

Islamic Education Quality Enhancement through Arabic-Medium International Class at Mahad Al Birr

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Abstract: *This study investigates the implementation of an international class program that utilizes Arabic as the medium of instruction to enhance students' mastery of Islamic education at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. Using a qualitative approach through interviews and observations, the research finds that the Arabic-medium international class positively contributes to students' understanding of both classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship. The program encourages students to directly engage with primary Islamic texts and to develop more advanced analytical skills. Nonetheless, several challenges persist, such as initial language barriers and the necessity for intensive linguistic support. The study recommends integrating comprehensive language support programs and contextual Islamic content to maximize the academic benefits of the international class. These findings offer valuable insights for Islamic higher education institutions aiming to strengthen their students' linguistic and religious competencies.*

Keywords: *Mahad albirr, international class, Arabic medium, Islamic education*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implikasi pelaksanaan program kelas internasional terhadap peningkatan kualitas pendidikan Islam mahasiswa di Mahad Al Birr Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, di mana penggunaan bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa pengantar menjadi salah satu strateginya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melibatkan 15 partisipan yang terdiri dari mahasiswa, dosen, dan pengelola program. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelas internasional secara signifikan memperkuat kemampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami literatur Islam klasik dan kontemporer, serta meningkatkan keterampilan berpikir kritis dan analitis. Tantangan utama yang ditemukan adalah kendala bahasa pada tahap awal dan perlunya dukungan intensif dalam penguasaan bahasa Arab. Studi ini merekomendasikan penguatan program pendampingan bahasa dan penyesuaian materi

keislaman. Temuan ini menjadi acuan bagi perguruan tinggi Islam dalam mengembangkan model pembelajaran internasional yang efektif serta meningkatkan kompetensi bahasa dan pemahaman agama mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: mahad albirr, kelas internasional, bahasa Arab, pendidikan Islam

Introduction

The phenomenon of globalization compels universities around the world, including those in Indonesia, to continuously innovate to produce graduates who can compete at both national and international levels. For Islamic higher education institutions, this challenge is not only about adapting to global trends but also about maintaining the core values of Islamic education and preparing students to address contemporary issues facing Muslim societies. These institutions must ensure that their graduates possess a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge while also developing critical thinking skills and global perspectives. One strategy to achieve this is through the development of international class programs, which foster an academic environment that encourages students to engage with diverse viewpoints, integrate Islamic principles with modern knowledge, and participate in global academic discourse. International classes are generally characterized by curriculum reinforcement aligned with global standards, enabling students to gain international-level academic experience while preserving the unique values of Islamic education.¹

In Islamic higher education institutions, the development of international class programs is increasingly linked to efforts to enhance the quality and relevance of Islamic education in a global context. Rather than focusing solely on foreign language proficiency, these programs emphasize the integration of Islamic values, critical thinking, and exposure to diverse intellectual traditions.² Mastery of Arabic remains important, as most primary references and classical Islamic literatures are available in this language. Accordingly, institutions such as Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, have adopted Arabic as a medium of instruction to facilitate direct

¹ Afzal Sayed Munna, "International Students' Learning Experience on Global Curriculum," *Journal of Education* 202, no. 3 (2020): 243–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022057420972063>.

² Nasibah Azme, "Integrating Islamic Spirituality in Teacher Training: Analysis of Faculty Development Programs and Their Impact on Teaching Practices," *Journal of Islamic Social Economics and Development* 9, no. 67 (2024): 81–90, <https://doi.org/10.55573/jised.09678>.

access to authoritative Islamic sources while nurturing analytical skills and fostering deeper engagement with contemporary issues in Islamic studies.

