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Reconfiguring Arabic Education in Indonesian Schools Abroad: Identity Work, Contextual Adaptation, and Pedagogical Innovation

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of Arabic language education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), a representative of Indonesian Schools Abroad (ISA). It focuses on how the school maintains students' linguistic and religious identity while adapting to the Malaysian socio-cultural context. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews with Arabic teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings indicate that SIKL strategically combines identity-based content, cultural adaptation, and pedagogical innovation. Teachers integrate Islamic values with local context through bilingual instruction, interactive methods, and digital tools. The study contributes to understanding how Arabic education in ISA can evolve to meet transnational educational demands while preserving core values.

Keywords: Arabic Language Education, Indonesian Schools Abroad, Balancing Identity, Adaptation and Innovation

A. Introduction

Arabic language education holds a decisive and transformative role in shaping religious identity and cultural continuity among Indonesian Muslim students living in the diaspora, particularly at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). In this context, Arabic is not taught merely as a linguistic system; it becomes an active medium through which Islamic values, spiritual sensibilities, and moral consciousness are cultivated. Within the globalized and multilingual environment these students inhabit, language itself becomes a battleground where cultural loyalties and identity boundaries are constantly negotiated. Arabic instruction in Indonesian Schools Abroad thus functions simultaneously as a stabilizing anchor and a cultural bridge grounding learners in the emotional and intellectual heritage of their faith while

equipping them to navigate the pluralistic realities of Malaysian society (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021). This dynamic underscores the relevance of holistic-integrative educational models, such as those shaped by Muhammadiyah's pedagogical philosophy, where the Islamic worldview is intentionally woven into academic learning to foster balanced spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022). In this way, Arabic education does not simply preserve tradition but becomes a conscious project of identity formation for young Muslims living beyond their cultural homeland.

Yet the transnational conditions of diaspora education introduce a set of complex pedagogical and epistemic challenges. Continuous exposure to multiple languages, belief systems, and cultural norms - particularly in highly cosmopolitan settings such as Malaysia - can subtly weaken students' attachment to their heritage language and the religious worldview embedded within it (Beaudrie, 2023). In this context, Arabic education functions not merely as a linguistic subject but as a strategic intervention against cultural dislocation. Still, a persistent tension emerges: efforts to safeguard Islamic identity may inadvertently become counterproductive when Arabic instruction is framed in overly rigid, doctrinal terms, thereby distancing learners from the multicultural realities they negotiate daily. Such rigidity risks reducing Arabic to a static symbol of orthodoxy rather than cultivating it as a living, relational intellectual tradition. As institutions increasingly confront this dilemma, the demand for pedagogical models that balance fidelity to Islamic identity with the fluid demands of global citizenship grows ever more pressing (Asmawi, 2023). This is precisely the terrain that SIKL and comparable Indonesian Schools Abroad must navigate in crafting Arabic language programs that are both culturally grounded and globally responsive.

The context of Arabic instruction in Malaysia - particularly at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) - reveals the inherent complexities of teaching a sacred language within a competitive multilingual environment. Arabic, while central to Islamic education, contends with dominant local languages such as Malay and English, which are more prevalent in students' everyday communication. At SIKL, Arabic is taught as part of the Islamic core curriculum; however, limited exposure beyond the classroom undermines students' retention and active engagement with the language (Selim, 2023). Research shows that conventional approaches often centered on grammar drills and translation have led to decreased student motivation and a weakened emotional connection to the language. In such settings, the curriculum must do more than deliver linguistic content; it must embed Arabic into students' lived realities through integrated, meaningful practice.

Arabic language learning - particularly for students living in diaspora contexts - is not merely a cognitive undertaking but a deeply constitutive act of identity formation. As a carrier of culture, belief, and communal belonging, language mediates the ways individuals interpret their world; consequently, Arabic instruction must be intentionally directed toward cultivating these affective and symbolic dimensions. Existing research indicates that students' engagement with authentic linguistic practices especially those embedded in religious discourse and cultural expression can significantly strengthen their emotional attachment to the language and reinforce its salience within their spiritual and social identities (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021). Realizing this potential requires educators to move beyond conventional, text-centered pedagogies and adopt communicative, interactive approaches capable of generating personal relevance and contextual immersion. Initiatives such as Arabic conversation circles, narrative-based religious storytelling, and collaborative cross-cultural projects offer promising avenues for enhancing both learner retention and the internalization of meaning. Although the multilingual environments characteristic of diaspora education present substantial instructional challenges, they simultaneously open space for more responsive, identity-centered pedagogical models ones that acknowledge the linguistic realities of students' local ecologies while preserving the enduring sacredness and cultural weight of Arabic (Nofal, 2023).

