



Humanization of Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Higher Education: Integrating Humanitarian and Ethical Values

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Abstract

The global humanitarian crisis shows the limitations of education that is oriented towards knowledge transfer alone. In Islamic higher education, this is reflected in the learning of Arabic which still emphasizes linguistic aspects, thus ignoring the ethical and humanitarian dimensions. Therefore, the humanization of Arabic language learning is an urgency to affirm its role as a medium for internalizing human and Islamic values. In this context, Arabic language education in higher education institutions has long been predominantly linguistics-oriented, often overlooking its transformative potential in fostering humanistic and ethical values. This study aims to describe the integration of humanitarian and ethical values into Arabic language pedagogy in higher education, using a case study conducted in the Arabic Language Education Program at the Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar, Ponorogo. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, and documentation analysis. The research findings show that the integration of humanistic and ethical values in learning is realized through the application of pedagogical strategies in the form of empathetic dialogue that encourages students' reflective participation, as well as experience-based learning that packages material with students' social and humanitarian realities. This integration contributes to enhancing the quality of the learning process, improving students' pragmatic competence, and producing graduates who are not only linguistically proficient but also embody Islamic ethical character, moderation, and the capacity to model ethical communication.

Keywords: humanization, arabic language learning, humanitarian values, ethical values

Introduction

Arabic language instruction in Islamic higher education institutions has generally been oriented toward structural linguistic outcomes, such as mastery of nahw, şarf, vocabulary, and the ability to read classical texts. However, it often fails to adequately address the humanistic dimension that emphasizes the cultivation of human values, ethics, and learners' character. This condition causes Arabic language learning to not optimally foster empathy, moral sensitivity, and communicative competence that respects human

dignity, because the focus of learning is still predominantly on the structural aspects of the language (A. Hermawan, 2011).

On the other hand, the development of Islamic higher education necessitates more holistic and transformative learning models. Universities are expected not only to produce graduates who are academically competent, but also to cultivate individuals with ethical character, a moderate outlook, and an active role in maintaining social harmony. The integration of humanistic and ethical values into Arabic language instruction has therefore become increasingly important as a response to various global challenges, such as moral crises, technological dehumanization, and the growing prevalence of intolerance and misinformation, which often arise from cross-cultural miscommunication (Nata, 2016).

However, numerous studies indicate that Arabic language instruction in many institutions remains dominated by teacher-centered approaches, rote memorization methods, and assessments based solely on cognitive abilities. Humanistic and ethical values have not yet been systematically integrated into the curriculum, instructional strategies, or evaluation processes. As a result, students may be able to comprehend linguistic structures but do not necessarily grasp the moral values, communicative ethics, and humanistic messages embedded in Arabic literature and its contexts of use (Yunus, 2014).

The gap between cognitive achievement and value formation underscores the urgency of humanizing Arabic language learning in Islamic higher education (Arifin, 2015). Numerous studies show that learning still focuses on linguistic aspects and learning motivation, while the integration of humanistic and ethical values has not been systematically implemented, resulting in suboptimal learning as a vehicle for character development (Fadhilah et. al., 2025; Hermawan & Kuswoyo, 2025). Studies on the humanistic approach emphasize the importance of student-centered learning strategies to develop emotional and social aspects (Firstisya et. al., 2025), which have received little attention in Islamic higher education. Thus, the shift from cognitive dominance to an approach that places the humanity of students at the center of pedagogy represents a crucial gap that requires further research.

Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, the concept of the humanization of education has long been introduced by educational thinkers such as Paulo Freire, who emphasized that education should be liberating, humanizing, and capable of fostering learners' critical consciousness of social reality (Freire, 2005). Such an approach can be implemented in Arabic language instruction, particularly by exploring the ethical and humanistic values embedded in both classical and contemporary Arabic texts. Accordingly, the integration of humanization into Arabic language learning not only enhances instructional

quality but also strengthens the role of Islamic higher education institutions in shaping a generation that is ethical, morally grounded, and possesses a strong humanistic orientation.

Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo is one of the Islamic higher education institutions that upholds a value- and character-based scholarly orientation rooted in pesantren traditions. The Arabic Language Education Study Program at this institution seeks to develop an integrative curriculum that combines language proficiency with character formation. However, the extent to which humanistic values are integrated into actual instructional practices still requires empirical investigation. Therefore, this study aims to describe the integration of humanistic and ethical values in Arabic language learning within the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo, along with its implications.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the humanization of Arabic language learning within the context of Islamic higher education. The qualitative approach is chosen to capture the meanings, values, and subjective experiences of both lecturers and students involved in the learning process. Qualitative research enables the researcher to enter social reality in a natural setting, allowing phenomena to be understood as they are, without manipulative intervention. Bogdan and Taylor explain that qualitative research seeks to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviors, and emphasizes an understanding of processes rather than merely final outcomes (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Accordingly, this approach is highly relevant for examining how humanistic values are presented, experienced, and interpreted within interactions in Arabic language learning.

The type of research employed is a case study, focusing on the implementation of humanistic learning practices in the Arabic Language 2 and Muhādathah1 courses within the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo. A case study is chosen because it provides opportunities for researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon within a specific and complex real-life context. Through a case study, researchers can gain a more detailed understanding of interaction patterns, pedagogical strategies, and the dynamics of relationships between lecturers and students in the learning context. Yin emphasizes that a case study approach is particularly appropriate when researchers seek to understand the “how” and “why” of a phenomenon that cannot be separated from its real-life context (Yin, 2003). Therefore, this

approach helps researchers to explore the process of humanizing learning in a comprehensive and in-depth manner.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was employed to directly examine the dynamics of Arabic language learning, including lecturers' teaching strategies, students' responses, classroom interactions, and the mechanisms through which humanistic values -such as empathy, equality, participation, and respect for learners' individuality- are incorporated. According to Spradley, observation enables researchers to capture events as they naturally occur without manipulation, thereby providing authentic and contextual data (Spradley, 1980). Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted with lecturers and students to further explore their personal experiences, perceptions, motivations, and interpretations of humanistic learning practices. Patton emphasizes that in-depth interviews are a highly effective technique for understanding informants' perspectives in a direct, rich, and detailed manner (Patton, 1990). The combination of observation and interviews provides a comprehensive perspective, encompassing both behavioral and reflective dimensions.

Documentation techniques in this study were employed to obtain written, visual, and digital data that support the findings derived from observations and interviews concerning the humanization of Arabic language learning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo. Documentation was selected because it provides stable, non-reactive, and verifiable data as part of source triangulation. The documents collected included syllabi, Semester Learning Plans (RPS), learning modules, assessment records, instructional materials, and institutional academic guidelines. Through the analysis of these documents, the researcher was able to identify the extent to which humanistic values, such as empathy, equality, respect for diversity, dialogical engagement, and professional ethics, are integrated into instructional design, learning materials, media, and institutional policies. Patton emphasizes that documentation is one of the essential data sources in qualitative research, as it can provide rich contextual information and serve as supporting evidence for data obtained through observations and interviews (Patton, 1990). Therefore, documentation techniques play a crucial role in strengthening the credibility of the research findings and providing a more comprehensive portrayal of the implementation of humanistic values in Arabic language learning within Islamic higher education.

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique, which consists of three main components. First, data reduction, namely the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data into key categories relevant to the theme of

the humanization of learning. Second, data display, which involves organizing data in the form of narratives, tables, charts, or matrices to facilitate understanding and interpretation. Third, conclusion drawing and verification, namely the process of systematically formulating patterns, meanings, and research findings, followed by ongoing verification to ensure data validity through checking, triangulation, and in-depth reflection. Miles and Huberman emphasize that continuous analysis from the early stages of data collection will produce findings that are robust, in-depth, and credible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this technique, the analytical process proceeds in a cyclical and interactive manner, thereby enabling a comprehensive depiction of the implementation of humanistic values in Arabic language learning.

Result and Discussion

The Integration of Humanistic and Ethical Values in Arabic Language Learning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo

In the field of education, the humanistic approach views that education must humanize humans, develop the full potential of individuals in both intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects and provide space for students to become aware, independent, and responsible individuals for their own learning process. Humanistic in education functions more as an adjective, which refers to an approach or perspective in the learning process that is oriented towards students as the main subject of education (Maimunah, 2016; Nurrokhmatulloh et. al., 2023; Sartika et. al., 2025).

