



Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab

Vol. 7 No. 1, January 2026

P-ISSN: 2721-1606 | E-ISSN: 2716-4985

doi: <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v7i1.23592>

Arabic for Specific Purposes in Islamic Higher Education: Systemic Learning Challenges among Non-Pesantren Students

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Abstract

Arabic competence is essential in Sharia Accounting programs for accessing Islamic legal sources and disciplinary terminology. However, non-pesantren students often face persistent difficulties due to limited prior exposure and misaligned instructional practices. This study investigates the systemic challenges of Arabic language learning among non-pesantren students in the Sharia Accounting Program at the State Islamic University of Madura. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed through triangulation. The findings reveal that learning challenges are structural in nature and arise from the interaction of three dimensions: linguistic–cognitive limitations, affective disengagement, and pedagogical–institutional mismatch. Instructional designs that assume prior Arabic competence increase cognitive load, limit communicative development, and indirectly generate anxiety and low motivation. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding Arabic learning difficulties as a systemic issue rather than an individual deficit, providing empirical evidence to inform curriculum alignment, pedagogical reform, and the development of Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP) in Sharia Accounting within Islamic higher education.

Keywords: *Arabic for specific purposes, systemic learning challenges, Islamic higher education, non-pesantren students*

Abstrak

Kemampuan bahasa Arab sangat penting dalam program Akuntansi Syariah untuk mengakses sumber-sumber hukum Islam dan terminologi keilmuan. Namun, mahasiswa non-pesantren sering menghadapi kesulitan yang persisten akibat paparan sebelumnya yang terbatas dan praktik pengajaran yang tidak sesuai. Studi ini menyelidiki tantangan sistemik dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di kalangan mahasiswa non-pesantren dalam Program Akuntansi Syariah di Universitas Islam Negeri Madura. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen, serta dianalisis melalui triangulasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tantangan pembelajaran bersifat struktural dan timbul dari interaksi tiga dimensi: keterbatasan linguistik-kognitif, ketidakpedulian afektif, dan ketidakcocokan pedagogis-institusional. Desain instruksional yang mengasumsikan kemampuan Arab sebelumnya meningkatkan beban kognitif, membatasi perkembangan komunikatif, dan secara tidak langsung menimbulkan kecemasan dan motivasi rendah. Signifikansi studi ini terletak pada kontribusinya dalam memahami kesulitan pembelajaran bahasa Arab sebagai masalah sistemik rather than defisit individu, memberikan bukti empiris untuk menginformasikan penyesuaian kurikulum, reformasi pedagogis, dan pengembangan Bahasa Arab untuk Tujuan Khusus (ASP) dalam Akuntansi Syariah di pendidikan tinggi Islam.

Kata kunci: *Bahasa Arab untuk tujuan khusus, tantangan pembelajaran, pendidikan tinggi keislaman, mahasiswa berlatar belakang non-pesantren.*

Introduction

Arabic plays a strategic role in Islamic higher education, particularly in academic programs closely related to Islamic law and economics.¹ Arabic in Indonesia holds a central position and exerts a significant influence on the social structure of society.² As the language of the Qur'an and primary Islamic sources, Arabic proficiency is essential not only for religious comprehension but also for accessing disciplinary knowledge, understanding technical terminology, and

¹ Emma Dafouz dan Ute Smit, *ROAD-MAPPING English medium education in the internationalised university* (Springer, 2020).

² Jamil, Husnaini, and Nur Agung. "Tantangan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Di Era Society 5.0: Analisis Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Aplikasi Interaktif." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 1 (January 2022): 38–51. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v3i1.5536>.

engaging with scholarly and professional discourse.³ In Sharia-based academic programs, such as Sharia Accounting, Arabic competence is increasingly recognized as an academic and professional asset rather than merely a supplementary skill.⁴ The revelation of the Qur'an has further strengthened the strategic position of the Arabic language in human civilization, eventually leading to its recognition as one of the official languages of the United Nations.

