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## **Arabic Language Curriculum in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Indonesia and the Philippines**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to compare the design, implementation, and evaluation of Arabic language curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines, as two national Arabic language curriculum systems in the Southeast Asian region. Employing a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design, the study utilizes document analysis as its primary method. Core data sources include Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum, as well as the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program in the Philippines. The analysis applies Posner's five dimensions of curriculum; purposes, content, organization, implementation, and evaluation. The findings indicate that Indonesia's curricula are centered on classical textual literacy and grammatical precision, yet lack adequate attention to oral communication skills. In contrast, the ALIVE curriculum promotes functional speaking ability from early stages but is limited in linguistic depth and assessment standardization. Both approaches demonstrate strengths and limitations in fostering comprehensive Arabic language competence. The study recommends the development of a more balanced curriculum integrating classical literacy and oral proficiency, supported by targeted teacher training and context-sensitive evaluation frameworks.

**Keywords:** *Arabic curriculum, Southeast Asia, comparative study, communication skills*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan desain, implementasi, dan evaluasi kurikulum bahasa Arab di Indonesia dan Filipina sebagai dua sistem kurikulum bahasa Arab nasional di kawasan Asia Tenggara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus komparatif, serta metode analisis dokumen terhadap perangkat kurikulum nasional formal. Data utama berupa dokumen Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka di Indonesia, serta program Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) di Filipina. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan lima dimensi kurikulum Posner (2004): tujuan, isi, organisasi, implementasi, dan evaluasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum Indonesia berorientasi pada literasi teks klasik dan penguasaan tata bahasa, namun belum memberikan perhatian memadai terhadap pengembangan keterampilan lisan. Sebaliknya, kurikulum ALIVE menekankan komunikasi fungsional sejak tingkat dasar, namun lemah dalam kedalaman linguistik dan standarisasi evaluasi. Kedua pendekatan menunjukkan keunggulan dan keterbatasannya masing-masing. Studi ini merekomendasikan pengembangan kurikulum yang lebih seimbang antara literasi klasik dan kompetensi komunikasi lisan, disertai pelatihan guru dan pembaruan instrumen evaluasi yang relevan dengan konteks lokal.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kurikulum bahasa Arab, Asia Tenggara, Studi komparatif, Keterampilan komunikasi*

### Introduction

In Southeast Asia, Arabic holds a multifaceted role beyond its identity as an international language, it serves as a medium for transmitting Islamic knowledge, shaping religious identity, and facilitating intercultural engagement among diverse Muslim communities.<sup>1</sup> With large Muslim populations and long-standing traditions of Islamic learning, both Indonesia and the Philippines have institutionalized Arabic language education into their national systems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Uki Sukiman et al., "Arabic Neologisms in Indonesian and Malaysian Arabic Media," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 2 (December 22, 2023): 365–92, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.612.365-392>.

<sup>2</sup> Mamluatul Hasanah et al., "ARABIC PERFORMANCE CURRICULLUM DEVELOPMENT: RECONSTRUCTION BASED ON ACTFL AND DOUGLAS BROWN PERSPECTIVE," *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 4, no. 3 (October 30, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v4i3.11900>.

However, while Arabic is integral to spiritual practice and religious scholarship,<sup>3</sup> the development of speaking skills has remained marginal within many curricula. This neglect presents a pedagogical contradiction: learners are expected to understand and apply Arabic for religious and social functions, yet they are rarely equipped with the speaking skills necessary to do so effectively.<sup>4</sup>

Indonesia's Arabic education is predominantly centered on grammar mastery and the comprehension of classical texts, often driven by the formal structures of madrasahs and the traditional frameworks of pesantren.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the Philippines implements the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program, a government-initiated curriculum aiming to promote functional Arabic for religious and cultural expression within a pluralistic public education setting.<sup>6</sup> Despite its communicative orientation, ALIVE faces operational challenges, particularly in teacher quality, instructional consistency, and standardization. These differing approaches reflect broader questions about the role of national policy, educational ideology, and curriculum design in shaping Arabic language education for Muslim learners.<sup>7</sup>

These contrasting curricular orientations reveal deeper issues in how Arabic language education is conceptualized and implemented across national contexts. The divergent emphasis, grammatical literacy

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<sup>3</sup> Mahyudin Ritonga et al., "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a Response To Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 10, no. 1 (March 2021): 355–63.

<sup>4</sup> Mahyudin Ritonga et al., "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a Response to Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 355, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20747>.

