Asalibuna
مجلة اللغة العربية وتعليمها

E-ISSN: 2656-3533
P-ISSN: 2615-5885
Volume 10, Issue 01, 2026
DOI: 10.30762/asalibuna.v10i01.7168

Beyond a Professional Association: IMLA Indonesia in the Transformation of Arabic Education in Indonesian Higher Education

Syarifaturrahmatullah[1]; Uril Bahruddin[1]; Sutaman[1]; Muhammad Yamin[2]; Mahbub Humaidi Aziz[1];
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang; [2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda;

Abstract:

Arabic language education in Indonesia has undergone substantial transformation over the past two decades, as reflected in curriculum reforms, the expansion of undergraduate and graduate programs, and the growing volume of scholarly publications and academic networks. However, previous studies have predominantly focused on pedagogical aspects, while the role of professional associations as agents of educational transformation has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. This study aims to examine the contribution of the Indonesian *Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (IMLA) to the transformation of Arabic language education in higher education institutions. Employing a qualitative historical approach through the perspective of oral history, the study draws on in-depth interviews with twelve key informants representing different leadership periods of IMLA, complemented by organizational documents. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis based on the framework proposed by Graneheim and Lundman. The findings reveal that IMLA has evolved beyond the conventional functions of a professional association by performing three interconnected roles: as an epistemic community, a professional association and platform for academic consolidation, and a driving force behind the transformation of Arabic language education. The study further demonstrates that the transformation of Arabic language education has been shaped not only by pedagogical reforms and educational policies but also by the interaction between knowledge production, collective agency, and educational structures. These findings highlight the complementary explanatory power of Epistemic Community Theory and Structuration Theory in demonstrating how a professional association can transcend its representative function to become a catalyst for the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education.

Keywords: *Arabic Language Education; IMLA; Epistemic Community; Structuration Theory; Educational Transformation.*

Submitted : November 27th 2025
Revised : July 9th 2026
Accepted : July 17th 2026

Correspondence Author:
Syarifaturrahmatullah
syarifaturrahmatullah@gmail.com

CC BY ND

Open Access Journal
Availabel at: https://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/asalibuna

Asalibuna
مجلة اللغة العربية وتعليمها
E-ISSN: 2656-3533
P-ISSN: 2615-5885
Volume 09, Issue 02, 2025
DOI: 10.30762/asalibuna.v10i01.7168

Melampaui Organisasi Profesi: IMLA Indonesia dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab di Perguruan Tinggi Indonesia

Syarifaturrahmatullah[1]; Uril Bahruddin[1]; Sutaman[1]; Muhammad Yamin[2]; Mahbub Humaidi Aziz[1];
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang; [2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda;

Abstract:

Pendidikan bahasa Arab di Indonesia dalam dua dekade terakhir mengalami transformasi yang signifikan, ditandai oleh reformasi kurikulum, berkembangnya program studi dan program pascasarjana, serta semakin luasnya publikasi ilmiah dan jejaring akademik. Namun, penelitian terdahulu masih didominasi oleh kajian pada aspek pedagogis, sementara peran organisasi profesi sebagai aktor transformasi pendidikan masih relatif terbatas dikaji. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kontribusi Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah (IMLA) Indonesia dalam transformasi pendidikan bahasa Arab di perguruan tinggi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode sejarah melalui perspektif sejarah lisan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap dua belas informan lintas periode kepengurusan IMLA, didukung oleh dokumen organisasi, dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi kualitatif berdasarkan kerangka Graneheim dan Lundman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa IMLA berkembang melampaui fungsi organisasi profesi melalui tiga peran yang saling berkaitan, yaitu sebagai komunitas epistemik, organisasi profesi dan wadah konsolidasi akademik, serta penggerak transformasi pendidikan bahasa Arab. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa transformasi pendidikan bahasa Arab tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh perubahan pedagogis dan kebijakan pendidikan, tetapi juga oleh interaksi antara produksi pengetahuan, agensi kolektif, dan struktur pendidikan. Penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa Teori Komunitas Epistemik dan Teori Strukturasi saling melengkapi dalam menjelaskan bagaimana organisasi profesi dapat berkembang melampaui fungsi representatifnya hingga menjadi penggerak transformasi pendidikan bahasa Arab di perguruan tinggi Indonesia.

Keywords: *Pendidikan bahasa Arab; IMLA; Komunitas Epistemik; Teori Strukturasi; Transformasi Pendidikan.*

Submitted : November 27th 2025
Revised : July 9th 2026
Accepted : July 17th 2026

Correspondence Author:
Syarifaturrahmatullah
syarifaturrahmatullah@gmail.com

Open Access Journal
Availabel at: https://jurnalfaktarbiyah.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/asalibuna

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language education in Indonesia has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past two decades, particularly within higher education institutions. During its early development, Arabic language instruction was primarily positioned as a means of facilitating the understanding of Islamic religious texts, with the *nahwu–tarjamah* approach dominating pedagogical practice through its emphasis on grammatical mastery and the translation of classical texts. However, the forces of globalization, increasing international academic mobility, economic development, and the growing demand for twenty-first-century competencies have gradually reoriented Arabic language education beyond its traditional religious function toward broader roles as a global language of communication, a professional language, and a form of social capital across diverse domains of society (Dedduang & Kholis, 2025). Historically, this transformation has unfolded progressively and has been reflected in a series of developments within higher education, including curriculum reforms from structural approaches to competency-based curricula, the implementation of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), Outcome-Based Education (OBE), and the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy, the expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate Arabic language programs, the growth of scholarly publications and academic conferences, and the strengthening of both national and international academic networks (Aditia et al., 2026; Rosyidi et al., 2020). Collectively, these developments indicate that the transformation of Arabic language education has extended beyond pedagogical practices to encompass broader institutional, academic, and professional dimensions.

Educational transformation is shaped not only by changes in curricula and pedagogy but also by external actors who generate ideas, build academic networks, mediate policy processes, and influence educational practices. In language education, growing evidence shows that professional associations play a pivotal role in fostering academic communities, advancing professional development, facilitating international collaboration, and shaping educational policy (Elsheikh et al., 2018; Lamb, 2012). In Indonesia, TEFLIN illustrates how a professional association has strengthened the English language education ecosystem through scholarly forums, policy advocacy, and professional standards. By contrast, the institutional role of professional associations in Arabic language education has received comparatively little scholarly attention.