Although the implementation of Arabic-medium international classes offers many advantages, students still face challenges such as limited language proficiency, the process of adapting to an academic culture that requires independence, and limited access to digital learning resources in Arabic.³ Moreover, the success of this program is greatly influenced by the quality of the instructors, communicative teaching methods, and the availability of ongoing language support programs. Therefore, innovation in learning and the use of technology become crucial aspects to overcome these challenges.⁴

Based on various previous studies, the implementation of international classes using Arabic as the medium of instruction has been shown to promote students' academic progress and create a dynamic learning atmosphere, although there remains a need for support programs to further enhance Arabic language skills.⁵ Innovative teaching methods and the utilization of digital media have been proven to improve Arabic language proficiency, although challenges related to limited resources and the adaptation process are still encountered.⁶ In addition, evaluations of intensive Arabic language programs have shown significant improvement in students' abilities, although the effectiveness and the need for further development of teaching

³ Yumin Li, "Adapting to the Digital Learning Environment: The Impact on Student Learning and Outcomes," *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media* 37, no. 1 (2024): 65–71, <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/37/20240504>.

⁴ Andri Sungkowo et al., "Promote Innovation in Madrasah Through the Use of Educational Technology," *Ijgie (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)* 5, no. 1 (2024): 71–81, <https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v5i1.2815>.

⁵ Luluk Humairo Pimada et al., "Teaching Arabic Language (Extra Lessons) to The International Class at The State Islamic University of Indonesia | Ta'lim Al-Lughah Al-'Arabiyyah (Al-Duruus Al-Idhoofiyah) Li-Fashl Al-Dauliy Al-Khash Fii Al-Jaami'ah Al-Islaamiyyah Al-Hukuumiyyah Bi-Indonisiyya," *Al-Ta'rib : Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Palangka Raya*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v11i1.6167>.

⁶ Isna Mufidah, Nurul Ainiy, and Siti Khoiriyah, "Implementation of Arabic Language Learning Media in Islamic Universities: Benefits and Problems," *Journal of Arabic Language Learning and Teaching (JALLT)*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.23971/jallt.v3i1.254>.

methods still require greater attention.⁷ The competency of instructors and the diversity of students' backgrounds are also noted as major challenges in managing international classes within Islamic higher education institutions.⁸

However, Despite existing developments, further research is still needed, especially regarding the design of effective support strategies for students with different backgrounds and academic needs, as well as the integration of technology to facilitate adaptation and improve learning outcomes in international class settings. Previous studies have shown that tailored support programs and the use of digital learning platforms can significantly enhance student engagement and performance in higher education contexts.⁹ Therefore, this study seeks to critically analyze the implementation of the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, focusing on how it contributes to improving students' academic quality. The findings are expected to provide a useful reference for the development of international class models in other Islamic higher education institutions.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Arabic-medium international class and its impact on the academic quality of students at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. Data were collected from January to March 2025 within the Mahad Al Birr environment using several techniques. The researchers selected 15 informants purposively, consisting of 10 active students enrolled in the international class and 5 teaching lecturers. Data collection methods included in-depth and semi-structured interviews (each lasting 45 to 90 minutes), participatory

⁷ Faliqul Isbah, M Rosyid, and Nilna Uswah Tamama, "Evaluation Implementation of the Arabic Language Intensification Program (PIBA) in Islamic Higher Education," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i2.11129>.

⁸ Ainun Fatihatulida and S Azhar Alam, "The Role Of Arabic Ability To The Understanding In Learning Process At The International Class Program Of Islamic Religion Faculty Muhammadiyah University Of Surakarta Academic Year 2017/ 2018," 2018, <https://consensus.app/papers/the-role-of-arabic-ability-to-the-understanding-in-learning-alam-fatihatulida/78388d6122cc5018a34df05cfadf832a/>.

⁹ Fatma Al-Busaidi, "Arabic in Foreign Language Programmes: Difficulties and Challenges," *Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies* 9, no. 4 (2015): 701-17, <https://doi.org/10.24200/JEPS.VOL9ISS4PP701-717>.

observation of teaching and learning activities, and documentation review of academic materials, assignments, and class records. The interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in participating in or teaching the international class, while observation focused on classroom interaction, use of Arabic, and learning strategies.