<sup>5</sup> Nurul Hadi, Nuri Alvina, and Khaled Radhouani, "Ta'zîzu Dâfi'iyati Thullâbi Riyâdh al-Athfâl Li Tathwîri Mahârât al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah al-Syafawiyah Min Khilâli Barâmiji al-Ta'lîm al-Mukatstsaf," *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 5, no. 2 (July 31, 2024): 189–214, <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v5i2.12195>.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Haiy A. Sali, "Pedagogical Praxis: Muslim-Filipino Madrasah Teachers' Conceptuality of Instructional Process," *IAFOR Journal of Education* 8, no. 4 (November 27, 2020): 115–31, <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.8.4.07>.

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Haiy Abdul Sali and Arlyne Canales Marasigan, "Madrasah Education Program Implementation in the Philippines: An Exploratory Case Study," *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development* 22, no. 3 (June 29, 2020): 201–17, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCED-06-2019-0034>.

in Indonesia versus communicative function in the Philippines, suggests that curriculum design is not merely a technical matter, but also a reflection of educational priorities, cultural expectations, and institutional traditions. Such differences affect not only what is taught but also how students are expected to engage with the Arabic language in both academic and religious settings.<sup>8</sup>

Given these disparities, it becomes essential to examine more critically how and why certain language skills, particularly speaking proficiency, are either emphasized or sidelined. This requires looking beyond surface-level content to understand the deeper curricular logic, pedagogical assumptions, and policy frameworks that shape instructional goals.<sup>9</sup> Doing so allows for a more nuanced understanding of the forces that structure Arabic language education in Southeast Asia and highlights the need for evidence-based curricular evaluation across differing systems.

A number of studies have explored Arabic curriculum reform in Indonesia, especially in the wake of the “Kurikulum 2013” and the Merdeka Curriculum. For example, Rufaiqoh highlights changes in learning objectives and assessment formats,<sup>10</sup> while Amalia et al. emphasize the importance of teacher readiness and institutional support.<sup>11</sup> Nur’aini and Al Farisi identify how differentiated learning strategies have influenced classroom implementation,<sup>12</sup> and Rahman and Kumalasari examine shifts toward inquiry-based instruction in Islamic

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<sup>8</sup> Lewicka Magdalena and Waszau Anna, “Analysis of Textbooks for Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language in Terms of the Cultural Curriculum,” *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 5, no. 1 (2017): 36–44.

<sup>9</sup> Gavin T. L. Brown, Atta Gebril, and Michalis P. Michaelides, “Teachers’ Conceptions of Assessment: A Global Phenomenon or a Global Localism,” *Frontiers in Education* 4 (March 7, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2019.00016>.

<sup>10</sup> Elok Rufaiqoh et al., “An Analysis of Arabic Language Curriculum Development in Indonesia,” *Jurnal Al-Maqayis* 11, no. 1 (June 22, 2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jams.v11i1.9843>.

<sup>11</sup> Nabila Nailil Amalia et al., “Analysis of the Arabic Language Textbook for Junior High School from the Perspective of the Education, Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP),” *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 5, no. 2 (July 31, 2024): 243–67, <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v5i2.13941>.

<sup>12</sup> Rara Nur’aini and Mohamad Zaka Al Farisi, “The Observation of Arabic Language Differentiation in the 2013 Curriculum and the ‘Merdeka’ Curriculum,” *Abjadia: International Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (July 3, 2023): 62–78, <https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v8i1.22359>.

higher education.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Hidayat, Akhirudin, and Sutiah investigate comparative curriculum management between universities, noting variations in quality assurance and instructional design.<sup>14</sup> However, these works primarily discuss grammar instruction and reading comprehension, leaving speaking skills insufficiently addressed.

In the Philippine context, the ALIVE program has been studied for its policy evolution and community-based implementation. Researchers such as Sali<sup>15</sup>, Marasigan<sup>16</sup> and Samid document the program's integration into public schooling and its emphasis on oral communication and values education.<sup>17</sup> While these studies provide critical insights into program goals and challenges, they tend to focus on national adaptation without benchmarking against regional counterparts. As such, there is little understanding of how ALIVE's communicative approach compares with more grammar-oriented models in neighboring countries like Indonesia.<sup>18</sup>

This study seeks to address this gap by directly comparing how Arabic curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines conceptualize and implement speaking skills within their formal education systems. Previous literature has rarely placed these two nations in comparative dialogue, despite their shared regional context and their different

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<sup>13</sup> Rifqi Aulia Rahman and Indah Kumalasari, "The Dynamics of Arabic Language Curriculum at Arabic Education Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta," *LISANIA: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 140–62, <https://doi.org/10.18326/lisania.v4i2.140-162>.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmad Fadhel Syakir Hidayat, Akhirudin Akhirudin, and Sutiah Sutiah, "Curriculum Management Characteristics in Arabic Language (A Comparative Study of Curriculum Documents in Arabic Language Education at UINSI Samarinda and UIN FAS Bengkulu)," *Lisanan Arabiya: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 2 (December 30, 2023): 143–60, <https://doi.org/10.32699/liar.v7i2.4882>.