From a theoretical perspective, educational transformation can be understood through Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory, which conceptualizes social change as the outcome of the dynamic interplay between structure and agency (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Dayrobi et al., 2024). In the context of Arabic language education, the transformation occurring within higher education cannot be explained solely as a response to government policies or the forces of globalization. Rather, it also reflects the collective actions of multiple actors who actively shape the direction of educational change. In addition, this study draws upon Epistemic Community Theory, originally developed by Haas (1992), to explain how communities of experts influence processes of change through knowledge production, the dissemination of ideas, and the establishment of academic norms. An epistemic community is understood as a network of professionals who share normative beliefs, causal understandings, criteria for validating knowledge, and common policy objectives (Haas, 2015; Roth & Bourgine, 2005; Shafira et al., 2022). These two theoretical perspectives are employed in a complementary manner. Structuration Theory provides a framework for explaining the reciprocal relationship between actors and social structures in educational transformation, whereas Epistemic Community Theory elucidates the mechanisms through which collective actors exert influence by building academic networks, producing knowledge, and fostering scholarly consensus.

Previous research on Arabic language education in Indonesia has predominantly focused on pedagogical issues and classroom practices. For example, Albantani and Madkur examined the challenges of Arabic language education in the era of the Fourth Industrial

Revolution, emphasizing curriculum adaptation and instructional strategies (Albantani & Madkur, 2019). Wekke investigated models of Arabic language instruction within minority Muslim communities (Wekke, 2015), while Ilham explored the development of multicultural teaching materials for Indonesian diaspora students (Ilham, 2021). Other studies have addressed topics such as teacher motivation (Edidarmo et al., 2025), the integration of artificial intelligence into Arabic language instruction (Gunawan & Hidayatullah, 2024), and the incorporation of intercultural dimensions into Arabic language education (Kustina et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies have made important contributions to improving the pedagogical practices of Arabic language education. However, their primary focus remains at the micro level, centering on classroom instruction, teaching and learning processes, and the internal educational systems of higher education institutions.

Recent scholarship has also demonstrated growing interest in the digital transformation of Arabic language education. A number of studies have examined the integration of artificial intelligence, blended learning, the enhancement of communicative competence, and the development of more contextualized pedagogical approaches in response to the demands of Society 5.0 (Aidah Novianti Putri & Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan, 2022; Albantani et al., 2026; Arani et al., 2024; Azhar et al., 2025; Maul & Rowin, 2026). While these studies have enriched pedagogical innovation, they continue to focus primarily on changes in instructional methods, learning media, and teaching strategies. Consequently, the transformation of Arabic language education has largely been conceptualized as a pedagogical phenomenon, whereas the mechanisms of change involving professional associations, academic networks, and collective actors at the institutional level have received comparatively limited scholarly attention.

Against this backdrop, the establishment of the Indonesian *Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (IMLA) in 1999 presents a compelling case for scholarly inquiry. Since its inception, IMLA has served not only as a professional association for Arabic language lecturers but also as a platform for academic consolidation, connecting higher education institutions, scholarly communities, and international partners. Although its contributions have been widely acknowledged in academic forums and historical accounts, systematic analyses of IMLA's historical role remain limited. Existing studies have largely portrayed IMLA as a professional association or organizer of academic activities without examining its role as a transformative actor in Arabic language education (Muradi, 2016). Moreover, little attention has been given to reconstructing this transformation through oral history based on the experiences of key actors across different leadership periods.

Based on the foregoing review, this study identifies three major research gaps. First, research on Arabic language education in Indonesia has predominantly concentrated on the micro level, focusing on curriculum, pedagogy, educational technology, and classroom practices, while the institutional dimension—particularly the ways in which educational transformation is shaped through professional associations and academic networks—has received limited scholarly attention. Second, previous studies have yet to explain the mechanisms through which professional associations generate influence by producing knowledge, fostering academic consolidation, and mediating policy processes in advancing the transformation of Arabic language education. Third, no historical study based on primary-source evidence has specifically reconstructed the contribution of the Indonesian *Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (IMLA) as an epistemic community and an agent of educational transformation within Arabic language education in higher education.

In response to these research gaps, this study aims to examine the role of the Indonesian *Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (IMLA) in the transformation of Arabic language education within higher education through a historical approach. The study is grounded in the argument that IMLA functions not only as a professional association but also as an epistemic community and a social agent that has contributed to shaping the institutional structure of Arabic language education in Indonesia.

METHOD

Research Approach and Method

This study employed a qualitative historical approach through oral history to reconstruct the role of the Indonesian *Ittihadu al-Mudarris al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah* (IMLA) in the transformation of Arabic language education in higher education since its establishment in 1999. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key historical actors, while organizational documents were used for triangulation. The study followed four stages of historical research: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics involved collecting interview and documentary data, while source criticism examined the consistency of information across informants and documentary evidence. The data were then interpreted to explain the relationships among actors, institutional change, and the transformation of Arabic language education before being synthesized into a historical narrative.

Research Informants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the establishment, development, and decision-making of IMLA since its founding in 1999. Rather than representing the broader Arabic language education community in Indonesia, the study sought the perspectives of key historical actors with first-hand experience of the organization's development. This approach is consistent with oral history research, which regards the experiences and testimonies of historical actors as primary sources for reconstructing institutional change.

The study involved twelve participants, including the founder, presidents, secretaries-general, and members of IMLA's central executive board from different leadership periods. They were selected for their knowledge, experience, and involvement in the organization's development and the transformation of Arabic language education. All leadership periods since 1999 were represented, enabling a historical reconstruction across different phases of IMLA's development.

