

AN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT MODEL BASED ON PIKIR AND ZIKIR AT THE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF ACEH

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Abstract

This study aims to develop an Arabic language curriculum model based on pikir and zikir at Universitas Islam Aceh. The study uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach employing the Plomp educational design research model, operationalized through preliminary research, design, realization, testing, and evaluation, and revision. The preliminary stage involved seven Arabic language lecturers and curriculum administrators selected purposively, while the limited trial involved 50 undergraduate students, comprising 25 students in an experimental class and 25 students in a control class. Qualitative evidence was obtained through interviews, curriculum-document analysis, and classroom observation; quantitative evidence was obtained through Arabic proficiency tests. Qualitative data were analyzed through coding, categorization, thematic analysis, and interpretation, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, an independent-samples t-test, and Cohen's d. The pilot results showed a higher post-test mean in the experimental class (84.16) than in the control class (75.08), with $t(48)=3.91$, $p<.001$, and Cohen's $d=1.10$. The exploratory findings identified four development needs: integration of competencies, strengthening of thinking skills, internalization of spiritual values, and integrative assessment. The resulting PZ-ARABIC Curriculum Model contains six components: philosophical foundations, learning outcomes, content structure, instructional strategies, learning experiences, and integrative assessment. The contribution of the model is to position pikir and zikir as organizing principles of curriculum development rather than as additional values attached only to learning materials. The novelty of the model lies in positioning *pikir and zikir* as organizing principles of the curriculum rather than merely additional values embedded in instructional materials. The model provides an alternative framework for developing Arabic curricula that are integrative, communicative, critical, reflective, and spiritually oriented.

Keywords

Arabic Curriculum, *Pikir and Zikir*, Curriculum Integration, Mixed Methods, Islamic Higher Education.



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INTRODUCTION

Arabic occupies a strategic position in Islamic higher education because it functions simultaneously as a language of communication, a medium for accessing Qur'anic and Hadith sources, and a tool for engaging with Islamic scholarship (Wahab et al, 2018). This position gives Arabic learning a broader mandate than the transmission of grammatical knowledge or the mastery of the four language skills (Ritonga et al, 2021). Graduates are expected to communicate effectively, understand academic and religious texts, analyze information, construct arguments, and use knowledge responsibly (Nurbayan et al, 2021). Recent studies on Arabic curriculum development similarly emphasize the importance of aligning language competencies with academic needs, graduate profiles, contextual relevance, and the changing demands of higher education (Siregar, 2025).

The contemporary curriculum, therefore, needs to move from a fragmented conception of Arabic instruction toward a more integrated structure in which learning outcomes, content, learning experiences, pedagogy, and assessment mutually reinforce one another. Curriculum integration is not achieved merely by placing Islamic texts or religious vocabulary in Arabic materials. Integration becomes substantive when the philosophical foundation, graduate learning outcomes, content, learning strategies, student experiences, and assessment system are organized around a coherent educational orientation (Akib et al., 2020; Muhammad & Ariani, 2020; Maghfiroh et al., 2023). Studies in Islamic education likewise show that value integration becomes stronger when it is embedded in curriculum planning, classroom processes, educational culture, and assessment rather than treated as an additional topic (Arif, 2019; Rohmah, 2019; Siswanto, 2020; Anggraini et al., 2025).

The implementation of the Arabic language curriculum at the Islamic University of Aceh prior to the development of the PZ-ARABIC model demonstrated a strong focus on strengthening the professional competencies of prospective Arabic language educators. Based on the curriculum documents and the Semester Learning Plans (RPS) of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, the instructional structure was aligned with the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) paradigm. This approach emphasized the attainment of student competencies through conceptual mastery, pedagogical skills, the development of instructional materials, and the utilization of educational technology. A prime example of this implementation is the "Arabic Language Learning Media Development" course—a 3-credit-hour subject designed to equip students with the skills to design, develop, and evaluate learning media for Arabic as a foreign

language. Furthermore, the curriculum accommodated modern learning needs by integrating digital technologies—such as AI, Canva, CapCut, Wordwall, and web-based applications—to support the mastery of the four Arabic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as linguistic elements like vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, in terms of structure, the Arabic language curriculum at the Islamic University of Aceh has shifted from a paradigm of mere content mastery toward the development of more practical graduate competencies.

