

Mandailing Local Wisdom-Based Arabic Teaching Materials for Critical Thinking in Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract

The cultural mismatch between Arabic teaching materials and students' local backgrounds remains a persistent challenge in Islamic higher education in Indonesia, often hindering cognitive engagement and critical thinking development. This study aimed to develop Arabic teaching materials integrating Mandailing local wisdom to support reading skills and critical thinking among undergraduate students at STAIN Mandailing Natal, using a Research and Development (R&D) framework with the ADDIE model. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, expert validation, and pre-test and post-test assessments involving 30 third-semester students of the Arabic Education Program. These findings carry strategic implications for instructional innovation in Arabic language education, suggesting that culturally grounded teaching materials can serve as a meaningful pedagogical framework for strengthening linguistic competence, fostering critical thinking, and affirming students' cultural identity in Islamic higher education contexts across Indonesia.

Abstrak

Ketidaksesuaian antara bahan ajar bahasa Arab dan latar belakang budaya mahasiswa masih menjadi tantangan yang dihadapi pendidikan tinggi Islam di Indonesia, yang kerap menghambat keterlibatan kognitif dan pengembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan bahan ajar bahasa Arab berbasis kearifan lokal Mandailing untuk mendukung keterampilan membaca dan berpikir kritis mahasiswa di STAIN Mandailing Natal, dengan menggunakan kerangka Research and Development (R&D) melalui model ADDIE. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, angket, validasi ahli, serta penilaian pre-test dan post-test yang melibatkan 30 mahasiswa semester tiga Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab. Temuan penelitian ini memiliki implikasi strategis bagi inovasi pembelajaran bahasa Arab, yang menunjukkan bahwa bahan ajar berbasis budaya lokal dapat berfungsi sebagai kerangka pedagogis yang bermakna untuk memperkuat kompetensi kebahasaan, menumbuhkan kemampuan berpikir kritis, dan mempertegas identitas budaya mahasiswa dalam konteks pendidikan tinggi Islam di Indonesia.

الملخص

يعد التنافر بين مواد تعليم اللغة العربية والسياق الثقافي للطلاب من أبرز التحديات التي تواجه مؤسسات التعليم العالي الإسلامي في إندونيسيا، إذ كثيرا ما يعيق هذا التنافر انخراط الطلاب المعرفي ويحول دون تنمية مهارات التفكير الناقد لديهم. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تطوير مواد تعليمية للغة العربية مستندة إلى الحكمة المحلية لثقافة مانديلينج، بوصفها إطارا تربويا يدعم مهارة القراءة ويعزز التفكير الناقد لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في جامعة مانديلينج ناتال الإسلامية الحكومية، وذلك من خلال منهج البحث والتطوير (R&D) وفق نموذج ADDIE. وقد جمعت البيانات عبر الملاحظة الصفية، والمقابلات شبه المنظمة، والاستبانات، وتحكيم الخبراء، واختباري قبل والبعد، بمشاركة ثلاثين طالبا من الفصل الدراسي الثالث في قسم تعليم اللغة العربية. وتكشف نتائج هذه الدراسة عن دلالات تربوية بالغة الأهمية في مجال تجديد تعليم اللغة العربية، إذ تشير إلى أن

المواد التعليمية المنبثقة من الثقافة المحلية تشكل إطارا تعليميا فاعلا لتعزيز الكفاءة اللغوية، وتنمية التفكير الناقد، وترسيخ الهوية الثقافية لدى الطلاب في سياق مؤسسات التعليم العالي الإسلامي في إندونيسيا.

Keywords: Arabic teaching materials; critical thinking skills; culturally responsive teaching; Islamic higher education; Mandailing local wisdom

Introduction

The development of Arabic teaching materials based on local wisdom has become a crucial focus in Islamic higher education, as the integration of local culture has been shown to effectively enhance higher-order thinking skills, particularly critical thinking.¹ Critical thinking is a core competency of the twenty-first century, requiring students to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and generate reasoned judgments within their social and cultural contexts.² In the context of second language acquisition and foreign language education, critical thinking is understood not merely as a generic cognitive skill but as a culturally situated practice that

¹ Mohamad Sarip, "Students' Needs of Arabic Speaking Material Using the Integrated Local Wisdom in the 21st-Century Skills Model," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 2 (2022): 1053–60, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i2.1899>.