However, Arabic is commonly learned as a foreign language by university students, especially those without prior exposure through pesantren or madrasah education.⁵ Previous studies in foreign language acquisition have consistently shown that learners' educational background significantly influences their language learning outcomes, particularly in languages characterized by complex morphological and syntactic systems such as Arabic.^{6,7} Research published in internationally indexed journals highlights that learners with limited foundational exposure often experience difficulties in phonology, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical processing, and communicative use, which subsequently affect their motivation and learning persistence.

In the context of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) in higher education, several Scopus-indexed studies report that linguistic complexity, limited exposure, and affective factors such as anxiety and low motivation are major obstacles for non-native learners.⁸ Other studies emphasize that non-linguistic factors, including instructional design, curriculum alignment, teaching methodology, and institutional

³ Ken Hyland, "English for specific purposes: What is it and where is it taking us?," *ESP Today-Journal of English for Specific Purposes at Tertiary Level* 10, no. 2 (2022): 202–20.

⁴ Fakieh Alrabai dan Abdullah Alamer, "The effects of teacher motivational practice on learner L2 achievement: A self-determination theory perspective using structural equation modeling," *Language Teaching Research*, 2024, 13621688241278625.

⁵ Alaa Alzahrani, "The Predictive Processing of Number Information in L1 and L2 Arabic Speakers," *Languages* 10, no. 2 (2025): 25.

⁶ Yasser Teimouri dkk., "Second language anxiety and achievement: A meta-analysis," *Studies in second language acquisition* 41, no. 2 (2019): 363–87.

⁷ Munassir Alhamami, "Intention over motivation: A holistic analysis of psychological constructs in Arabic as a foreign language learning," *Acta Psychologica* 258 (2025): 105142.

⁸ Hafiz Nauman Ahmed dan Saqib Mahmood, "Focus on form, forms, or meaning in grammar instruction: a study of Pakistani university EFL teachers' cognition and practices," *Language Learning in Higher Education* 14, no. 2 (2024): 435–62.

support, play a decisive role in shaping learners' success or failure. Despite this growing body of research, most existing studies focus on Arabic language education students, secondary-level learners, or general Islamic studies programs, while empirical investigations targeting students of applied disciplines such as Sharia Accounting remain limited.

At the State Islamic University of Madura, Arabic is a compulsory subject for students of the Sharia Accounting Program within the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. Unlike students from pesantren backgrounds, non-pesantren students typically enter the program with minimal Arabic proficiency and heterogeneous linguistic competence. This condition creates pedagogical challenges, as Arabic courses are expected to support students' academic literacy and disciplinary understanding, while the curriculum and instructional practices are not always adapted to their actual linguistic readiness. Preliminary observations indicate persistent student complaints regarding difficulty, low engagement, and perceived irrelevance of Arabic courses to their field of study.

Current literature highlights that linguistic and non-linguistic factors are the primary barriers in Arabic acquisition. Al-Rohlili (2024) emphasizes that cognitive load and learning styles significantly influence the success of Arabic learners in non-native environments.⁹ Furthermore, Güngenci & Yıldız (2024) identify that listening and speaking remain the most challenging skills due to phonological and morphological complexity.¹⁰ In addition, Ritonga et al. (2022) argue that the absence of a supportive linguistic environment and the mismatch between traditional instructional materials and the practical needs of modern academic programs further exacerbate the learning difficulty for non-native speakers.¹¹

While general Arabic learning challenges have been documented, there is a research gap regarding Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP) within Sharia Accounting, particularly for students with zero prior exposure. Existing research tends to address linguistic

⁹ Mohammad Awad Al-Rohlili, "An Exploration of Language Learning Strategies by Non-native Arabic Speakers: Identifying Effective Approaches.," *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences* 22, no. 1 (2024).

¹⁰ Meryem Güngenci dan MUSA Yıldız, "Challenges in listening and speaking skills for Arabic language pre-service teachers: A correlational study," *Novitas-Royal* 2, no. 18 (2024).

¹¹ Adelia Priscila Ritonga dkk., "Pengembangan bahan ajaran media," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Dehasen (MUDE)* 1, no. 3 (2022): 343–48.

difficulties in isolation or to generalize findings across different educational settings without considering institutional structures, curriculum implementation, and learner characteristics simultaneously. Moreover, few studies employ triangulated qualitative data to examine how linguistic, psychological, and institutional factors interact in shaping Arabic learning experiences in Sharia Accounting programs.