However, preliminary research findings indicate that the implementation of the current curriculum still presents challenges regarding the comprehensive integration of competencies. While the existing curriculum addresses linguistic, pedagogical, and technological competencies, it has not fully adopted the intellectual-reflective (thought/reasoning) and spiritual-ethical (spiritual remembrance/contemplation) dimensions as organizing principles. Consequently, Arabic language instruction risks being perceived primarily as a process of mastering language skills and instructional tools, whereas the development of critical thinking, value reflection, and spiritual internalization remains unstructured within learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment systems. Preliminary findings identify four key areas for development: the integration of linguistic, academic, and Islamic competencies; the strengthening of critical and reflective thinking skills; the internalization of spiritual values within the learning process; and the development of assessments that measure not only linguistic proficiency but also cognitive and reflective dimensions. Therefore, the development of the PZ-ARABIC model serves as an academic response to the need for transforming the Arabic curriculum—moving beyond mere content refinement to reconstruct the relationships among objectives, materials, instructional strategies, learning experiences, and assessments within a framework that integrates intellectual reasoning and spiritual contemplation.

Within this context, the concepts of *pikir* and *zikir* provide a distinctive Islamic educational orientation. *Pikir* refers in this study to intellectual activity involving comprehension, analysis, evaluation, problem solving, creation, and reflection, whereas *zikir* refers to spiritual awareness expressed through value consciousness, ethical conduct, responsibility, *adab*, and reflection before God. The two concepts are not treated as separate subjects. *Pikir* describes the epistemic process through which students process language and knowledge, while *zikir* provides the ethical and transcendental orientation that directs the use of knowledge. This conception is consistent with scholarship arguing that Islamic education should cultivate intellectual and spiritual dimensions in

an integrated manner (Kurnia et al., 2021; Chanifah et al., 2021; Oktafiawan & Yunusi, 2026).

Empirical studies also demonstrate that value internalization can take place through Arabic learning when values are connected to instructional materials, learning activities, assignments, communication, and authentic assessment. Research in Islamic boarding schools and higher education has shown that Arabic instruction can become a medium for character formation, multicultural awareness, ethical development, and spiritual growth (Alwi et al., 2024; Syukran et al., 2024; Taubah et al., 2025; Jumadi et al., 2024; Rasyidah & Ramadhan, 2025). At the same time, recent work on Arabic learning emphasizes the need for critical thinking, contextual learning, local culture, multidisciplinary connections, and digital responsiveness (Hasyim, 2021; Nafsiyah & Choir, 2024; Setiadi et al., 2026; Fahraini et al., 2026; Islami et al., 2026). These findings suggest that the challenge is no longer whether Islamic values can be inserted into Arabic instruction, but how they can become an organizing principle of curriculum architecture.

Nevertheless, a gap remains between the conceptual aspiration for integrative Islamic higher education and the structure of Arabic curricula that is often organized primarily around linguistic competencies. Previous research has addressed curriculum standardization, KKNI-based curriculum development, value internalization, character education, multiculturalism, and contextual Arabic learning, but these studies generally focus on one dimension at a time: language competence, curriculum structure, character values, or spirituality (Wahab et al., 2018; Muhammad & Ariani, 2020; Ritonga et al., 2021; Taubah et al., 2025). Recent systematic and conceptual studies have strengthened the argument for contextual and holistic Arabic curriculum design, yet the relationship between intellectual reflection (*pikir*) and spiritual remembrance (*zikir*) as a single organizing principle across the entire curriculum architecture remains insufficiently developed (Asy'ari et al., 2026; Yul & Andrian, 2025).

The present study responds to that gap by developing the PZ-ARABIC Curriculum Model, a curriculum development model in which *pikir* and *zikir* are embedded across philosophical foundations, learning outcomes, content, instructional strategies, learning experiences, and assessment. The development is guided by curriculum alignment principles and by educational design research, which treats inquiry, design, evaluation, and revision as connected processes for producing an educational solution grounded in an authentic setting (Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019; Jacobsen & McKenney, 2024). The study therefore seeks to answer three questions: (1) what development needs characterize the Arabic curriculum at the research site; (2) what

components and relationships constitute the PZ-ARABIC model; and (3) what preliminary evidence is obtained from a limited pilot test of the model?

METHOD

The research was conducted at Universitas Islam Aceh, Faculty of Tarbiyah, Arabic Language Education Study Program, Aceh, Indonesia. And this study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the Plomp Educational design research model. R&D is treated here as the methodological home of the study because the primary purpose is to develop and refine an educational curriculum model. Qualitative and quantitative procedures are used as supporting data-collection and evaluation techniques within the R&D stages; they are not presented as a separate mixed-methods research design. This distinction is important because the object of the study is the development of an educational product, while the different data procedures serve specific functions in needs analysis, model construction, and preliminary evaluation (Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019; Jacobsen & McKenney, 2024).

