

How Mediatization Of Arabic Learning Affects Religious Culture At The Indonesian Islamic University

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Abstract

Mediatization has transformed Arabic-language education from the personal to the instrumental and has provided a rapid, convergent approach to language learning. Such an approach, however, has distanced students from their education, as mediatized learning cannot convey the teacher's values. This article seeks not only to map the changing trends in Arabic-language education but also to analyze the implications of the ongoing mediatization process. Students' literacy influences their ability to learn Arabic through self-motivated, self-regulated learning and affects religious culture. This study finds that language learning has been transformed from a personal-religious cultural approach to an instrumental-functional one. At the same time, students have become dependent on technology and lost religious values, while their language has become formalized owing to the standardization of learning media. This study recommends improving media literacy to maximize students' achievements and free them from their dependence on media technology.

Keywords: Arabic Learning; Educational Technology; Mediatization; Religious Culture; Student Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic-language education has transformed from personal to instrumental as technology has become widely adopted. Although scholars have questioned the adverse effects of mediatization, they have recognized its positive contributions. Where the learning processes previously relied on dictations and textbooks, they can now be conducted online using electronic and digital media. Fewer than 80% of university students use social media and digital media such as electronic dictionaries, electronic books, search engines, and other free applications when learning Arabic. The digitization of learning media is thus unavoidable. As various scholars have shown, learning processes have transformed as information technology has been adopted worldwide (A. G. Abdullah & Ridwan, 2008; Wahidin, 2018) Moelbatak and Bria argue that, through such digital media, new approaches to learning—such as self-motivation learning and self-regulated learning—have been made possible. (Meolbatak & Bria, 2016) It may be surmised that independence has thus become a major driver of changes in the learning process. Similarly, education technology can be said to prioritize the development of students' logic and rational minds over didactic and methodic thought processes (Miarso, 2008).

Studies have generally viewed the introduction of media technology into the learning process as deleteriously affecting students' interactions with their teachers, and as a result they have difficulty internalizing values (Rubini et al., 2016; Setiawan, 2019;

Wiranto, 2015) At the same time, however, this technology has been seen as promoting new forms of education.(Hadidi & Al Khateeb, 2015; Siregar, 2013) Media technology has also been adapted in Arabic-language learning,(Hat et al., 2013) being perceived as capable of overcoming the obstacles that hinder the classical process. Through media technology, Arabic-language education can occur rapidly, draw students' interest, and improve their linguistic capabilities.(Iswanto, 2017) Previous studies have examined the use of technology in the learning process from a moralistic perspective, recognizing both its positive and its negative effects. The substantial, rather than instrumental, value of technology has yet to be examined. It is therefore crucial to understand how technology has the ability to create linguistic fluency and convey specific meanings. As stated by Veron, mediatization has created new forms of control, bureaucracy, and dominance.(Verón, 2014) However, the mediatization of Arabic learning at Islamic universities should not eliminate its function as a tool to understand the sources of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an and Hadith.(Suprayogo, 2011, p. 38) This article seeks to understand the process of Arabic-language learning from a mediatization perspective, one that recognizes the biases and values of technology-based learning. As such, it seeks to answer three questions: (1) How do students use technology when learning Arabic; (2) What level of media literacy do students exhibit in learning Arabic; (3) How can the mediatization of Arabic-language education develop students' self-motivated, self-regulated learning and affect religious culture, thereby improving students' competencies.

This study departs from the argument that the media facilitates Arabic-language learning and improves students' fluency. At the same time, however, media technology cannot convey the ideologies and values embedded within the Arabic language. In other words, due to technology's use of its logic, mediatization can potentially erode the religious elements embedded in the language, ultimately providing students with a linguistic understanding that fails to contribute to their personal development.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the mediatization of Arabic-language learning amongst the students of Malang State Islamic University, focusing on their use of media technology, media literacy, self-motivated and self-regulated education, and its consequences for students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and surveys. The observation was used to understand the learning process and its effect on students. Interviews, meanwhile, were used to obtain an understanding of students' media access and content. Finally, surveys were used to collect secondary data on media popularity, content, and duration. Various types of secondary data were used to complement primary data, including written resources and relevant documents.