The data sought in this study included students' and lecturers' perceptions of the international class program, the learning processes, the specific challenges encountered, and the perceived impacts on students' academic achievements and skills. Documentation helped corroborate findings from interviews and observations, ensuring that the data represented both subjective experiences and objective evidence from academic activities. Data analysis was conducted inductively through stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions systematically. Thematic analysis was applied to identify and organize main themes related to program implementation, encountered obstacles, and the effects on students' academic outcomes. Data validity was strengthened using source triangulation (comparing information from students and lecturers), technique triangulation (combining interviews, observation, and documentation), and member checking through discussions with key informants to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the research findings. This multi-method approach ensured that the study provides a comprehensive and objective description of the dynamics, challenges, and successes in implementing the international class at Mahad Al Birr.

Result and Discussion

Implications for Academic Quality through the Implementation of the Arabic-Medium International Class

The implementation of the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, has demonstrated a significant positive impact on students' academic quality. By immersing students in an environment where Arabic is consistently used in academic activities—such as discussions, academic writing, and scientific presentations—the program enhances their critical thinking, analytical skills, and ability to engage directly with primary Islamic sources. This approach not only improves linguistic competence but also strengthens students' academic performance and readiness to compete in the era of globalization.¹⁰ The

¹⁰ Lihua Pei, "Exploring Mental Health Stigma Among Chinese-English Bilinguals: Dual-Process Model of Emotional Competence, Flipped Learning Readiness, and Academic Performance in Mainland Chinese Universities," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.1001796>.

program's alignment with the demands of modern Islamic education ensures that graduates possess both strong foreign language proficiency and a deep understanding of classical and contemporary Islamic literatures. As supported by Second Language Acquisition theory (Krashen), continuous exposure to meaningful input in a supportive setting enables optimal language development, which in turn directly contributes to students' academic achievement and intellectual growth".¹¹

The implementation of the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, has delivered substantial improvements in students' academic quality. This program creates an immersive academic environment where students are routinely engaged in Arabic for class discussions, academic writing, and scientific presentations. As a result, students demonstrate enhanced critical thinking, deeper comprehension of Islamic knowledge, and improved ability to access and analyze both classical and contemporary Islamic literatures. The program serves as a strategic response to the demands of globalized Islamic education, preparing graduates with not only strong Arabic proficiency but also with broader academic competencies essential for international competitiveness. Drawing on Second Language Acquisition theory by Stephen D. Krashen, this model leverages continuous, meaningful exposure to Arabic in a supportive academic context, thereby reinforcing students' intellectual growth and scholarly engagement.¹² The success of this approach reflects the comprehensive adoption of Arabic as the central medium of instruction, contributing directly to higher academic achievement and professional readiness among students.

The use of Arabic as the primary language of instruction in the international class has a direct and significant impact on students' academic quality. By engaging in activities such as group discussions, seminars, and scientific presentations entirely in Arabic, students are trained to think systematically, construct arguments, and solve problems based on primary Islamic sources.¹³ This learning environment not only improves students'

¹¹ Nesreen Alahmadi, "The Role of Input in Second Language Acquisition: An Overview of Four Theories," *Bulletin of Advanced English Studies* 3 (December 19, 2019): 70-78, <https://doi.org/10.31559/baes2019.3.2.1>.

¹² Jamilah Maflah Alharbi, "Acquired Versus Learned Systems in Second Language Acquisition: A Review of Studies Based on Krashen's Hypothesis," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 14, no. 1 (2024): 177-85, <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1401.21>.

¹³ Marwan Elsamman, "A Program Based on the Pragmatic Theory to Develop Grammatical Structure Comprehension Skills for Foreign

confidence and academic communication skills but also fosters the development of critical and analytical thinking. Empirical evidence, such as that presented by Glushko, supports that active and sustained exposure to the target language within higher education settings contributes substantially to both language competence and overall academic achievement. Furthermore, learning through practical, real-life academic activities—rather than relying solely on theory—further enhances students’ abilities to engage deeply and meaningfully with Islamic scholarship.