Based on the results of in-depth interviews and participatory observations conducted by researchers at the Arabic Language Education Study Program (PBA) of Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo, it was found that the integration of humanist and ethical values in Arabic language learning is not only positioned as a normative discourse, but has been implemented in real terms in learning strategies, approaches, and interactions. This integration is reflected in the selection of methods, lecturer-student communication patterns, and the design of learning activities that are oriented towards the simultaneous development of cognitive, affective, and moral aspects of students. One of the prominent forms of implementation is the application of the empathic dialogue strategy in the Arabic Language 2 course.

This strategy emphasizes the importance of two-way communication that is dialogical, participatory, and respects the diversity of students' backgrounds. In practice, lecturers not

only play the role of delivering linguistic materials, but also as facilitators who open up dialogue spaces, listen to students' opinions, and respond to learning difficulties with a persuasive and humanist approach. This approach to empathic dialogue is in line with the humanistic education paradigm that places students as learning subjects who have potential, feelings, and life experiences that need to be appreciated (Freire, 2005). In the context of Arabic language learning, empathic dialogue has strong pedagogical significance because language learning is essentially a social activity that involves interaction, meaning, and value. Through empathic dialogue, students are not only trained in language skills such as reading and understanding, but also cultivated mutual respect, academic honesty, linguistic politeness, and moral responsibility in communicating. These findings are in line with the results of research that states that a humanistic approach to language learning can increase students' confidence, empathy, and ethical sensitivity (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In addition, the integration of humanist and ethical values is also realized through the application of experiential learning strategies in the Muhādathah 1 course. This strategy encourages students to learn through hands-on experience, critical reflection, conceptualization, and practical application in the context of Arabic oral communication. Students are engaged in conversation simulations, role plays, group discussions, and contextual communication practices that reflect real-life situations. This approach allows students not only to master the structure and vocabulary of the Arabic language, but also to understand the ethical values of communication such as good manners, honesty, cooperation, and respect for the interlocutor. Experiential learning has strong relevance to ethical education because meaningful learning experiences can shape students' moral awareness and reflective attitudes (Beard & Wilson, 2013). In the context of PBA IAI Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar, this strategy is a means of internalizing Islamic humanist values, such as *ta'aruf*, *tasamuh*, and *ta'awun*, which are implicitly integrated in the practice of *muhādathah*. This strengthens the view that Arabic language learning in Islamic universities cannot be separated from the mission of building students' character and morals (Nata, 2016). Furthermore, the integration of humanist and ethical values in learning Arabic in this study program is also influenced by the institutional vision that places education as a human humanization process. These values are not taught dogmatically but are internalized through the example of lecturers, academic culture, and an inclusive and dialogical classroom climate. These findings are in line with a value education approach that emphasizes contextual and practical value integration, not just the delivery of normative concepts (Tilaar, 2012).

The Implementation of Empathetic Dialogue in the Arabic Language 2 Course

The empathetic dialogue strategy in Arabic language learning was implemented in the Arabic Language 2 course. The instructional steps were as follows. First, the lecturer explained the objectives of the activity, which were to develop speaking skills (*maharah al-kalām*) while simultaneously fostering values of empathy, politeness, and mutual respect. Second, the lecturer provided examples of short dialogues demonstrating empathetic responses in Arabic, such as *Anā ata'ātafu ma'ak* (I empathize with you), *Āsif li-samā'i hādihā* (I am sorry to hear that), and *Mubārak! Aqaddimu laka al-tahni'ah* (Congratulations! I share in your joy). Third, the lecturer outlined the principles of humanistic communication in learning, including refraining from interrupting others, maintaining eye contact, attending to tone of voice, and demonstrating respectful attitudes. Fourth, the lecturer presented several topics related to personal experiences relevant to the theme, from which students could choose topics to serve as the basis for dialogue. Fifth, students were divided into six small groups consisting of three to four members, in which each student took turns acting as both storyteller and empathetic listener. The storyteller was tasked with conveying personal experiences using simple and clear Arabic, while the listener was required to listen attentively, refrain from interrupting, and respond using empathetic expressions appropriate to the context. The lecturer observed the dialogue process in each group. Sixth, students were asked to engage in oral reflection on the outcomes of the empathetic dialogue activity. Seventh, the lecturer provided feedback and reinforcement concerning linguistic aspects, respectful attitudes, politeness, and social sensitivity.

