

Learner Motivation in Arabic Language Acquisition: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Studies

Muhammad Ghazali¹, Muhammad Mirzan², Fitri Hidayati³, Gusti⁴

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

⁴ Universiti Utara Malaysia

Email Konfirmasi: muhammadghazali_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti motivasi pembelajar dalam pemerolehan bahasa Arab melalui tinjauan literatur komprehensif dari studi teoritis dan empiris yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 dan 2025. Motivasi secara luas diakui sebagai faktor kunci yang memengaruhi keterlibatan, ketekunan, dan prestasi pembelajar dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Studi ini menggunakan analisis tematik untuk menyintesis temuan dari artikel-artikel terpilih yang ditinjau oleh rekan sejawat, dengan fokus pada dimensi motivasi, pengaruh sosial-budaya, praktik pedagogis, dan integrasi teknologi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa motivasi dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab bersifat multidimensional, meliputi orientasi intrinsik, ekstrinsik, integratif, dan instrumental. Faktor agama dan budaya ditemukan memainkan peran dominan, terutama dalam konteks Muslim, sementara inovasi pedagogis dan pembelajaran yang didukung teknologi secara signifikan berkontribusi pada peningkatan keterlibatan pembelajar. Namun, tantangan seperti kompleksitas bahasa, keterbatasan sumber daya pengajaran, dan kesenjangan teknologi terus memengaruhi tingkat motivasi. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya mengadopsi pendekatan yang peka terhadap konteks dan berpusat pada siswa untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan memperbaiki hasil belajar. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi kesenjangan penelitian, khususnya kebutuhan akan studi longitudinal dan studi yang spesifik konteks. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini memberikan wawasan tentang strategi efektif untuk menumbuhkan motivasi dalam pendidikan bahasa Arab.

Kata kunci: Motivasi Pembelajar, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Tinjauan Pustaka.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition through a comprehensive literature review of theoretical and empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. Motivation is widely recognized as a key factor influencing learners' engagement, persistence, and achievement in second language learning. The study employs a thematic analysis to synthesize findings from selected peer-reviewed articles, focusing on motivational dimensions, socio-cultural influences, pedagogical practices, and technological integration. The results indicate that motivation in Arabic language learning is multidimensional, encompassing intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental orientations. Religious and cultural factors play a dominant role, particularly in Muslim contexts, while pedagogical innovation and technology-enhanced learning significantly contribute to increased learner engagement. However, challenges such as language complexity, limited instructional resources, and technological disparities continue to affect motivation levels. The study highlights the importance of adopting context-sensitive and student-centered approaches to enhance motivation and improve learning outcomes. It also identifies research gaps, particularly the need for longitudinal and context-specific studies. Overall, this study provides insights into effective strategies for fostering motivation in Arabic language education.

Keywords: Learner Motivation, Arabic Language Learning, Literature Review

Introduction

Arabic language learning has gained increasing global significance due to its multifaceted roles as the language of Islamic literature, a medium of scholarly discourse, and a tool for diplomatic and economic communication among Muslim-majority countries and the international community (Burhanuddin, 2024; Shidiq et al., 2023). Historically, Arabic has functioned as the primary language for classical Islamic sciences, including jurisprudence, hadith, and theology, thereby making its mastery essential for accessing foundational religious texts and intellectual traditions. In contemporary contexts, global dynamics such as migration, international education policies, and the expansion of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) have further emphasized the need for strong Arabic literacy among both Muslim communities and non-native learners worldwide (Alhazmi, 2024; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022). Consequently, Arabic is no longer confined to liturgical use but has evolved into a language of global academic, cultural, and economic relevance.

In the Indonesian context, Arabic occupies a strategic position in shaping religious identity, cultural practices, and intellectual engagement within Islamic education systems. It serves as a key medium for understanding religious texts, performing rituals, and fostering connections with the broader Muslim world (Shidiq et al., 2023; Yoyo et al., 2023). Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and formal educational institutions play a central role in promoting Arabic language learning, contributing to both national cultural identity and international communication. However, the coexistence of Arabic with other dominant languages, particularly English, introduces complex language policy challenges. The implementation of EMI in Islamic educational institutions, for instance, presents both opportunities for global competitiveness and risks related to the marginalization of Arabic as a religious and cultural language (Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Widayani et al., 2024). These dynamics highlight the need for balanced and context-sensitive language policies in Indonesia.