As its informants, this research took students from the Arabic Language and Literature Department at Malang State Islamic University. Informants were chosen randomly to represent each class (I, III, V, VII). Collected data were analyzed using the process promoted by Milles and Huberman: collected, presented, reduced, and verified.(Miles et al., 2014) At each stage of the data collection process, the researchers observed learning processes in the classroom, faculty, and student communities; this enabled the researchers to answer the first and third research questions. To answer the second research question, the researchers distributed surveys to informants; after these data were collected, the researchers reduced and categorized it to facilitate analysis. Data

were then verified, with relevant information being identified and irrelevant data being discarded.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the mediatization of Arabic-language learning amongst the students of Malang State Islamic University, focusing on their use of media technology, media literacy, self-motivated and self-regulated learning, and its consequences for students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and surveys. The observation was used to understand the learning process and its effect on students. Interviews, meanwhile, were used to obtain an understanding of students' media access and content. Finally, surveys were used to collect secondary data on media popularity, content, and duration. Various types of secondary data were used to complement primary data, including written resources and relevant documents.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technologization Of Education

The post-industry era has been marked by radical changes in informative, processual, and institutional learning. This has not only transformed content, but also its goals and motifs. Electronic learning technology, online training, and various new educational models have been developed through a process termed technologization (Ruliene & Namsaraev, 2016). Technology is no longer something students 'learn', but rather something 'with which' they learn (Buchanan et al., 2015). This phenomenon has been given several names, including the 'computerization of education' (Nurmukhametova et al., 2015) the 'technologization of knowledge', (Karpov, 2015) and 'innovation in education' (Blândul, 2015). Given that globalization and modernization have affected various aspects of human life, it is necessary for the educational landscape to adapt so it can remain relevant and responsive. Technologizing education is not an easy task, but it can produce a promising and significant approach to language education (Mabuan & Ebron, 2017).

Advances in science and technology, as well as their social consequences, have required constant renewal and content production (Lips, 2013; Nurmukhametova et al., 2015). Lips writes that students are often equipped with more media technology than their classrooms; teachers, meanwhile, are required to behave innovatively as they only have access to outdated equipment (Lips, 2013). The literature on the technologization

of education has also asked who benefits from this process. Birbirso shows that, in Ethiopia, the government cited the current 'global world' as its main reason for introducing information technology into its classrooms. There was thus an ideological desire to control teachers and students through technology (Birbirso, 2013). Similarly, Blair and Monske question the benefits of the rapid introduction of information technology into the learning process. They ask readers to be critical in understanding this phenomenon, to whether it benefits students and whether it threatens teachers' continued employment (Blair & Monske, 2003). Others have examined geopolitical issues, such as whether the technologization of education increases homogeneity and threatens diversity (Pickering, 1997). According to Stone, technologization has resulted in a limited concept of education, one that invites no alternatives or diverse approaches in conveying its educational messages (Stone, 2006).

According to Lundby, mediatization is a matter of communication, as it transforms communication through the introduction of new technologies known as 'media' (Lundby, 2014). Such mediatized communication patterns can transform the social and cultural contexts in which they are practiced. Mediatization is thus a key concept for understanding the relationship between the media, society, and culture. (I. Abdullah et al., 2019; Michelsen & Krogh, 2017) Michelsen and Krogh write that mediatization has been understood as more than a term; it has also become a paradigm for media studies (Michelsen & Krogh, 2017). Hjarvard has introduced a broad sociological theory of media that investigates the media's influence on culture and society. Central to this theory is its definition of mediatization as a two-sided modernization, within which the media exists independently and practices its own logics while simultaneously being integrated into political, employment, family, and religious institutions (all of which have begun relying on interactive and mass media) (Hjarvard, 2008).