Table 1. Informants' Initials and Descriptions

Code	Position	Period
MHB	Secretary	1999-2003
LZ	Chairperson	2003-2007
SH	IMLA Founders & Chairperson	2007-2011
ADY	Secretary	2007-2011
IA	Chairperson	2015-2019
WW	Secretary	2015-2019
MH	Executive Secretary	2015-2019
TM	Chairperson & Secretary	2019-2023 & 2011-2015
MHJ	Secretary	2019-2023
UB	Chairperson	2023-2027
FH	Secretary	2023-2027
WD	Executive Secretary	2023-2027

Although all participants were drawn from within IMLA, this was appropriate because the study sought to reconstruct the organization's history through the perspectives of its principal historical actors. The study nevertheless acknowledges the potential for an organizational perspective. To minimize this bias, interview data were triangulated with organizational documents, *PINBA* proceedings, policy archives, curricula, and other historical records. Participants were also encouraged to discuss not only the organization's achievements but also its challenges, internal dynamics, and constraints across different

leadership periods. Finally, interpretations were verified through member checking and documented in an audit trail to enhance the credibility, dependability, and transparency of the analysis.

Data Collection Techniques

Primary data were collected through face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored participants' experiences and perspectives on IMLA's role in curriculum development, institutional strengthening, academic networking, and the transformation of Arabic language education. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and verified before analysis. Secondary data consisted of organizational archives, activity reports, *PINBA* proceedings, curriculum documents, and relevant policy records, which were used for source triangulation and historical reconstruction.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis following the framework proposed by Graneheim and Lundman (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The analytical process involved several stages: repeated reading of the interview transcripts, identification of meaning units, condensation of meaning, coding, category development, and the inductive generation of overarching themes. This approach was selected because it enables the systematic identification of patterns of meaning embedded in the narratives of historical actors. Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory and Epistemic Community Theory were subsequently employed as interpretive lenses to examine the relationships among actors, institutional structures, and knowledge networks emerging from the findings.

Data Validity

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through source triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to enhance credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Source triangulation involved comparing interview data with organizational documents, *PINBA* proceedings, policy archives, curricula, and other relevant historical records. Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review the researchers' interpretations, while an audit trail documented each stage of the research process from data collection to the development of conclusions. Together, these procedures ensured that the historical reconstruction was supported not only by participants' narratives but also by corroborating evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings derived from in-depth interviews and document analysis indicate that IMLA's contribution to the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education cannot be understood as a single or uniform role. Rather, this transformation evolved progressively through interconnected epistemic, institutional, and pedagogical processes. Based on the analysis, IMLA's contributions can be classified into three principal roles: (1) IMLA as an epistemic community, (2) IMLA as a professional association and a platform for academic consolidation, and (3) IMLA as a driving force in the transformation of Arabic language education.

Figure 1: The Roles and Contributions of IMLA Indonesia

1. IMLA as an Epistemic Community

The interview findings consistently indicate that IMLA members perceive the organization as more than a professional association; rather, they regard it as an academic forum that brings together lecturers, researchers, and administrators of Arabic language study programs from higher education institutions across Indonesia. According to the participants, interactions among Arabic language scholars prior to the establishment of IMLA were relatively limited, resulting in fragmented exchanges of experience, research findings, and scholarly development. One informant observed that *"the Arabic language community in Indonesia was actually large, but it did not yet have a strong professional association"* (MHB), while another emphasized that *"there was no national professional association for Arabic language educators"* (SH). Another participant further explained that experiences gained through participation in TEFLIN activities inspired the establishment of a national professional association for Arabic language educators capable of strengthening academic communication across the country. These findings suggest that the establishment of IMLA was driven primarily by the need to create a shared academic space for the advancement of knowledge rather than merely to establish a formal organizational structure.

These interview findings are further corroborated by documentary evidence, particularly the opening address delivered by the President of IMLA at the Second Congress (*Muktamar II*) and the Third National Conference on Arabic Language Education (*PINBA III*) in 2003. The document demonstrates that, from its earliest stage of development, IMLA was envisioned as a platform for academic consolidation aimed at strengthening the position of Arabic language education through sustained scholarly activities. It further reveals that the organization's orientation extended beyond institutional development to fostering an active academic community engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Taken

together, the interview data and organizational documents consistently indicate that IMLA's primary function at its inception was to establish a shared academic space that had previously been absent from the landscape of Arabic language education in Indonesia.

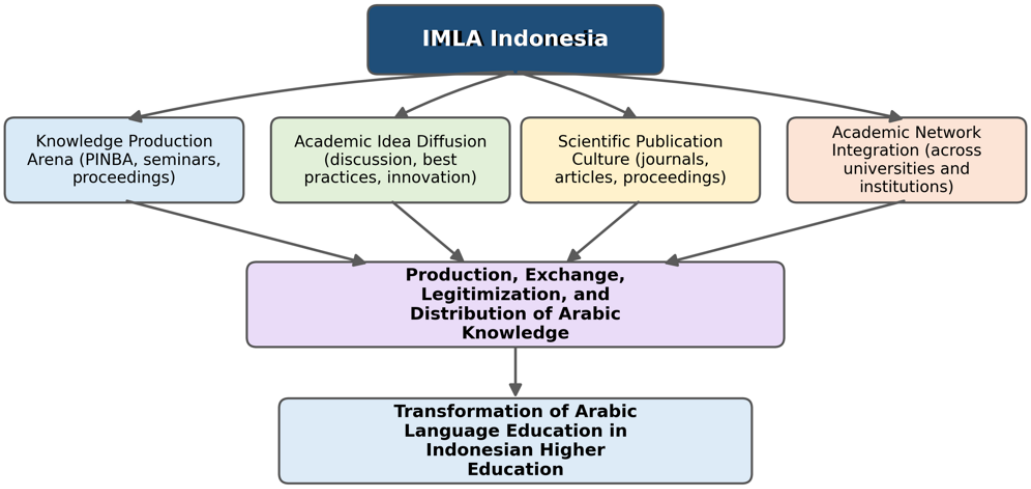
All participants also identified the National Conference on Arabic Language Education (*PINBA*) as the activity that played the most significant role in building this academic community. One informant stated that *"PINBA provides a forum for researchers and academics to present their research findings"* (FT), while another explained that the conference brought together lecturers from different higher education institutions to exchange experiences, discuss issues in Arabic language education, and establish research collaborations. These accounts were supported by an analysis of the *PINBA* proceedings, which revealed a shift in research themes from teaching methodology, curriculum, *nahwu*, linguistics, and Arabic literature during the early period to e-learning, competency standardization, Outcome-Based Education (OBE), blended learning, artificial intelligence, and Society 5.0 in subsequent years. This development indicates that *PINBA* evolved alongside changes in the paradigm of Arabic language education and became an important medium for disseminating academic ideas.