Despite its importance, Arabic language learning faces persistent challenges, particularly in terms of learner motivation and instructional practices. Numerous studies indicate that low motivation among learners is often associated with traditional, teacher-centered methodologies, limited interaction, and lack of engaging learning media (Barimah et al., 2024; Yasri & Suyadi, 2022). In addition, the transition to online learning environments during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed issues related to student readiness, technological infrastructure, and learning engagement (Nugroho et al., 2020). The lack of contextualized materials and culturally relevant content also contributes to learners' disengagement, reducing their interest and persistence in learning Arabic (Nurdiana, Kumalasari, et al., 2023). These challenges suggest that improving motivation is a critical factor in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction.

Motivation has been widely recognized as a key determinant in second language acquisition (SLA), including Arabic language learning. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as integrative and instrumental orientations, significantly influence learners' commitment, persistence, and achievement (Razem & Pandor, 2023; Syawaluddin et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2020). In many Muslim contexts, religious motivation emerges as a dominant driving force, particularly in relation to understanding the Qur'an and Islamic texts (Handriawan, 2020; Selim & Abdalla, 2022). However, practical considerations such as academic advancement and career opportunities also play an important role, reflecting the multidimensional nature of motivation in Arabic language acquisition. Furthermore, pedagogical innovations such as gamification, ARCS-based instructional design, and mobile-assisted learning have been shown to enhance learner motivation and engagement (Albantani et al., 2022; Almelhes, 2024; Fauzi & Anindiati, 2021).

Given the complexity and variability of motivational factors across different contexts, there is a need for a comprehensive synthesis of both theoretical and empirical studies on learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition. Although numerous studies have examined motivation in specific settings, there remains a lack of integrative reviews that systematically analyze trends, theoretical frameworks, and research gaps in this field. Therefore, this study aims to review and synthesize existing literature on learner motivation in Arabic language learning, with a particular focus on identifying key factors, dominant theoretical perspectives, and emerging pedagogical implications. By doing so, this article seeks to contribute to the development of more effective and contextually relevant approaches to Arabic language education in both global and Indonesian contexts.

Research Methods

This study employs a literature review approach to systematically analyze and synthesize existing research on learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition. The method focuses on identifying, evaluating, and integrating relevant theoretical and empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. Data were collected from reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and open-access repositories. The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed articles that specifically address motivation in second language acquisition, particularly within Arabic language learning contexts. Studies that lacked clear methodological rigor or were not directly related to the research focus were excluded to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

The analysis was conducted using a thematic content analysis, allowing the researcher to categorize findings into key themes such as types of motivation, socio-cultural influences, pedagogical strategies, and technological integration. Each selected study was carefully reviewed to extract relevant data, compare findings, and identify

patterns as well as research gaps. This method enables a comprehensive understanding of how motivation functions across different contexts and contributes to Arabic language acquisition. By synthesizing diverse sources, the study aims to provide a holistic and evidence-based perspective that can inform future research and pedagogical practices.

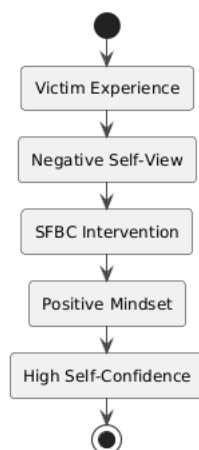


Figure 1. Literature Review Process

The diagram illustrates the systematic process of conducting a literature review, beginning with the identification of the research topic and continuing through database searching, screening, and selection of relevant studies. It highlights the importance of applying inclusion criteria to ensure the quality of selected articles. The process then proceeds to data extraction and thematic analysis, which are essential for identifying patterns and synthesizing findings. This structured approach ensures that the study maintains methodological rigor and produces reliable, comprehensive insights into learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition.

Results and Discussion

Results

Patterns of Learner Motivation in Arabic Language Acquisition

Learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition demonstrates complex and multidimensional patterns influenced by both internal and external factors. Studies indicate that intrinsic motivation, such as personal interest and religious commitment, plays a dominant role in sustaining long-term engagement in Arabic learning (Jama, 2022; Selim & Abdalla, 2022). At the same time, extrinsic motivation, including academic requirements and career opportunities, significantly contributes to learners' persistence, especially in formal educational settings (Razem & Pandor, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2020). These findings suggest that motivation is not singular but rather a dynamic interplay of various psychological and contextual elements.

Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that integrative motivation, defined as the desire to connect with the Arabic-speaking community or Islamic culture, is particularly strong among Muslim learners. However, instrumental motivation, such as achieving academic success or improving employability, is equally significant in non-religious or globalized contexts (Syawaluddin et al., 2023). This duality highlights the need for

educational strategies that address both dimensions simultaneously. In addition, motivational patterns vary across educational levels, with higher education students demonstrating more goal-oriented motivation compared to younger learners.