This study offers a novel contribution by providing a triangulated qualitative analysis of Arabic language learning challenges among non-pesantren students enrolled in a Sharia Accounting program. Moving beyond approaches that primarily attribute learning difficulties to linguistic deficits or abstract theoretical explanations, this research integrates students' perspectives, tutors' insights, and institutional documentation to examine the systemic configuration of Arabic language learning. Specifically, this study addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) what systemic challenges characterize Arabic language learning experiences of non-pesantren students in Sharia Accounting programs; (2) how linguistic–cognitive, affective, and pedagogical–institutional factors interact in shaping these challenges; and (3) in what ways existing instructional designs and institutional arrangements contribute to or constrain effective Arabic language learning. By situating Arabic learning within the specific academic demands of Sharia Accounting, this study extends the discussion of Arabic as a Foreign Language beyond language education programs and provides context-sensitive evidence to inform curriculum development and instructional policy in Islamic higher education.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. Data were collected through interviews and observations.¹² This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with an analytical orientation to explore the challenges of Arabic language learning among non-pesantren students in the Sharia Accounting Program at the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, State Islamic University of Madura. This approach was chosen to capture students' experiences and the

¹² Silvia, Neng, Asep Ahmad Saepudin, Nuril Mufidah, and Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. "Manajemen Perencanaan Dan Pengorganisasian Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 1 (January 2023): 108–23. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v4i1.7497>.

contextual factors influencing learning in a natural setting, particularly where linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions intersect.

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025–2026 academic year (September–November 2025). Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included non-pesantren students enrolled in Arabic courses, Arabic language tutors, and faculty administrators. This selection enabled the study to obtain perspectives from learners, instructors, and institutional stakeholders relevant to the research questions.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three techniques: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations focused on instructional practices, student participation, and classroom interaction.¹³ Interviews explored participants' perceptions of learning challenges, contributing factors, and instructional conditions. Document analysis involved reviewing syllabi, course plans (RPS), instructional modules, and related academic policies to examine curriculum alignment and institutional support.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.¹⁴ Data from interviews, observations, and documents were coded thematically to identify patterns related to linguistic challenges, non-linguistic challenges, and institutional factors. The analysis emphasized interpretative insights rather than the presentation of raw data.

Triangulation and Trustworthiness

To enhance credibility, data triangulation was applied by comparing findings from different sources. Students' statements were cross-validated with classroom observations and tutors' perspectives, while institutional claims were verified through document analysis. This process ensured the consistency and trustworthiness of the findings.

¹³ David Lansing Cameron, "An Examination of Teacher–Student Interactions in Inclusive Classrooms: Teacher Interviews and Classroom Observations," *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 14, no. 4 (2014): 264–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12021>.

¹⁴ MILES, MATTHEW B., and A. MICHAEL HUBERMAN. "Drawing Valid Meaning from Qualitative Data: Toward a Shared Craft." *Educational Researcher* 13, no. 5 (May 1984): 20–30. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X013005020>.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the challenges faced by non-pesantren students in learning Arabic in the Sharia Accounting Study Program are structural and systemic in nature, rather than merely incidental or individual obstacles. The difficulties that arise cannot be understood solely as a weakness in students' initial abilities, but rather as the result of a learning configuration that is not in harmony with their linguistic and academic backgrounds. Through data triangulation that included in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of institutional documents, this study identified three interrelated dimensions that shape these challenges, namely linguistic-cognitive limitations, affective disengagement, and pedagogical-institutional mismatch. To illustrate the convergence of evidence across data sources, Table 1 presents a triangulated overview of the identified challenges.