<sup>15</sup> Sali, "Pedagogical Praxis: Muslim-Filipino Madrasah Teachers' Conceptuality of Instructional Process."

<sup>16</sup> Sali and Marasigan, "Madrasah Education Program Implementation in the Philippines: An Exploratory Case Study."

<sup>17</sup> Amina SAMID, "Filipinler'de İslami Eğitim ve Medrese Okullarının Gelişimi," *International Journal of Political Studies*, August 31, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.25272/icps.1139650>.

<sup>18</sup> KHADIGUIA ONTOK-BALAH -, "A Systematic Review on the Implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines: Implications on the Educational Psychology Practice," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 6 (December 30, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i06.11290>.

educational responses to Arabic language teaching. The absence of cross-national curriculum analysis obscures opportunities to learn from each system's respective strengths, especially regarding instructional design, assessment frameworks, and the alignment between curricular goals and communicative competence.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on speaking proficiency as a curricular construct and its comparative methodology. By using a structured curriculum analysis framework, the study identifies concrete pedagogical and structural elements that either support or hinder speaking skills in classroom practice. This approach not only offers theoretical insight but also provides practical implications for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers seeking to improve Arabic language education for Muslim learners across diverse Southeast Asian contexts. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to analyze how Arabic curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines support or limit the development of speaking proficiency. The research explores curricular purposes, content selection, instructional strategies, and assessment practices related to speaking skills in each context.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design (Yin, 2018<sup>19</sup>; Merriam, 2009<sup>20</sup>) to analyze the structure and orientation of Arabic language curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines, with a particular emphasis on speaking proficiency. The study focuses on formal Islamic education frameworks in both countries, specifically the Kurikulum 2013 and Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian madrasahs, and the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) and Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in the Philippines.

Data were collected through document analysis, a method suitable for examining official and policy-level curricular materials. The procedure followed the framework outlined by Bowen, which involves the systematic review, coding, and interpretation of documents to extract

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<sup>19</sup> R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th Ed.). (SAGE Publications, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

meaning and contextual insight.<sup>21</sup> Primary sources included government-issued curriculum frameworks, teacher manuals, syllabi, and relevant policy regulations. In the Indonesian case, this included documents from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (e.g., KMA No. 183 of 2019), while Philippine sources included DepEd Order No. 51, s.2004 and DepEd Order No. 40, s.2011, which provide implementation guidelines for the ALIVE and Madrasah Education Program (Department of Education, 2004, 2011).

The analytical lens used in this study is based on Posner's five dimensions of curriculum analysis,<sup>22</sup> which offers a structured framework to understand how curricula are designed and how they reflect educational priorities. These five dimensions are: 1) Purposes (the intended goals and learning outcomes); 2) Content (the knowledge, language elements, and skills included); 3) Organization (the sequencing and structure of the learning material); 4) Implementation (the instructional strategies and delivery mechanisms); and 5) Evaluation (the approaches and instruments used to assess student learning). By applying this framework, the study systematically compares the extent to which speaking proficiency is prioritized, structured, and assessed in each curriculum.

Table 1. Analytical Framework Based on Posner's Model

Dimension	Guiding Questions	Application in Study
Purposes	What are the stated objectives and educational goals of the curriculum?	Identify whether speaking proficiency is explicitly mentioned as a learning goal.
Content	What subject matter, vocabulary, grammar, and skills are included?	Analyze whether the content supports oral communication or is focused only on reading and grammar.
Organization	How is the content sequenced and structured over time?	Examine whether speaking components are introduced early and scaffolded throughout the program.

<sup>21</sup> Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (August 3, 2009): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

<sup>22</sup> G. J. Posner, *Analyzing the Curriculum (3rd Ed.)* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).

Implementation	What instructional methods and teaching contexts are envisioned?	Assess the pedagogical orientation, lecture-based, communicative, oral-focused, etc. of each curriculum.
Evaluation	How is student learning assessed, particularly in speaking?	Review if and how speaking skills are formally evaluated through oral assessments or performance tasks.

To ensure analytical depth, the study also incorporated triangulation with relevant empirical studies and program evaluations that discuss how these curricula are enacted in classroom settings. Although classroom observation or field interviews were not conducted, this document-based approach allows for a rigorous comparison of formal curriculum intentions, particularly as they pertain to speaking skills as a component of communicative Arabic language instruction.