² Hanzalah Mohamed Nor et al., "Implementation of The Critical Thinking Skills in Arabic Language Teaching and Learning: A Preliminary Study," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11, no. 9 (2021): 1120–28, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v11-i9/11109>; Muhammad Rosihan Anwar and Danial Hilmi, "Students' Critical Thinking Skills and Arabic Learning Outcomes Using Quizlet Media," *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 8, no. 1 (2025): 41–53, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i1.30206>; Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*, 4th ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021); Stephen D. Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017); Robert H. Ennis, "Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum: A Vision," *Topoi* 37, no. 1 (2018): 165–84, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-016-9401-4>.

is activated through meaningful engagement with texts embedded in learners' sociocultural worlds.³ For Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) learners in Indonesian Islamic higher education, this means that the development of critical thinking is inseparable from the cultural authenticity and contextual relevance of the learning materials used. This theoretical position undergirds the present study.⁴

From the perspective of contemporary pedagogy, language learning materials should not merely present linguistic structures but must also be socially and culturally relevant in order to stimulate students' higher-level cognitive processes.⁵

Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education plays a strategic role in shaping graduates who are not only competent in understanding religious texts but also possess critical thinking capacity and the ability to communicate in a global context.⁶ In Mandailing Natal Regency, the richness of local culture offers highly authentic and potential learning resources to address these challenges. Local wisdom values such as *Dalihan Na Tolu*, which embodies principles of social harmony and balanced social roles, as well as the tradition of

³ Saeed Rezaei et al., "Critical Thinking in Language Education," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 2, no. 4 (2011): 769–77, <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.2.4.769-777>; Lisa M. Marin and Diane F. Halpern, "Pedagogy for Developing Critical Thinking in Adolescents: Explicit Instruction Produces Greatest Gains," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 6, no. 1 (2011): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2010.08.002>.

⁴ Deanna Kuhn, "Critical Thinking as Discourse," *Human Development* 62, no. 3 (2019): 146–64, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000500171>.

⁵ L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, ed. Michael Cole et al., *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard University Press, 1978), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>; Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Asking a Different Question* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2021).

⁶ Syaiful Mustofa et al., "The Improvement of Arabic Language Learning Program in Realizing the World Class University," *Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 13, no. 1 (2021): 53–72, <https://doi.org/10.24042/albayan.v13i1.7705>.

Marsialapari, which emphasizes collaboration and collective responsibility, can be meaningfully integrated into Arabic teaching materials as culturally grounded learning contexts.⁷ The integration of such cultural contexts not only enhances the relevance of Arabic language instruction but also encourages students to engage in higher-order cognitive processes, particularly the development of critical thinking skills.

Conceptually, culturally responsive teaching theory emphasizes that learning will be more meaningful when teaching materials reflect the cultural identity of students,⁸ while social constructivism theory states that students' understanding and thinking abilities are based on their cultural experiences.⁹ Thus, teaching materials based on local wisdom not only enrich the content of Arabic language teaching, but also serve as a strategic pedagogical instrument to strengthen students' thinking skills and conceptual understanding.¹⁰

⁷ Erawadi Erawadi and Fadlan Masykura Setiadi, "Exploring Religious Harmony Through Dalihan Na Tolu: Local Wisdom in Peacebuilding in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 3 (2024): 1379–1408, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i3.1398>; Fadlan Masykura Setiadi et al., "Coexisting in Faith: The Role of Local Traditions in Muslim-Christian Relations in South Tapanuli," *Dialog* 48, no. 2 (2025): 262–79, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v48i2.1223>.

⁸ Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York: Teachers College, 2010); Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy," *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (2012): 93–97, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>.

⁹ Dale H. Schunk, *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective*, 8th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2019).

¹⁰ Muhammad Naufal Ihsan and Dendodi, "Adaptation of Local Cultural Elements in Arabic Language Teaching Materials for Higher Education," *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2024): 310–19, <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i2.950>; Mohamad Zaka Al Farisi et al., "Investigating Arabic Language Teaching Materials Based on Indonesian Folklore: An Ethnographic Study on the Folktale of 'Bandung,'" *Asian Education and Development Studies* 13, no. 2 (2024): 134–49, <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-07-2023-0082>.

However, classroom realities reveal conditions that are far from this ideal. In the Arabic Education Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal, the primary teaching material used is *Al-'Arabiyyah Baina Yadaika* by Al-Fauzani, whose themes, dialogues, social contexts, and cultural representations are strongly Arab-centric. This condition is reflected in interview with Arabic language lecturer, who noted that *"the materials currently used in teaching are not sufficiently aligned with students' everyday lives, the majority of whom come from the Mandailing ethnic background, and the textbooks do not adequately support the development of students' critical thinking skills."*¹¹ This finding is consistent with studies by Sulton and Kabir¹² and Irawan¹³ which stated that cultural misalignment in teaching materials can hinder comprehension and reduce students' analytical and cognitive capacities. The Arabic teaching material used in the study program was entirely centered on Arab culture and lacks representation of the Indonesian cultural context. This cultural gap has direct implications for students' difficulties in activating cultural knowledge schemas, thereby inhibiting their critical thinking skills,¹⁴ difficulties in understanding long texts,¹⁵ inability to

¹¹ Isra Hayati Darman, Lecturer in Arabic Education Program, STAIN Mandailing Natal, Interview.