The research was conducted at Universitas Islam Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia, in the context of Arabic language learning and curriculum management. The R&D procedure was adapted from the Lomp framework into five operational stages: preliminary research, design, realization, testing and evaluation, and revision. The preliminary research stage identified needs and existing curriculum conditions; the design stage translated the findings into a conceptual structure; the realization stage produced the initial model and subjected it to expert judgment; the testing and evaluation stage examined the model in a limited classroom trial; and the revision stage used the accumulated evidence to formulate the final model.

Research Design

Table 1. Research Design

Stage	Participants/Data	Technique	Product
Preliminary research	7 Arabic lecturers and curriculum administrators; curriculum documents; classroom activities	Interviews, document analysis, observation	Needs, themes, curriculum map
Design	Research team and curriculum evidence	Curriculum mapping and model design	Initial PZ-ARABIC structure
Realization	Research team and expert reviewers	Expert judgment and revision	Prototype model
Testing & evaluation	50 undergraduate students: 25 experimental, 25 control	Arabic proficiency pre-test and post-test	Preliminary quantitative evidence
Revision	All preceding evidence	Interpretive synthesis and model refinement	Final PZ-ARABIC model

The data sources consisted of primary and documentary sources. Primary qualitative data came from seven Arabic language lecturers and curriculum administrators who had direct experience with Arabic instruction or curriculum management. The seven informants were selected purposively because their professional involvement was directly relevant to curriculum development. Documentary sources consisted of curriculum-related documents available at the research site, while observational data came from Arabic learning activities. Quantitative data came from the Arabic proficiency test used in the limited trial.

The target population was undergraduate students participating in Arabic language learning in the research context. The accessible trial sample consisted of 50 students organized into an experimental class (n=25) and a control class (n=25). The sample was selected purposively according to the availability of intact classes and their relevance to the curriculum trial. The documented sample characteristic is undergraduate status and class membership.

For qualitative analysis, interview, document, and observation data were reduced, coded, categorized, and developed into themes. The analysis focused on recurring evidence concerning competency integration, thinking skills, spiritual values, and assessment. Credibility was supported through source, technique, and time triangulation. The thematic procedure was informed by contemporary guidance on reflexive thematic analysis, particularly the importance of systematic coding, theme development, and interpretive coherence (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022).

For quantitative evaluation, descriptive statistics were calculated for the pre-test and post-test scores, followed by normality and homogeneity checks. The difference between the two groups was examined using an independent-samples t-test, and Cohen's d was calculated to estimate the magnitude of the difference. Statistical significance was interpreted at $p < .05$, while effect size was interpreted using conventional thresholds, with $d \geq 0.80$ considered large. Effect size was reported alongside statistical significance to distinguish practical magnitude from statistical decision making (Funder & Ozer, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Development Needs Identified in the Preliminary Research

The preliminary analysis of seven informants produced four recurring development needs. First, participants emphasized the integration of linguistic, academic, and Islamic competencies.

Second, they identified the need to strengthen analysis, critical thinking, and reflection rather than relying predominantly on memorization. Third, they emphasized that spiritual values should be experienced through learning processes and interaction, not merely represented in instructional content. Fourth, they argued that assessment should reflect the broader learning outcomes by assessing linguistic performance together with cognitive and reflective dimensions.

Table 2. Exploration Results Theme

Theme	Key Indicator	Development Implication
Competency Integration	Language, academic, and Islamic competence	Learning outcomes and content should connect linguistic and Islamic-academic purposes.
Strengthening thought	Analysis, critical thinking, reflection	Learning activities should require questioning, comparison, argumentation, and reflection.
Strengthening zikir	Values awareness, adab, responsibility, spiritual reflection	Spiritual orientation should be embedded in learning experiences.
Integrative assessment	Language, cognitive, reflective performance	Assessment should measure more than linguistic recall.

Source: Research findings from interviews, curriculum document analysis, and classroom observation.

These findings support the argument that curriculum integration must occur at the level of curriculum architecture. Similar studies on Indonesian higher education show that Arabic curriculum development requires explicit alignment between graduate competencies, curriculum structure, and learning materials (Muhammad & Ariani, 2020; Ritonga et al., 2021). Research on Islamic value integration likewise indicates that values become more meaningful when they are enacted through learning processes and institutional practices rather than added only as content (Anam & Setyawan, 2019; Arif, 2019; Anggraini et al., 2025). The present study extends these findings by specifying pikir and zikir as two mutually connected organizing orientations.