## Results and Discussion

### Curricular Design and Content Orientation

The design of Arabic language curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines reflects two divergent educational approaches, one grounded in classical textual literacy, and the other oriented toward functional verbal usage. In Indonesia, Arabic is taught as a compulsory subject in state-regulated madrasahs under two successive national frameworks<sup>23</sup>: the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) and the more recent Merdeka Curriculum. While these two curricula differ structurally and philosophically, both share a common feature in their approach to Arabic instruction: they emphasize the mastery of grammatical rules and the comprehension of classical Islamic texts.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, the Philippines' ALIVE (Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education) program promotes the acquisition of practical spoken Arabic as an identity and

<sup>23</sup> Syamsul Sodiq and Lutfiyah Alindah, "The Hidden Indonesian Language Literacy Curriculum In Arabic Language Textbooks For Islamic Junior High School," *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 7, no. 1 (February 29, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v7i1.25049>.

<sup>24</sup> Siti Fahimatul Ilmia et al., "Critical Review of the 2023 Tenth Grade Arabic Textbook for Madrasah Aliyah under Kurikulum Merdeka," *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 5, no. 2 (August 31, 2023): 231–56, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.5.2.20893>.

religious language, particularly within a multicultural and multilingual public education system.<sup>25</sup>

The 2013 Curriculum follows a standardized format with predetermined core competencies (Kompetensi Inti-KI) and basic competencies (Kompetensi Dasar-KD) that guide instruction and assessment. In the Arabic subject, KI-KD structures direct the learning process toward reading comprehension, vocabulary recognition, and understanding of grammatical patterns, particularly those relevant to Qur'anic and classical texts. Speaking skills are mentioned only peripherally, often as informal extensions of written exercises or supplementary oral drills. Although classroom interaction may occur, it is not systematically supported in either learning objectives or evaluation instruments.<sup>26</sup>

The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced as a more flexible and student-centered reform, eliminates the rigid KI-KD format and instead uses learning outcomes based on Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) and Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP). This structural shift allows for more contextual and differentiated instruction. However, in the case of Arabic, the transition has not yet yielded a substantial pedagogical departure from the previous curriculum. Due to the continued reliance on teacher guides, textbooks, and teaching practices developed under the KI-KD model, the instructional focus remains predominantly textual.<sup>27</sup> Teachers often continue to emphasize grammatical exercises and reading tasks, reinforcing a conservative orientation that privileges interpretative literacy over spoken fluency.

By contrast, the Philippines' ALIVE program sets out explicitly to develop students' ability to use Arabic in basic communicative contexts, particularly through daily expressions, religious greetings, and

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<sup>25</sup> Hamsira M. Harad and Benjier H. Arriola, "Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE)," *THE American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (THE AJHSSR)* 5, no. 3 (2022): 47–57.

<sup>26</sup> Iis Susiawati and Moch. Hasyim Fanirin, "ARABIC LEARNING AT MADRASAH ALIYAH BASED ON THE 2013 CURRICULUM," *Arabiyat : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 7, no. 2 (December 30, 2020): 251–63, <https://doi.org/10.15408/a.v7i2.17444>.

<sup>27</sup> Khoirul Faizin and Ismail Ismail, "HISTORY OF ARABIC CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA," *Lahjah Arabiyah: Jurnal Bahasa Arab Dan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (July 26, 2023): 103–17, <https://doi.org/10.35316/lahjah.v4i2.103-117>.

classroom dialogues. The curriculum is integrated into the public school system and is designed for Muslim learners in regions with significant Islamic populations. Its stated goals reflect a functional perspective, aiming to equip students with a working command of Arabic for immediate use in both religious and social environments. This is particularly important given that most ALIVE students come from communities where Arabic is neither a native nor heritage language.

In terms of content, the Indonesian curricula are rooted in grammatical depth and classical literacy. Learning materials are drawn from *nahwu* and *sharf*, as well as texts based on Qur'anic excerpts and traditional Islamic literature. Vocabulary is primarily drawn from religious sources, and language activities tend to involve translation, parsing, and grammatical identification. These tasks are aligned with the goal of enabling students to read and interpret canonical texts rather than engage in everyday spoken interactions. Although this approach cultivates analytical precisions, it neglects the development of active language use in communicative contexts.

The ALIVE curriculum, meanwhile, presents a more accessible and learner-friendly content structure. The materials are built around thematic units such as greetings, school objects, religious practices, and daily routines. Grammar is introduced implicitly through repeated exposure and patterned practice, rather than as an abstract system to be memorized. Although this results in a relatively shallow grasp of grammatical structure, it supports verbal interaction in controlled settings.<sup>28</sup> The vocabulary selection is immediately functional, designed to be spoken and heard, rather than written and interpreted.