Table 1. Triangulation of Arabic Learning Challenges

Dimension	Interview Evidence	Classroom Observation	Institutional Documents
Linguistic–Cognitive	Persistent difficulty with <i>nahwu–şarf</i> , limited vocabulary retention, and weak productive skills	Rule-based instruction and translation-dominated activities	Assumed baseline Arabic proficiency
Affective	Low confidence, anxiety, declining motivation	Minimal student talk and risk-avoidant behavior	Absence of affective learning strategies
Pedagogical–Institutional	Perception of monotonous teaching	Predominantly lecture-based instruction	Rigid syllabi and standardized outcomes

In the linguistic–cognitive dimension, persistent difficulties in mastering *nahwu–şarf*, retaining vocabulary, and developing productive language skills are consistently reported by students and tutors and are directly observable in classroom practices. Classroom observations show that a substantial portion of instructional time is devoted to tutors explaining grammatical rules on the board, such as *i‘rāb*, verb patterns, and word inflections, followed by line-by-line translation of written texts

into Indonesian. Throughout these sessions, students are primarily engaged in note-taking, while opportunities to actively use Arabic are minimal. Students are rarely instructed to construct simple sentences, respond orally in Arabic, or apply newly introduced vocabulary within contextualized tasks. When vocabulary items are introduced, they are typically translated immediately and not revisited in subsequent oral or written practice, resulting in largely receptive rather than productive vocabulary knowledge.

The empirical impact of these instructional patterns becomes visible in students' observable classroom behavior. Most students remain passive during lessons, with only a small number actively responding to tutors' questions, while the majority focus on copying explanations or avoid eye contact. When students are occasionally prompted to apply vocabulary productively, many experience visible difficulty. For example, when the tutor introduced the word *al-bayt* (البيت, "house") and asked students to produce a simple sentence using the word, several students were only able to repeat the vocabulary item or provide its Indonesian meaning, but struggled to independently form a complete sentence. Some students hesitated for extended periods or requested that the tutor first model the sentence before attempting to respond. Similar patterns were observed during reading activities, where students read hesitantly, frequently paused to seek pronunciation correction, and were unable to restate sentence meanings in their own words after lengthy grammatical explanations.

Documentary analysis further reveals that course syllabi and instructional modules implicitly assume a baseline Arabic proficiency, such as familiarity with grammatical terminology and Arabic script conventions, which is generally characteristic of pesantren graduates. In practice, this assumption places non-pesantren students in situations where they are required to follow complex grammatical explanations from the early stages of instruction despite limited foundational knowledge. Empirically, this structural mismatch manifests in visible confusion during lessons, frequent requests for Indonesian translation, uneven participation, and limited development of functional Arabic language use.

The empirically observed patterns described above resonate with findings reported in recent studies, which highlight that the morphological density of Arabic and its root-based lexical system

demand carefully structured and layered pedagogical strategies.¹⁵ In the absence of systematic scaffolding and communicative grounding, learners are required to process complex grammatical information prematurely, resulting in a substantial increase in cognitive load. In the present study, this condition is empirically evident in students' reliance on rule memorization, repeated requests for translation, and difficulty producing even simple sentences despite prior exposure to relevant vocabulary and grammatical explanations. Under such instructional conditions, learning tends to remain mechanical rather than meaningful, a pattern that is reflected in the limited development of students' oral and written production skills observed across classroom activities.¹⁶

Empirical observations indicate that affective disengagement among non-pesantren students develops gradually through repeated classroom interaction patterns. During several observed sessions, tutors frequently initiated questions in Arabic; however, these moments were often followed by short periods of silence. Rather than attempting to respond, many students lowered their gaze, avoided eye contact, or focused on copying explanations from the board. In such situations, tutors typically provided the answers themselves after a brief pause, and opportunities for students to attempt responses were not extended. Over time, this interactional pattern contributed to a classroom atmosphere in which active participation was not implicitly expected, and silence became a normalized student response.

This affective pattern became more pronounced during activities that required oral language use. When students were asked to read Arabic texts aloud or respond to simple questions, several began speaking in very low voices, paused frequently mid-sentence, or stopped altogether to request immediate confirmation of pronunciation or word meaning. Some students declined to respond unless explicitly called upon, while others indicated that they were "not ready" or waited for their peers to answer. Interview data reveal that these behaviors were driven by fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors and concerns about

¹⁵ Taha Thomure, Hanada, Haitham Taha, Taline Sabella, and Rabab Saleh. "A Systematic Review of Teaching and Learning in the Context of Arabic Diglossia." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 12 (2025): 102281. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102281>.