Beyond scholarly forums, participants also viewed IMLA as contributing to the growth of research and publication culture among Arabic language lecturers. One informant stated that *"there used to be very few Arabic language journals, but now they have grown rapidly"* (MA), while another noted that the number of Arabic language journals had expanded to more than one hundred (UB). These statements are consistent with documentary evidence showing the continued publication of the *PINBA* proceedings and the existence of 115 Arabic language journals indexed in SINTA by 2025. Although this development cannot be attributed entirely to IMLA's activities, data triangulation indicates that the scholarly forums facilitated by the organization have contributed to the growth of research and publication culture within the Arabic language academic community.

A further contribution was reflected in the strengthening of academic networks. Participants explained that IMLA expanded communication among Arabic language lecturers, facilitated research collaboration, and connected higher education institutions through sustained scholarly activities. These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing IMLA's collaboration with various national and international institutions, including the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMI), *Ma'had Al-Jazera li al-I'lam*, Ewan Institute, and *Markaz al-Buhuts wa al-Tawasul al-Ma'rify*. This evidence indicates that the academic networks established by IMLA extended beyond the national level to the international academic community, thereby broadening opportunities for knowledge exchange in Arabic language education.

These findings indicate that IMLA's contribution as an epistemic community operated through four main mechanisms: (1) creating a platform for knowledge production through scholarly forums, (2) expanding knowledge dissemination through conference proceedings and academic publications, (3) strengthening the culture of research and scholarly publication, and (4) integrating academic networks across institutions, as summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mechanisms of IMLA's Contribution as an Epistemic Community



To clarify the relationship between the oral history findings and the documentary evidence, a summary of the research findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Empirical Indications of IMLA's Contributions as an Epistemic Community

Form of Contribution	Oral History Findings	Documentary Evidence
Knowledge production	*PINBA* served as the primary forum for presenting research and academic discussion.	The themes of the *PINBA* proceedings evolved from teaching methodology to OBE, artificial intelligence, and Society 5.0.
Knowledge dissemination	Scholarly forums expanded the exchange of ideas among academics.	PINBA proceedings have been published continuously as a medium for scholarly dissemination.
Publication culture	Arabic language lecturers became increasingly active in conducting research and publishing scholarly work.	A total of 115 Arabic language journals were indexed in SINTA by 2025, alongside the continued publication of the *PINBA* proceedings.
Academic network integration	Collaboration among lecturers and higher education institutions increased.	Cooperation agreements with national and international institutions, including WAMI, *Ma'had Al-Jazera li al-I'lam*, Ewan Institute, and *Markaz al-Buhuts wa al-Tawasul al-Ma'rify*.

Overall, the triangulation of oral history and documentary evidence indicates that IMLA has successfully established an academic environment that supports knowledge production, exchange, publication, and the development of scholarly networks in Arabic language education. These findings demonstrate that IMLA's contribution extends beyond organizing academic activities to fostering a scholarly ecosystem that has strengthened the development of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education.

2. IMLA as a Professional Organization and a Platform for Academic Consolidation

The interview findings indicate that IMLA functions not only as a professional association for Arabic language lecturers but also as an institution that strengthens the academic governance of Arabic language education in Indonesia. According to the participants, IMLA provided a coordinating platform that had previously been unavailable,

enabling higher education institutions, study programs, and Arabic language scholars to work together in advancing the profession. Unlike its epistemic role, which is oriented toward knowledge production and exchange, IMLA's institutional contribution is reflected in its ability to establish a coordination system that strengthens organizational legitimacy, enhances lecturers' professionalism, develops academic standards, and integrates scholarly organizations into a national network.

One of the contributions most frequently highlighted by the participants was IMLA's formal recognition as a professional association. One informant stated that *"IMLA was recognized as a professional association by the Ministry of Education and Culture"* (ADY), while another emphasized that the organization *"was recognized as a professional association by the Directorate General of Higher Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs"* (SH). Another participant explicitly stated that *"IMLA is a professional association"* (BM). These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing that, following its formal recognition, IMLA also received an organizational development grant. This evidence indicates that the recognition of IMLA was not merely administrative but was accompanied by institutional support that strengthened its position in advancing Arabic language education in higher education.

Beyond formal recognition, participants also emphasized IMLA's contribution to enhancing the professionalism of Arabic language lecturers. One informant explained that the organization's contribution *"has been reflected in lecturer training and the strengthening of scholarly networks"* (FP), while another stated that IMLA has consistently *"strengthened scholarly networks and inter-university collaboration"* (AH). According to several participants, the training programs, seminars, workshops, and conferences organized by IMLA not only enhanced lecturers' academic competencies but also expanded collaboration among higher education institutions. These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing the continuous implementation of lecturer capacity-building programs. In addition to lecturers, several activities also involved faculty leaders and study program administrators, indicating that professional development extended beyond the individual level to the institutional level.

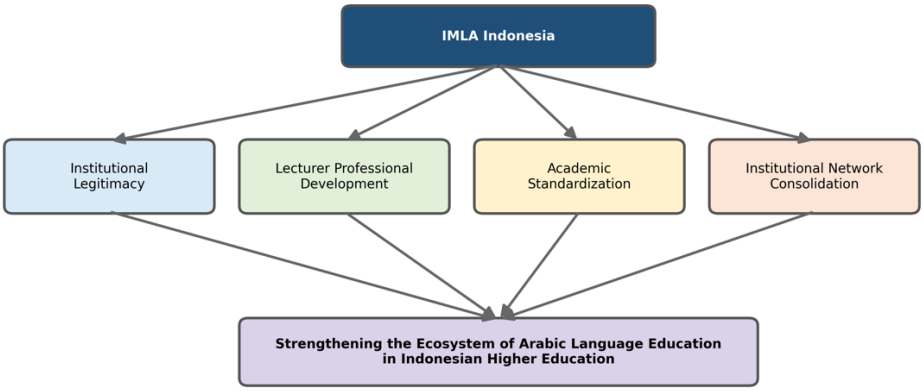
A further contribution was reflected in the process of academic standardization. Participants explained that IMLA played an active role in developing the direction of the Arabic language education curriculum in Indonesia. One informant stated that IMLA *"developed the curriculum standards for PBA and BSA, including the draft general objectives and credit allocation"* (IA), while another noted that the organization *"prepared curriculum recommendations"* (FH). These statements are supported by curriculum standard documents developed by IMLA as references for Arabic Language Education (PBA) and Arabic Language and Literature (BSA) study programs. The documents indicate that IMLA's contribution extended beyond organizing academic forums to developing academic guidelines used in curriculum development across higher education institutions. Thus, both the interview findings and documentary evidence consistently demonstrate that IMLA performed a coordinating role in establishing academic standards for Arabic language education.