The data above are consistent with Nel Noddings' theory of relationality in the learning process, which posits that dialogue, attentiveness, and lecturers' sensitive responses can foster care, empathy, and respect for others (Noddings, 2013). The theory of relationality in the learning process emphasizes that meaningful education occurs not merely through the transmission of content, but through human relationships between lecturers and students that are grounded in authentic dialogue, genuine attentiveness, and sensitivity to learners' emotional as well as intellectual needs. From this perspective, empathetic listening, the demonstration of care, and the provision of space for students' voices and experiences create a psychologically safe classroom climate that enables the growth of care, empathy, and mutual respect. Relationality is constructed through horizontal, dialogical interactions rather than one-way instructional practices; through teachers' attitudes that recognize students' potentials and challenges on a personal level; and through non-judgmental responses that validate their feelings and viewpoints. When pedagogical relationships are founded on

attentiveness and sensitivity, students not only learn language or academic content but also learn to value the presence of others, develop social sensitivity, and cultivate humanistic values in both communication and everyday behavior.

In addition to the theory discussed above, the implementation of the sequential steps of the empathetic dialogue strategy in this learning context is also supported by the theory of Empathic Pedagogical Dialogue. Anne P. Jones explains that empathetic dialogue is a form of educational communication that prioritizes active listening, emotionally sensitive responses, and the provision of space for students' voices. Empathetic dialogue aims to establish educational relationships that are authentic, humanistic, and mutually respectful. Its key stages include framing the purpose of the dialogue, modeling empathetic expressions, creating a safe communicative environment, using personal experiences as the basis for dialogue, and engaging in post-dialogue reflection (Jones, 2016).

The Implementation of Experiential Learning in the Muhādathah 1 Course

Based on the data obtained from the field, the integration of humanistic and ethical values in Arabic language learning is also implemented through the use of experiential learning, in which instructional activities are constructed around students' concrete language experiences, which are then reflected upon and applied in new language activities. The instructional steps implemented in the Muhādathah 1 course are as follows:

First, students were directly involved in Arabic language activities in real or near-real situations through simple interview practices with peers using Arabic. Second, students engaged in critical reflection on the interview practices by documenting the difficulties they encountered during communication, reflecting on the values that emerged in the interview process -such as politeness, empathy, mutual assistance, and respect for others- and participating in small-group discussions on how Arabic can be used ethically and humanistically in such contexts. Third, students transformed the outcomes of these reflections into conceptual understanding of language and ethical values by: (a) identifying linguistic patterns derived from experience (e.g., polite expressions, sentence structures, empathetic phrases); (b) formulating effective and ethical communication strategies in Arabic; (c) connecting their experiences with Arabic language theories, such as polite speech acts, Arab communicative culture, or moral values in communication; and (d) constructing concepts of humanistic communication in Arabic (al-ta'āṭuf, al-iḥtirām, al-tawāḍu', al-adab fī al-ḥiwār). Fourth, students applied the concepts they had developed in new activities by creating Arabic

dialogues that emphasized empathetic and polite expressions, as well as completing project-based assignments in the form of value-based conversational videos.

The data concerning the implementation of experience-based Muhādathah learning are consistent with Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which later became the foundation for the experiential learning model developed by David Kolb in the early 1980s. This model emphasizes a holistic approach to the learning process. Within experiential learning, experience plays a central role in learning. Experiential learning is a model of teaching and learning that actively engages learners in constructing knowledge and skills through direct experience. In this regard, experiential learning uses experience as a catalyst to help learners develop their capacities and competencies throughout the learning process (Nurhasanah, 2019). Kolb emphasizes that direct experience (concrete experience), followed by reflection, constitutes the foundation of value learning, including empathy, social awareness, and interpersonal ethics. Experiential learning creates opportunities for students to encounter human situations in authentic contexts, reflect upon them, and develop ethical understanding (Kolb, 1985).