The literature may be divided into three categories in its discussion of mediatization and education. First are those that examine computer technology's development, use, and effects in the education sector. Most such studies deal with changes in how information is transmitted. Second, are those studies that examine how politics inform mediatization of education (Andrade-Molina & Valero, 2019). Third, are those studies investigating the effects of mediatization on how education practices are understood and represented. Mediatization has transformed society and culture by changing how people communicate; (Lundby, 2014) as such, the media has been an agent of cultural and social change. (Hjarvard, 2008) According to Verón, mediatization has been detrimental to public literacy (Verón, 2014). Communication has changed across space and time. Mediatization makes it possible for spoken communication to be recorded, examined, manipulated, and retransmitted within new and different contexts while at the same time creating new forms of control, bureaucratization, and dominance.

Student Language Competencies And Culture

The introduction of media has fundamentally affected the learning process, which has developed dynamically as it has adapted to changing contexts and demands. According to Naeve et al., there are two learning processes: knowledge transmission and creation. The first is used to convey pre-existing knowledge, including that incorporated into the curriculum, while the second creates knowledge through the learning process.

Constructivists believe that knowledge must be developed independently by individuals. Naeve et al. argue that knowledge should be created through all learning processes. For management purposes, two mutually complementary components are necessary: learning management (a people-oriented approach that focuses on learning as a process) and knowledge management (traditionally a technology-oriented approach that perceives knowledge as a resource) (Naeve et al., 2008).

Teutsch-Dwyer describes the learning process as related to language. Students' perceptions of their identities transform with their social and cultural environments when learning a language. Personal identities are created discursively, and as such, a language is an essential tool for developing these identities (Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001). Meanwhile, Arabic is also referred to as the language of religion which is used in religious practice and forms religious traditions and culture (Asy'ari, 2016, p. 24). As a result of technological advances, including in the education sector, studies of the learning process have focused on how it has transformed and the effects of these changes. For example, Zhang and Feng and Adesina have shown that the incorporation of information and communication technology in education has created new educational and managerial paradigms.(Adesina, 2013; Zhang & Feng, 2013) At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that the mediatization of the learning process does not guarantee its success. Nonetheless, electronic learning—a product of information and communication technology—has significantly influence the learning process within universities, promoting flexible teaching and independent study.(Adesina, 2013)

Language not only has a central role in students' social and emotional development, but also contributes significantly to the success of the learning process.(Purwanti, 2016) Teachers often promote *fluency*, the ability to speak and write easily and expressively, or *competency*, the ability to meet applicable standards.(Pietro, 1970) Competency refers to individuals' ability to perform within the workplace or within specific situations, as measured through established criteria. Suherman likens 'competency' to 'ability' (Suherman, 2008). Once they have linguistic competency, students can understand and use educational material. Later on, they can incorporate it into their set of life skills.

All languages have their own indicators for measuring students' competency. For instance, the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) uses grammar, dictation and listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing as indicators of students' linguistic and communicative competencies (Rammuny, 1999). Meanwhile, Suherman identifies several indicators of competency: cognitive ability (understanding, rational thinking, application, analysis, observation, identification, exploration, connection, communication, inquiry, hypothesis, conjecture, generalization, creativity, and problem solving), affective ability (self-control, self-awareness, impulse control, positive motivation, and empathy) and psychomotor skills (socialization, personality, argumentation, presentation, and behavior).(Suherman, 2008, p. 3) According to Pietro, teachers have a central role in shaping students' competencies and linguistic abilities. It is best for teachers to motivate students while adapting themselves to changing times (Pietro, 1970). Teachers also hold an important role in the process of transformation, transaction and transinternalization of values in the learning process (Muhaimin et al., 2001, pp. 301–302). Therefore, the selection of media and learning resources needs to be adapted to the function of Arabic in the Islamic University environment, which is as

a tool to understand the sources of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an and Hadith(Suprayogo, 2011, p. 38) and as the language of religion and to study Islamic science.(Asy'ari, 2016, p. 24) These teachings can be an inspiration to develop modern science.(Suprayogo, 2011, p. 38)

Use Of Media In Arabic-Language Education

Since students have begun handling their academic and administrative affairs online, the internet has become an integral part of the learning process. Where students once referenced lectures and physical books, today, they turn to electronic books, dictionaries, journals, and applications. Likewise, where face-to-face interactions were once necessary to select classes, submit assignments, or survey students, these can now be done online.

