

# THE CULTURE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF BERNARD SPOLSKY'S LANGUAGE POLICY

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## Abstract

*This article explores the culture of Arabic language learning through the framework of Bernard Spolsky's language policy. According to Spolsky, language policy consists of language practice, language beliefs, and language management. In the context of Arabic language education, language policy encompasses the implementation of suitable curricula, the use of effective teaching methods, and the sustainable management of educational systems. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis. For data analysis, the researchers apply the analytical framework of Miles and Huberman, which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation methods and peer discussions were employed. The study's key findings are as follows: First, the policy on teaching materials, as stipulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is implemented in accordance with Ministerial Decree No. 183 of 2019. Both madrasas develop learning plans, selecting appropriate media and methods. At Madrasah Aliyah Negeri MAN 2 Malang, the approach is similar, with careful planning of learning activities. Second, in both madrasas, Arabic language instruction follows the 2013 curriculum. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs encourages more innovative and intensive approaches to Arabic language learning, as demonstrated by Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Malang's initiative to incorporate remote learning into their Arabic language instruction.*

**Keywords:** Arabic Language Learning, Bernard Spolsky' Language Policy, Culture

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching of the Arabic language in Indonesia occurs within both formal and informal institutions, spanning

from preschool to university. Turkis Lopes categorizes these institutions into two types: first, official institutions that operate under the management of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education;

and second, informal educational institutions (Lubis, 2018). Official institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs progressively establish educational programs from preschool through university. Meanwhile, institutions governed by the Ministry of National Education offer Arabic language and its associated sciences at public universities that host departments specializing in Arabic language and literature or Arabic language teaching (Taba, 2021; Syam, 2021).

Efendi argues that, based on the history of the Arabic language, five key points can be identified: 1) the introduction of Arabic, 2) the historical role of Arabic in Indonesian society, 3) the development of Arabic language education over time, 4) efforts to modernize the teaching of Arabic in Indonesia, and 5) the status of Arabic in Indonesia's language policies (Bachrong and Ansar, 2021). It is also important to recognize Indonesia's national language policy. According to the 1999 policy document, Arabic is classified alongside English, German, Japanese, French, and Chinese as a foreign language. However, Arabic holds a unique position as it is also recognized as the language of Islam and Islamic culture (Nuryani, 2021).

This distinctive status has significantly increased interest in studying Arabic, making it more popular than other foreign languages in Indonesian society (Zainuddin, 2020). Over time, the concept of politics has evolved from the management of state affairs to include a broader range of policies, such as defense policy, oil policy, cultural policy, and language policy (Beauchamp, 2005).

Bernard Spolsky distinguishes three components of language policy: 1) linguistic practice, which refers to habitual language choices; 2) linguistic beliefs or ideologies, referring to existing beliefs about language and its use; and 3) efforts to influence or manage language practices through intervention, planning, or regulation (Spolsky, 2005). Consequently, cultural policy as a linguistic culture has both theoretical and practical manifestations, often involving deliberate efforts to bring about change. Language policy, as seen by Tanner and Tanner, is a set of ideas, laws, rules, and applications designed to achieve planned changes in language use across societies (Tanner and Tanner, n.d.).

Language policy, like other policies, has often been viewed in two ways: first, as a

governmental function that implements language policies through quantifiable programs, reviews, and evaluations; and second, as an action that transcends the state, involving multiple stakeholders and potentially resulting in conflicts over linguistic policies (Spolsky, 2005).

In the context of Arabic language education in Indonesia, the importance of language policy lies in developing a clear, enforceable linguistic decision, followed by concrete implementation to improve Arabic teaching. The state's authority and influence are crucial, as education is a key driver of progress in the digital age.

## Literature Review

Language policy refers to the activities and processes involved in the formulation and implementation of linguistic regulations, often in the form of constitutional and legislative decisions. As a branch of public policy, language policy is defined by E. David as the behavior and set of interactions through which formal and binding decisions are created and executed for the benefit of society (Tanner and Tanner, n.d.). It is comprised of formal positions, guiding principles, and broad decisions that shape the linguistic environment of a society.

Language policy includes actions taken by state institutions to monitor and regulate the linguistic landscape, guiding its development and ensuring coherence. This is often accomplished through the enactment of constitutional and legislative measures, which aim to control the linguistic situation within society (Albury, 2021). For language policy to function effectively, it requires a framework of both linguistic and non-linguistic relationships. This framework encompasses the languages within a society, their functions, and the different levels at which they operate (Nursyamsi, 2023). The policy also considers the number of language users, their identities, and the political, economic, and social context of the society involved.