The academic quality of students in the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr is strongly influenced by the expertise and teaching approach of the lecturers, who are selected for their high proficiency in Arabic and their mastery of Islamic education methodology. These lecturers serve as academic role models, fostering a culture of active learning that prioritizes student participation in discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-solving. This participative model, supported by Prince’s research, significantly enhances students’ retention of material, development of higher-order thinking skills, and capacity for constructive social interaction, which are essential components of academic excellence.¹⁴ The institution’s investment in supporting facilities—such as an extensive Arabic literature library, discussion spaces, and access to international databases—enables students to deepen their engagement with Islamic scholarship through research-based and exploratory learning.

The Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr has proven to be a transformative force in enhancing the quality of Islamic education by creating an immersive learning environment that integrates language mastery with academic rigor. Through the consistent use of Arabic as the primary language of instruction across all subjects, students acquire not only linguistic competence but also a deepened engagement with Islamic epistemology. This immersion equips learners with the ability to think, articulate, and analyze in Arabic—bridging the gap between language learning and content mastery. Consequently, students are better positioned to access, interpret, and internalize the intellectual legacy of Islamic civilization, which remains richly embedded in Arabic sources. This foundational shift in the medium of instruction repositions Arabic not as a subject to be studied,

Learners of Arabic,” *Education* 3-13 134, no. 4 (2014): 529–36, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1034988>.

¹⁴ Fitrianti Wulandari Wulan, Novita Widyaningrum, and Umi Matsturoh, “Fungsi Keluarga Sebagai Pembentukan Karakter Islami Anak Di Tk Allam Desa Pelemwatu Kecamatan Menganti Kabupaten Gresik,” *Kiddo: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, July 13, 2024, 625–38, <https://doi.org/10.19105/kiddo.v1i1.12456>.

but as the very vehicle through which Islamic knowledge is transmitted, questioned, and expanded.

Furthermore, the international class cultivates essential academic competencies that transcend mere linguistic fluency. It significantly improves students' ability to comprehend, critique, and synthesize both classical and contemporary Islamic texts. These texts—ranging from Quranic exegesis and Hadith compilations to modern Islamic thought—are explored through rigorous academic discourse, training students to engage critically and contextually. This capacity to grapple with Islamic literatures in their original language enriches students' interpretative depth and analytical precision, thereby addressing one of the enduring challenges in Islamic studies: the ability to navigate primary sources authentically and independently. Through this approach, the international class contributes meaningfully to the cultivation of scholars who are not only linguistically proficient but also intellectually grounded in the Islamic tradition.

The academic benefits are further amplified by preparatory matriculation programs that address students' varying levels of Arabic proficiency before they enter the international class. By focusing on core skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and utilizing communicative and research-oriented training, the program ensures that students are linguistically prepared to meet academic standards. Regular assessments—including exams, language proficiency tests, and participatory observation—enable continuous evaluation and refinement of teaching methods, materials, and learning strategies. This ongoing evaluative process embodies the principle of continuous academic improvement, ensuring that student learning outcomes remain aligned with curriculum objectives. Such dynamic feedback mechanisms are critical in maintaining instructional quality and adjusting pedagogical practices to suit students' evolving needs and contextual realities.

One of the most notable academic implications is the creation of a collaborative and supportive environment where students actively participate in intellectual debates, group projects, and scientific forums. This environment fosters critical thinking, strengthens students' ability to present and defend arguments in Arabic, and encourages appreciation for diverse perspectives. As a result, students develop the mindset and adaptability needed for intellectual growth, open-mindedness, and lifelong learning—qualities that are central to academic quality in Islamic higher education. The fostering of such dispositions not only benefits the individual student but also contributes to a broader culture of inquiry and dialogue that is essential for sustaining intellectual vitality within Islamic academic institutions.