Online media has improved literacy amongst all members of society, particularly intellectuals such as university students. Media technology has enabled students to hone their knowledge and improve their understanding. Wright recognizes the internet as offering ten important benefits: saving time, saving money, promoting security, facilitating learning, remaining up-to-date, remaining connected, improving decisions, offering employment opportunities, spreading joy, and influencing others. Such benefits can promote self-motivated and self-regulated learning among students of Arabic (Wright, 2012).

The learning process has transformed as technological advances have been made. Low-technology media such as textbooks, tape recorders, dictionaries, and modules have given way to high-technology media such as digital applications, internet-based programs, and video streaming (Figure 1). Applications such as electronic dictionaries, Qur'an in Word, Learn Arabic and Speak Arabic were used by 2% of students. Through such applications, students improve their vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Through the internet, meanwhile, students access course materials that are not available through digital applications; this was reported by 8% of informants.

Similarly, online course materials that are not directly related to fluency can be accessed. Meanwhile, video streaming services such as YouTube are used to improve students' speaking and listening skills. This can be attributed to streaming's status as a convergent media. Fewer than 11% of students use video streaming services while learning Arabic. Overall, 88% of respondents reported using more than one learning medium, indicating a high media literacy.

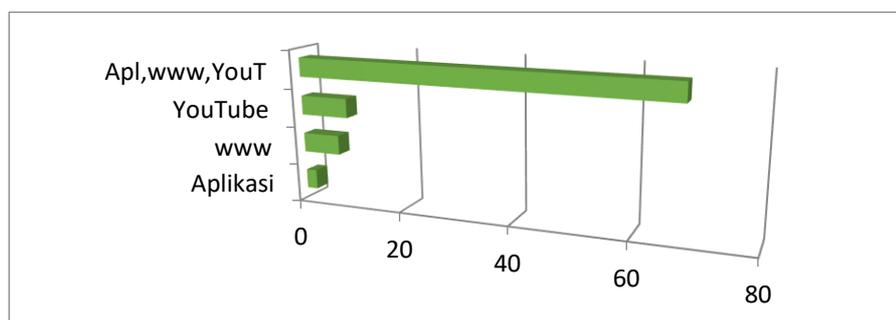
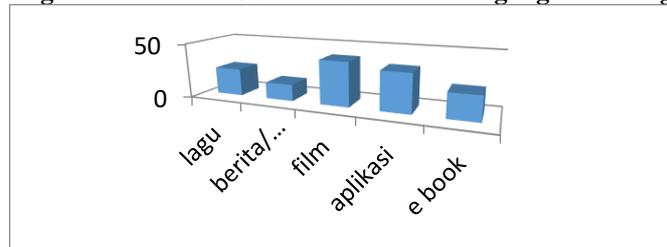


Figure 1: Favored Media for Arabic-Language Education

The data also show that various types of content facilitate the Arabic-language learning process. Most popular among students are films, which 29% of respondents use.

Students frequently access Arabic-language movies, particularly animated ones; this is particularly evident in their selection of thesis topics. This can be explained by films being part of students' everyday life experiences. Meanwhile, 26% of students used language applications to study vocabulary, pronunciation, structure, syntax, dan morphology. Students often use songs as learning media, as reported by 18% of respondents; these media are popular owing to their ease of access and the enjoyment they bring. Conversely, news articles and speeches are unpopular, as mentioned by 11% of respondents. Such media are perceived as monotonous and overly severe.

Figure 2: Favored Content for Arabic-language Learning

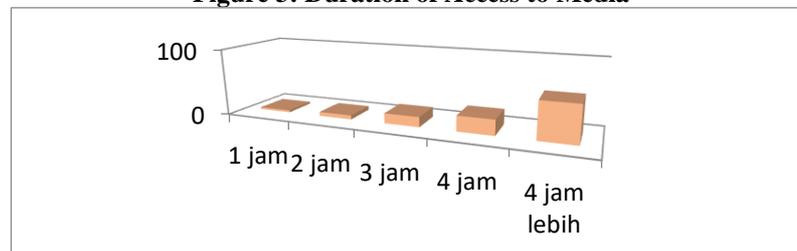


From Figure 1 and Figure 2, it can be seen that students today differ from their predecessors. Unlike previous generations, who had to scour the library for learning resources, identify roots to find words in dictionaries, and listen to speeches to improve their pronunciation, today's university students can study at any time and place. The time-consuming processes of the past have given way to mediatized learning processes in which students can readily and instantaneously access the information and material they require.