¹² Achmad Sulton and Saleh Muhammad Kabir, "Integrating Arab Cultural Elements in Arabic Language Education," *Lahjatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (2025): 133-46, <https://doi.org/10.38073/lahjatuna.v4i2.2597>.

¹³ Bambang Irawan, "Developing Arabic Teaching Materials Based on Local Culture to Enhance Reading Skills And Its Implications on Self-Regulated Learning," *IJIE International Journal of Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (2023): 57-72, <https://doi.org/10.35719/ijie.v2i2.1895>.

¹⁴ Syaiful Mustofa et al., "HOTS in Arabic Learning: A Study of The Implementation of HOTS on Students' Critical Thinking Ability," *Al-Ta'rib : Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Palangka Raya* 10, no. 2 (2022): 133-44, <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v10i2.4088>.

¹⁵ Muhamad Fuad Awwad Hasim et al., "Development of Adaptive Arabic Language Teaching Materials to Support Inclusive Learning," *Ijaz*

evaluate the main ideas in the reading,¹⁶ and a tendency to simply copy literal translations without further analytical skills.¹⁷

Preliminary observations and a needs-analysis survey conducted at the beginning of the 2024/2025 odd semester identified the main challenges in Arabic language learning at the Arabic Language Education Program, STAIN Mandailing Natal. Data were collected from 30 undergraduate students using a validated structured questionnaire focusing on reading comprehension, analytical identification of main ideas, and cultural relevance of learning materials. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Main problems in Arabic language learning based on questionnaire results

Indicator	Percentage
Difficulty understanding long Arabic texts	73 %
Inability to analytically identify main ideas	82 %
Existing textbooks culturally irrelevant to the Mandailing context	91 %
Low learning motivation due to unfamiliar textual contexts	68 %
Inability to relate Arabic texts to local life experiences	89 %

Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning 8, no. 3 (2025): 1349–66, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i3.35819>.

¹⁶ Rabiatul Munawarah and Aulia Mustika Ilmiani, “Factors of Difficulties in Learning the Arabic Language for Students,” *Journal Of Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* 4, no. 1 (2024): 55–63, <https://doi.org/10.23971/jfltl.v4i1.8810>.

¹⁷ Abdulwasiu Isiaq Nasirudeen, “The Impact of Language Immersion on Developing Arabic Language Skills in Non-Native Learners: A Descriptive Study,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 13, no. 4 (2024): 531–44, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i4/23199>.

These findings collectively indicate a significant gap between the existing instructional materials and students' cultural and cognitive needs. The high percentage of students reporting cultural irrelevance (91%) and difficulty connecting Arabic texts to local experiences (89%) points to the absence of culturally grounded content as a primary obstacle to meaningful learning and critical thinking development.

In the context of Arabic language learning, a number of previous studies on the development of local wisdom-based teaching materials have been conducted at various levels of education, but most of them did not focus on Arabic language learning at the university level or on the development of critical thinking skills. Yonanda et al.¹⁸ developed teaching materials based on the local wisdom of Indramayu to improve the ecoliteracy of elementary school students, finding that the integration of local culture increased the relevance and engagement of learning. Similarly, Gazali and Ainin¹⁹ developed Arabic reading skills learning content by integrating Mandar local cultural values to improve linguistic and cultural understanding, while Elmubarok et al.²⁰ developed Arabic teaching materials based on local wisdom to enhance students' writing skills, creativity, and cultural attachment. Nevertheless, these studies have not adequately addressed the cultivation of

¹⁸ Devi Afriyuni Yonanda et al., "The Effectiveness of Teaching Materials of Local-Wisdom Based Picture Storybooks on the Eco-Literacy of Elementary School Students," *Al Ibtida: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru MI* 10, no. 1 (2023): 143–52, <https://doi.org/10.24235/al.ibtida.snj.v10i1.12558>.

¹⁹ Muhammad Gazali and Moh Ainin, "Integration of Mandar Local Cultural Values into the Content of Arabic Reading Skills Learning," *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 8, no. 3 (2025): 1544–57, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i3.34147>.

