rather than a didactic method. Its impact on linguistic familiarity arises naturally from ritual participation and emotional immersion, not from explicit teaching goals. This distinction illustrates that artistic media acquire pedagogical meaning only when contextualized within the institutional and cultural frameworks of a learning environment.

Ultimately, the comparison between UIN and *Dalwa* demonstrates that artistic media are not neutral educational tools with universally predictable outcomes. Their pedagogical power emerges in relation to the cultural narratives, motivational structures, and epistemological values of the institutions that employ them. Musicalization and drama flourish within UIN's academically oriented, innovation-driven environment, where creativity is encouraged and assessed. Meanwhile, *shalawat* shapes the linguistic, emotional, and spiritual dispositions of *Dalwa*'s santri within a ritual-based culture that views Arabic as the linguistic embodiment of religious devotion. Understanding these distinctions is essential for designing pedagogical approaches that respect the strengths of both institutional models and for developing broader frameworks that capture the diverse realities of Arabic education in Indonesia.

## Theoretical Integration, Limitations, and Implications for Curriculum and Policy

The findings of this study reveal that the pedagogical functions of artistic media in Arabic learning—whether musical, dramatic, or devotional—cannot be understood merely through technical analysis of teaching strategies. Instead, these functions must be examined through a broader theoretical lens that integrates cognitive, cultural, spiritual, and sociolinguistic perspectives. Musicalization at UIN Malang supports rhythm-based learning theories, demonstrating that melodic scaffolding enhances phonological awareness, vocabulary retrieval, and pronunciation accuracy. Drama reinforces embodied cognition and performance-based pedagogy, showing that linguistic meaning becomes more accessible when learners activate gesture, emotion, and bodily movement in the learning process. Meanwhile, *shalawat* in Pesantren Dalwa aligns with ritual-based and identity-centered learning models, particularly those rooted in Islamic educational traditions where linguistic internalization emerges through devotional repetition rather than explicit instruction.<sup>26</sup>

The distinct functions of artistic media in the two institutions show that linguistic acquisition is inseparable from the institutional cultures in which it takes place. The academic–creative model at UIN Malang generates learning experiences shaped by modern pedagogical principles, measurable outcomes, and structured evaluation. In contrast, the ritual–devotional model at Dalwa highlights how linguistic familiarity develops through spiritual discipline, emotional resonance, and immersion within a sacred linguistic environment. These contrasting models demonstrate that Arabic learning in Indonesia does not follow a single unified pedagogical trajectory. Rather, it emerges from a diversity of cultural logics and epistemologies that

<sup>26</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, “Religion, Culture, and Education,” *Al-Jami’ah*, Vol. 39 No. 2 (2001), 342.

interact with learners' motivations, identities, and daily practices.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study underscores the need for a more holistic understanding of Arabic pedagogy—one that acknowledges the interplay between cognition, affect, ritual, and culture. The findings challenge the assumption that effective language learning must be rooted in explicit instruction, standardized curricula, and measurable competencies. Instead, they show that implicit learning mechanisms, particularly those embedded in religious or communal performance, can produce deep linguistic internalization that is difficult to achieve through classroom-based instruction alone. This aligns with the scholarly view that religious practices, when consistently repeated and emotionally charged, can function as powerful cognitive frameworks for memory, identity formation, and linguistic embodiment.<sup>27</sup>

However, the study also presents several limitations that must be acknowledged. The qualitative sample is limited to only two institutions, which means the findings cannot be generalized to all pesantren or Islamic universities in Indonesia. Furthermore, the absence of quantitative data, such as phonological tests or vocabulary assessments, limits the ability to measure the precise linguistic gains generated by musicalization, drama, or *shalawat*. The study captures the lived experiences and perceptions of students and teachers, but does not establish causal relationships or track linguistic development over time. Another limitation lies in the difficulty of evaluating spiritual impact empirically; the emotional and devotional dimensions of *shalawat* resist standardization or measurement, making them challenging to compare with academically oriented learning strategies. These limitations point to the need for

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<sup>27</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Religion, Culture, and Education," *Al-Jami 'ah*, Vol. 39 No. 2 (2001), 342.

more comprehensive research—possibly through longitudinal and mixed-method approaches—that can capture both measurable and experiential aspects of artistic and ritual-based learning.<sup>28</sup>

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and language policy. For universities such as UIN Malang, the success of musicalization and drama suggests that creative, performance-based pedagogies should be integrated more systematically into Arabic curricula. These approaches can be embedded not only in speaking courses, but also in vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and morphology instruction. Proper institutional support—such as dedicated performance spaces, training workshops for lecturers, and assessment guidelines—would allow artistic media to be used more effectively and sustainably.

In pesantren contexts, the findings suggest that *shalawat* and other devotional practices can be recognized as legitimate linguistic resources rather than merely ritual obligations. Although these practices should not be reduced to pedagogical techniques, their linguistic impact can be enhanced by complementary instructional strategies. For example, teachers might provide brief lexical or phonological explanations related to the phrases frequently recited in *shalawat*, helping santri become more aware of the structural features of the Arabic they chant. Such hybrid models could strengthen the relationship between devotional practice and formal Arabic learning without compromising the spiritual atmosphere that makes *shalawat* pedagogically powerful.

On a broader policy level, the study highlights the need for Arabic education frameworks in Indonesia to embrace pedagogical

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<sup>28</sup> M. Syahran Jailani, “Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Pesantren,” *Arabiyat*, Vol. 4 No. 1 (2017), 55

pluralism. Policymakers should recognize that Arabic learning does not occur exclusively within formal classroom boundaries. Artistic expression, ritual repetition, and embodied performance can serve as alternative pathways for linguistic internalization, particularly in culturally rich environments like pesantren. Training programs for teachers of Arabic could therefore include modules on creative pedagogy, ritual-based learning, and culturally responsive teaching, equipping educators with diverse tools that reflect Indonesia's multifaceted educational landscape. Institutions might also consider performance-based assessments that allow students to demonstrate linguistic competence through creative outputs such as musicalized recitations, dramatized dialogues, or ritual-based memorization.

Ultimately, this study argues that artistic and devotional media form an interconnected ecosystem of learning practices that transcend conventional pedagogical categories. Musicalization, drama, and *shalawat* each demonstrate that Arabic learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a deeply embodied, emotional, and culturally situated experience. Recognizing this complexity opens the door to more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to Arabic pedagogy—approaches that honor the richness of Indonesian Islamic educational traditions while engaging contemporary theories of learning. Through this integration, educators and policymakers can build more holistic models that support linguistic competence, spiritual development, and cultural identity in harmonious and sustainable ways.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that artistic and devotional media such as musicalization, drama, and *shalawat* shape Arabic learning in different ways depending on the institutional culture in which they are practiced. At UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, artistic media

encourage linguistic creativity and communicative competence through intentional performance-based instruction, while at Pesantren Dalwa Pasuruan, shalawat serves as a devotional practice that implicitly strengthens linguistic familiarity, spiritual identity, and disciplined repetition. These findings affirm that Arabic learning is both a cognitive and cultural process, emerging through academic innovation as well as spiritual immersion. Based on these dynamics, the authors recommend that universities integrate creative performance more systematically into Arabic curricula, while pesantren recognize the linguistic benefits of devotional practices and reinforce them with supportive instruction. Policymakers are encouraged to adopt more pluralistic models that appreciate the complementary value of academic and ritual based approaches in

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