Another defining feature of the international class is its capacity to nurture students' self-confidence and global academic readiness. Students are encouraged to participate in academic exchanges, inter-university seminars, and international symposia, where they apply their Arabic proficiency and intellectual training in diverse and often competitive settings. These experiences serve to validate their skills on a wider platform while reinforcing their identity as competent Muslim scholars capable of navigating both traditional Islamic scholarship and modern academic discourses. The interplay between local rootedness and global engagement positions students to become active contributors to the internationalization of Islamic education—an outcome that directly aligns with the goals of quality enhancement in higher education.

Despite these successes, the program is not without its challenges. Variations in students' initial Arabic proficiency, limited access to digital learning resources, and the ongoing need for adaptive teaching strategies present persistent obstacles. However, the institution's strategic responses—including Arabic literacy training, targeted support systems, and continuous professional development for lecturers—demonstrate a proactive commitment to overcoming these barriers. These initiatives ensure that the program remains inclusive, equitable, and academically robust, thereby strengthening its institutional sustainability. Importantly, these responses reflect a broader pedagogical philosophy that views challenges not as deterrents but as opportunities for reflection, innovation, and growth within the educational process.¹⁵

The Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr exemplifies a strategic and sustainable model for Islamic education quality enhancement. By integrating Arabic language immersion with critical academic practices, the program fosters a vibrant academic ecosystem that is inclusive, competitive, and globally responsive. The research affirms that such a model—when supported by targeted institutional policies, innovative pedagogies, and international partnerships—can serve as a valuable reference for other Islamic universities. Practical recommendations include sustained curriculum innovation, expansion of global academic networks, and the reinforcement of Arabic preparatory programs. By adopting these strategies, Islamic higher education institutions will be better equipped to cultivate

¹⁵ Asif Mahbub Karim, Tariqul Islam Chowdhury, and Ajwaad Mahbub Karim, "Study on Comparative Adaption of Educational Tools in the Institute of Higher Education: Post Pandemic Perspective," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 14, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbs/v14-i1/20461>.

graduates who embody both scholarly excellence and cultural authenticity in an increasingly interconnected world.

The integration of digital technology is also pivotal to advancing students' academic quality. Tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), online forums, and e-learning platforms extend learning beyond the classroom, enabling students to access resources, participate in global discussions, and submit assignments digitally. This digitalization not only improves academic efficiency and digital literacy but also prepares students for the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.¹⁶ Additionally, exposure to guest lecturers from abroad enriches students' academic horizons, expands their scholarly networks, and provides direct experience in engaging with international perspectives on Islamic thought.

In summary, the implementation of the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr has yielded substantial academic benefits, transforming students' mindsets, competencies, and scholarly character. Students are not only proficient in Arabic but also exhibit robust scientific values, work ethics, and intellectual integrity. Their active participation in scholarly activities, such as engaging with primary Islamic literature and presenting in academic forums, nurtures independence and collaborative learning. Ultimately, this innovation has produced graduates who are adaptive, globally competitive, and capable of integrating Islamic insights with contemporary academic demands—setting a benchmark for academic quality in Islamic higher education and serving as an inspirational model for other institutions.¹⁷

The Influence of the International Class on Students' Academic Quality

The implementation of the international class at Mahad Al Birr has brought significant improvements in students' academic quality, extending far beyond linguistic abilities. Students enrolled in this program exhibit marked progress in critical and reflective thinking, particularly in their engagement with both classical and contemporary Islamic literatures. Consistent with Krashen's second language acquisition theory, meaningful and sustained interaction in Arabic fosters not only language mastery but also deeper academic competence and Islamic literacy, as supported by relevant

¹⁶ Moch Aspihan, Moses Glorino Rumambo Pandin, and Kusnanto Kusnanto, "Rethinking Digital Literacy Competencies of Indonesian Nursing Student in IR 4.0: Philosophical Context ≪/Em>," 2021, <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202104.0165.v1>.