Content organization further highlights the divide between the two systems. In Indonesia, both K13 and Merdeka Curriculum employ a linear sequence, where students progress from basic to advanced grammar and text interpretation. The progression is tightly aligned with academic calendars and textbook chapters, leaving little room for thematic flexibility or adaptive learning trajectories. While the Merdeka Curriculum nominally supports differentiation, in practice, Arabic

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<sup>28</sup> Rita L. Salindab and Allan A. Maglantay, "Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Implementation, Pedagogical Practices of Alive Teachers and Learners' Performance," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* IX, no. IV (April 29, 2025): 1137–50, <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400087>.

instruction tends to retain its linear and teacher-centered structure. In contrast, ALIVE follows a spiral progression, where previously learned vocabulary and expressions are revisited and expanded upon over time. This allows for gradual reinforcement and confidence-building in speaking, especially among early-grade learners.

However, ALIVE is not without limitations. The content, though communicative in nature, often lacks depth. Vocabulary is repetitive and highly predictable, and students are rarely exposed to more complex sentence structures or authentic speech contexts. There is also minimal focus on reading and writing development, which restricts students' ability to transition from oral to literate proficiency. Moreover, the curriculum is not supported by a comprehensive grammatical framework, making it difficult to scaffold learners' progression toward more autonomous language use.

These differences are synthesized in the following table, which compares the curricular design and orientation of Arabic language education in both national systems. The table presents distinctions in learning objectives, content types, instructional methods, and content organization, with a particular focus on how each system supports or limits the development of spoken proficiency.

Table 2. Comparative Design and Orientation

Curricular Aspect	Indonesia (K13/Merdeka Curriculum)	Philippines (ALIVE Program)
Learning Objectives	Emphasize textual comprehension, grammar mastery, and interpretation of classical texts	Emphasize verbal expression in religious and school contexts; promote functional speaking
Curriculum Structure	K13: Standardized with KI-KD; Merdeka: Flexible with CP-ATP but content remains largely textual	Non-standardized; locally contextualized; allows teacher adaptation based on learners' needs
Content Focus	Grammar-heavy ( <i>nahwu, sharf</i> ), religious vocabulary, translation exercises	Functional vocabulary (greetings, daily routines), memorized expressions
Instructional Approach	Deductive, form-focused, written drills; minimal structured oral practice	Inductive, communicative, oral repetition; grammar taught implicitly
Content Organization	Linear progression; aligned with textbook chapters and calendar	Spiral model; gradual expansion of oral expressions through thematic units

Literacy Emphasis	Strong on reading and writing of classical texts; oral skills underrepresented	Strong on basic oral expression; limited reading and writing integration
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The table above clarifies that while the Indonesian national curricula offer linguistic depth and classical orientation, they fall short in promoting active verbal communication in Arabic. Even the newer Merdeka Curriculum, despite its structural flexibility, has not yet achieved a shift in pedagogical focus in this regard. On the other hand, the Philippine ALIVE curriculum demonstrates an intentional effort to build students' oral skills, albeit at the expense of grammatical richness and extended literacy. Both approaches, therefore, reflect trade-offs: one favors academic and interpretive rigor, while the other leans toward accessibility and immediate communicative utility. Future curricular improvements in both countries would benefit from integrating these strengths to create a more balanced and comprehensive Arabic language education.

#### Implementation and Evaluation Practices

The implementation of Arabic language instruction in both Indonesia and the Philippines is shaped not only by the content of their national curricula but also by the institutional structures, teacher qualifications, and pedagogical cultures in which these curricula are embedded. While both countries recognize Arabic as an important component of Islamic education, they differ significantly in how instruction is delivered and how learning outcomes, particularly in oral proficiency, are assessed.<sup>29</sup>

In Indonesia, the teaching of Arabic in madrasahs is largely influenced by a centralized and standardized framework under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Teachers are typically graduates of Islamic higher education institutions, many of whom have been trained in the traditional disciplines of Arabic grammar and Qur'anic exegesis. While this academic background provides a strong foundation for teaching syntax and textual interpretation, it does not always equip teachers with the methodological tools needed to facilitate

<sup>29</sup> Muhamad Holandiyah et al., "Grammar Instruction in Communicative Language Teaching Classrooms: Student Teachers' Perceptions," *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran*, June 30, 2021, 66–77, <https://doi.org/10.19109/ejpp.v8i1.8510>.

communicative language instruction.<sup>30</sup> As a result, classroom practices tend to mirror the structure of the curriculum: deductive, text-bound, and examination-oriented.