¹⁶ Dewi, Intan, Ahmad Nurcholis, Izzatul Laila, Juan Acevedo, and Moumen El-Sayed. "Curiosity-Driven Learning in Arabic: A Case Study on the 'Inquiring Minds Want to Know' Approach." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 1 (January 2025): 42–64. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v6i1.17881>.

appearing incompetent in front of classmates. As these experiences accumulated, students increasingly adopted avoidance strategies, such as refraining from raising their hands or asking questions, and limiting their engagement to passive note-taking. Documentary analysis further supports these observations, showing an absence of structured low-risk speaking activities, such as pair work or small-group practice, and an evaluative emphasis on grammatical accuracy rather than communicative effort.

This interpretation is reinforced by findings from recent research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which demonstrate that anxiety and low perceived behavioral control substantially reduce learners' willingness to communicate in the target language.¹⁷ In learning environments where opportunities for low-risk interaction are limited, these affective constraints become more pronounced. In the present study, this pattern is empirically reflected in students' reluctance to respond orally, prolonged silence following tutors' questions, and avoidance of participation unless explicitly prompted. Consequently, students' low participation in Arabic language learning cannot be understood as a matter of individual disposition alone, but must be situated within a pedagogical environment that provides minimal support for safe, scaffolded, and meaningful interaction.¹⁸

Empirical evidence indicates that lecturers' pedagogical practices are strongly shaped, and effectively constrained by institutional structures embedded in the curriculum and course documentation. Analysis of syllabi and lesson plans shows that each meeting is pre-structured around specific grammatical topics, such as *i'rāb*, verb forms, or word patterns, with learning outcomes that emphasize mastery of formal rules. These documents provide little explicit space for adapting instruction to the needs of non-pesantren students, reinforcing basic vocabulary, or incorporating communicative activities. In interviews, tutors acknowledged the importance of interactive and communicative

¹⁷ Yuxia Ma, "The Triarchy of L2 Learners' Emotion, Cognition, and Language Performance: Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, and Speaking Skill in Lights of the Emerging Theories in SLA," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (September 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1002492>.

¹⁸ Husisy-Sabek, Rabia, Rania Hussein Farraj, and Noam Lapidot-Lefler. "Arabic Creates an Atmosphere of Safety Because It Is Our Mother Tongue: Inclusive Training for Arab Students at a Teacher Training College in Israel." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 46, no. 4 (April 2025): 1307–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2236979>.

approaches, particularly for students without prior Arabic exposure; however, they also reported feeling compelled to “cover the material” in accordance with predetermined targets, leaving limited time for oral practice or student-centered activities.

Classroom observations confirm how these structural constraints translate into daily teaching practices. Lessons typically begin with tutors explaining grammatical concepts, writing rules on the board, and subsequently reading and translating texts, with most instructional time allocated to one-directional explanation and clarification of grammatical terminology. Activities such as pair work, dialog simulation, or contextualized practice related to Sharia Accounting are rarely observed on a consistent basis. Within this instructional structure, students assume largely passive roles as listeners and note-takers, with limited and unstructured opportunities to ask questions, experiment with language use, or engage in meaningful interaction. Several students described the learning experience as resembling “listening to a lecture” rather than participating in a language practice session. As a result, despite tutors’ pedagogical awareness, the dominance of grammar-focused instruction, reinforced by rigid syllabi and standardized outcomes, systematically limits the development of communicative competence.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study gain analytical clarity when interpreted through a contemporary theoretical framework, not as a conceptual abstraction, but as a lens rooted in the observed class reality.¹⁹ This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how language acquisition theory works or fails to work in the context of Arabic language learning in higher education. Table 2 maps the key empirical patterns identified in this study onto relevant theoretical constructs in Second Language Acquisition.

¹⁹ Sovacool, Benjamin K, and David J Hess. “Ordering Theories: Typologies and Conceptual Frameworks for Sociotechnical Change.” *Social Studies of Science* 47, no. 5 (October 2017): 703–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312717709363>.