The teaching and maintenance of Arabic in Indonesian Schools Abroad, particularly in Southeast Asia, present a set of complex challenges and rich opportunities that remain underexplored in academic discourse. While Arabic is embedded within the Islamic curriculum, its implementation within hybrid educational frameworks where the Indonesian national curriculum intersects with the sociocultural norms of host countries demands a careful balance between religious instruction and local cultural adaptation (Mas'ud et al., 2019). This dual commitment calls for a curriculum design that not only transmits linguistic competence but also respects the cultural particularities of the host society. Although some institutions have made strides in this direction, most still rely on traditional pedagogical models that emphasize rote memorization and grammar drills. Recent studies advocate for more interactive and student-centered approaches that incorporate technology, real-life communication, and project-based learning to enhance motivation and retention.

Despite growing interest in Arabic education within diaspora contexts, there is still a notable absence of comprehensive research that critically examines how Arabic instruction in ISA supports identity negotiation while fostering cultural adaptability. Existing literature tends to focus on curriculum structure or linguistic outcomes, often neglecting the broader psychosocial dimensions of language learning in transnational settings. In particular, the role of teachers in helping students navigate dual identities as Indonesians and global Muslim

learners requires further investigation. Additionally, while student disengagement remains a persistent issue, there is limited exploration of how pedagogical innovation can address this challenge. The need for sustained professional development to equip teachers with culturally responsive and pedagogically effective strategies is also pressing (Sulaiman et al., 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating how Arabic education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) operationalizes identity-oriented and context-sensitive pedagogies in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the implementation of Arabic language education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) as a representative model of Indonesian Schools Abroad, with a focus on three interrelated objectives: to analyze how the Arabic curriculum and pedagogical practices function as mechanisms for reinforcing students' religious and linguistic identity; to explore how the school adapts its instructional strategies to the sociocultural realities of Malaysia's multilingual and multicultural environment; and to identify the forms of pedagogical innovation such as digital integration, communicative approaches, and contextual learning that are employed to enhance student engagement and language retention. By investigating these dimensions holistically, the study aims to offer empirical insight into how Arabic education in diaspora contexts can simultaneously preserve cultural-religious heritage and respond to global educational demands, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on identity-oriented language instruction in transnational Islamic education settings.

B. Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design with an intrinsic case study approach to explore the implementation of Arabic language education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL). A case study is particularly appropriate for investigating a bounded system or context where the focus lies on understanding the particular rather than the general. (Xiong et al., 2025) The intrinsic nature of the study stems from the researcher's intention to understand SIKL as a unique and complex site for Arabic education within a transnational setting. SIKL represents a distinct model of Islamic education that simultaneously upholds Indonesian national identity and engages with Malaysia's multilingual and multicultural environment. In this sense, the case was not chosen for its representativeness, but for its relevance to the specific educational, cultural, and religious questions being investigated (Merriam, 1998).

Data were collected through three main sources: semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three Arabic language teachers and six students from junior and senior high

school levels. The interviews focused on participants' experiences in teaching and learning Arabic, particularly regarding identity formation, cultural adaptation, and pedagogical practices. Classroom observations were carried out over two weeks, using an observation guide to capture aspects such as instructional techniques, teacher-student interaction, and the integration of Arabic with religious or cultural content. In addition, documents such as lesson plans, teaching materials, school policies, and student worksheets were analyzed to gain insight into curriculum structure and instructional intent. Triangulation of data sources was employed to enhance the credibility and richness of the findings (Sharp, 2003).