¹⁷ Junaidah Junaidah, "Adapting of Quality Education; Towards Excellent and Competitive Higher Education," *Al-Tanzim Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2022): 207–17, <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i1.3232>.

research findings. Active engagement through reading, discussion, and analytical examination of Islamic texts empowers students to move beyond rote memorization, equipping them to critically evaluate and contribute to evolving discourses in the field.

A concrete academic outcome of this program is students' improved ability to produce scientific papers in Arabic. This achievement results from regular assignments—such as research reports, essays, and articles—combined with active learning strategies that develop systematic thinking, argumentation, and the ability to cite authoritative sources. This is in line with the active learning framework of Bonwell & Eison, where writing, discussion, and reading collectively strengthen analytical, synthetic, and conceptual understanding. Consequently, the tradition of Islamic scholarship on campus is reinforced, and students learn to construct well-founded arguments and communicate ideas clearly and logically.

The program also cultivates significant advances in oral academic communication. Through regular practice in scientific presentations and discussions held in Arabic, students become more confident and rhetorically skilled, preparing them for participation in international academic forums. Such experiences help students develop the ability to critically evaluate academic material, respond spontaneously, and base arguments on solid evidence. From a critical thinking perspective, the discussion-based approach of the international class sharpens students' capacity to analyze Islamic issues, articulate problems, and offer innovative solutions. Rooted in Vygotsky's perspective on social interaction and cognitive growth, this method promotes open-mindedness, adaptability, and a reflective mindset through collaborative exchanges of ideas.

Moreover, the program prioritizes teamwork and collaboration, allowing students to hone leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills. Group assignments, seminars, and academic conferences offer opportunities to expand professional networks and gain a global perspective on Islamic studies. Research supports that collaborative learning not only enhances problem-solving abilities but also strengthens essential soft skills. The motivating academic environment of the international class further boosts students' learning motivation. According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation flourishes when students experience autonomy, competence, and social belonging—factors reinforced by high academic expectations and ongoing institutional support.¹⁸ Many students who initially

¹⁸ Phoenix T M Horrocks and Nathan C Hall, "Social Support and Motivation in STEM Degree Students: Gender Differences in Relations With Burnout and Academic Success," *Interdisciplinary Education and*

struggled with Arabic demonstrate notable academic growth, underscoring the program's effectiveness.

Students also benefit from greater access to global Islamic literature and digital resources, which broadens their academic horizons and improves their information literacy—skills crucial for academic competitiveness in the global era. Regular evaluation shows that international class students achieve higher academic grades, are more productive in academic writing, and actively engage in classroom activities, supporting the notion that such programs foster an excellent academic culture. Ultimately, the international class at Mahad Al Birr has succeeded in creating a dynamic, inclusive academic environment that supports lifelong learning and prepares Muslim intellectuals to meet contemporary challenges. As a best practice model, it demonstrates how international class programs can drive both academic quality and character development within Islamic higher education.

Challenges, Opportunities, and Implications of the International Class

This study aims to analyze the challenges, opportunities, and academic implications arising from the implementation of the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr, Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, with particular focus on how this program affects the academic quality and preparedness of students in a global educational context.

One of the main challenges identified is the variation in Arabic language proficiency among students. Those with insufficient foundational skills often struggle to keep pace in an environment where all learning activities are conducted in Arabic. This finding supports Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory, which highlights the importance of meaningful, gradual, and supportive language exposure. Without sufficient exposure, students experience difficulties in comprehension and participation, ultimately impacting their academic performance.

Additional challenges include limited access to current and relevant Arabic learning resources. Both digital and physical references are sometimes inadequate, requiring students to exert more effort to develop their academic reading and analytical skills. To address these gaps, the institution provides targeted literacy training, expands digital resource access, and offers academic guidance to encourage independent learning.¹⁹ Lecturers, in turn,

Psychology 4, no. 1 (2024),
<https://doi.org/10.31532/interdiscipducpsychol.4.1.001>.