The interview findings also indicate that institutional consolidation was one of IMLA's major contributions. Participants explained that the organization not only brought together Arabic language lecturers but also facilitated the establishment of various associations and consortia that strengthened inter-institutional coordination. One informant stated that *"the PBA–BSA Association was established during my term"* (IA), while another explained that *"the recommendation to establish the PBA Association was made at the 2015 Congress"* (MA). Another participant added that IMLA *"facilitated the establishment of the PP-PBA and PP-BSA associations"* (WW) and *"initiated the PBA and BSA associations"* (FH). These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing the establishment of associations under IMLA's coordination, including PP-PBA, PP-BSA, the Arabic Language Consortium, and several other development groups. The establishment of these structures reflects the

growing maturity of IMLA's organizational governance through a clearer division of roles between the parent organization and its affiliated bodies.

Taken together, these four findings indicate that IMLA's contribution as a professional association lies not only in its formal existence but also in its ability to establish institutional mechanisms that support the development of Arabic language education in Indonesia. An overview of these contributions is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Mechanisms of IMLA's Contributions as a Professional Organization



To further clarify the relationship between the interview findings and the documentary evidence, a summary of the research findings is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Empirical Indications of IMLA's Contributions as a Professional Organization and a Platform for Academic Consolidation

Form of Contribution	Interview Evidence	Documentary/Policy Evidence
Institutional legitimacy	Recognition by the Ministry of Kemendikbud, Ditjen Dikti, and Kemenag	Official recognition and organizational grant documents.
Professional development	Lecturer training, seminars, workshops, and academic networking.	Lecturer capacity-building programs and academic activities.
Academic standardization	Development of curriculum standards, learning outcomes (CPL), and PBA–BSA recommendations.	PBA–BSA curriculum standards, learning outcomes, and consortium reports.
Institutional network consolidation	Establishment of study program associations and inter-institutional coordination.	PP-PBA, PP-BSA, Arabic Language Consortium, and affiliated organizations.

Overall, the interview findings indicate that participants viewed IMLA as an organization that strengthened the governance of Arabic language education through institutional development. This view is supported by organizational documents, curriculum records, institutional archives, and academic policies showing that IMLA evolved from a professional association into a coordinating body for academic activities. The triangulation of oral history and documentary evidence therefore demonstrates that IMLA not only provided a platform for the Arabic language professional community but also established institutional mechanisms supporting lecturers' professional development, academic standardization, and the consolidation of Arabic language education institutions in Indonesia.

3. IMLA as a Driving Force in the Transformation of Arabic Language Education

The interview findings indicate that participants viewed IMLA's influence as extending beyond the formation of an academic community and the strengthening of a professional association to promoting the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education. One of the contributions most frequently highlighted was IMLA's role in advancing the position of Arabic language education at the national level. Several participants explained that, since its establishment, IMLA has actively advocated for greater recognition of Arabic language education within the national education system. One informant stated that IMLA *"advocated for Arabic to attain a status equal to English"* (LZ), while another emphasized that the organization has consistently *"encouraged greater government attention to Arabic"* (UB). Another participant explained that the forums organized by IMLA served as a channel for conveying academic aspirations to the government regarding the development of Arabic language education. These accounts indicate that IMLA's role extended beyond higher education institutions into the sphere of educational policy.

These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing IMLA's involvement in national forums, the development of academic recommendations, and communication with relevant ministries on the advancement of Arabic language education. The documents indicate that these advocacy efforts were intended to strengthen the legitimacy of Arabic language education within the national higher education system. Thus, the triangulation of interview findings and documentary evidence demonstrates that IMLA's advocacy function has been an important mechanism in promoting the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesia.

A further contribution was reflected in the development of the Arabic language education curriculum. Participants explained that IMLA's recommendations served as references for higher education institutions in developing and revising their curricula. One informant stated that IMLA *"provided curriculum recommendations"* (WW), while another noted that the organization *"served as a reference in curriculum development"* (IA). Another participant added that IMLA *"contributed curriculum concepts"* (MA), particularly following the implementation of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) and the development of consortium-based graduate learning outcomes (CPL). These accounts are supported by curriculum recommendations, graduate learning outcomes (CPL) documents, and reports from academic consortia, all of which demonstrate IMLA's involvement in curriculum development. This evidence indicates that curriculum reform emerged through academic coordination involving the professional association, study programs, and other higher education stakeholders.

The interview findings also indicate that IMLA's influence on the transformation of Arabic language education did not always operate through formal structural mechanisms. Several participants emphasized that change was driven primarily by the academic relationships developed through the organization's activities. One informant explained that *"it was not structural directives, but these relationships that influenced the development of study programs"* (MHJ). Another participant noted that IMLA's activities brought together lecturers, study program administrators, journal editors, language institutions, and other organizations within a mutually supportive academic network. These accounts are supported by organizational documents showing the expansion of national coordination through scholarly forums, consortia, study program associations, and other collaborative activities facilitated by IMLA. These findings indicate that the transformation evolved through sustained academic interaction involving multiple actors within the Arabic language education ecosystem.