The pedagogical methods employed in Indonesian madrasahs typically involve explicit grammar instruction, sentence parsing, and text translation. Oral interaction is often limited to choral repetition or brief recitation drills, with few opportunities for spontaneous dialogue or extended speech.<sup>31</sup> This instructional pattern is reinforced by the dominance of written assessments, which prioritize reading comprehension and grammatical analysis. Even in the Merdeka Curriculum, where flexibility and student-centered approaches are encouraged, teachers often default to familiar methods rooted in textual analysis, particularly due to a lack of professional development in modern language pedagogy.

Meanwhile, the ALIVE program in the Philippines operates under a distinct implementation model that reflects its status as a special program within the public education system. Arabic language instruction is delivered by *asatidz*, contract-based religious teachers, who are hired through a partnership between local school divisions and Islamic community organizations. These instructors are often native or near-native Arabic speakers, or graduates of Islamic institutions abroad. However, they frequently lack formal training in language pedagogy, classroom management, or curriculum development, leading to significant variability in instructional quality.<sup>32</sup>

Despite these limitations, the ALIVE classroom is generally more interactive and orally oriented. Teachers are encouraged to use communicative techniques, including dialogues, role plays, and daily conversation practice. Lesson plans provided by the Department of Education emphasize speaking and listening tasks over grammatical instruction, although the extent of implementation varies widely

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<sup>30</sup> Intan Afriati et al., "Grammar and Translation Methods in Arabic Language Learning: Theory and Practice," *MADINA : Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2025): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.62945/madina.v2i1.741>.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad Mizan Rosyadi and Muhammad Shokhibul Hidayah, "Penerapan Metode Grammar Translation Untuk Baca-Tulis Di MA As-Sunniyyah Jember," *Al-Fusha : Arabic Language Education Journal* 4, no. 1 (January 30, 2022): 30–36, <https://doi.org/10.62097/alfusha.v4i1.748>.

<sup>32</sup> -, "A Systematic Review on the Implementation of the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program in the Philippines: Implications on the Educational Psychology Practice."

depending on the teacher's experience and initiative. In the absence of formal certification requirements or consistent pedagogical supervision, instructional effectiveness in ALIVE classrooms remains uneven across regions.<sup>33</sup>

A further point of divergence lies in the materials and resources available to support implementation. In Indonesia, madrasahs benefit from a relatively robust infrastructure of standardized textbooks, teacher guides, and lesson plans aligned with the national curriculum.<sup>34</sup> However, these resources tend to perpetuate the grammar–translation model, offering little support for communicative or task-based learning. By contrast, ALIVE instructors often rely on locally produced materials or adapt content from international Islamic textbooks. While this allows for contextual flexibility, it also creates inconsistencies in scope, sequence, and quality, as there is no unified national standard for Arabic instructional materials in the ALIVE program.

When it comes to evaluation, Indonesia's Arabic language assessments are predominantly written and grammar-based. National and school-level exams focus on identifying grammatical structures, translating passages, and answering comprehension questions on classical texts.<sup>35</sup> There is minimal attention to oral proficiency, either in formative or summative evaluations. Teachers rarely employ rubrics or structured observation tools to assess students' speaking ability, and there is no national mechanism for evaluating verbal communication skills as part of Arabic language competency.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, the ALIVE program includes oral assessment as a formal component of student evaluation. Teachers are instructed to

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<sup>33</sup> Hamsira M. Harad and Benjier H. Arriola, "Challenges on the Implementation of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Program," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications* 4, no. 9 (2022): 17–26.

<sup>34</sup> Zulfa Tsalitsatul Muna et al., "Mind Mapping as an Innovation in Reading and Writing Learning: A Study of Understanding Arabic Texts," *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 1 (January 30, 2025): 120–37, <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v6i1.15963>.

<sup>35</sup> Danial Hilmi, Nur Toifah, and Halimatus Sa'diyah, "Curriculum Development Strategy for Independent Learning in Arabic Language Learning at PTKIN in East Java," *LISANIA: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 7, no. 2 (December 14, 2023): 159–77, <https://doi.org/10.18326/lisania.v7i2.159-177>.

<sup>36</sup> Salindab and Maglantay, "Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Implementation, Pedagogical Practices of Alive Teachers and Learners' Performance."

evaluate students through recitations, oral responses, and memorized dialogues. While these forms of assessment promote the use of Arabic in spoken form, they remain largely performative and rote in nature. There is limited emphasis on spontaneous speech, fluency, or communicative strategies. Furthermore, since ALIVE is a supplementary program and not part of the national core curriculum, its assessment outcomes often carry less weight in students' overall academic records.