The theory of language policy draws its core concepts from the interactions between four key elements: 1) society as a fabric of collective identities, 2) the language or languages used for communication within society, 3) the state as a geographic and political entity, and 4) the authority or government as an institution capable of

making and enforcing decisions (RomaK, 2023).

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for Arabic language learning, as analyzed through Bernard Spolsky's theory of language policy, seeks to understand how policies, practices, and beliefs influence language acquisition. Spolsky identifies three key components of language policy: language practices, language beliefs, and language management. By applying this framework to the culture of Arabic language learning, we can examine how educational institutions, societal norms, and religious contexts shape the teaching and learning processes of Arabic.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, as it emphasizes accurately describing phenomena and developing a deeper understanding of them (Bungin, 2011). Using a descriptive method, the study focuses on the case of the Second Islamic State High School in Malang. Data collection was carried out through three primary tools: first, observation; second, interviews; and third, document analysis (Zainuddin et al., 2020). The researcher applied qualitative data analysis, with data being collected both during and after the research process. During interviews, the researcher analyzed responses from the officials, and if a response was deemed insufficient, follow-up questions were posed to obtain more reliable data. The data analysis process involved several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## DISCUSSION

### Policy Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

Language is a skill and a tool through which individuals communicate with members of their society to express personal needs and goals. It also serves as a means to enhance psychological, behavioral, cognitive, and social abilities in life (Handriawan, 2015). A failure to connect language with these elements can lead to ineffective linguistic practice or even its absence. Conversely, recognizing the connection between language and these elements fosters the learner's

motivation and ability to practice language effectively. To achieve this, it is crucial to focus on various adaptations, which can be categorized as follows (Ainin, 2021):

1. Social adaptation and language practice
2. Psychological adaptation and language practice
3. Semantic adaptation and language practice
4. Adaptation to the linguistic system and language practice
5. Current and situational adaptation and language practice

The curriculum refers to the comprehensive range of tailored opportunities provided by an educational institution, offering students cognitive, emotional, and psychological experiences both inside and outside the classroom. These opportunities are aligned with the conditions, abilities, and needs of learners at all educational levels. Saeed Hamid Hassan (1998) proposed that the concept of curriculum in modern times encompasses four interconnected dimensions: 1) the curriculum as an idea; 2) the curriculum as a written plan, grounded in the idea; 3) the curriculum as an activity, or the implementation of the written plan; and 4) the curriculum as a product, representing the outcomes of the implemented curriculum (Hasan, 2013). Thus, the curriculum can be understood as an idea, a written plan, an activity, and a product.

### The Ministry of Religious Affairs' Policy Beliefs on Arabic Language Instruction

The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy is a comprehensive academic resource in the field of language policy, edited by Bernard Spolsky, a distinguished researcher in language planning and policy. Published by Cambridge University Press in 2021, this 756-page volume is divided into five chapters and co-authored by 46 researchers (Assya'bani and Majdi, 2022). Its significance lies in the fact that it is the first comprehensive reference work in which numerous specialized researchers collaborate to address various issues related to language policy through rigorous academic analysis (Pajarianto and Muhaemin, 2020).

When discussing the content of language education, two key processes are involved: content selection and organization. Across Spolsky's body of work, he emphasizes

criteria for selecting content that align with the following principles: 1) The content should assist students in overcoming barriers to communication in standard Arabic, facilitating their mastery of the language by gradually exposing them to linguistic structures they are not yet familiar with. To achieve this, educators must first understand the linguistic knowledge students bring with them into the classroom; 2) The content should encourage creative language use, moving beyond mechanical repetition; 3) The content should enrich students' linguistic repertoire, allowing them to use Arabic effectively; 4) The content should introduce students to the unique characteristics of Arabic and foster an appreciation for its beauty, thereby cultivating a sense of pride in learning the language (Tim Kementerian Agama, 2019).

Research findings indicate that the curriculum content for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers encompasses experiences, activities, study materials, and skills designed to help students achieve linguistic creativity, familiarity with language characteristics, and communicative competence. These findings align with Ali Ahmed Madkour's (2006) assertion that the Arabic language curriculum for foreign learners should include: 1) established cultural values and norms, represented in the curriculum's cultural content; 2) evolving experiences and skills, evident in the development of Arabic language proficiency; 3) consideration of learners' linguistic and cultural needs, characteristics, and nature; 4) integration of linguistic and cultural components; 5) a focus on both theoretical and practical aspects, with an emphasis on practical language use in real-life situations to meet communication needs; and 6) close alignment with the objectives of teaching Arabic to non-native learners.