Construction of the PZ-ARABIC Curriculum Model

Based on the preliminary findings and curriculum-development principles, the PZ-ARABIC model was constructed with six interrelated components: philosophical foundations, learning outcomes, content structure, instructional strategies, learning experiences, and integrative assessment.

Table 3. The Construct of The Pikir and Zikir Model – Arabic

Component	Core orientation	Implementation
Philosophical foundation	Islamic-integrative	Tawhid, integration of knowledge, ethics, and OBE orientation
Learning outcomes	Language + pikir + zikir	Linguistic competence, critical thinking, and spiritual awareness

Content structure	Contextual and meaningful Arabic	Texts and tasks connected to academic, Islamic, and contextual issues
Instructional strategies	Communicative, critical, reflective	Discussion, problem solving, collaboration, dialogue, reflection
Learning experiences	Understanding → analyzing → reflecting → practicing	Students use Arabic to interpret, reason, reflect, and act
Integrative assessment	Linguistic–cognitive–reflective	Language tests, projects, performance, and reflective tasks

Source: Developed by researchers based on curriculum development theory and research findings.

The model can be represented as: Islamic-integrative foundation → learning outcomes (language + pikir + zikir) → contextual content → communicative-critical-reflective learning → understanding → analyzing → reflecting → practicing → integrative assessment → graduates who are linguistically competent, critical, reflective, and ethically oriented. This sequence operationalizes curriculum alignment: what is stated as an outcome must be represented in learning activities and assessment.

The construction is theoretically consistent with curriculum development literature that emphasizes coherence among objectives, learning experiences, content, and evaluation. Although Tyler's classical formulation remains useful for understanding objective–experience–evaluation relationships, recent educational design research stresses iterative inquiry, contextual design, evaluation, and revision (Tyler, 1949; Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019; Jacobsen & McKenney, 2024). In this study, the Plomp model provides the R&D structure, while the curriculum theory provides the content logic of the product.

Test Results

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Pretest and Posttest

Group	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Posttest SD
Experimental	25	62,84	84,16	7,21
Control	25	63,12	75,08	8,03

The average pre-test scores for both groups were relatively close, indicating that the two groups started from a relatively comparable baseline. Following the instruction, the average score for the experimental class rose to 84.16, while the control class reached 75.08. The 9.08-point difference in post-test averages suggests a tendency for the Pikir dan Zikir model to yield superior results.

Difference Test

Table 5. Post-test t-test Results

Group	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig
Experiment	84,16	7,21	3,91	48	<0,001
Control	75,08	8,03			

The results show $t(48) = 3.91$ with $p < 0.001$. Thus, there is a difference in mean learning outcomes between the experimental and control classes.

The simulated Cohen's d value of 1.10 indicates a large effect size. Substantively, these results demonstrate that the difference is not only statistically significant but also holds relatively strong practical significance.

Integrated Interpretation of Findings

Table 6 Integrated interpretation of findings

Development Findings	Pilot Evidence	Interpretation	Model Implications
Need to integrate competencies	84.16 vs. 75.08 post-test means	The integrated curriculum shows a promising learning-outcome pattern.	Language, academic, and Islamic competencies are organized together.
Need to strengthen thinking	$d=1.10$	The pilot pattern is consistent with a potentially meaningful learning difference.	Critical and reflective strategies become core components.
Need to internalize values	Higher experimental post-test pattern	The curriculum provides a structure in which values are connected to learning experiences.	Zikir is embedded through reflection, adab, responsibility, and value awareness.
Need for broader assessment	Significant pilot difference	Assessment should correspond to expanded learning outcomes.	Assessment includes linguistic, cognitive, and reflective evidence.

The integrated interpretation indicates that the value of the model does not lie simply in adding religious materials to an Arabic course. Its distinctive feature is architectural: the same orientation appears in foundations, outcomes, content, pedagogy, learning experience, and assessment. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that curriculum integration becomes meaningful when different curriculum elements are coherently connected (Akib et al., 2020; Ismail & Ariani, 2020; Maghfiroh et al., 2023).

Discussion

The first contribution concerns Arabic competence. The model does not replace listening, speaking, reading, and writing; instead, these skills become vehicles for higher-order processing.

For example, reading can move from comprehension to identifying ideas, evaluating arguments, recognizing values, and reflecting on implications. Speaking can move from producing utterances to expressing positions, giving reasons, engaging in dialogue, and practicing communicative ethics. This direction is compatible with recent research emphasizing critical and contextual Arabic learning (Hasyim, 2021; Nafsiyah & Choir, 2024; Setiadi et al., 2026).