Another challenge in both contexts is the lack of structured teacher development programs focused on Arabic as a foreign or second language. In Indonesia, teacher training programs continue to emphasize classical Arabic and religious studies, with little exposure to communicative language teaching (CLT), second language acquisition theories, or applied linguistics. In the Philippines, while community training workshops are occasionally offered to *asatidz*, they are not standardized, accredited, or aligned with national quality assurance frameworks.

Despite these limitations, both systems have shown localized innovations. In some Indonesian pesantren and private Islamic schools, oral language programs are integrated alongside the national curriculum, often using immersive or dormitory-based approaches.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in ALIVE, some instructors with experience abroad introduce their own oral proficiency models, such as conversation tables or group recitation activities. These practices, however, remain the exception rather than the rule, and are often absent in broader curricular evaluation and planning.

The following table provides a comparative summary of the implementation and evaluation practices in Arabic language instruction between the two countries. The table highlights key features such as teacher background, instructional techniques, assessment formats, and pedagogical limitations.

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<sup>37</sup> Akmaliah Akmaliah et al., "Child-Friendly Teaching Approach for Arabic Language in Indonesian Islamic Boarding School," *International Journal of Language Education*, March 30, 2021, 501–14, <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v5i1.15297>.

Table 3. Comparative Implementation and Evaluation Practices

Aspect	Indonesia (K13 & Merdeka Curriculum)	Philippines (ALIVE Program)
Instructor Profile	Graduates of Islamic universities; strong in grammar and textual analysis	Contractual <i>asatidz</i> ; may have fluency but limited formal training in pedagogy
Instructional Approach	Grammar-translation method; lecture-based; limited speaking practice	Communicative activities encouraged; use of dialogues and repetition
Instructional Resources	Standardized textbooks and teacher manuals; oriented toward written literacy	Localized or imported materials; flexible but inconsistent in quality
Assessment Type	Written exams (grammar, translation, comprehension); minimal oral evaluation	Includes oral recitation, memorized dialogues, basic conversation checks
Assessment Limitations	No structured evaluation of speaking skills; oral ability not measured or recorded formally	Assessment of speaking is performative; lacks depth and spontaneous use criteria
Teacher Development	Focus on religious studies and classical Arabic; limited training in L2 instruction	Non-standardized training; highly dependent on individual initiative or local programs

This comparison underscores the structural and pedagogical gaps in both systems. Indonesia offers a more standardized and academically rigorous environment, but it lacks the methodological flexibility needed to support spoken Arabic. The Philippines, while embracing oral interaction, faces challenges in ensuring consistent instructional quality and deep linguistic progression. Bridging these gaps requires not only curricular reform, but also substantial investment in teacher education, assessment innovation, and classroom-level support systems that promote both communicative competence and linguistic accuracy.

## Discussion

This comparative analysis of Arabic language curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines reveals two fundamentally different orientations in curricular design, pedagogical implementation, and assessment practices. Applying Posner's five dimensions of curriculum analysis, the study has shown that while both countries value Arabic education as a component of Islamic identity and religious literacy,<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Mahyudin Ritonga et al., "Analysis of Arabic Language Learning at Higher Education Institutions with Multi-Religion Students," *Universal Journal of*

they diverge significantly in how they conceptualize and operationalize the development of language skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication.

The Indonesian curriculum, across both the 2013 and Merdeka versions, reflects a classical-linguistic model grounded in the textual traditions of Islamic scholarship. The stated purposes prioritize the ability to read and interpret classical texts, and this is mirrored in the content choices, which emphasize grammatical structure, morphology, and canonical vocabulary.<sup>39</sup> The organization of learning materials follows a linear, hierarchical structure that advances students from basic decoding to more complex syntactic analysis. Implementation remains heavily reliant on grammar-translation methods, and evaluation practices are dominated by written assessments. Although Merdeka Curriculum introduces structural flexibility, its actual execution in Arabic instruction has yet to depart from established textual-literate traditions.

In contrast, the ALIVE curriculum in the Philippines adopts a functional-communicative model<sup>40</sup> that seeks to make Arabic usable in daily religious and school-based interactions. Its learning objectives are framed around immediate communicative needs, and its content is selected for thematic and situational relevance. The curriculum favors oral activities and listening-based comprehension, and it encourages a spiral approach to learning that gradually reinforces earlier language elements. However, implementation remains uneven due to the absence of standardized teacher training, and assessments, though inclusive of oral tasks, lack rigor and depth, often relying on rote recitation rather than authentic language production.

These contrasting models illustrate what Posner describes as “curriculum logic”<sup>41</sup>, the set of assumptions and priorities embedded

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*Educational Research* 8, no. 9 (September 2020): 4333–39, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080960>.