Another important finding is the variability of motivation across geographical and institutional contexts. For instance, learners in pesantren environments often exhibit higher intrinsic and religious motivation due to immersive cultural exposure (Handriawan, 2020). In contrast, students in secular or international institutions tend to show stronger instrumental motivation linked to global opportunities. This diversity reinforces the importance of context-sensitive approaches in Arabic language instruction.

Table 1. Types of Motivation in Arabic Language Learning

Type of Motivation	Characteristics	Key References
Intrinsic	Interest, enjoyment, religious purpose	Jama (2022) and Selim & Abdalla (2022)
Extrinsic	Grades, career goals	Yusuf et al (2020)
Integrative	Cultural/religious connection	Syawaluddin et al (2023)
Instrumental	Practical benefits	Razem & Pandor (2023)

The table illustrates that motivation in Arabic learning is multidimensional, combining internal drives (intrinsic) and external pressures (extrinsic), as well as cultural (integrative) and pragmatic (instrumental) orientations. This confirms that effective learning strategies must address multiple motivational dimensions simultaneously.

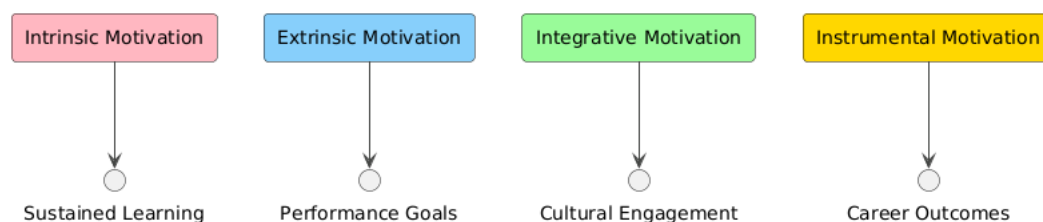


Figure 2. Motivation Dimensions

The diagram visualizes four major types of motivation and their outcomes. It highlights how each motivational dimension contributes differently to learning processes, reinforcing the importance of integrating all aspects in Arabic language pedagogy.

Socio-Cultural and Religious Determinants of Motivation

Socio-cultural and religious factors are consistently identified as dominant influences on learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition. In many Muslim-majority contexts, the desire to understand religious texts such as the Qur'an serves as a primary motivational driver (Handriawan, 2020; Selim & Abdalla, 2022). This form of motivation is deeply rooted in identity formation and spiritual development, making it more sustainable compared to purely instrumental goals. Consequently, Arabic learning is often perceived not only as an academic pursuit but also as a religious obligation.

In addition, cultural identity plays a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes toward Arabic. Students who perceive Arabic as part of their cultural heritage tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and commitment (Syawaluddin et al., 2023). This is particularly evident in Indonesian *pesantren*, where Arabic is integrated into daily

communication and religious practices. Such immersive environments create a strong motivational foundation that enhances language acquisition.

However, socio-cultural influences are not always uniform. In multicultural or globalized contexts, learners may experience conflicting motivations due to competing linguistic priorities, such as the dominance of English (Widayani et al., 2024). This tension can affect learners' attitudes and reduce their motivation to prioritize Arabic learning. Therefore, balancing cultural identity with global competencies becomes a critical challenge in Arabic language education.

Table 2. Socio-Cultural Influences on Motivation

Factor	Impact on Motivation	Context
Religion	Strong intrinsic motivation	Muslim learners
Culture	Identity reinforcement	<i>Pesantren</i>
Globalization	Mixed influence	Urban education

The table shows how different socio-cultural factors influence motivation differently. While religion and culture strengthen motivation, globalization introduces both opportunities and challenges.

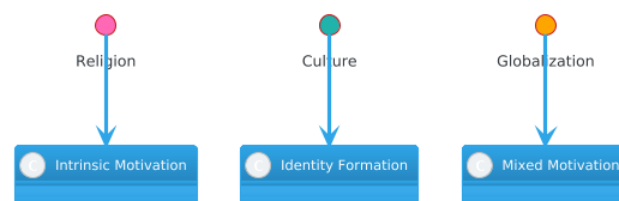


Figure 3. Socio-Cultural Influence

This diagram highlights the relationship between socio-cultural factors and types of motivation. It emphasizes how religion and culture strongly support intrinsic motivation, while globalization creates complex motivational dynamics.

