

## Portrait Of Arabic Language Immersion Program In Indonesian Islamic Colleges

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### Abstract

The discourse of language immersion is the antithesis of the language environment, which has been considered the ideal endeavor in Arabic language pedagogy in Islamic universities in Indonesia. In contrast to the language environment, which requires community instruments to optimize Arabic, language immersion looks more from the perspective of the quantity and quality of students interacting with Arabic. This paper examines the description of the Arabic language immersion program in Islamic universities in Indonesia. This paper is in the form of a case study. The author chose Islamic universities in the Yogyakarta area as the object of research, namely: Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Ahmad Dahlan University, and Pandanaran Islamic College. Data collection used questionnaires, interviews, and documentation; data analysis borrowed from the Miles and Huberman procedure. The study results indicate that Arabic language immersion programs in Islamic universities in Indonesia universally use an artificial immersion basis to provide students with Arabic language knowledge and skills to form communication competencies like those in Arab society. The immersion model with the most significant percentage of use is the partial immersion model. The methods used are qowaid wa tarjamah, direct method, audio lingual-visual method, communicative method, and eclectic method. Meanwhile, the effectiveness and efficiency of the immersion program will be evaluated using test and non-test methods.

**Keywords:** Arabic; Immersion Program; Islamic College; Indonesia

### INTRODUCTION

Language immersion is one of the latest dynamics in foreign language education development (Ismail & Ismail, 2014) (Chen, 2019). Foreign language teaching and learning in this typology has a fundamental character in the form of optimizing the target language (Holobow et al., 1991). This term has attracted a lot of attention from academics and foreign language education practitioners. Discourses about it, for example, relate to approaches (Hammerley, 1987), models (Chen, 2019) (Makransky & Petersen, 2021), and programs (Li et al., 2016) in the application of language immersion. Several studies above affirm the significant role of language immersion in improving foreign language skills and psychological aspects of students.

The discourse of foreign language immersion in Indonesia has been voiced by the government for at least two decades. The legal formulation of the internationalization of the quality of education is suspected as the legal formal application of foreign language immersion programs in the national education space (Pendidikan, n.d.). Arabic with all its strategic labels is one of the foreign languages that is used as an instrument to increase

the capacity and capability of national students to be able to compete in the global arena. Islamic universities in their position as the highest stratum of formal education based on Islam in Indonesia are certainly expected to have a significant role in producing quality output in the context of Arabic. This is in addition to ideological factors, there are also other pragmatic reasons such as academic needs and global communication. Therefore, Arabic immersion should be used as an alternative solution to mitigating problems in Arabic language education so far.

As of August 2022, there are 847 private Islamic universities and 58 state Islamic universities (Kemenag, n.d.), including 16 Islamic universities in the Yogyakarta area (Koperteis, n.d.). Researchers chose Islamic universities in Yogyakarta, namely the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Ahmad Dahlan University, and Pandanaran Islamic College. This is because several Islamic universities can be used as a cultural mirror of the implementation of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities on a macro scale. In addition, in the last five years, these Islamic universities have shown a positive trend in adopting the Arabic immersion model, both total immersion (Nurhadi, n.d.), partial immersion (Holilulloh, n.d.), and two-way immersion (*Results of Documentation Study of PBA Profile at UMY, n.d.*).

Several previous university studies have questioned the effectiveness of language immersion programs at universities (Taufiq, 2020) (Abdurrohman et al., 2018), the design of immersion programs with psycho-social and psycho-cultural bases (Suvongse & Chanyoo, 2022), and artificial immersion programs (Supriyono et al., 2020). In addition, it is also related to the affirmation that short-term immersion programs at universities can stimulate foreign language learning, although to maintain language proficiency, a more long-term design is needed (Savage & Hughes, 2014). However, as far as the author's research goes, the study of language immersion at universities generally has English as its object (Dewi, 2007). In addition, several studies that the author has found also do not discuss the implementation of language immersion at universities. Based on this, the author is interested in identifying the portrait of Arabic language immersion in Islamic universities, especially in Indonesia.