Students' Level of Technology Literacy In Learning Arabic

In the Industry 4.0 Era, students have ready access to information that can help them improve their ability to speak Arabic. Classrooms, *ma'had* (Islamic learning centers), mosques, libraries, and canteens all provide Wi-Fi facilities, which students can access free of charge. As shown in Figure 3, students most commonly spend more than four hours studying Arabic on the internet (54% of respondents); 22% use the internet for four hours a day, 15% use it for three hours, 6% for two hours, and 3% for one hour. Students living in boarding houses can readily purchase affordable data packages, with which they can access the internet through their cellular phones and laptops. In other words, students have no reason not to use technology. Technology-literate students can become fluent more quickly, easily, effectively, and efficiently.

Figure 3: Duration of Access to Media



The students who most commonly access the internet are those involved in faculty activities such as El-Jidal and research communities. El-Jidal, for instance, offers students a place to train their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills and compete with students from other domestic and foreign Islamic universities and institutions.

Meanwhile, research communities involve students interested in writing (which promotes critical reading skills). Members of such communities are often writing their theses or writing articles for publication in accredited and non-accredited journals. Some students are involved in literary societies, language groups, and Al-Jalalain.

Beyond Self-Motivated, Self-Regulated Learning, And Religious Culture

Advances in media technology have significantly affected students' learning approaches and their interpersonal relations with their lecturers. Lecturers use media technology to transfer knowledge to their students, which may be accessed rapidly, efficiently, and affordably. Students can absorb new knowledge from the media without meeting their lecturers or obtaining detailed explanations. When students have difficulty understanding a concept, they generally consult search engines and applications; they do not ask their lecturers, whose answers are provided less immediately. Where Arabic-language education once involved personal relationships between lecturers and their students and thus enabled the transmission of body language, character values, spirits, and motives, media technology has resulted in the codification of interpersonal relationships. It can only produce codes and symbols; the meaning of these symbols is not conveyed correctly.

By introducing media technology, Arabic-language education has become easier, more effective, and more efficient. At the same time, however, it has emphasized technological factors over human factors. Students cannot access their lecturers' explanations or receive moral values, and as such the meaning of the text cannot truly be conveyed. Language learning requires not only an understanding of specific symbols and codes, but also an ability to contextually interpret them. Media technology is only capable of providing the symbols and codes of language, and as such cannot provide students with the necessary interpretative abilities. The meanings of these symbols cannot be conveyed, and thus language loses its substance. In some cases, texts are interpreted in a manner that betrays their original intent. Such mistaken interpretations have enabled the rise of radicalism and liberalism. Students may have good language skills, but lack any understanding of its values; in other words, they may gain fluency, but not the appropriate character.

According to Hasan, a good model in education is more easily formulated through religious traditions and culture, manifested in the behavior and attitudes of teachers when teaching in the class and through selected films. (Hasan, 2006, pp. 120–121) Heroic values can be transformed and internalized within students by giving them roles in Arabic dramas, such as the drama about Kholifah Umar bin Khotob. Therefore, in the digitally era, Arabic teachers need to be skilled at creating and developing Arabic language learning media and resources, such as Internet-based dramas and short films, such as Youtube. Professional organizations of Arabic language lecturers at Islamic universities also need to increase their knowledge of digital literacy and the preparation of Internet-based learning resources, such as E-Books and YouTube. In addition, Arabic learning mediation at Islamic universities must not eliminate the function of Arabic as a religious language (Asy'ari, 2016) and a tool for understanding religious teachings in the Qur'an and Hadith written in Arabic (Suprayogo, 2011, p. 38) because Arabic is also an instrument for understanding Islamic literature. (Azra, 1999, pp. 113–116) However, mediatization in Arabic teaching and learning activities has also led to Self-Motivated

and Self-Regulated learning. It has also become a solution to the barriers of Arabic learning in Islamic education.(Hasan, 2006, p. 175)