²⁰ Zaim Elmubarok et al., "Pengembangan Buku Ajar Keterampilan Menulis Bahasa Arab Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Sebagai Penunjang Kreativitas Mahasiswa," *Alsina : Journal of Arabic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2019): 215–28, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.1.2.5056>.

more complex critical thinking skills within Arabic language learning.

Several other studies, such as Maulidi et al.,²¹ focus on the use of storytelling in project-based learning by integrating local culture to improve speaking skills, but the learning context and education level are very different from Islamic higher education. Meanwhile, Norlaila et al.²² examined the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties students face in understanding Arabic texts, without considering the cultural relevance of the teaching materials. Djody et al.²³ also investigated the use of digital platforms as a medium for learning Arabic and found that technology can increase learning participation, but does not systematically integrate elements of local wisdom.

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model,²⁴ selected for its systematic and flexible framework for developing teaching materials oriented toward students' needs and cultural context.²⁵ Effectiveness was examined through field testing

²¹ Liazi Maulidi et al., "Development of Arabic Culture-Based Storytelling Media through a Project-Based Learning Approach," *Al-Irfan : Journal of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2025): 65–80, <https://doi.org/10.58223/al-irfan.v9i1.611>.

²² Norlaila Norlaila et al., "Students' Difficulties in Arabic: A Study of the Background of Students Arabic Language Education," *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 8, no. 2 (2025): 992–1012, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v8i2.32092>.

²³ Kurniawan Djody et al., "Development of Arabic Language Teaching Materials Based on Information Technology for Elementary Schools," *Research and Development in Education (RaDEn)* 4, no. 2 (2024): 1397–1407, <https://doi.org/10.22219/raden.v4i2.36100>.

²⁴ Necla Dönmez Usta and Ebru Turan Güntepe, "Pre-Service Teachers' Material Development Process Based on the ADDIE Model: E-Book Design," *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 5, no. 12 (2017): 199–210, <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i12.2820>.

²⁵ Tolga Kara and Emin Atasoy, "Development of ADDIE Instructional Design Model Based Social Participation Skills in Secondary School Students," *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science*,

using a one-group pretest–posttest design; findings are therefore interpreted as indicative of instructional improvement rather than causal inference.

The study was conducted at STAIN Mandailing Natal during the odd semester of 2024/2025. Participants comprised 30 third-semester undergraduate students of the Arabic Education Program (aged approximately 19–20 years; proficiency level A2–B1), alongside two expert validators who assessed material validity prior to field implementation.

Prior to field testing, a 30-item pilot instrument was administered to a separate group of 15 students not included in the main sample. Items with point-biserial correlation coefficients below 0.30 were revised or removed, yielding a final 25-item instrument. Reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.82$), and content validity was established through expert judgment aligned with Bloom's revised taxonomy.²⁶ The instrument assessed five cognitive indicators (*understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating*) as operationalizations of reading-integrated critical thinking (see Table 2). Findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of reading-integrated critical thinking improvement rather than as a comprehensive measure of critical thinking as a generalized cognitive disposition.

Engineering and Education (IJCRSEE) 13, no. 3 (2025): 703–17, <https://doi.org/10.23947/2334-8496-2025-13-3-703-717>; Sopa Marwah et al., "Design and Implementation of Interactive Digital Media Using the ADDIE Model for Arabic Learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *Journal of Integrated Elementary Education* 5, no. 2 (2025): 527–46, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jieed.v5i2.27977>; Robert Maribe Branch, *Instructional Design: The ADDIE Approach* (Boston, MA: Springer, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09506-6>; Michael Molenda, "In Search of the Elusive ADDIE Model," *Performance Improvement* 42, no. 5 (2003): 34–36, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.4930420508>.

²⁶ Lorin W. Anderson et al., *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 2001).

Table 2
Test item specification matrix for assessing reading and critical thinking skills

Indicator	Cognitive Level	Item Type	Number of Items
Identifying main idea	Understanding	MCQ	5
Analyzing argument	Analyzing	Short answer	5
Evaluating text	Evaluating	MCQ	5
Cultural interpretation	Applying	Short answer	5
Reflective thinking	Creating	Short answer	5

Each ADDIE stage served a distinct purpose: the Analysis stage mapped learning needs through classroom observation, lecturer interviews, and textbook review;²⁷ the Design stage produced a culturally grounded prototype; the Development stage subjected the prototype to expert validation and revision; the Implementation stage applied the revised materials in class; and the Evaluation stage assessed learning outcomes and student responses. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, pre- and post-tests, and expert validation sheets.²⁸ All participants provided written informed consent in accordance with STAIN Mandailing Natal's institutional research ethics guidelines.