Based on preliminary studies that the author has conducted in several Islamic universities in Yogyakarta, Arabic immersion has existed in the treasury of Arabic language education. This is reflected, for example, in the existence of lectures that fully use Arabic by bringing in lecturers from Al-Azhar University, Egypt (*Results of Documentation Study of PBA Profile at UIN SUKA, n.d.*), or by creating a natural Arabic language environment by sending their students to study at Al-Azhar. In addition, there is cooperation between universities in the Yogyakarta area with universities in Egypt, Libya, Mecca, and Malaysia in the framework of improving students' Arabic language skills (*Results of Documentation Study of PBA Profile at UMY, n.d.*).

Starting from the background above, the author is interested in identifying further related to the existence of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities. In this case, the author will examine the model, objectives, implementation, and evaluation of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities in Indonesia. The results of the study will be able to help understand the current state of Arabic immersion education in universities, assess program needs, and support the design of the implementation of Arabic immersion education in a broader university context.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study pattern. The natural approach in this case will be used to see the portrait of Arabic immersion programs at Islamic universities in Indonesia. The researcher chose Islamic universities in the Yogyakarta area as the object of research, namely: Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Ahmad Dahlan University, and Pandanaran Islamic College. This is because it can be used as a cultural mirror of the application of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities in a macro way. In addition, in the last five years, these Islamic universities have shown a positive trend in adopting the type of Arabic immersion program, both total immersion, partial immersion, and two-way immersion

The data collection technique in this study used questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. In the context of data analysis, this study uses the Miles and Huberman model which operationally consists of three steps, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification (Afrizal, 2014). The initial stage of the data that the author obtained in the field will be filtered and adjusted to the focus of the research, namely related to the objectives, models, implementation, and evaluation of immersion programs in Islamic universities. In the next step, the data related to the focus of the research will be presented by the author and then the author will conclude.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Discourse on Language Immersion in Foreign Language Pedagogy

Studies on language immersion programs in second or foreign language proficiency have shown a significant role. Its existence began around the mid-1960s at St. Lambert School in Quebec, Canada. Furthermore, the program has successfully improved language proficiency in various countries, such as Canada, America, China, Estonia, and other parts of the world. Although there are differences in management and implementation models, in general, this program has the same main focus, namely improving language skills in the target language (Subroto et al., 2020).

In Canada, the program has been implemented for 60 years and has been effective in improving students' language skills. Through intensive immersion programs, students in Canada develop their French and Spanish language skills while maintaining their proficiency in their native language (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). The implementation of language immersion programs in Canada is designed to enrich the education of native English-speaking students by teaching them all of their academic subjects in the target language. In language immersion programs, the regular school curriculum is taught in the immersion language for at least half of the school day. In partial immersion programs, instructional time is evenly divided between English and the immersion language throughout the elementary grades. In full immersion programs, teachers do not use English at all in the early grades. The goal is for students to become proficient in a second language and develop increased cultural awareness while achieving high levels of academic achievement.

Language immersion programs are also a mainstay in the context of bilingual learning (English and Portuguese) in Utah, Portugal. The program is implemented by changing the school environment to be like the target language country environment. In daily communication practices at school, all students are required to use the target

language. This is done so that students feel as if they are living in the target country's environment. Such language immersion programs can build students' fluency in speaking and accuracy in writing in the target language. On the other hand, this strategy can force students to try harder to learn the language (Bell'Aver & Rabelo, 2020).

In Estonia, the language immersion program has been running for about 20 years. They run this program for several reasons, including; (1) the program is national, planned, supported, and even funded by the Ministry of Education and Research in all aspects of the program, including teacher training and study materials. (2) the sustainability of the program is ensured by long-term planning, the language immersion program strategy is revised every five years after collecting feedback from the target group and taking into account any changes in education policy. (3) the program has always had clear social and educational values expressed in its Program Vision. With the implementation of integrated learning of content and language in the Estonian education system, language immersion has fostered the idea that after completing primary school, students - becoming multilingual independent learners - have broad possibilities for further studies and in the labor market and they value their ethnic identity and mother tongue (Golubeva, 2018).

In Indonesia, language immersion programs have invited many academics to experiment with the program in various educational institutions from elementary school to college. At the elementary school level, the immersion program is carried out by accustoming interaction between teachers and students using a second language. Likewise with the delivery of materials by teachers (Pujiastuti, 2013). At the secondary school level, teachers are given full authority to control and provide direction, or orders to students to maximize interaction in the target language during the learning process (Nasir et al., 2019). At the same level, the language immersion program is also carried out by translating the teaching materials used into the target language (Asrori, 2011). At the college level, the program can be specifically implemented by increasing interactive discussions with students (Meida & Fadhly, 2018). Through various learning models, the program generally has a positive impact on learning motivation, self-confidence, and increasing students' communication skills using the target language.