Media technology is convergent, combining multiple elements (symbols, sounds, and images) within a single message. As such, it is an easy and pleasurable learning resource, one that can entice students and increase their enthusiasm. At the same time, however, such media cannot convey the same values as lecturers. Media technology is stagnant, following a single pattern. No matter how often a YouTube video is watched to learn speaking skills (*muhadatsah*), it will continue to provide the same information—no less and no more. Consequently, media technology produces overly formal and standardized speech. Conversely, when students learn from a lecturer, new vocabulary may be introduced, different intonations may be used, and body language may vary.

Students' use of media technology as a medium for learning Arabic has transformed speech patterns and language use in society. The El-Jidal community investigated in this study practiced four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and used these skills in debates, *ghina'* (singing), *khithobah* (speeches), and *insya'* (creative writing), all of which require both active (*kalam* and *kitabah*) and passive (*istima'* and *qiro'ah*) language skills. The students observed in this study are interested in writing, and as such are expected to be better at critical reading. These students are writing their theses, conducting research for competitions, or writing articles for presentation or publication. Although they receive guidance from their academic advisors, their main references are online: electronic journals, books, dictionaries, and applications.

Aside from academic content, Students also access Arabic-language entertainment (such as films). As seen in Figure 1, 29% of students watch films and use them to improve their listening skills. Using such media, students can: a) obtain new vocabulary (*mufrodah*), b) hear native accents (*lahjah*), c) practice correct pronunciation (*ashwat*), d) enrich their speech (*ibarah/ta'bir*) by choosing the right words for the right contexts and situations, e) improve their intonation (*nabr*), and f) examine film scripts as research objects from a literary or linguistic perspective in their theses. Although Arabic-language songs have similar benefits, they are not as commonly used as films. Speeches and news articles, meanwhile, draw minimal student attention (Figure 2), as both are perceived as severe texts that require focus and careful reading.

Students tend to use applications, electronic books, and streaming services to access Arabic-language learning material. Almost all students (88%, Figure 2) used these three media in tandem, as each has its distinct characteristics. Applications and electronic books must be downloaded before being used as learning material. Applications can be used to look up complex terms (through electronic dictionaries), Qur'anic verses (through Qur'an in Word), or *tashrif* through Qurthub. Electronic books, meanwhile, can be used to obtain linguistic and literary references. Meanwhile, streaming services such as YouTube can access Arabic-language films, songs, speeches, and news stories.

CONCLUSION

Advances in media technology have created an Arabic-language learning process that promotes immediate results, nonpersonal approaches, and convergent media. Internet-based technology, such as streaming services, has enabled students to obtain

immediate results. Consequently, the personal relationships that were previously cornerstones of the learning process have given way to independent learning. At the same time, media technology has enabled audio and visual media to be used in the learning process. YouTube, the primary medium through which students learn Arabic, provides them access to films and songs (both of which are integral parts of their life experiences).

This study's perspective of mediatization has enabled it to show that, despite the benefits offered to students, media limits students' ability to develop their values and character. Where interpersonal relationships give way to mediatized relationships, the values conveyed by educators cannot be readily transferred to students. Mediatized Arabic-language education has only enabled students to obtain linguistic fluency without understanding the extralinguistic values that underpin it. In other words, Arabic-language education must do more than transfer knowledge; it must also convey values. Language is part of a personal-cultural configuration rather than a purely instrumental-functional one.

This article has examined media use in the learning process to analyze the mediatization of the language-learning process. It has yet to concern how interpersonal relationships are created and shaped through media technology, influencing media literacy among program users. Meanwhile, its assessment of education programs departs from particular assumptions, and further investigation is required. Mediatization fundamentally affects how students receive the specific messages and meanings that are distributed through the media. In other words, a qualitative study that investigates students' subjective experiences with technology would provide a valuable contribution.

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