²⁷ Dian Misesani et al., "Need Analysis in ADDIE Model to Develop Academic Speaking Materials," *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature* 7, no. 2 (2020): 438–46, <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.226>.

²⁸ Rita C. Richey and James D. Klein, *Design and Development Research: Methods, Strategies, and Issues* (New York: Routledge, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203826034>.

Result

Design and Development Stages of Mandailing Local Wisdom-Based Arabic Teaching Materials

Student Needs Analysis

Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with three Arabic language lecturers (30–45 minutes each) revealed that the primary textbook in use, *Al-Arabiyyah Baina Yadaika* by Al-Fauzan, was perceived as culturally irrelevant to the Mandailing student majority at STAIN Mandailing Natal. Interview data were thematically analyzed and triangulated with classroom observations and questionnaire results, which showed that 73% of students had difficulty understanding long Arabic texts, 80% disliked the existing materials, 70% preferred materials integrating Mandailing local wisdom, and 53% explicitly favored content related to their daily lives (See Figure 1). These findings indicated a strong student preference for culturally grounded instructional content.

Figure 1

Students' perceptions of existing Arabic teaching materials

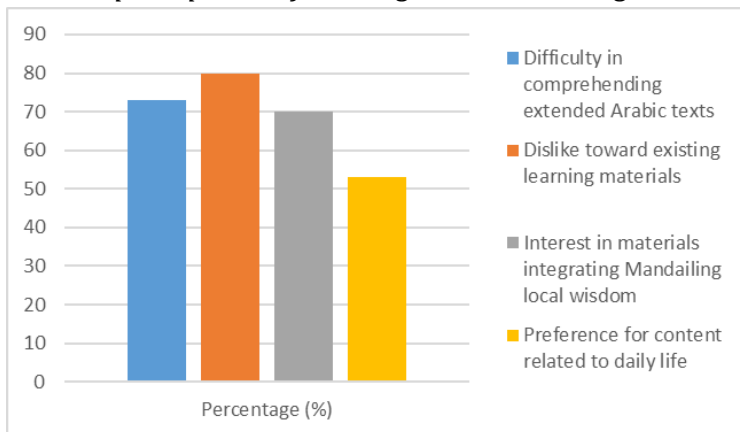


Figure 1 presents a bar chart summarizing the distribution of student responses to indicators of perceptions toward existing Arabic teaching materials, as obtained from the pre-study questionnaire administered to 30 participants.

Initial Design (Prototype)

Based on the needs analysis findings, an initial prototype was developed by integrating Mandailing cultural themes selected according to four criteria: cultural familiarity, potential for authentic reading texts, relevance to Islamic and social values, and suitability for HOTS development. Eight themes were selected (*Bagas Godang, Gordang Sambilan, Lubuk Larangan, Mangupa, Marsialapari, Marpokat, Manortor, and Naposonauli Bulung*) each systematically mapped to specific learning objectives and critical thinking indicators. For instance, *Bagas Godang* supported analysis of descriptive texts on traditional leadership; *Marsialapari* anchored comparative reading tasks on collective labor and Islamic ethics; and *Lubuk Larangan* underpinned evaluative tasks on environmental ethics. Exercises were designed as analytical questions, short reflections, and problem-based reading tasks, with vocabulary lists integrated into each unit to support lexical development within a meaningful cultural context.

Expert Validation

The developed materials were evaluated by two expert validators: Prof. Dr. Mahyuddin Ritonga, M.A. (content and cultural integration) and Dr. Bambang, M.Pd.I. (instructional design and critical thinking alignment), both from Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat. Their selection reflects their documented expertise in Arabic language education within the Sumatran sociocultural context, though the authors acknowledge this as a limitation in institutional diversity. Validation employed a four-point Likert scale rubric (1 = poor; 4 = excellent) across eight dimensions per category, with ≥ 3.25 as the threshold for high validity. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3
Material validation and local wisdom elements

No	Assessment	Aspect	Mean Score	Criteria
1	Appropriateness of theme selection	of theme representing Mandailing local wisdom	3.83	Very Good
2	Relevance of the material to the students' real-life context at STAIN Mandailing Natal		3.83	Very Good
3	Completeness of new vocabulary related to Mandailing culture		3.50	Good
4	Clarity of Arabic language concept explanations within the local cultural context		3.83	Very Good
5	Ability of the materials to encourage students to relate Arabic texts to local cultural experiences		3.83	Very Good
6	Appropriateness of Mandailing cultural examples used in reading texts		3.83	Very Good
7	Suitability of illustrations/images with cultural values and students' comprehension level		3.50	Good
8	Clarity of the teaching material usage guidelines		3.50	Good
Total Mean Score			3.71	Very Good