Immersion etymologically means to dip, soak, combine, mix, and immerse (Musthofa et al., 2018). In terms of terminology, language immersion in Lambert's perspective is a natural method of learning the target language that will expose students to the target language naturally and motivate them to communicate socially (Bailey, 2016). A simpler opinion was conveyed by Varandi, according to him, language immersion is a method of learning a second language using the target language. Meanwhile, Hadumod Bussmann argues that language immersion is a school of thought in teaching foreign languages where subjects are taught using only the target language. Florian Coleman argues that language immersion is an activity that places students in an environment that uses the target language naturally for a certain period. Al-Ross argues that language immersion is an approach, method, and strategy in the learning process where the target language is used to teach academic content (Musthofa et al., 2018) (Andriyani, 2016). Based on the expert opinions above, it can be seen that Arabic language immersion is a school of thought, approach, method, strategy, program, and activity, that places students in Arabic language activities, either naturally or artificially to improve Arabic language skills.

The portrait of Arabic immersion in the context of this study refers to a universal idea related to how Islamic universities in Indonesia place students in Arabic language

activities, either naturally or artificially to improve Arabic language skills. The following is a portrait of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities in Indonesia:

### Objectives of Arabic Immersion Programs in Islamic Colleges in Indonesia

The main objective of language immersion programs is for learners to gain target language communication skills like native speakers. This can be instrumentally indicated by the learner's capacity for target language skills (Musthofa et al., 2018). Furthermore, Arabic language skills in the perspective of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) itself are categorized into 1) Basic level, which is divided into two, namely A1 (pre-beginner) and A2 (beginner); 2) independent level, divided into two, namely B1 (pre-intermediate) and B2 (intermediate); 3) advanced level, divided into two, namely C1 (pre-advanced) and C2 (advanced) (Division, 2001). In general, the objective of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities in Indonesia is to provide students with Arabic language skills so that they can communicate like native speakers. This is in line with what was conveyed by Ahmad Zaky, one of the PBA lecturers at Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD) Yogyakarta, that the objective of the Arabic immersion program is to produce Arabic language students who can communicate like Arab society in the context of globalization and technology (*Interview Results with Mr. Ahmad Zaky*, n.d.). Meanwhile, Nurul Huda explained that in the context of Islamic universities, the Arabic immersion program is not only oriented to provide students with Arabic communication skills but also oriented to academic aspects that are in line with the vision and mission of the study program. In other words, students who take part in the Arabic immersion program are expected to be competent in Arabic knowledge and Arabic language skills so that students are not only able to communicate but also can exchange ideas related to the linguistic and metalinguistic aspects of Arabic (*Interview Results with Mr. Nurul Huda*, 2023). In contrast to the opinion above, according to Talqis Nurdianto, the orientation of the Arabic immersion program at the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) is directed so that students can communicate confidently on more varied themes in formal and informal settings. Furthermore, Nurdianto explained that the ability to communicate in Arabic like a native speaker will later be assigned to advanced students (*Interview Results with Mr. Talqis Nurdianto*, 2023). The purpose of the Arabic immersion program at Islamic universities in Indonesia is also in line with what was conveyed by Roid Musthofa that the purpose of Arabic immersion is to equip learners with various linguistic, cultural, and language skills competencies, develop and improve learners' abilities to simulate linguistic models of the target language (Musthofa et al., 2018) (Kang & Ghanem, 2016).

The following is a further description of the objectives of the Arabic language immersion program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, UMY, UAD, and the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic College (STAISPA):

**Table 1. Objectives of Arabic Language Immersion at Indonesian Islamic Colleges**

Language Proficiency	Indicator	Indonesian Islamic College			
		UIN	UMY	UAD	STAISPA
Listening Skills	Can recognize very basic sounds about himself	√	√	√	√
	Understanding sounds related to the areas that are most personally relevant	√	√	√	√
	Understand the sounds of standard conversation clearly about things commonly encountered at work, school, leisure time, etc.	√	√	√	-