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model of qualitative data analysis, consisting of three concurrent flows: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Transcribed interviews and field notes were coded inductively to identify patterns related to the study's three central dimensions: identity reinforcement, sociocultural adaptation, and pedagogical innovation. Themes were compared across data sources and refined through iterative reading and memo-writing. To ensure trustworthiness, member checking was used with selected participants to validate the interpretations, and peer debriefing was conducted with fellow researchers in the field of Arabic education. Ethical clearance was obtained through informed consent, and participants' identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality, following standard qualitative research ethics (Creswell, J. W., Creswell, 2018).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Reinforcement of Religious and Linguistic Identity through Arabic Instruction

The integration of Arabic instruction at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) plays a pivotal role in reinforcing students' religious and linguistic identities. Unlike secular models of language instruction, the approach at SIKL is deeply rooted in the Islamic educational tradition, wherein Arabic is not merely taught as a subject but is treated as a sacred language that carries theological, ethical, and civilizational meaning. Through the recitation of Qur'anic verses, study of prophetic traditions (ḥadīth), and the use of religious vocabulary in daily practice, students are immersed in an environment where Arabic becomes a living symbol of faith and belonging. This aligns with Forbes and Rutgers' (2021) assertion that in diaspora Muslim education, language acquisition is closely linked to identity construction, where Arabic serves not only communicative purposes but also ontological and symbolic functions (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021).

This integrative model of Arabic instruction nurtures students' emotional and cultural attachment to Islam as part of their personal and collective identity. By embedding religious content into linguistic exercises, educators promote what Nofal (2023) refers to as "faith-embedded language learning," where learners internalize Arabic through meaningful spiritual engagement rather than mechanical memorization (Nofal, 2023). This approach is especially

crucial in diaspora contexts, where external influences and limited exposure to Arabic may weaken students' connection to their heritage. At SIKL, however, Arabic becomes a bridge between the sacred and the personal, connecting students to their religious roots while empowering them with a sense of cultural continuity. The holistic, identity-driven pedagogy observed at SIKL reflects broader efforts in Islamic education to cultivate students who are not only linguistically competent but also spiritually grounded.

a. Language as a Medium of Identity

Language, particularly in the context of religious education, is more than a communicative tool it is a powerful medium of identity formation. In Islamic education, Arabic occupies a sacred position as the language of the Qur'an, the foundational text of Islamic belief and practice. This sacredness imbues Arabic with symbolic, spiritual, and emotional significance that transcends grammatical structures and lexical functions. (Baharun et al., 2020) At institutions like Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), Arabic is taught not only for linguistic competence but also as a means of cultivating students' connection to their faith. The use of Qur'anic verses, daily supplications, and classical Islamic expressions during Arabic instruction helps students internalize the language as part of their religious identity, thereby reinforcing their sense of self within a diasporic Islamic framework.

This identity-oriented approach to language teaching fosters an emotional bond between learners and the Arabic language, which enhances motivation and long-term retention. As Forbes and Rutgers (2021) argue, when Arabic instruction is anchored in religious discourse, students experience language acquisition not merely as an academic task but as a spiritual journey (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021). The integration of meaningful content—such as the recitation of short *sūrah*s, ethical proverbs in Arabic, or discussions of Islamic values—creates a pedagogical space where language learning becomes personal and identity-affirming. In the context of diaspora education, where students often negotiate between competing linguistic and cultural influences, such emotionally resonant instruction is essential for sustaining their Islamic consciousness and cultural continuity. Thus, Arabic, when taught as a medium of identity rather than a neutral language, becomes an instrument of belonging, resilience, and self-definition.

b. Cultural Heritage and Moral Values

In Arabic language instruction at SIKL, cultural heritage and moral values are not treated as supplementary elements but as integral to the curriculum design. Lessons are deliberately constructed to embed Islamic values, linking linguistic content with acts of worship and ethical behavior. For example, students learn vocabulary related to daily

prayers, respect for parents, and Islamic holidays, not only to improve their Arabic proficiency but also to internalize the religious meanings behind these practices (Nofal, 2023). This integrative model reflects a broader philosophy in Islamic pedagogy that does not separate language acquisition from spiritual development. Rather, language is seen as a vessel through which divine teachings are accessed and lived. This approach enables learners to engage with Arabic in ways that are both functionally and theologically meaningful, deepening their commitment to the moral universe that the language represents.