Pedagogical Practices and Their Impact on Motivation

Pedagogical practices significantly influence learner motivation in Arabic language learning. Traditional methods, such as rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, are often associated with low student engagement and decreased motivation (Yasri & Suyadi, 2022). These approaches fail to address learners' needs for interaction, creativity, and meaningful communication. As a result, many students perceive Arabic as a difficult and uninteresting subject.

In contrast, student-centered approaches have been shown to enhance motivation by promoting active participation and collaboration. Methods such as project-based learning, communicative language teaching, and contextual learning enable students to engage more deeply with the language (Farida, 2023). These approaches not only improve linguistic competence but also increase learners' confidence and autonomy.

Moreover, the role of teachers is critical in shaping motivation. Studies indicate that supportive teacher behavior, constructive feedback, and engaging instructional strategies significantly enhance student motivation (Aziz et al., 2022). Teachers who create a positive learning environment can foster a sense of belonging and encourage students to persist in their learning journey.

Table 3. Teaching Methods and Motivation

Method	Impact	Reference
Traditional	Low motivation	Yasri & Suyadi (2022)
Student-centered	High motivation	Farida (2023)
Interactive	Engagement	Aziz et al. (2022)

The table shows that modern, interactive teaching methods are more effective in enhancing motivation compared to traditional approaches.

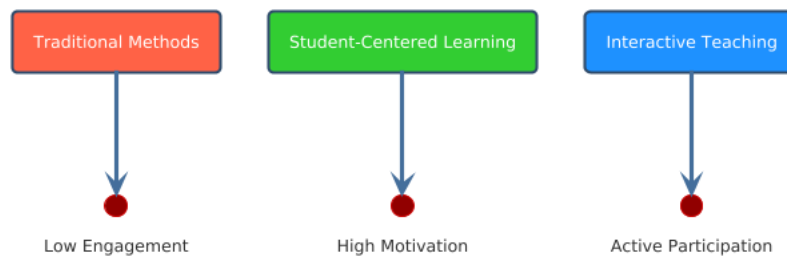


Figure 4. Teaching Impact

This diagram compares different teaching methods and their impact on motivation, clearly showing the superiority of interactive and student-centered approaches.

Technology Integration and Motivational Enhancement

The integration of technology has emerged as a significant factor in enhancing motivation in Arabic language learning. Digital tools such as mobile applications, online platforms, and multimedia resources provide interactive and flexible learning environments (Albantani et al., 2022). These tools enable learners to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, increasing their autonomy and engagement.

Gamification is another effective strategy for boosting motivation. By incorporating game elements such as rewards, challenges, and competition, gamification enhances learners' interest and enjoyment (Almelhes, 2024). This approach has been shown to improve vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. Additionally, the ARCS model has been widely used to design motivational learning experiences that capture attention and sustain engagement (Fauzi & Anindiati, 2021).

However, technological integration also presents challenges, particularly in terms of infrastructure and digital literacy. In many contexts, limited access to technology can hinder the effectiveness of digital learning strategies (Nugroho et al., 2020). Therefore, successful implementation requires adequate resources and teacher training.

Table 4. Technology and Motivation

Technology	Benefit	Challenge
E-learning	Flexibility	Access issues
Gamification	Engagement	Design complexity
Mobile learning	Accessibility	Digital literacy

The table highlights both the benefits and challenges of technology integration in Arabic learning.



Figure 5. Technology Role

This diagram illustrates how different technologies contribute to motivation and learning outcomes.

Challenges and Barriers to Motivation

Despite advancements in teaching and technology, several challenges continue to hinder motivation in Arabic language learning. One major issue is the perceived difficulty of the language, particularly its grammar and script, which can discourage learners (Barimah et al., 2024). This perception often leads to anxiety and reduced confidence.

Another challenge is the lack of relevant and engaging learning materials. Many textbooks fail to connect with learners' real-life experiences, making learning less meaningful (Nurdiana et al., 2023). Additionally, the transition to online learning has introduced new barriers, including limited interaction and technical issues (Nugroho et al., 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines pedagogical innovation, technological support, and cultural relevance. Without such efforts, motivation will remain a significant obstacle in Arabic language education.