	Understanding conversations and lectures on broader topics	√	-	√	√
	Understanding conversations that are heard implicitly and not explicitly marked	√	-	√	√
	Have no difficulty in understanding any type of language heard, either directly or indirectly, like a native speaker of the language.	√	-	-	√
Speaking Skills	Can interact in a simple way verbally but communication is completely dependent on repetition at speaking speed.	-	√	√	√
	Can communicate in simple tasks requiring verbal and direct exchange of information on general matters.	√	√	√	√
	Can communicate verbally with confidence on matters familiar to his/her professional field.	√	√	√	√
	Can use language orally fluently, accurately and effectively on a variety of general topics	√	-	√	√
	Can express himself orally fluently and spontaneously, almost without effort	√	-	√	-
	Have mastery of idiomatic expressions	√	-	√	√
Reading Skills	Understanding written symbols in the form of names, words and very simple sentences	√	√	√	-
	Can read very short and simple texts according to grammar	√	√	√	√
	Can understand familiar text	√	√	√	√
	Can read articles and reports	√	-	√	√
	Can understand long and complex texts	√	-	√	√
	Can read almost all forms of written language with ease	√	-	√	√
Writing Skills	Can write correspondence via short and simple postcards	√	√	√	-
	Can write notes and short messages related to material in the field being studied	√	√	√	√
	Can write simple, connected texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.	√	√	√	√
	Can write clear and detailed texts on a variety of subjects	√	-	√	√
	Can express oneself in clear and well-structured text, expressing points of view at length	√	-	√	√
	Can write clear, flowing text in an appropriate style. Can write complex letters, reports, or articles that present cases grammatically.	√	-	√	√

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the objectives of the Arabic immersion program in Islamic universities are predominantly directed at providing students with Arabic language skills like the Arab community. This objective in the context of CEFR is termed C2 skills. Meanwhile, the minor objectives of the Arabic immersion program in Islamic universities are directed at providing students with the capacity to speak Arabic passively and actively with more varied topics, both in formal and informal situations. This objective in the context of CEFR is termed B1

### Model of Arabic Immersion Program in Islamic Colleges in Indonesia

The model of the Arabic Immersion Program in Islamic Universities in Indonesia refers to the complete set of material presentations in the program. The following are the models of Arabic immersion programs at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, Ahmad Dahlan University, and Sunan Pandanaran Islamic College:

**Table 2. Arabic Language Immersion Model in Islamic Colleges in Indonesia**

Model Arabic Immersion	Islamic College			
	UIN	UMY	UAD	STAISPA
Total Immersion	-	-	-	√
Partial Immersion	√	-	√	√
Two Way Immersion	-	√	√	-

According to the table, Islamic colleges in Indonesia generally use the partial immersion model for Arabic language education. This model emphasizes the use of Arabic in the learning process, with a percentage reaching 50%. Additionally, two-way immersion, which is a bilingual immersion, is also used. The least common model is total immersion, which emphasizes the use of Arabic in the learning process with a percentage reaching 100%. Andi Holiluloh pointed out that the shortage of qualified Arabic language lecturers is a major obstacle to implementing total immersion in Islamic universities in Indonesia. He mentioned that the Arabic language lecturers in these universities are not proficient enough in active Arabic communication, similar to native speakers (Holilulloh, n.d.)

### Implementation of Arabic Immersion Programs in Islamic Colleges in Indonesia

To achieve communicative competence, students can engage in a series of linguistic activities involving both oral and written reception and production. According to Khalid Husain, individuals can acquire any language when they are exposed to a language that they can understand and use. Therefore, meaningful interactions with the target language are crucial in the process of learning a foreign language (Musthofa et al., 2018). The implementation of Arabic immersion programs in Islamic universities in Indonesia is outlined below:

**Table 3. Implementation Of Arabic Language Immersion In Islamic Colleges In Indonesia**

Method	Strategy	Islamic College			
		UIN	UMY	UAD	STAISPA
<i>Qowaid wa Tarjamah</i> Method	Reading Arabic texts in newspapers	-	-	√	-
	Reading Arabic magazines	-	-	-	√
	Reading Arabic stories	-	-	√	√
	Reading Arabic novels	-	-	-	-
	Reading Arabic advertisements	-	-	-	√
	Reading research reports in Arabic	√	√	√	√
Direct Method	Presentation in Arabic	-	√	√	√
	Presenting poetry in Arabic	-	√	-	-
	Telling experiences in Arabic	-	-	√	√
	Describing pictures in Arabic	√	√	√	√
	Expressing opinions in Arabic	√	-	√	√
	Presenting research reports in Arabic	-	√	√	√
Audio lingual-visual Method	Listening to Arabic radio, audio, recordings	-	-	√	√
	Watching Arabic YouTube	√	√	√	√
	Watching Arabic films related to the material	-	√	√	√
	Watching Arabic TV related to the material	-	-	-	-
	Listening to Arabic music	-	-	√	-
	Listening to news broadcasts using Arabic	-	-	√	√
Communicative Method	Self-study using Arabic illustrations	-	-	√	√
	Live interview with native speaker	-	√	-	√
	Communicate with native speaker	-	√	-	√
	Interact with classmates using Arabic	√	-	√	√

Eclectic Method	Discussion using Arabic	√	√	√	√
	Debate using Arabic	-	√	√	√
	Role play using Arabic	-	-	√	√
	Participation in Arabic language conferences	√	√	√	√
	Participation in other training courses	-	-	√	-
	Student exchange	-	-	√	-

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the implementation of the Arabic immersion program at Islamic universities in Indonesia uses the *qowaid wa tarjamah* method, direct method, audio-lingual visual method, communicative method, and eclectic method. In the *qowaid wa tarjamah* method, the dominant strategy used is reading research reports in Arabic, then reading Arabic stories, reading Arabic advertisements, reading Arabic newspapers, and reading Arabic magazines. The operationalization of the direct method in the Arabic immersion program at Islamic universities in Indonesia mostly uses the strategy of describing images in Arabic, followed by the use of presentation strategies using Arabic, expressing opinions in Arabic, presenting research reports in Arabic, and presenting poetry in Arabic as the most inferior strategy. The basis of the dominant audio-lingual visual method uses the strategy of watching Arabic YouTube related to the subject matter, then watching Arabic films related to the material, listening to Arabic radio or audio, listening to Arabic news broadcasts, independent learning with Arabic illustrations, and listening to Arabic music. In terms of communicative methods, the implementation of Arabic immersion in Islamic universities in Indonesia predominantly uses discussion strategies using Arabic, debating using Arabic, interacting with Arabic-speaking colleagues, interviewing with native speakers, and playing roles using Arabic. Meanwhile, the implementation of Arabic immersion programs in Islamic universities in Indonesia based on eclectic methods mostly uses participation strategies in online or offline Arabic conferences or seminars.

### Evaluation of Arabic Immersion Programs in Islamic Colleges in Indonesia

Evaluation in language immersion programs can be done using various methods, generally using test and non-test methods. The following are the methods and strategies for evaluating Arabic immersion programs in Islamic universities in Indonesia:

**Table 4. Evaluation Of The Arabic Language Immersion Program At Indonesian Islamic Universities**

Evaluation	Strategy	Islamic College			
		UIN	UMY	UAD	STAISPA
Test	Multiple Choice	-	√	-	-
	Making Essays	√	√	√	√
	Making Free Descriptions	-	-	√	√
	Making Daily Journals	-	-	√	√
	Making Scientific Journals	√	-	√	-
Non-Test	Interviews	-	√	√	√
	Observations	√	√	√	√
	Questionnaires	-	√	-	-

Based on the table above, it can be seen that Islamic universities in Indonesia predominantly use the strategy of making essays and conducting direct observations to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Arabic immersion program. Furthermore, the interview strategy is then followed by making scientific journals, daily journals, and free descriptions. Meanwhile, the multiple-choice strategy and

questionnaire strategy are the least chosen alternative strategies by Islamic universities in Indonesia to evaluate the Arabic immersion program.

## CONCLUSION

Arabic immersion programs in Islamic colleges in Indonesia universally use an artificial immersion basis with the main objective of providing students with Arabic language knowledge and Arabic language skills to form communication competencies like Arab society. The immersion model with the most significant percentage of use is the partial immersion model, then two-way immersion, and the total immersion model is the least used model. The reality of total immersion being the least used model is a consequence of human resources who do not yet have a high commitment as well as minimal communication competency. Furthermore, in operating the Arabic immersion model, Islamic universities in Indonesia use the *qowaid wa tarjamah* method, direct method, audio lingual-visual method, communicative method, and eclectic method. Meanwhile, to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Arabic immersion program, Islamic universities in Indonesia use test and non-test methods

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