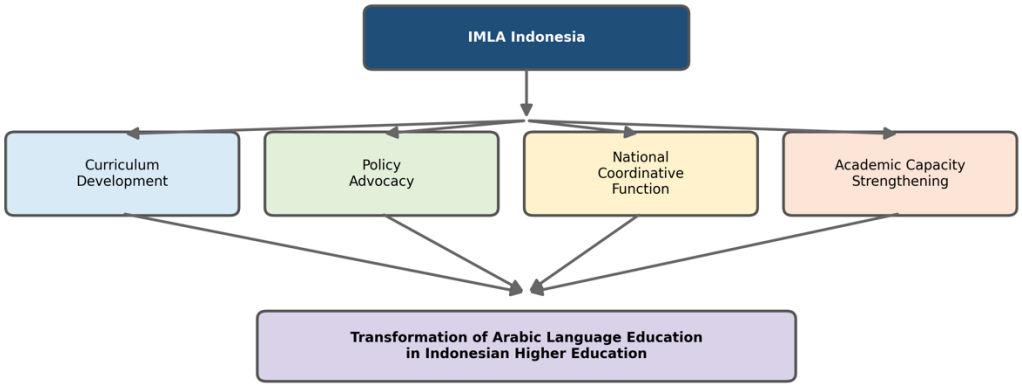
Beyond its influence on curriculum and academic coordination, participants also viewed the institutional development of Arabic language education as accelerating alongside the growing role of IMLA and higher education reforms in Indonesia. Several participants noted that the number of Arabic language study programs had continued to increase, accompanied by the expansion of master's and doctoral programs across higher

education institutions. According to the participants, this development was supported by the increasing number of training programs, seminars, conferences, and academic forums that strengthened the capacity of both lecturers and educational institutions.

These oral history accounts are supported by organizational documents showing increased academic activities, expanded collaborative networks, and the growth of capacity-building programs facilitated by IMLA. At the same time, these institutional developments took place within the broader context of higher education reform in Indonesia, including the implementation of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI), the National Standards for Higher Education (SN-DIKTI), Outcome-Based Education (OBE), and the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy, all of which promoted improvements in quality, curriculum, and higher education governance. Accordingly, the findings do not suggest that the increase in the number of study programs or postgraduate programs was a direct consequence of IMLA's establishment. Rather, they indicate that IMLA served as an important actor in facilitating academic consolidation, strengthening professional networks, and accelerating the transformation of Arabic language education within the broader context of higher education reform.

Taken together, these four findings indicate that IMLA's contribution as a driver of the transformation of Arabic language education operated through four interconnected mechanisms: 1) curriculum development, 2) policy advocacy, 3) national coordination, and 4) academic capacity building. A summary of these mechanisms is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Mechanisms of IMLA's Contributions as a Driving Force in the Transformation of Arabic Language Education



To clarify the relationship between the oral history findings and the documentary evidence, a summary of the research findings is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Empirical Indications of IMLA's Contributions as a Driving Force in the Transformation of Arabic Language Education

Form of Contribution	Interview Evidence	Documentary Evidence
Curriculum development	Curriculum recommendations, graduate learning outcomes (CPL), and curriculum input.	Curriculum recommendations and consortium-based CPL documents.
Policy advocacy	Advocacy for greater government support for Arabic language education.	Organizational recommendations and IMLA's involvement in Arabic language education development.
National coordination	Coordination among lecturers, study programs, journal editors, and Arabic language institutions.	National activities, study program associations, and coordination forums facilitated by IMLA.

Form of Contribution	Interview Evidence	Documentary Evidence
Academic capacity building	Training, seminars, proceedings, and scholarly forums.	Lecturer development and institutional capacity-building programs.

Overall, the interview and documentary evidence indicate that IMLA's influence extended beyond curriculum reform and academic capacity building to strengthening the national coordination of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education.

Discussion

The main finding of this study is that IMLA cannot be understood solely as a professional association. The historical reconstruction demonstrates that its role has evolved beyond the representative functions typically associated with professional organizations. Since its establishment in 1999, IMLA has served not only as an association for Arabic language lecturers but also as a platform for knowledge production, institutional consolidation, and the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education. Accordingly, IMLA's contribution cannot be explained solely by its organizational activities but should be understood as a gradual social process shaped by the interaction among the academic community, the professional association, and the higher education system.

These findings also broaden the understanding of professional associations in language education. Professional associations are generally viewed as bodies representing their members, organizing scholarly activities, or facilitating professional development (Muradi, 2016). While this perspective explains part of their role, it does not fully account for how professional associations can drive broader changes in the education system. The findings of this study show that the transformation of Arabic language education is shaped not only by curriculum innovation, pedagogical development, or government policy, as emphasized in previous studies (Albantani & Madkur, 2019; Gunawan & Hidayatullah, 2024; Wekke, 2015), but also by collective actors capable of building academic consensus, coordinating institutions, and linking knowledge with institutional practice (Davis et al., 2025; Elsheikh et al., 2018; Lamb, 2012; Rimmer & Floyd, 2020; Slaughter et al., 2022).

In this context, the findings suggest that IMLA initially developed as an epistemic community. Its activities, including the organization of *PINBA*, the promotion of scholarly publications, the establishment of academic networks, and other scholarly forums, reflect a collective process of knowledge production, validation, and dissemination. This is consistent with Haas's (1992) concept of an epistemic community as a professional network characterized by shared normative beliefs, common causal understandings, shared standards of validity, and a common policy enterprise (Haas, 2015; Roth & Bourgine, 2005; Shafira et al., 2022). In this study, IMLA functioned not only as a meeting place for Arabic language scholars but also as a forum for developing a shared understanding of the direction of Arabic language education in Indonesia.

However, the findings also indicate that Epistemic Community Theory alone cannot fully explain the transformation identified in this study. Haas explains how knowledge is produced and gains legitimacy within a professional community, but does not fully account for how such knowledge develops into relatively stable change within an education system. In this study, the ideas generated through IMLA's scholarly forums did not remain at the level of academic discourse. Instead, they evolved into curriculum recommendations, graduate learning outcomes, study program associations, academic consortia, and stronger national coordination among Arabic language education institutions. In other words, knowledge production was the starting point rather than the endpoint of educational transformation.