Based on this discussion, the researcher concludes that language curriculum content consists of multiple elements. The first is knowledge, which includes basic concepts, terms, generalizations, and theoretical frameworks. The second element comprises mental and practical skills specific to each subject area. The third is creative activity, which encourages students to explore new problems and engage with unique content that differs from the first two elements.

Data in Chapter IV of the study highlight specific criteria and methods for selecting and

organizing curriculum content. Mohamed Ain (2013) emphasizes several key principles for content selection: 1) Content should be based on the objectives of teaching Arabic; 2) Arabic language instruction should be integrated; 3) Content should progress from simple to more complex material; 4) Practical application should follow theoretical instruction; 5) Arabic content should reflect real-life situations; 6) Vocabulary should begin with commonly used words; 7) Content should be engaging and easy to comprehend; 8) Evaluative exercises should be included for reinforcement and repetition.

In summary, content selection should align with the educational objectives outlined in the curriculum document. The content must be organized with consideration of learners' needs, abilities, and challenges, as well as the demands of the subject matter and input from educational experts and stakeholders. There are two main sources for guiding content selection: external sources, such as expert opinions and other curricula, and internal sources, such as student needs, assessed through accommodation and analysis of relevant learning situations.

## Practices in Arabic Language Teaching

The introduction of regional autonomy and decentralization policies in education aims to provide students with opportunities to acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to society. This shift has not come as a surprise to the principals of Islamic schools. These schools have experienced rapid changes in curriculum, as they are no longer solely dependent on the national curriculum. Decentralized administration grants schools the authority to tailor the teaching and learning process according to local needs (Rahman et al., 2022). Consequently, Islamic schools now have greater flexibility to manage their activities without direct intervention from the central government, allowing for improvements in the quality of education.

By adapting the curriculum to local needs, Islamic schools can avoid overloading students with unnecessary or less relevant subjects, thus focusing on enhancing students' knowledge and skills in more meaningful ways. This approach is expected to increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, ultimately leading to higher educational achievement.

In terms of increasing government participation in education, Islamic school principals have implemented additional programs aimed at improving the quality of education. These include therapeutic programs and courses designed to enhance the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students from low-income backgrounds. These compensatory programs are intended to complement, rather than replace, existing curricula.

Additionally, some lecturers at two schools have employed various strategies in teaching Arabic. These strategies focus on developing language skills across subjects, specifically in areas related to the teaching of Arabic (Eldin, 2015).

#### *1. Teaching listening*

The teacher in this context has developed expertise in the pronunciation of Arabic words and the articulation of Arabic sounds. It is essential for all students to understand the sounds of the Arabic language, as well as its vocabulary and linguistic structures. Each student is encouraged to express what they hear from the lecturer using accurate and eloquent language.

In addition, the teacher employs face-to-face learning strategies, or direct guidance, which is a teacher-centered approach commonly used in classrooms. This strategy includes various methods such as lectures, didactic questioning, explicit instruction, practice, and guidance in the learning process.

Based on previous research, the researcher observes that the teaching of listening skills at this school tends to rely on oral-audio and selective methods. These strategies are frequently used to promote and enhance the development of listening skills.

#### *2. Teaching speaking*

The teacher facilitates discussions among students regarding the texts provided, encouraging them to express their thoughts in Arabic. Students are expected to engage in representative and debate-style conversations about contemporary issues, utilizing strategies such as lectures, discussions, and dialogues.

Reflecting on previous research, the researcher observes that the teaching of speaking in these two schools primarily employs selective and communicative

methods. This approach is evident in the strategies and steps used to enhance the instruction of speaking.

#### *3. Teaching reading*

Teaching reading skills begins with the teacher reading various Arabic texts and books aloud, followed by directing students to read them individually and accurately to minimize errors. The teacher also employs storytelling strategies, transforming the learning material into engaging narratives that capture students' interest. This approach can be integrated throughout the lesson or used at the beginning to draw students' attention to the subject matter.

In these two schools, the curriculum for reading skills encompasses materials for both the first and second semesters. Based on previous research, the researcher notes that the teaching of reading skills in these schools primarily utilizes oral-audio methods and selective approaches. This conclusion is drawn from observations of the teaching strategies and steps implemented to enhance reading instruction.