<sup>39</sup> Rara Nur'aini and Mohamad Zaka Al Farisi, “The Observation of Arabic Language Differentiation in the 2013 Curriculum and the ‘Merdeka’ Curriculum,” *Abjadia: International Journal of Education* 8, no. 1 (July 3, 2023): 62–78, <https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v8i1.22359>.

<sup>40</sup> Marlon Pontino Guleng, Razaleigh Muhamat@Kawangit, and Zulkefli Aini, “Issues on Islamic Education in the Philippines,” *Al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues* 2, no. 1 (June 20, 2017): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v2i1.22>.

<sup>41</sup> Posner, *Analyzing the Curriculum* (3rd Ed.).

within curricular decisions. Indonesia's curriculum logic is rooted in the assumption that mastery of classical Arabic grammar and literacy constitutes sufficient language competence. This reflects both historical influences and institutional legacies, where the purpose of Arabic learning is tightly tied to textual engagement. Meanwhile, the Philippines' curriculum logic embraces a more pragmatic orientation, assuming that the value of Arabic lies in its use as a social-religious tool among non-native speakers. This divergence demonstrates how cultural, religious, and policy contexts shape language education in distinct and sometimes conflicting ways.

Importantly, both approaches exhibit imbalances that compromise comprehensive language acquisition. Indonesia offers grammatical depth but lacks mechanisms for supporting oral fluency. Speaking is neither scaffolded nor assessed in any formal sense, resulting in students who may read and analyze texts fluently but struggle to engage in basic Arabic conversation. The Philippines, on the other hand, cultivates basic oral ability but often fails to support it with grammatical depth and academic literacy, leading to verbal performance that is functional but superficial.

These findings suggest the need for curricular convergence that balances both literacy and oral communicative competence. For Indonesia, this could involve integrating structured speaking objectives, expanding assessment frameworks to include oral interaction, and providing in-service teacher training in communicative language pedagogy. For the Philippines, it is necessary to enhance teacher preparation, standardize instructional resources, and strengthen the grammatical foundation of the curriculum to support long-term language development beyond formulaic speech.

Furthermore, the comparative perspective underscores the importance of localized curricular adaptation that is both culturally responsive and pedagogically sound. Rather than importing global models wholesale, policymakers and educators must critically assess how curricular dimensions—purposes, content, organization, implementation, and evaluation—align with learner needs, community contexts, and institutional capacities. Cross-national dialogue between Islamic education systems may also be beneficial, enabling the sharing of best practices and collaborative development of regionally adapted frameworks.

In sum, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Arabic language education is shaped by curriculum policy and pedagogical tradition in two Southeast Asian contexts. By highlighting the strengths and limitations of each system, it calls for an integrated approach to curriculum design—one that affirms the value of both classical literacy and contemporary communicative competence. Future research may build upon this analysis by exploring classroom-level implementation, student perceptions, and long-term learning outcomes, thereby extending the conversation toward more inclusive and effective models of Arabic education in the region.

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined and compared the design, implementation, and evaluation of Arabic language curricula in Indonesia and the Philippines through the lens of Posner's five-dimensional model. Despite sharing a broader Islamic educational agenda, the two countries have developed markedly different curricular orientations. Indonesia's national curriculum, both in the 2013 and Merdeka formats, continues to emphasize classical textual literacy, grammatical mastery, and religious comprehension. Conversely, the Philippines' ALIVE program adopts a more functional and communicative approach, seeking to equip students with basic oral skills for religious and social interaction.

The analysis reveals that each curriculum presents strengths aligned with its respective educational logic. Indonesia offers depth and structure grounded in classical Arabic traditions, but lacks systematic support for oral proficiency. The Philippines, meanwhile, promotes verbal engagement and learner-centered activities, yet often falls short in providing linguistic depth and instructional consistency. These contrasts underscore the trade-offs between form-focused and function-focused curricula in Arabic education.

A key implication of this study is the necessity of balance. Effective Arabic language instruction requires both textual literacy and oral competence, especially in contexts where Arabic is neither the mother tongue nor a heritage language. Policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators must therefore work toward integrated models that combine communicative goals with grammatical accuracy, supported by clear instructional frameworks and reliable assessment tools.

This research contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic education and language policy in Southeast Asia by offering a cross-national perspective grounded in curricular analysis. While limited to document-based data, the study provides a foundation for further investigation into classroom practices, teacher preparation, and learner outcomes. As Arabic continues to play a central role in shaping religious identity and global Muslim connectivity, the need for coherent, balanced, and pedagogically sound curricula is more pressing than ever.

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