Implications of the Integration of Humanistic and Ethical Values in Arabic Language Learning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo

Based on observations of Arabic language learning and interviews with lecturers of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo, it was found that the integration of humanistic and ethical values in Arabic language instruction has significant implications for enhancing the quality of the learning process. This humanistic approach is able to create a dialogical, supportive learning climate that recognizes students as active subjects of education. Such conditions emphasize that lecturers' genuine attentiveness (engrossment) and sensitive responses foster caring pedagogical relationships and enable students to develop both cognitively and emotionally (Noddings, 2013). Within a humanistic educational relationship, students experience psychological safety, gain the confidence to speak in Arabic, and are able to express their ideas without fear of judgment (Azzahra et. al., 2025). Freire refers to such conditions as dialogue between subjects, which gives rise to respect, mutual trust, and the liberation of learners' potential (Freire, 2016).

From the perspective of language competence, the integration of values such as empathy, politeness, and respect for others enhances students' pragmatic competence,

particularly in understanding communicative ethics within Arab culture. This finding is consistent with Johnson and Johnson, who argue that cooperative interactions that value each individual's contributions can enhance interpersonal sensitivity and harmonious communication skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). A learning environment grounded in dialogue and collaboration also strengthens a supportive learning community, as explained by Palmer, who asserts that lecturers' authentic presence and learning relationships characterized by trust and care can enhance students' academic engagement (Palmer, 2007).

From the perspective of sustainable humanity, the application of a humanistic approach to learning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo supports the development of graduates who are not only linguistically proficient but also possess Islamic character, a moderate outlook, and the capacity to serve as role models in ethical communication. Students learn to internalize values such as *iḥtirām* (respect), *ta'āṭuf* (empathy), *tawāḍu'* (humility/politeness), and proper etiquette in dialogue. These values are closely aligned with pesantren culture. Accordingly, the integration of humanistic and ethical values not only contributes to language mastery but also strengthens the readiness of graduates of the Arabic Language Education Study Program to become educators capable of delivering Arabic language instruction that is friendly, inclusive, and human-centered in response to societal needs (Sheridan & Kelly, 2020).

The implications of this humanistic educational relationship can be seen in the increased psychological security of students in participating in Arabic language learning. Students become more courageous to speak, express opinions, and express ideas in Arabic without fear of mistakes or negative judgments. This condition is in line with Freire's view that dialogical learning is an encounter between subjects based on appreciation, trust, and critical awareness, so as to be able to liberate students' learning potential (Freire, 2005). Thus, Arabic is no longer perceived as a stressful subject, but rather as a lively and meaningful medium of communication. In terms of language competence development, the integration of the values of empathy, politeness, and respect for others has positive implications for improving students' pragmatic abilities. Students not only understand the structural aspects of the Arabic language, but are also able to grasp the ethical dimensions of communication inherent in Arabic culture, such as the use of polite expressions, the choice of appropriate diction, and the manners of speaking according to the social context. This value- and culturally sensitive language learning is in line with Brown's view that the success of learning a foreign language is greatly influenced by the affective and social factors of learners (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, cooperative and respectful learning interactions encourage the

formation of students' interpersonal skills. Johnson and Johnson explain that cooperative learning that rewards each individual's contribution is able to improve social sensitivity, empathy, and harmonious communication skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). In the context of learning Arabic in the PBA IAIRM Study Program, this kind of interaction not only strengthens the ability to speak (maharah al-kalam), but also builds an attitude of mutual respect and collective responsibility in the learning community. A learning environment based on dialogue and collaboration also has implications for the formation of a supportive academic community. Palmer emphasized that the presence of authentic lecturers, accompanied by learning relationships based on trust and care, contributes to increasing academic involvement and the depth of student learning (Palmer, 2007). In this context, PBA lecturers not only play the role of language teachers, but also as exemplary figures in communication ethics and human values.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the integration of humanistic and ethical values in Arabic language learning in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Institut Agama Islam Riyadlotul Mujahidin Ngabar Ponorogo is carried out through various approaches, including the implementation of empathetic dialogue strategies in the Arabic Language 2 course and experiential learning-based instruction in the Muhādathah 1 course. The implications of integrating humanistic and ethical values into Arabic language learning include improvements in the quality of the learning process, enhancement of students' pragmatic competence, and support for the development of graduates in Arabic language education who are not only linguistically proficient but also possess Islamic character, a moderate outlook, and the ability to serve as role models in ethical communication.

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