The impact of this approach extends beyond language competence into the realms of identity and cultural continuity. As students participate in lessons that blend linguistic instruction with rituals, values, and narratives from their religious tradition, they begin to experience Arabic not merely as an academic subject but as a core element of who they are. This emotional and cultural engagement fosters a strong sense of belonging, especially for learners in diaspora contexts where identity negotiation is constant. According to Shpetna and Kirichenko (2022), embedding cultural heritage within language instruction enhances students' sense of rootedness and resilience, allowing them to navigate multicultural environments without losing touch with their origins (Shpetna & Kirichenko, 2022). At SIKL, this pedagogical strategy cultivates not only morally grounded individuals but also linguistically empowered youth who carry their heritage with pride and purpose.

c. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study underscore the significant pedagogical value of integrating Arabic language instruction with religious and cultural education. When Arabic is taught not merely as a linguistic code but as a living embodiment of Islamic values and practices, it fosters deeper cognitive and emotional engagement among students. This approach strengthens learners' connection to their faith, facilitates comprehension of religious texts, and promotes internalization of moral values through meaningful language use. (Baharun et al., 2020) At institutions like SIKL, this integrative pedagogy proves particularly effective in sustaining cultural continuity and spiritual identity among diaspora students who might otherwise experience religious dislocation or cultural dilution. Consequently, there is a strong case for designing Arabic curricula that are not just communicative in orientation but also value-laden, aligning language instruction with broader Islamic educational goals.

This fusion of linguistic and religious instruction also raises critical pedagogical challenges, especially in multicultural and multilingual educational settings. While it benefits students who share a strong religious background and prior exposure to Arabic, it may unintentionally create barriers for learners with limited familiarity or different linguistic starting points. In some cases, non-Arabic speaking students may feel alienated if the

instruction assumes a level of prior religious or linguistic knowledge, potentially leading to disengagement or feelings of inadequacy (Saleh et al., 2025). Moreover, educators may struggle to differentiate instruction effectively in such diverse classrooms, balancing the need to preserve the sacred character of Arabic with inclusive teaching practices. As such, there is a need for responsive pedagogical strategies that honor the religious significance of Arabic while remaining accessible to all students, regardless of their linguistic background or level of religiosity. This highlights the broader tension between identity reinforcement and inclusive education a dilemma central to faith-based schooling in transnational contexts.

2. Sociocultural Adaptation within a Multilingual Environment

Operating within the sociolinguistic landscape of Malaysia, SIKL faces the dual task of preserving Indonesian-Islamic identity while remaining contextually responsive to local culture and language. While Arabic instruction formally follows the Indonesian national curriculum, its implementation is adapted to students' linguistic realities many of whom are more fluent in Indonesian, Malay, or English. Teachers frequently code-switch between Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia to scaffold learning and ensure comprehension. In some cases, cultural references are localized to help students better relate to the learning materials, especially when discussing ethical or social themes.

This adaptive strategy reflects what Hornberger (2005) describes as “biliteracy development” in multilingual education, where identity, power, and language access are negotiated through hybrid pedagogical choices. Teachers at SIKL acknowledge the cultural proximity between Bahasa Indonesia and Malay and use this as a bridge to engage students more effectively. Yet, this adaptive method is not without tension; while it improves accessibility, it also risks reducing students' immersion in authentic Arabic discourse. Therefore, striking a balance between accommodation and authenticity becomes a central challenge.

a. Code-Switching and Language Adaptation

In the multilingual environment of Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL), code-switching between Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia emerges as a pedagogical necessity rather than a deviation from linguistic norms. Teachers strategically alternate languages to scaffold students' comprehension, particularly when introducing complex grammatical structures or abstract religious vocabulary. Given that most students are more fluent in Bahasa Indonesia or Malay due to their daily linguistic environment, this approach enhances accessibility and minimizes cognitive overload. This bilingual mediation not only supports learning outcomes but also affirms students' cultural and linguistic identities, allowing them to approach Arabic as a meaningful language rather than a foreign academic burden (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021).

In this context, code-switching serves as a bridge between the sacred language of instruction and the students' lived linguistic experiences.