¹⁹ Stephen Walker and Alexandra Judith Frances Patel, "More Than Skills: What Can Approaches to Digital Literacies Learn From Academic Literacies?," *Journal of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* 1, no. 1 (2018): 93–100, <https://doi.org/10.29311/jlthe.v1i1.856>.

are required to adapt their teaching to the diverse backgrounds and competencies of their students. To overcome these obstacles, Mahad Al Birr has implemented a range of support strategies, such as intensive Arabic matriculation and academic literacy programs. These initiatives aim to build students' foundational skills across reading, writing, and speaking, ensuring they are better equipped for success in the international class. This is closely aligned with Second Language Acquisition Theory and underscores the value of meaningful, context-rich interaction for academic development. Furthermore, lecturers employ innovative, active learning methods – such as group discussions, case studies, and scientific presentations – to foster student engagement and academic growth.

Empirical evidence shows that active learning significantly enhances conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and confidence in using Arabic for academic purposes. Beyond overcoming challenges, the international class also creates important opportunities for students, such as the possibility to join student exchange programs, pursue further studies abroad, and access job opportunities in international institutions that value Arabic proficiency. Strong language skills also reinforce the standing of Mahad Al Birr graduates within global academic networks, prompting the institution to strengthen international collaborations, research initiatives, and alumni engagement. The success of the international class extends beyond language acquisition; it contributes meaningfully to the cultivation of academic character, development of critical thinking, and preparedness for global challenges. The research demonstrates that Mahad Al Birr's approach, grounded in Second Language Acquisition Theory and active learning, has established a collaborative, innovative, and inclusive academic ecosystem. Students learn to apply theoretical concepts in real-life situations, developing the adaptability and leadership needed to become agents of change.

However, sustaining the program's benefits depends on ongoing institutional support, resource availability, and commitment from both lecturers and students. Regular evaluation and continuous adaptation of teaching strategies are essential to ensuring the achievement of intended academic outcomes.²⁰ This study highlights that strengthening Arabic matriculation, enhancing digital literacy, and providing active learning training for lecturers are key recommendations for the sustainable development of international classes.

²⁰ Masyitah Md Nujid and Duratul Ain Tholibon, "Evaluation on Academic Performance of Students in Teaching and Learning in Engineering Course," *Asean Journal of Engineering Education* 6, no. 1 (2022): 33–39, <https://doi.org/10.11113/ajee2022.6n1.78>.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr delivers both immediate and long-term academic benefits. The program not only improves students' academic quality in the short term but also produces adaptive, innovative, and globally minded graduates – demonstrating its strategic value in shaping a new generation of Muslim intellectuals equipped for international competition.

Conclusion

This study highlights how the Arabic-medium international class at Mahad Al Birr significantly enhances the quality of Islamic education. Key improvements include:

- Mastery of Arabic as a medium of instruction, enabling students to engage deeply with Islamic knowledge through improved oral and written skills.
- Advanced critical engagement with Islamic texts, both classical and contemporary, empowering students to analyze and contextualize Islamic teachings.
- Growth in intellectual capacity, marked by increased confidence, critical thinking, and academic communication essential for participation in scholarly Islamic discourse.
- Formation of a dynamic academic culture, fostering inclusivity, collaboration, and healthy competition among students.
- Global academic readiness, shown through high motivation, adaptability, and participation in international academic initiatives.

This research affirms that Arabic-medium international classes serve as a strategic model for building an Arabic-rooted, globally responsive Islamic education system. While challenges remain—such as varied Arabic proficiency and digital limitations—Mahad Al Birr's proactive interventions, including matriculation, literacy support, and teacher development, are pivotal to sustained success.

Practical implications underscore the need to:

- Continuously update curriculum and pedagogy with digital tools and Arabic-based soft skills,
- Expand international collaborations to access broader academic opportunities,
- Reinforce foundational Arabic programs to bridge student entry gaps.

Ultimately, this model provides a scalable approach for Islamic universities aiming to strengthen academic excellence through Arabic-based education.

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