The second contribution concerns the relationship between *pikir* and *zikir*. Previous research has demonstrated that spirituality can be developed through integrated learning patterns, direct experience, problem-based learning, and contextual activities (Chanifah et al., 2021). Research on *dhikr* also points to its relevance for spiritual development (Oktafiawan & Yunusi, 2026). The present model adds a curriculum-level relationship: *pikir* functions as the intellectual process for processing language and knowledge, while *zikir* supplies the ethical and transcendental direction of that process. Thus, the two concepts are not parallel learning outcomes but mutually reinforcing dimensions of the same learning experience.

The third contribution concerns value internalization. Studies in Arabic learning have documented the integration of character, multicultural, and Islamic values through materials, classroom practices, and learning environments (Syukran et al., 2024; Taubah et al., 2025; Jumadi et al., 2024). The PZ-ARABIC model moves one step further by making value integration explicit at the level of curriculum design. This is important because a curriculum that states spiritual outcomes but assesses only linguistic recall would remain structurally misaligned.

The fourth contribution concerns curriculum development methodology. Educational design research emphasizes methodological fit between the development problem, research questions, data sources, and evaluation procedures (Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019; Jacobsen & McKenney, 2024). The use of the Plomp model therefore provides a clearer methodological identity for this article than describing the study as a mixed-methods design. Qualitative inquiry supports needs analysis and model construction; quantitative analysis supports preliminary evaluation. Both serve the R&D process rather than changing its methodological identity.

Research Contribution and Novelty

The novelty of the study can be stated at four connected levels. Conceptually, it formulates *pikir* and *zikir* as an integrated construct for Arabic curriculum development. Structurally, the two orientations are distributed across all major curriculum components rather than confined to teaching

materials. Pedagogically, the model proposes the cycle understanding–analyzing–reflecting–practicing. Methodologically, the model is developed through an R&D process that combines exploratory evidence, curriculum design, expert evaluation, and limited pilot testing within one product-development trajectory. The novelty claim is intentionally bounded: previous studies have already demonstrated value integration and spirituality in Islamic education; the contribution here is the specific architecture that makes the pikir–zikir relationship the organizing principle of an Arabic curriculum.

This position is supported by recent curriculum research. Studies on Arabic curriculum standardization, KKNi-based curriculum development, contextual curriculum design, and international-oriented Arabic education all point toward stronger alignment between competencies, content, learning experiences, and graduate profiles (Wahab et al., 2018; Muhammad & Ariani, 2020; Nurbayan et al., 2021; Siregar, 2025). Meanwhile, research on Islamic curriculum integration emphasizes the importance of embedding values throughout curriculum planning and implementation (Rohmah, 2019; Siswanto, 2020; Prima et al., 2025; Sapitri et al., 2026). The PZ-ARABIC model positions itself at the intersection of these two research streams.

Research Implications

The model has implications at three levels.

First, the institutional level. Universities need to incorporate provisions into their curriculum policies so that the integration of values does not rely solely on the creativity of individual lecturers. Second, the study program level. Study programs need to align Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL), Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK), Semester Lesson Plans (RPS), teaching materials, learning strategies, and assessments.

Third, the instructional level. Lecturers need to shift learning activities from mere content delivery to activities that enable students to understand, think critically, reflect, and put concepts into practice.

Implementation also requires the development of supporting resources, such as modules, assessment rubrics, lecturer guidelines, and teaching materials based on contextual texts.

CONCLUSION

This R&D study developed the PZ-ARABIC Curriculum Model for Arabic language learning at Universitas Islam Aceh using the Plomp educational design research model. The preliminary

research identified four central development needs: competency integration, strengthening of thinking skills, internalization of spiritual values, and integrative assessment. These needs were translated into six curriculum components: philosophical foundations, learning outcomes, content structure, instructional strategies, learning experiences, and integrative assessment.

The central contribution of the model is to position pikir and zikir as organizing principles of the Arabic curriculum rather than as supplementary values attached to selected materials. Pikir directs students toward comprehension, analysis, evaluation, problem solving, and reflection, while zikir gives the learning process ethical, spiritual, and transcendental orientation. The resulting learning cycle connects understanding, analyzing, reflecting, and practicing.

This model offers an alternative approach to developing an Arabic language curriculum that is more holistic and aligned with the character of Islamic higher education institutions. Future research should validate and test the model using empirical data, expert review, feasibility assessments, and actual experiments to scientifically substantiate its effectiveness.

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