This practice resonates with Hornberger's theory of biliteracy development, which posits that effective language learning in multilingual contexts depends on flexible, hybrid pedagogical strategies that validate and build upon learners' existing linguistic repertoires (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021). At SIKL, code-switching is not only a linguistic strategy but also a sociocultural one—allowing educators to navigate the tension between preserving the sanctity of Arabic and ensuring pedagogical inclusivity. Through this dynamic negotiation, students are gradually empowered to access Arabic as both a religious and communicative resource. However, this also requires teachers to possess strong intercultural competence and metalinguistic awareness, so that the integration of both languages reinforces, rather than dilutes, the authenticity and significance of Arabic instruction. In this sense, code-switching becomes a pedagogical act of balance-honoring both the sacred and the practical in a complex, pluralistic learning environment.

b. Cultural Localization

The incorporation of cultural localization in Arabic language instruction at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) reflects a conscious pedagogical effort to make learning more meaningful and contextually resonant for students. By embedding local cultural references - such as Malay social norms, regional idioms, and Southeast Asian customs - into instructional materials and classroom discourse, educators bridge the abstract nature of classical Arabic with the lived experiences of their students. This strategy is particularly effective when addressing ethical and moral themes, as students are more likely to internalize values when they are presented through familiar cultural lenses (Ismail & Sarudin, 2023). For instance, lessons on respect, cooperation, or family ethics are often illustrated through examples rooted in the Malaysian-Indonesian socio-cultural context, allowing students to see direct relevance between Arabic expressions and their everyday social realities.

This approach also takes advantage of the cultural and linguistic proximity between Bahasa Indonesia and Malay, which share not only lexical similarities but also common historical and religious narratives. Leveraging this proximity allows educators to clarify complex Arabic concepts using culturally accessible explanations, thereby enhancing comprehension and engagement. (Ghazali et al., 2019) Rather than viewing localization as a compromise to linguistic purity, SIKL's approach frames it as a form of cultural translation that reinforces the pedagogical goals of both language acquisition and identity formation. In multicultural and transnational educational settings, such adaptive strategies are essential for sustaining students' motivation while simultaneously nurturing a deep appreciation for

Islamic heritage embedded within Arabic. Ultimately, cultural localization becomes a strategic pedagogical tool-one that honors local identity while guiding students toward broader global Islamic literacies.

c. Tensions in Pedagogy

Despite the effectiveness of adaptive pedagogical strategies such as code-switching, cultural localization, and contextualized moral instruction, these practices introduce a persistent tension in Arabic language education: the potential erosion of immersion in authentic Arabic discourse. While strategies that prioritize student accessibility - especially in multilingual and multicultural settings like SIKL - enhance engagement and comprehension, they may inadvertently dilute exposure to native Arabic structures and expressions. Over-reliance on Bahasa Indonesia or cultural substitution, though pedagogically convenient, can limit students' ability to internalize the linguistic nuances and stylistic conventions of formal Arabic.(Iversen, 2025).

This presents a pedagogical dilemma, where teachers must choose between ensuring immediate comprehension or fostering deeper linguistic authenticity-both of which are crucial, yet often in competition within diaspora educational contexts. The findings of Mas'ud et al. (2019) and Asbulah et al. (2019) affirm that Arabic language instruction in transnational Islamic schools must carefully negotiate the space between contextual relevance and linguistic purity. On one hand, curriculum localization acknowledges students' sociocultural realities and aids in identity affirmation; on the other, it raises concerns about the diminished role of Arabic as a living, functional medium of religious scholarship and cross-cultural communication. Educators are thus challenged to construct a bilingual ecosystem in which Arabic remains a central communicative tool - not just a symbolic or ritual language - while still honoring the linguistic diversity of learners (Mas'ud et al., 2019). This balancing act requires pedagogical intentionality, curricular flexibility, and teacher capacity to scaffold learning progressively from local familiarity toward linguistic and cultural immersion. Failure to strike this balance risks reducing Arabic instruction to superficial encounters, undermining its transformative potential in shaping identity and intellectual formation in diaspora settings.

3. Pedagogical Innovation to Enhance Engagement and Retention

The integration of pedagogical innovation in Arabic language teaching significantly enhances student motivation and retention. Teachers at SIKL employ interactive strategies, such as digital platforms and collaborative activities, to create engaging learning environments. This shift from traditional methods to innovative practices aligns with contemporary second language acquisition research, emphasizing communicative competence and learner autonomy.

a. Interactive Teaching Strategies

The use of interactive teaching strategies in Arabic language instruction at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) reflects a significant shift from traditional, grammar-heavy approaches toward more learner-centered and engagement-driven pedagogy. One prominent innovation is the integration of digital platforms such as Quizizz, Kahoot, and Wordwall, which offer gamified learning environments that appeal to students' intrinsic motivation and familiarity with technology. These platforms transform passive reception into active participation, encouraging learners to compete, collaborate, and reflect on their understanding in real time (Panagiotidis et al., 2023). The immediate feedback feature inherent in such tools supports formative assessment and helps students self-correct their language use. In diaspora contexts where Arabic is often limited to the classroom, these interactive tools not only make lessons more dynamic but also extend the learning experience beyond the textbook by providing multi-sensory and emotionally engaging input.