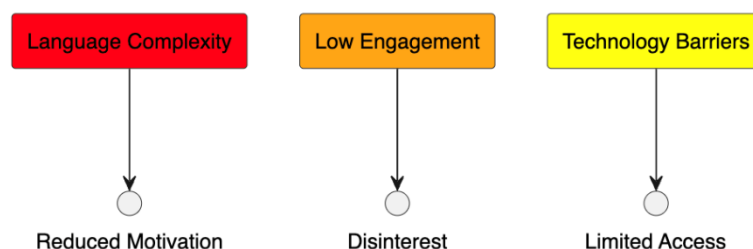


Figure 6. Challenges

The diagram shows key barriers that negatively impact learner motivation, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition is a multidimensional construct shaped by intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental orientations. This result is consistent with previous studies which emphasize that motivation plays a central role in second language acquisition by influencing learners' persistence and achievement (Jiao et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2020; Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Yang & Wang, 2022). In particular, the dominance of intrinsic and religious motivation identified in this study aligns with findings by Hajar (2025), Jenuri et al (2025), and Rushami Zien et al (2024), who argue that spiritual goals significantly sustain long-

term engagement in Arabic learning. However, some studies suggest that relying solely on intrinsic or religious motivation may not be sufficient to ensure consistent achievement, as external support systems and structured learning environments are equally important (Horwitz, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2020). This indicates that motivation should be understood as a dynamic interaction between internal drives and external conditions.

Furthermore, the role of socio-cultural and religious contexts as major determinants of motivation strongly supports earlier research highlighting the importance of identity and community in language learning. The present findings are in line with Handriawan (2020) and Syawaluddin et al (2023), who emphasize that learners in Islamic environments, such as pesantren, exhibit higher motivation due to immersive exposure and cultural reinforcement. Nevertheless, contrasting evidence from Widayani et al (2024) suggests that globalization and the increasing dominance of English may weaken learners' attachment to Arabic, particularly in urban or international educational settings. This tension illustrates the complexity of balancing local cultural identity with global linguistic demands, suggesting that motivation is context-dependent and influenced by broader socio-political dynamics.

In terms of pedagogical practices, this study highlights the significant impact of teaching methods on learner motivation, particularly the superiority of student-centered and interactive approaches over traditional methods. These findings are consistent with Alfiyanto et al (2021) and Maryance et al (2022), who report that teacher-centered instruction often leads to disengagement and low motivation. Similarly, Agustina et al (2023) and Jagat et al (2022) demonstrate that the use of visual and interactive media can significantly enhance student engagement. However, some studies argue that traditional methods still have value in certain contexts, particularly for mastering complex grammatical structures in Arabic (Nurdiana et al., 2023). This suggests that an integrated pedagogical approach, combining traditional and modern methods, may be more effective in addressing diverse learner needs.

The integration of technology as a motivational tool also emerges as a significant finding in this study. This aligns with research by Albantani et al (2022) and Almelhes (2024), which demonstrate that digital tools, gamification, and mobile-assisted learning can enhance learner engagement and autonomy. The application of the ARCS model in instructional design further supports the importance of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction in sustaining motivation (Fauzi & Anindiati, 2021). However, this study also acknowledges challenges related to technological access and digital literacy, supporting findings by Nugroho et al (2020) that technological disparities can hinder effective implementation. Therefore, while technology offers significant potential, its success depends on adequate infrastructure and teacher readiness.

Finally, the study identifies several persistent challenges that affect learner motivation, including the perceived difficulty of Arabic and the lack of engaging

instructional materials. These findings are supported by Barimah et al (2024), who highlight the complexity of Arabic as a major barrier to learning. At the same time, the lack of contextualized and culturally relevant materials, as noted by Nurdiana et al (2023), further reduces learners' interest and engagement. Nevertheless, innovative strategies such as gamification, contextual learning, and culturally responsive teaching have been shown to address these challenges effectively (Almelhes, 2024; Naziha & Fitriani, 2023). This suggests that improving motivation requires a holistic approach that integrates pedagogical innovation, cultural relevance, and technological support to create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

Conclusion

This study concludes that learner motivation in Arabic language acquisition is a complex and multidimensional construct influenced by intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental factors. The findings highlight that religious and intrinsic motivations play a significant role, particularly in Muslim contexts, where Arabic is closely with spiritual and cultural identity. At the same time, instrumental motivations related to academic achievement and career opportunities remain important, especially in globalized educational environments. In addition, socio-cultural contexts, pedagogical practices, and technological integration significantly shape learners' motivational dynamics. These results emphasize that motivation is not static but continuously evolves depending on learners' environments, goals, and learning experiences.

Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of adopting a holistic and context-sensitive approach to enhancing motivation in Arabic language learning. Effective strategies should integrate student-centered pedagogies, culturally relevant materials, and technology-enhanced learning environments to address diverse learner needs. The study also identifies persistent challenges, including the perceived difficulty of Arabic and limited access to engaging instructional resources, which must be addressed through innovative and inclusive educational practices. Therefore, future research should focus on longitudinal and context-specific studies to better understand motivational changes over time and to develop sustainable models for Arabic language education in both local and global contexts.

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