#### *4. Teaching writing*

Students are required to write down everything the lecturer reads from the Arabic texts on the blackboard, collaborating with their peers in groups to ensure accuracy. The teaching of dictation is divided into two types: movable spelling and perspective dictation.

Based on previous research, the researcher observes that the teaching of writing skills in these two schools primarily employs oral-audio methods and selective approaches. This conclusion is drawn from an analysis of the teaching strategies and steps used to enhance writing instruction.

### **Instructional aids for Arabic language teaching**

At the National Secondary School Qadri in the city of Jambar, the instructional tools used by the teacher include blackboards, textbooks, photos, drawings, and audio devices such as recorders, along with various forms of representation. In the context of teaching foreign languages, including Arabic, instructional aids are categorized according to the language skills they support: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Harianto, 2017).

The teaching aids for each of these four language skills are as follows: For listening skills, essential aids include recording devices and phone conversations. For speaking, aids such as Pitt plates are utilized to train students in pronunciation and articulation. Additionally, static films are employed to present a series of images that help students articulate the chronological sequence of stories and serve as stimuli for specific phrases and sentences.

Language labs are also crucial; they allow students to apply and practice what they have learned in class, focusing on pronunciation, vocabulary, linguistic structures, and cultural aspects of the language. These labs facilitate stereotypical and audio-oral exercises requiring frequent repetition, helping students express themselves confidently and overcome psychological barriers when interacting with native speakers.

For reading skills, instructional aids include reading cards, which are smaller than flashcards and are used for reading and comprehension practice. Reading coefficients are educational materials graded by difficulty level, designed to assist learners in progressively developing their reading skills according to their abilities.

#### **Instructional aids for teaching writing, including:**

1. Blackboard.
2. Textbook.
3. Text books in Arabic. (Nuryani, 2021)

In these two schools, the teacher used the types of means in teaching the Arabic language in particular, and the following are the teaching aids that are used in teaching each of these four language skills:

Instructional aids for teaching listening:

- a. Recording device.
- b. Dialogue or conversation.
- c. Google Classroom, Zoom and WhatsApp

Instructional aids for developing speaking include Pitt plates, which are used to train students in pronunciation and articulation. Static films are also employed, providing an organized presentation of a series of frames or images that assist students in expressing the chronological sequence of a story and serve as stimuli for specific phrases and sentences. Additionally,

language labs are utilized to help students apply and practice what they have learned in class, focusing on pronunciation, vocabulary, linguistic structures, and cultural aspects of the language.

Instructional aids for teaching reading:

- 1) Reading cards, which are smaller in size than flash cards, and are used for training in reading and comprehension.
- 2) Reading Lab, which is a graded educational material according to the level of difficulty, and is specially designed to help the learner develop his reading skill from one stage to another according to his ability.
- 3) Text forms: including schedules showing the schedules of planes, trains, or forms used to apply for work, citizenship, passport, or visa. These methods train students to absorb information.
- 4) Teaching aids for teaching writing skills, including:
  - 1) Blackboard.
  - 2) Textbook.
  - 3) Text books in Arabic.

Instructional aids refer to all tools, devices, and materials that teachers use to facilitate, enhance, and improve the educational process. These aids are sometimes called "teaching aids" because they support the teacher's work, and may also be referred to as "learning aids" as they assist students in their learning. In essence, teaching aids encompass anything that helps the teacher convey concepts to learners through various illustrative methods.

#### **The site of the Arabic language teaching curriculum in the light of Bernad Spolsky**

The Arabic language curriculum must be grounded in an educational theory or philosophy that accounts for the various factors influencing its development and implementation. These factors include the philosophy of the society in which students live, the nature of the knowledge to be provided, and the type of knowledge that should be imparted. One educator emphasized this perspective, stating that any theory of curriculum must consider three key dimensions: the learner, the knowledge, and society (Spolsky, 2005). This suggests that the foundation of the Arabic language

curriculum as a second language is not significantly different from the foundation of educational curricula in general, which also relate to these three dimensions.

The curriculum serves as a blueprint, including objectives, core content, lesson materials, and methods that guide the implementation of learning activities to achieve specific goals. The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes since 1945, with major revisions in 1947, 1952, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. Each version of the curriculum has its advantages and limitations, influenced by the differences in systems and implementation strategies over the years.