Table 4
Validation of instructional design and critical thinking core

No	Assessment Aspect	Mean Score	Criteria
1	Clarity of learning objectives and indicators	3.83	Very Good
2	Alignment of teaching materials with core competencies and learning outcomes	3.83	Very Good
3	Clarity and coherence of material organization	3.83	Very Good
4	Appropriateness of learning activities based on active learning principles	3.83	Very Good
5	Effectiveness of exercises in enhancing students' analysis, evaluation, and reflection	3.50	Good
6	Alignment of assessment tasks with critical thinking development objectives	3.50	Good
7	Language clarity and ease of understanding instructional directions	3.83	Very Good
8	Visual appeal and effectiveness of instructional design layout	3.50	Good
Total Mean Score		3.71	Very Good

Both validation categories yielded an overall mean score of 3.71, categorized as "very good," confirming the materials' high feasibility for field implementation. Validation was conducted through independent scoring followed by consensus discussion. Validators noted that the materials were well-structured and strongly aligned with critical thinking indicators, particularly in analytical and reflective tasks, while recommending improvements to visual contrast in certain

layout sections. Validators noted that the materials were well-structured and strongly aligned with critical thinking indicators, particularly in analytical and reflective tasks, while recommending improvements to visual contrast in certain layout sections.

Final Revision Results

Following validators' feedback, five components were revised: cover design, basic competencies, learning indicators, introductory pages, and practice exercises (*tadribāt*). The most substantive changes involved the cover and the practice exercises, illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2
Cover design before and after revision



The cover was redesigned from a generic layout to one incorporating Mandailing visual elements, more explicitly reflecting the cultural context of the materials.

Figure 3
Practice exercises (tadribāt) before and after revision



The practice exercises were diversified from uniform comprehension questions to higher-order analytical and reflective tasks aligned with HOTS indicators.

The remaining revisions, elaboration of basic competencies, refinement of learning indicators, and enrichment of introductory pages, were implemented in accordance with validators' recommendations. The title was also updated to *Buku Ajar Bahasa Arab Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Budaya Mandailing* (<https://tinyurl.com/bdz7sw89>) to more explicitly signal its cultural grounding. These revisions were carried out prior to field implementation.

Students' Responses to Mandailing Local Wisdom-Based Arabic Teaching Materials

Following the implementation of Arabic teaching materials based on Mandailing local wisdom, the researchers measured students' responses to evaluate levels of cognitive engagement, learning motivation, contextual relevance, learning autonomy, and the strengthening of critical thinking skills throughout the learning process. A questionnaire was administered to students of the Arabic Education Program as part of the formative evaluation within the research and development framework. This data collection aimed to obtain empirical evidence regarding the extent to which the developed materials met students' learning needs and support pedagogical objectives in enhancing the quality of Arabic language learning based on the local cultural contexts.

The questionnaire results present a systematic overview of students' perceptions of the materials' effectiveness, attractiveness, clarity of content, integration of Mandailing cultural values, and their impact on the development of critical thinking skills and learning motivation among students of the Arabic Education Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal.

Table 5
Students' responses toward Mandailing local wisdom-based Arabic teaching materials

No	Indicator	Yes (%)	Sometimes (%)	No (%)
1	The teaching material helps me analyze Arabic texts more critically	56.7	33.3	10.0
2	The learning activities encourage me to think, compare, and draw conclusions	66.7	20.0	13.3
3	The integration of Mandailing culture increases my motivation	60.0	26.7	13.3
4	The materials make me enjoy learning Arabic more	86.7	13.3	0.0
5	I understand new vocabulary better because topics relate to my daily life	93.3	3.3	3.3
6	The images and examples reflect Mandailing culture clearly	83.3	10.0	6.7
7	I can study Arabic independently using this material	66.7	16.7	16.7
8	The structure of the book helps me learn systematically	80.0	13.3	6.7
9	Learning through Mandailing culture strengthens my appreciation of local wisdom	60.0	26.7	13.3
10	The materials encourage me to connect Arabic learning with my cultural identity	73.3	20.0	6.7

Based on the questionnaire results presented in Table 5, the Mandailing local wisdom-based Arabic teaching materials received a highly positive response from students of the Arabic Education Program. The majority of students (93.3%) reported that the materials were easy to understand because the content was closely related to their everyday lives. In addition,

86.7% of respondents reported that contextual illustrations and images helped them comprehend new vocabulary associated with Mandailing culture.