Table 2. Alignment between Empirical Findings and SLA Theories

Empirical Pattern	Relevant Theory	Analytical Interpretation
Input perceived as inaccessible	Krashen – Comprehensible Input	Input lacks pedagogical mediation and contextual grounding
Limited oral participation	Swain – Output Hypothesis; Long – Interaction Hypothesis	Output deprivation constrains interlanguage development
Persistent grammatical overload	Cognitive Load Theory	Simultaneous processing exceeds working memory capacity
Low instrumental motivation	Gardner; CLIL	Weak integration of disciplinary content undermines relevance

Table 2 illustrates the analytical alignment between the empirical patterns identified in this study and established theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Rather than functioning as abstract explanatory devices, these theories illuminate how specific classroom practices and instructional conditions observed in the field give rise to persistent learning challenges among non-pesantren students.

From an SLA perspective, Krashen's concept of *comprehensible input* helps explain why students experience Arabic input as inaccessible, despite continuous exposure during classroom instruction. The empirical findings indicate that the primary issue does not lie in the quantity of input, but in the lack of pedagogical mediation and contextual grounding. Observed instructional practices emphasize grammatical explanation and text translation with minimal disciplinary relevance, resulting in input that is formally present but functionally opaque. Recent critiques of SLA theory emphasize that input must be pedagogically structured and meaningfully contextualized in order to be processed effectively, particularly in languages with high linguistic distance, such as Arabic.²⁰

Furthermore, Swain's *Output Hypothesis* and Long's *Interaction Hypothesis* provide an explanatory framework for understanding the limited oral participation observed in the classroom. Empirical findings

²⁰ Satriadi, Satriadi satriadi, and Muassomah. "Cooperative Learning Dalam Bahasa Arab: Metode Belajar Di MA Nurul Huda." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 2, no. 2 (July 2021): 161–74. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v2i2.4798>.

show that students are rarely afforded opportunities to test hypotheses about language use through speaking or interaction. As a result, interlanguage development remains constrained, and students rely heavily on receptive skills and rule memorization. This pattern is consistent with evidence that output deprivation inhibits the development of communicative competence in learners of Arabic as a foreign language.²¹

Cognitive Load Theory offers an additional lens for interpreting the persistent grammatical difficulties identified in the study.²² Classroom observations and document analysis reveal that students are simultaneously required to process complex grammatical rules, unfamiliar scripts, and technical terminology related to Sharia Accounting. In the absence of instructional segmentation and scaffolding, these demands exceed students' working memory capacity, leading to cognitive overload. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that unmanaged cognitive load significantly impedes grammatical acquisition, particularly in languages characterized by dense morphology and rule complexity.

Within this instructional configuration, motivational issues emerge as a further consequence rather than an isolated affective problem. Motivation, traditionally conceptualized through Gardner's socio-educational model as a combination of integrative and instrumental orientations, requires reinterpretation in light of the empirical context of this study. The findings indicate that low student motivation among non-pesantren learners is closely related to how Arabic is positioned within the Sharia Accounting curriculum. Interview data and classroom observations consistently show that students perceive Arabic as peripheral to their core disciplinary competencies, rather than as a functional resource for understanding accounting concepts, Islamic financial contracts, or professional terminology.²³

²¹ Al-Issa, Ali S.M., Ali Hussain Al-Bulushi, and Rima Mansoor Al-Zadjali. "A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Reasons Underlying Arab Student-Teachers' Inadequate English Language Proficiency." *Cogent Education* 4, no. 1 (January 2017): 1340821. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1340821>.

²² John Sweller, "Cognitive load theory, learning difficulty, and instructional design," *Learning and Instruction* 4, no. 4 (1994): 295–312, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-4752\(94\)90003-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-4752(94)90003-5).

²³ Roux, Kate le, Dale L. Taylor, Bruce Kloot, and Saalih Allie. "Research on Higher Education: A Perspective on the Relations between Higher Education Studies and Discipline-Based Education Research." *Teaching in Higher Education* 26, no. 1 (January 2021): 50–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1634538>.

Document analysis reinforces this perception by revealing a lack of systematic integration between Arabic language instruction and Sharia Accounting content. Course syllabi and instructional materials treat Arabic as a standalone subject, with learning objectives centered on grammatical mastery rather than disciplinary application. As a result, students struggle to identify clear instrumental value in Arabic learning, leading to weakened motivation despite institutional recognition of Arabic as an important academic requirement. In this context, low motivation emerges as a rational response to curricular signals, rather than as an inherent lack of interest or effort on the part of learners.