This perspective can be explained more comprehensively through Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory. Unlike Haas, who focuses on how expert communities produce and

disseminate knowledge, Giddens explains how social change emerges through the reciprocal relationship between agency and structure. From this perspective, structures are not fixed entities that unilaterally determine human action; rather, they are continuously created, reproduced, and transformed through the social practices of actors (Achmad, 2021; Chatterjee et al., 2019; Dayrobi et al., 2024). The findings of this study indicate that IMLA performed this role through the collective actions of academics who continuously generated scholarly activities, including academic forums, curriculum development, academic standard setting, and the establishment of associations and consortia. These activities ultimately influenced not only the practices of individual lecturers and study programs but also the development of new patterns of coordination and governance in Arabic language education within Indonesian higher education.

Accordingly, the transformation of Arabic language education identified in this study demonstrates the dynamic relationship between agency and structure. Initially, Arabic language scholars acted as a collective agency by creating a space for discussion and knowledge production through IMLA. The knowledge produced then gained legitimacy through scholarly forums and was gradually adopted in the form of curricula, academic standards, institutional networks, and study program management practices. As these practices were continuously adopted and reproduced by higher education institutions, they became part of a new structure of Arabic language education. These findings indicate that educational transformation did not result from top-down decisions but from a process of institutionalization driven by sustained interaction among academic actors.

It is at this point that the two theories complement each other. Epistemic Community Theory explains how knowledge and academic consensus are developed, whereas Structuration Theory explains how that knowledge is subsequently reproduced into new educational structures. In other words, the epistemic community provides the intellectual resources that underpin change, while structuration explains how these resources are translated into institutional practices that are continuously reproduced within the higher education system. Therefore, rather than representing two separate perspectives, the two theories form an integrated interpretive framework for explaining the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesia.

This interpretation also explains why IMLA has evolved beyond the functions of a professional association, as reflected in the title of this study. A professional association generally serves as a body for member representation, professional development, and the organization of professional activities. However, the findings show that IMLA has moved beyond these functions. It not only connects Arabic language lecturers but also builds academic consensus, produces scholarly references, facilitates inter-institutional coordination, and promotes changes in curriculum, academic governance, and the institutional development of Arabic language education. Thus, what distinguishes IMLA from a conventional professional association is not merely the range of activities it organizes but its ability to connect knowledge production with structural change in education.

This interpretation also extends previous studies, which have largely focused on the pedagogical aspects of Arabic language education. Earlier research has emphasized the importance of curriculum innovation, pedagogical development, digital technologies, and communicative competence in addressing the challenges of contemporary Arabic language education (Albantani & Madkur, 2019; Gunawan & Hidayatullah, 2024; Wekke, 2015). While these studies have made important contributions to understanding change at the instructional level, the present study shows that such pedagogical developments do not occur in isolation. Rather, innovations in curriculum, teaching, and academic development are enabled by an institutional ecosystem that supports knowledge exchange, academic coordination, and inter-university collaboration. In this way, the study complements previous research by identifying professional associations as an important actor in the transformation of Arabic language education.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that IMLA's influence on the transformation of Arabic language education was not uniform across higher education institutions in Indonesia. Its effectiveness in influencing curriculum, academic development, and institutional consolidation depended on institutional contexts, including university policies, human resource capacity, leadership support, and regional dynamics. Accordingly, the transformation of Arabic language education should not be understood as the result of a professional association acting in isolation but rather as the outcome of the interaction between IMLA and broader changes in the higher education system.

Based on the overall findings, this study proposes an integrative conceptual model explaining how IMLA evolved beyond the functions of a professional association. By integrating the empirical findings with Epistemic Community Theory and Structuration Theory, the model illustrates that the transformation of Arabic language education occurred through a gradual process that began with the formation of an epistemic community, continued through the consolidation of a professional association, and culminated in the emergence of collective academic agency that progressively reproduced new institutional structures within Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Integrative Model of IMLA's Role in the Transformation of Arabic Language Education

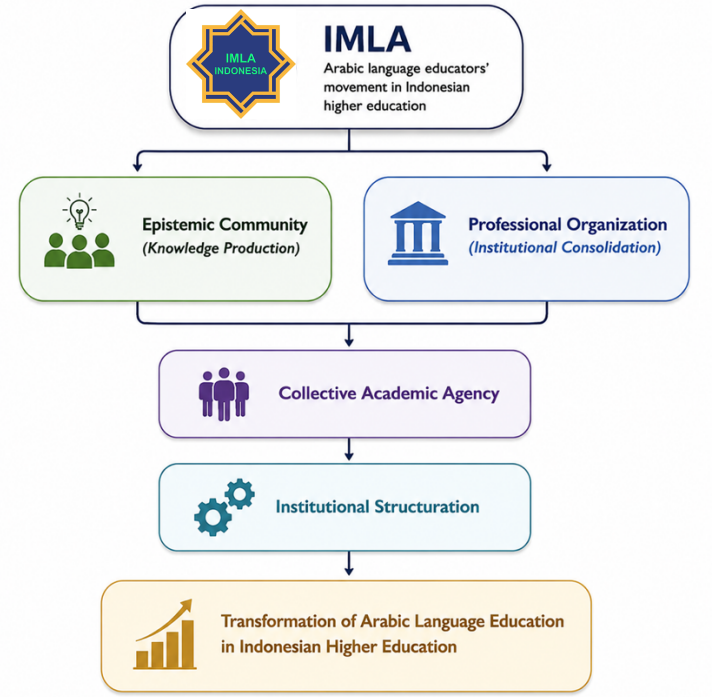


Figure 5 summarizes the empirical findings and theoretical interpretation of this study. The model suggests that the transformation of Arabic language education followed a gradual process, beginning with the formation of an epistemic community, followed by the consolidation of a professional association, and culminating in the emergence of collective academic agency that progressively reproduced new educational structures. The model highlights IMLA's transformative role in connecting knowledge production with structural change in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that IMLA Indonesia has evolved beyond the functions of a professional association and has contributed to the transformation of Arabic language education in Indonesian higher education through three interconnected roles: as an epistemic community, a professional association and platform for academic consolidation, and a driver of educational transformation. The findings indicate that educational transformation extends beyond the pedagogical level to encompass knowledge production, institutional consolidation, and structural change collectively shaped by the academic community.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Arabic language education research by showing that Epistemic Community Theory and Structuration Theory complement each other in explaining educational transformation. What distinguishes IMLA from conventional professional associations is its ability to connect knowledge production, academic consolidation, and institutional change within a single transformative process. Therefore, the implications of this study extend beyond the development of Arabic language education in Indonesia and offer insights for other professional associations seeking to act as agents of educational transformation.