Research indicates that the curriculum for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers consists of several elements: objectives, content, methodology, evaluation, and a guide for Arabic language teachers. These elements are based on four questions posed by Tyler, and there must be a cohesive relationship between all the components of the curriculum (Tanner & Tanner, n.d.).

Regarding the content of the curriculum for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, modern curriculum design emphasizes that objectives form the foundation for selecting content. Content includes experiences, activities, opportunities, values, and motor skills that help foster students' holistic development, taking into account their individual circumstances and needs (White, n.d.). The curriculum is developed in alignment with students' psychological needs and developmental stages.

The teaching methods employed in the Arabic language curriculum for non-native speakers depend on both internal and external factors influencing the learner. As noted, no single teaching method is universally suitable for all situations, learners, and contexts. A good method is one that recognizes individual differences among students and keeps the learner at the center of the educational process (Muradi, 2013). This suggests that a variety of methods should be used, moving beyond direct instruction and rote learning, which often overlook the specific circumstances of the learners.

Evaluation in the curriculum for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers focuses on assessing changes in students'

cognitive, emotional, and skill-based behaviors. The goal of evaluation is not just to measure knowledge acquisition, but also to foster students' overall growth, ensuring a holistic approach to learning. This aligns with contemporary approaches to language education, which emphasize comprehensive assessment beyond rote learning.

The analysis of the curriculum reveals a clear distinction between the old and new curricula in terms of the content of all curriculum elements. The modern understanding of curriculum design is rooted in humanism, which views education as a tool for personal transformation, placing the learner at the center of the educational process. Proponents of this approach believe that the goal of education is to provide learners with enriching internal experiences that promote personal growth, autonomy, and positive relationships with others. The core of the humanistic approach is self-realization, which drives the educational objectives (Stack, 1966).

The behavioral system approach, influenced by Skinner's "operant conditioning," emphasizes that every step in the learning process should build on previous learning. This perspective asserts that with adequate learning activities and sufficient time, students can master the material. Vallet identified nine key language objectives, including vocabulary knowledge, grammar, phonology, and translation skills, as well as the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Communicative goals in Arabic language instruction focus on developing these four skills so that learners can practice the language as native speakers do, or as closely as possible. Additionally, cultural goals aim to introduce students to Arabic culture, enabling them to understand the characteristics of Arab societies and their environments.

In line with these goals, the research findings suggest that the objectives of foreign language education should encompass three domains: cognitive (knowledge acquisition), psychomotor (physical or mental skills), and affective (values and attitudes). This broad approach to learning objectives ensures that the curriculum supports the development of comprehensive skills in students. Edward M. Stack (1966) emphasized that the goal of

foreign language instruction is to enable learners to understand, speak, read, and write in the target language fluently and naturally.

Research also indicates that the objectives of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers align with the philosophy of pragmatism. This philosophy advocates for the comprehensive development of students across cognitive, emotional, and motor domains, equipping them with the skills needed for systematic thinking, emotional balance, and productive work. The theory of teaching Arabic views language as a tool for understanding culture and communication, not just as an academic subject. Teaching Arabic should, therefore, enable learners to communicate effectively and appreciate the cultural context in which the language is used.

The findings also show that teaching objectives in Arabic focus on three primary areas: language, communication, and culture. These objectives are supported by behavioral goals, which follow broader educational goals. Zaid Suleiman Al-Adwan and Muhammad Fouad Al-Hawamdeh (2011) assert that behavioral objectives are the most precise and follow from general educational objectives.

In conclusion, the researcher emphasizes the importance of clearly defining teaching objectives. These objectives guide the selection of Arabic language teaching materials, learning activities, instructional methods, and assessment practices. The ultimate goal is to ensure that every teacher strives to achieve the comprehensive curriculum objectives related to language, communication, and cultural understanding.

## CLOSING

The Policy Department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes that teaching the Arabic language should extend beyond mere grammatical theory; it should integrate the fundamental functions of language as a means of communication. According to the Minister of Religious Affairs' Decision No. 183 of 2019, the Arabic language curriculum for eighth grade encompasses several critical components: teacher readiness, curriculum implementation, learning processes, teaching methods, and evaluation strategies.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs advocates for a comprehensive and intensive

renewal in the teaching of Arabic. The curriculum aims to enhance the fundamental competencies and specializations required for effective Arabic language instruction, ensuring that educators are well-equipped to meet these objectives.

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