Complementing digital innovation, collaborative learning activities such as Arabic conversation circles, peer-to-peer roleplays, and small group discussions have been shown to enhance both the affective and cognitive dimensions of language acquisition. At SIKL, these activities foster a socially supportive environment where students are encouraged to take linguistic risks, negotiate meaning, and co-construct knowledge through meaningful interaction. This aligns with sociocultural theories of language learning, which emphasize that language development occurs most effectively in dialogic, socially mediated contexts. Empirical evidence also suggests that such collaboration enhances vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, and overall communicative competence (Rabie-Ahmed & Mohamed, 2022). Importantly, these practices contribute to the normalization of Arabic as a spoken and social language, rather than one confined to ritual or memorization. In this way, interactive and collaborative strategies not only modernize the pedagogy but also align Arabic education with the developmental and contextual needs of diaspora learners.

b. Project-Based Learning

One of the most impactful innovations in Arabic language instruction at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) is the implementation of project-based learning (PBL), which positions students as active participants in constructing their linguistic knowledge through real-life tasks. Activities such as role-playing, thematic presentations, and scripted dialogues allow learners to use Arabic in simulated communicative contexts that mirror authentic interaction. These tasks foster greater motivation and participation by giving students a clear purpose and audience for their language use, thus transforming the classroom from a passive learning environment into a dynamic linguistic laboratory (Turgut KOÇ,

2018). Unlike traditional drill-based methods, project-based assignments require learners to synthesize vocabulary, grammar, and cultural context in a holistic manner, enhancing both retention and fluency. Furthermore, such tasks promote autonomy, critical thinking, and collaboration-skills essential for success in both academic and real-world settings.

The effectiveness of project-based learning is further amplified when instructional content is culturally relevant and resonates with students' religious and personal identities. For instance, assignments that involve religious storytelling (*qiṣaṣ an-nabiyyīn*), dramatization of Islamic historical events, or presentations on Islamic holidays in Arabic help ground language learning in culturally meaningful narratives. This approach aligns with the findings of Genlott et al. (2019), who emphasize that identity-linked projects significantly increase learner engagement and deepen emotional connections to the language. At SIKL, these culturally embedded projects not only facilitate linguistic development but also nurture a sense of pride and belonging among students as members of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. By linking Arabic learning with lived values and spiritual heritage, project-based strategies function as powerful tools for both pedagogical efficacy and identity formation. They transform the classroom into a space where Arabic is not only learned but also lived.

D. Conclusion

This study has shown that Arabic language education at Sekolah Indonesia Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) plays a critical role in reinforcing students' religious and cultural identities while simultaneously navigating the complexities of a multilingual and multicultural educational environment. Through the integration of Qur'anic vocabulary, religious practices, and culturally resonant themes, Arabic instruction at SIKL becomes more than a linguistic endeavor; it functions as a transformative process that cultivates spiritual connection, moral development, and identity formation among diaspora students. This integration is not without challenges. The balance between maintaining the sacred character of Arabic and adapting to students' sociolinguistic realities requires nuanced pedagogical strategies, including the use of code-switching, cultural localization, and identity-affirming instruction. These strategies reflect a conscious effort to ensure both accessibility and authenticity in Arabic language learning.

The study highlights the growing importance of innovative, student-centered teaching approaches in Arabic pedagogy. Techniques such as gamified digital learning, collaborative conversation circles, and project-based assignments not only enhance linguistic competence but also foster deeper engagement and retention. Particularly effective are culturally embedded learning tasks that connect language to students' religious and personal narratives, making

Arabic instruction relevant, meaningful, and empowering. Yet, such innovations must be carefully implemented to avoid diluting immersion in authentic Arabic discourse. In this regard, the SIKL model provides valuable insight for educators and curriculum designers in similar transnational settings-demonstrating how Arabic language education can be both contextually responsive and rooted in Islamic pedagogical traditions. Future research should further explore how these adaptive strategies can be scaled, refined, and evaluated across other Indonesian schools abroad and Muslim minority institutions globally.

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