Effectiveness of Mandailing Local Wisdom-Based Arabic Teaching Materials

To measure the effectiveness of Arabic teaching material based on Mandailing local wisdom, this study employed a pre-test-post-test evaluation design as part of the implementation and evaluation stages of the ADDIE model. The test instrument used consists of 25 items (multiple choice and short answer) designed to assess high-level reading and critical thinking skills, including identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions, analyzing arguments, evaluating textual information in relation to the local cultural context, and reflective interpretation. The instrument was designed based on Anderson and Krathwohl's revised Bloom's taxonomy, spanning five cognitive levels: understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (see Table 2) and to ensure content validity and cognitive appropriateness. Before receiving treatment, students first complete a pre-test to assess their initial basic competencies, particularly in reading skills and higher-order cognitive abilities. After completing a series of lessons using the revised and validated teaching materials, students then take a post-test to assess the changes in learning outcomes resulting from the use of the developed materials.

Table 6
Descriptive statistics of students' pre-test and post-test

Indicator	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Total Score	1865	2280
Mean Score	62.17	76.00
Highest Score	70	90
Lowest Score	50	65
Average Increase		+13.83

Table 7
Students' achievement improvement after the implementation of teaching materials (N = 30)

Indicator	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain	N-Gain	Category
Mean Score	62.17	76.00	+13.83	0.37	Moderate
Highest Score	70	90			
Lowest Score	50	65			

The analysis results (Table 6 and Table 7) showed a significant increase in student academic achievement after the implementation of Arabic teaching materials based on Mandailing local wisdom. The mean score increased from 62.17 in the pre-test to 76.00 in the post-test, resulting in a mean increase of 13.83 points and a moderate normalized gain (N-Gain = 0.37). A paired-sample t-test ($df = 29$) confirmed that the increase was statistically significant ($t_0 = 7.176 > t_t = 2.045$; $p < 0.05$), with a moderate normalized gain (N-Gain = 0.37).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that the implementation of Mandailing local wisdom-based Arabic teaching materials was associated with meaningful improvements in students' reading and critical thinking performance within the field-testing context. The moderate N-Gain value (0.37) warrants particular analytical attention: while statistically significant, this gain falls below the threshold typically associated with high instructional effectiveness (N-Gain ≥ 0.70). This outcome may be attributed to at least three interacting factors: (1) the relatively limited exposure duration (one semester), which may not have been sufficient for deep critical thinking development, a process that inherently

requires iterative and sustained engagement;²⁹ (2) students' initial proficiency ceiling (A2–B1), which may have constrained the extent of observable cognitive growth within a single implementation cycle; and (3) the novelty effect of culturally responsive materials, which, while motivationally stimulating, may require a longer acculturation period before translating into measurable higher-order thinking gains.

In addition, this finding was consistent with a study conducted by Sarip,³⁰ which revealed that Arabic language learning grounded in students' cultural contexts facilitates deeper understanding and encourage the development of critical thinking skills through meaningful engagement and contextual reflection on the reading texts in Arabic textbooks. These results further support the principles of *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (CRT),³¹ which emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful and impactful when learning materials reflect students' cultural backgrounds and connect learning experiences to their social realities. In the context of this study, representations of Mandailing culture, such as *Bagas Godang*, *Gordang Sambilan*, *Lubuk Larangan*, *Manortor*, *Mangupa*, and *Marsialapari*, function as cognitive bridges that help students construct meaning, critically interpret texts, and relate new information to their lived experiences.³² This process is argued to support reading comprehension and

²⁹ Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*.

³⁰ Sarip, "Students' Needs of Arabic Speaking Material Using the Integrated Local Wisdom in the 21st-Century Skills Model."

³¹ Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*.

³² Dang Thi Kim Chung and Nguyen Thanh Long, "Language Learning Through a Cultural Lens: Assessing the Benefits of Cultural Understanding in Language Education," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* 7, no. 7 (2024): 5345–52, <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i07-82>; Ishak Bagea, "Cultural Influences in Language Learning in a Global Context," *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal* 4, no. 2 (2023): 630–45, <https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v4i2.248>.

activate analytical, evaluative, and reflective skills that lie at the core of critical thinking development.³³

Furthermore, increased learning motivation and positive responses from students to teaching materials show that local wisdom-based learning encourages simultaneous emotional and cognitive engagement.³⁴ This condition is highly consistent with frameworks of critical thinking development, which emphasize the importance of engagement, meaningful learning, and contextualized reasoning as essential prerequisites for the growth of higher-order thinking skills.³⁵ Thus, Arabic language learning is no longer positioned as a mechanistic, memorization-oriented activity, but rather as an intellectual process that trains students to interpret, evaluate, and reflect on textual meaning within socio-cultural contexts.³⁶

Beyond learning outcomes, student response data further corroborate these findings. The high proportion of affirmative responses, particularly 93.3% reporting improved vocabulary comprehension due to culturally familiar topics, and 86.7% expressing greater enjoyment in learning Arabic, suggests that cultural relevance operates not only as a cognitive scaffold but also as an affective motivator.³⁷ Notably, 73.3% of students

³³ Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*.