This interpretation resonates with research on English for Specific Purposes (ESP)²⁴, Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP)²⁵, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)²⁶, which consistently demonstrates that discipline-based language instruction enhances learner engagement and strengthens perceptions of relevance in higher education contexts. Studies in applied linguistics show that when language learning is meaningfully embedded within disciplinary practices, such as analyzing domain-specific texts, engaging with authentic professional discourse, or applying terminology in problem-solving tasks, students are more likely to develop sustained instrumental motivation.²⁷ Conversely, when language instruction remains decontextualized from students' academic and professional trajectories, motivation tends to decline regardless of instructional intensity or assessment demands.

²⁴ Marcu, Nicoleta Aurelia. "Designing Functional ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Courses." *Procedia Manufacturing* 46 (2020): 308–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.promfg.2020.03.045>.

²⁵ Maswani, Maswani, and Kisno Umbar. "Arabic for Specific Purposes (ASP) in Indonesian Context: A Review of the Indonesian Qualifications Framework (IQF)." *Proceedings of the 7th International Colloquium on Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (ICIIS) in Conjunction with the 6th Annual Postgraduate Conference on Muslim Society (APCoMS), ICIIS and APCoMS 2024, 17–18 June 2024, Banjarmasin, Indonesia*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.17-6-2024.2349073>.

²⁶ Dalton-Puffer, Christiane. "Content-and-Language Integrated Learning: From Practice to Principles?" *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31 (March 2011): 182–204. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000092>.

²⁷ Macaraeg, Jonathan Marcos, Marivic Cruz Gallego, Renz E. Ferrera, and Mark Bedoya Ulla. "Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Experiences and Challenges of English Preparatory School Graduates in a Cambodian International University." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 10 (2024): 101165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101165>.

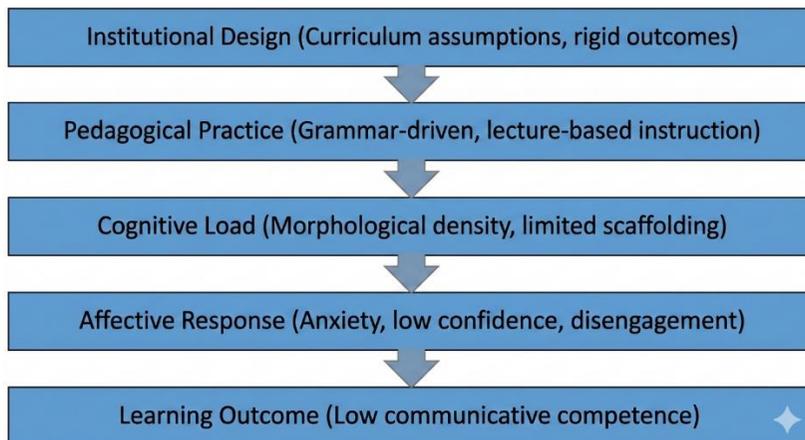


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Systemic Arabic Learning Challenges

Figure 1 presents a process-oriented conceptual model that synthesizes the empirical findings of this study into a systemic configuration of Arabic language learning challenges among non-pesantren students. The model illustrates how institutional design, manifested through curriculum assumptions and rigid learning outcomes, functions as the upstream determinant that shapes pedagogical practices in the classroom.²⁸ These practices, predominantly grammar-driven and lecture-based, structure the learning environment in ways that prioritize formal rule transmission over meaningful language use.

Within this instructional configuration, students are required to process dense morphological structures and complex grammatical explanations with limited scaffolding, resulting in heightened cognitive load.²⁹ Rather than facilitating gradual language development, the accumulation of unmediated input places excessive demands on learners' working memory, particularly for students without prior exposure to Arabic. This cognitive overload subsequently triggers affective responses, including anxiety, reduced confidence, and progressive disengagement from classroom interaction.³⁰

²⁸ John Biggs, and Catherine Tang. *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. 4th ed. Berkshire: Open University Press, 2011.