This study is limited to the perspectives of IMLA's national executive board, and therefore does not fully capture regional dynamics or institutional implementation across higher education institutions. Future research could expand the scope to the regional level or adopt a mixed-methods approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between professional associations and educational transformation.

REFERENCES

Achmad, Z. A. (2021). *Anthony Giddens: Antara Teori Strukturasi dan Ideologi Jalan Ketiga*.

Aditia, E. A., Or, S., Setiawan, I., Hartono, M., Pranoto, A. S., Rahma, T. A., Tamimi, A. I., Qaulany, N. T., Setiawan, H., & Mustabshirin, M. A. (2026). *Transformasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Indonesia Jejak KBM, KTSP, Kurikulum 2013 Hingga Kurikulum Merdeka dan Deep Learning*. Penerbit: Kramantara JS.

Aidah Novianti Putri, & Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan. (2022). Application of artificial intelligence as a medium of learning Arabic the Society 5.0 Era. *Tarling : Journal of Language Education*, *7*(1 SE-Articles), 69–80. https://doi.org/10.24090/tarling.v7i1.8501

Albantani, A. M., & Madkur, A. (2019). Teaching Arabic in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities. *ASEAN Journal of Community Engagement*, *3*(2), 3.

Albantani, A. M., Rozak, A., Sahrir, M. S., & Khoiriyyah, B. (2026). The Influence of Generative AI on Student Engagement and Academic Outcomes in Arabic Language Learning. *Asalibuna*, *9*(02 SE-Articles), 147–163. https://doi.org/10.30762/asalibuna.v9i02.6810

Arani, S., Muslimah, H., Zikriati, Z., & Zulhendra, D. (2024). Inovasi blended learning dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab: Tantangan dan peluang di era society 5.0. *لساننا (LISANUNA): Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa Arab Dan Pembelajarannya*, *14*(2), 267–286.

Azhar, M., Yolanda, D., Frananda, A., Saputra, M. R., Mulyani, R., & Nurdinah, S. (2025). Revolusi pembelajaran bahasa Arab di era digital: Analisis peran artificial intelligence dalam pengembangan kompetensi berbahasa. *Al-Ma'Lumat: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, *3*(2), 58–81.

Chatterjee, I., Kunwar, J., & Den Hond, F. (2019). Anthony Giddens and structuration theory. In *Management, Organizations and Contemporary Social Theory* (pp. 60–79). https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279591-4

Davis, W. S., Borden, R. S., Frantz, K., & Yue, W. (2025). Language teacher associations as a nexus of research and practice: A collaborative autoethnography. *System*, *132*, 103710. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103710

Dayrobi, M., Usqo, H. U., & Lubis, F. (2024). The Relationship Between Structuration Theory and Agency According to Giddens and Walters. *PKM-P*, *8*(2), 348–353.

Dedduang, V., & Kholis, N. (2025). A Comparative Study of Arabic Language Education in Indonesia, Thailand, China, and South Korea. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, *8*(7), 133–143.

Edidarmo, T., Alawiyah, N. L., & Rahim, H. (2025). Exploring Arabic Teachers' Motivational Strategies in Teaching Arabic in Indonesia. *Asalibuna*, *9*(01), 179–196.

Elsheikh, A., Coombe, C. A., & Effiong, O. (2018). *The role of language teacher associations in professional development*. Springer.

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, *24*(2), 105–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001

Gunawan, R., & Hidayatullah, M. S. (2024). The Potential of Use Artificial Intelligence in Implementing Character Education in Arabic Language Subjects. *Asalibuna*, *8*(01), 39–51.

Haas, P. M. (2015). *Epistemic communities, constructivism, and international environmental politics*. Routledge.

Ilham, A. (2021). The Need for Arabic Language Teaching Materials Based on Multicultural Education for Indonesian Diaspora Students. *Alsinatuna*, *7*(1), 45–63.

Kustina, K., Shodiq, M. J., Syaifullah, M., & Surohman, I. (2024). The intercultural aspect of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia. *Mantiqu Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language*, *4*(1), 279–293.

Lamb, T. (2012). Language associations and collaborative support: Language teacher associations as empowering spaces for professional networks. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *6*(3), 287–308.

Maul, A. H., & Rowin, I. A. (2026). Developing Digital Learning Tools Based on 21st-century Skills for the Arabic Speaking Skill at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang. *Asalibuna*, *9*(02 SE-Articles), 194–211. https://doi.org/10.30762/asalibuna.v9i02.7007

Muradi, A. (2016). Pengembangan kompetensi guru bahasa Arab melalui IMLA sebagai organisasi profesi. *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies*, *1*(2), 1–10.

Rimmer, W., & Floyd, A. (2020). Teaching associations and professionalism. *ELT Journal*, *74*(2), 126–135. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa003

Rosyidi, A. W., Machmudah, U., & Suhadak, S. (2020). *Mewujudkan doktor Pendidikan Bahasa Arab berkualitas melalui "trandisiplinary learning outcome "(pengembangan program studi dan kelembagaan)*.

Roth, C., & Bourgine, P. (2005). Epistemic communities: Description and hierarchic categorization. *Mathematical Population Studies*, *12*(2), 107–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/08898480590931404

Shafira, A. S. R., Rosyidin, M., & Hanura, M. (2022). Komunitas Epistemik dalam Kebijakan Luar Negeri: Peran INACA dalam ASEAN Open Sky. *Journal of International Relations Diponegoro*, *8*(3), 377–384.

Slaughter, Y., Bonar, G., & Keary, A. (2022). The Role of Membership Viewpoints in Shaping Language Teacher Associations: A Q Methodology Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, *56*(1), 281–307. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3068

Wekke, I. S. (2015). Arabic teaching and learning: A model from Indonesian muslim minority. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *191*, 286–290.