³⁴ Sulton and Kabir, "Integrating Arab Cultural Elements in Arabic Language Education"; Irawan, "Developing Arabic Teaching Materials Based on Local Culture to Enhance Reading Skills And Its Implications on Self-Regulated Learning."

³⁵ Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*; Abdillah Mahbubi, "Conventional and Contemporary Arabic Language Teaching Methods: A Comparative Analysis," *Alsina: Journal of Arabic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2024): 205–28, <https://doi.org/10.21580/alsina.6.2.23307>.

³⁶ Mohamad Sarip et al., "Integrated Local Wisdom with 21st – Century Skills for Arabic-Speaking Material Model," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran* 8, no. 4 (2022): 845–56, <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v8i4.6231>.

³⁷ Irawan, "Developing Arabic Teaching Materials Based on Local Culture to Enhance Reading Skills And Its Implications on Self-Regulated

reported feeling more connected to their cultural identity through Arabic learning, indicating that the materials succeeded in fostering what Paris terms culturally sustaining engagement,³⁸ an orientation in which learners see their language study as continuous with, rather than disconnected from, their cultural selves.

These findings extend previous studies on local culture integration in language learning, most of which have operated at primary or secondary education levels or addressed motivation and basic comprehension without explicit critical thinking indicators. Yonanda et al., for instance, demonstrated the effectiveness of local wisdom-based materials for ecoliteracy at the elementary level,³⁹ while Gazali and Ainin integrated Mandar cultural values into Arabic reading instruction without systematically targeting higher-order thinking outcomes.⁴⁰ Idhan et al. similarly examined cultural integration in pesantren contexts but focused primarily on general learning strategies rather than cognitive skill development.⁴¹ The present study advances this line of inquiry by demonstrating that local wisdom integration at the Islamic higher education level can be purposefully designed to target critical thinking as a measurable instructional outcome, a contribution that is both contextually specific and methodologically transferable to analogous settings.

Learning”; Sulton and Kabir, “Integrating Arab Cultural Elements in Arabic Language Education.”

³⁸ Paris, “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy.”

³⁹ Yonanda et al., “The Effectiveness of Teaching Materials of Local-Wisdom Based Picture Storybooks on the Eco-Literacy of Elementary School Students.”

⁴⁰ Gazali and Ainin, “Integration of Mandar Local Cultural Values into the Content of Arabic Reading Skills Learning.”

⁴¹ Mohamad Idhan et al., “Arabic Learning Strategy in a *Pesantren*: Local Cultural Integration Perspective,” *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 8, no. 4 (2024): 1274–87, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i4.695>.

Conclusion

This study set out to develop Arabic teaching materials grounded in Mandailing local wisdom as a pedagogical response to the cultural mismatch between existing instructional resources and the sociocultural realities of students in Islamic higher education. The findings affirm that when local wisdom is purposefully embedded in learning objectives, reading texts, and analytical tasks, rather than treated as peripheral enrichment, it functions as a genuine cognitive scaffold that enables students to engage with Arabic texts more meaningfully and think more critically. This represents a substantive shift in how Arabic teaching materials might be conceptualized: not as culturally neutral linguistic tools, but as identity-affirming, thinking-oriented instructional artifacts. Theoretically, the study strengthens the case for Culturally Responsive Teaching and social constructivism as complementary frameworks in Arabic language pedagogy. Methodologically, it offers a replicable model for local wisdom-based material development through the ADDIE framework. Practically, the findings carry direct implications for lecturers and curriculum designers to move beyond Arab-centric textbook dependency toward more contextually situated instructional design.

Future studies should employ more robust experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups to establish stronger causal claims, broaden the scope of language skills assessed beyond reading, and incorporate independently validated critical thinking instruments for a more multidimensional measurement of outcomes. Longitudinal designs spanning multiple semesters would further allow researchers to examine whether the gains observed in field-testing are sustained over time. These directions point toward a richer research agenda for culturally responsive Arabic

language education in Islamic higher education across Indonesia and beyond.

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