²⁹ Sweller, John, Jeroen J. G. van Merriënboer, and Fred Paas. "Cognitive Architecture and Instructional Design: 20 Years Later." *Educational Psychology Review* 31, no. 2 (June 2019): 261–92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09465-5>.

³⁰ Teimouri, Yasser, Julia Goetze, and Luke Plonsky. "SECOND LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND ACHIEVEMENT." *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 41, no. 2 (May 2019): 363–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263118000311>.

Importantly, the model conceptualizes affective factors not as initial causes of learning difficulty, but as downstream consequences of pedagogical and institutional arrangements. As affective disengagement intensifies, opportunities for communicative practice further diminish, reinforcing students' reliance on passive learning strategies and mechanical memorization.³¹ The cumulative effect of these interacting dimensions is a learning outcome characterized by persistently low communicative competence, despite sustained instructional exposure.

By framing Arabic language learning challenges as an interconnected systemic process rather than isolated learner deficits, Figure 1 advances an explanatory model that integrates linguistic complexity, instructional design, cognitive processing, and affective experience. This systemic perspective underscores that addressing low proficiency outcomes requires interventions beyond motivational enhancement at the individual level. Meaningful improvement depends on structural realignment across curriculum design, pedagogical orientation, and cognitive accessibility of instruction. Without such systemic reform, Arabic language learning risks remaining a formal academic requirement rather than functioning as a meaningful disciplinary resource that supports students' academic and professional development in Sharia Accounting.³²

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The findings are derived from a single study program within a specific institutional and disciplinary context, which may limit their transferability to other Arabic language learning settings. In addition, the qualitative design prioritizes analytical depth over statistical generalization, and the absence of longitudinal data constrains the examination of developmental changes in language proficiency over time. Nevertheless, these limitations highlight important implications for research and practice. The study demonstrates that improving Arabic language learning in higher education requires systemic alignment across curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and cognitive accessibility, rather than isolated motivational or methodological

³¹ Li, Shaofeng, Phil Hiver, and Mostafa Papi. "Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition." In *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Individual Differences*, 3–34. New York: Routledge, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003270546-2>.

³² Ruiz-Madrid, Noelia, and Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez. "Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education." *System* 115 (July 2023): 103073. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103073>.

interventions. Future research may build on this framework through comparative or mixed-method designs, while practitioners may use the proposed model as a diagnostic tool to evaluate how institutional assumptions and instructional structures shape learners' engagement and communicative competence, particularly in programs serving students without prior exposure to Arabic.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Arabic language learning challenges among non-pesantren students in the Sharia Accounting Program are the product of a systemic instructional configuration rather than isolated linguistic or motivational shortcomings. Through systematic triangulation, the findings demonstrate that institutional assumptions embedded in curriculum design shape pedagogical practices that prioritize grammatical coverage over meaningful language use. Within this configuration, students are required to process linguistically dense input with limited scaffolding, resulting in sustained cognitive overload that constrains the development of functional communicative competence. Affective responses such as anxiety, low confidence, and declining motivation emerge as downstream consequences of these learning conditions, while rigid curricula and standardized learning outcomes further restrict pedagogical flexibility and reinforce lecture-based instruction. Consequently, Arabic is positioned primarily as a formal academic requirement rather than as a functional resource aligned with disciplinary learning in Sharia Accounting.

Despite these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The findings are situated within a single program and institutional context, and the qualitative design emphasizes analytical depth over broad generalization, while longitudinal dimensions of language development remain beyond the scope of the present investigation. Nevertheless, these limitations highlight important implications for both research and practice. The study advances a process-oriented explanatory model that integrates linguistic complexity, instructional design, cognitive processing, affective experience, and disciplinary relevance, offering a diagnostic framework for understanding Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education. Practically, the findings suggest that meaningful improvement requires systemic realignment across curriculum design, pedagogical orientation, and cognitive accessibility, alongside the adoption of discipline-integrated approaches such as Arabic for Specific Purposes. Future research may extend this

framework through comparative or mixed-method designs to further examine how systemic reform can reposition Arabic as a meaningful academic and professional tool for non-pesantren students.

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