

Wayang-based muhadatsah learning design in inclusive arabic language education from an islamic educational psychology perspective

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive Arabic language learning requires instructional designs that accommodate students' diverse cognitive, emotional, and learning characteristics, particularly those with special educational needs. Muhadatsah, as the core skill in Arabic speaking competence, often poses challenges for inclusive learners due to anxiety, low memory retention, limited exposure, and reduced verbal confidence. This study aims to design and analyze the implementation of the Wayang Puppet Theater as an innovative Muhadatsah learning medium rooted in Islamic educational psychology, emphasizing holistic development, positive emotion, and spiritual-humanistic learning values. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through classroom observations, reflective evaluations, and interviews with teachers and students in inclusive secondary schools. The learning design was developed based on William Francis Mackey's theory of language learning and the principles of Islamic educational psychology related to motivation, emotional regulation, and affective learning behavior. The results indicate that Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning enhances students' verbal participation, reduces speaking anxiety, encourages storytelling interaction, and supports cooperative communication. Students with special needs exhibited greater focus, emotional stability, and expressive responses compared to conventional textbook-based instruction. Teachers also noted that Wayang media simplifies lesson delivery, strengthens contextual understanding, and maintains classroom engagement without cognitive overload. This study concludes that the Wayang-based Muhadatsah design is pedagogically effective and culturally relevant for inclusive Arabic language education. Theoretically, it integrates Islamic educational psychology with culturally embedded media, while practically offering a feasible model for adaptive and inclusive learning environments. Future research is recommended to expand this model into digital-based applications to improve accessibility, sustainability, and broader implementation across Islamic educational institutions.

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Introduction

The teaching of Arabic as a foreign language in inclusive education settings demands innovative approaches that integrate linguistic, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Arabic language learning is not merely about linguistic competence but also embodies moral, cultural, and religious values that align with the principles of Islamic education (Hakim, 2023). Among the four essential language skills, *muhadatsah* (speaking) plays a central role in enabling learners to express thoughts, emotions, and spiritual insights in Arabic (Hasan, Sutaman, & Machmudah, 2024). However, inclusive classrooms often present diverse student profiles, including those with special educational needs, varied cognitive abilities, and emotional differences, which complicate traditional teaching strategies (Uyuni & Adnan, 2024). Therefore, teachers must design adaptive, engaging, and culturally relevant methods that ensure all students actively participate in Arabic communication practice.

In inclusive education, one of the central challenges is creating a learning environment that embraces diversity and nurtures participation without marginalizing learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. Conventional Arabic learning models often emphasize grammar and memorization, leading to limited interaction and minimal speaking opportunities (Hasan, Aziz, Nurharini, et al., 2024). Students with ADHD, hearing impairments, or slow learning conditions struggle to keep up with abstract explanations or rote methods. Consequently, they experience higher levels of anxiety and lower self-efficacy in oral expression (Agil, 2023). Addressing these barriers requires a pedagogical design that merges creative media with psychologically supportive teaching frameworks grounded in Islamic values of *rahmah*, empathy, and equality.

Wayang Puppet Theater, as an element of Indonesian cultural heritage, offers a multimodal medium that stimulates imagination, emotion, and dialogue. In Arabic language learning, wayang can serve as an interactive tool for storytelling, dramatization, and contextual conversation (Hasan, Sutaman, & Machmudah, 2024). The use of such cultural media aligns with the integrative philosophy of Islamic education, which views learning as a process of holistic development encompassing cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects (Abukhaled et al., 2023). From a psychological perspective, this method engages multiple sensory modalities that support inclusive participation and reduce communicative anxiety, especially in students with low confidence in public speaking.

Islamic educational psychology provides a theoretical foundation for understanding learners' motivation, emotional regulation, and social interaction in learning processes (Setiawati & Achadi, 2024). It highlights that effective education must nurture both intellectual and moral dimensions through spiritual awareness and emotional balance (Fahrudi, 2022). In the case of Arabic learning, this approach ensures that instruction is not only cognitively stimulating but also emotionally comforting and spiritually meaningful (Toto Edidarmo et al., 2025). Integrating the principles of Islamic educational psychology into language learning design allows teachers to foster empathy, patience, and self-confidence among students with diverse abilities.

From a linguistic and pedagogical standpoint, William Francis Mackey's theory of the four aspects of language learning meaning, form, distribution, and situation provides a strong framework for developing effective language teaching strategies (Mackey, 1986). The theory emphasizes that language competence is built upon the interrelation of structure, context, and function (Mackey, 1972). When applied to Arabic speaking activities, these aspects guide teachers to balance linguistic accuracy with communicative function and socio-cultural relevance, which is especially valuable for students in inclusive classrooms who learn best through contextualized and experiential methods.

Previous studies have explored creative strategies for Arabic speaking skill development, including storytelling, role-play, and game-based learning (Diniyah & Kholis, 2024). These studies have proven effective in increasing motivation and participation but are mostly limited to regular education contexts. Few have examined how such media can be adapted for inclusive environments where students exhibit a wide range of cognitive and emotional differences (Hasibuan et al., 2023). Moreover, the psychological dimension of learning particularly when integrated with Islamic educational values has rarely been addressed in relation to media-based Arabic instruction. This study thus fills that gap by combining cultural creativity with Islamic psychological insight to foster a more inclusive and compassionate learning atmosphere.

The integration of Wayang Puppet Theater into Arabic language learning represents a fusion between local cultural identity and pedagogical innovation. This combination resonates with Islamic education's aim to harmonize faith, knowledge, and culture as interconnected domains of human development (Asri et al., 2023). The visual and narrative nature of wayang supports comprehension, while its dramatization aspect enhances expression and emotional engagement. For students with special needs, such as ADHD or speech difficulties, this method provides a safe and enjoyable way to practice communication, reducing performance pressure and anxiety during Muhadatsah sessions (Hasan, Sutaman, & Machmudah, 2024).

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design to explore how Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning functions in inclusive secondary schools. Data were gathered through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and reflective learning design evaluations. The study analyzes how the medium facilitates communication, emotional regulation, and social interaction while promoting Arabic speaking fluency. The qualitative approach enables a deep understanding of how students with different needs respond to creative and spiritually grounded pedagogical interventions.

The findings are expected to show that integrating Wayang Puppet Theater in Muhadatsah learning significantly enhances students' verbal participation, focus, and confidence. Teachers benefit from simplified concept delivery and improved classroom engagement. These outcomes align with the principles of Islamic educational psychology, which prioritize *ta'dib* (ethical cultivation), *tarbiyah* (nurturing), and *ta'lim* (knowledge transmission) as interconnected dimensions of education. Thus, the study contributes not only to the practical improvement of Arabic teaching strategies but also to the theoretical enrichment of Islamic educational psychology through contextual application.

The novelty of this research lies in its threefold integration: first, it introduces Wayang Puppet Theater as a culturally grounded and psychologically adaptive media for Arabic Muhadatsah learning; second, it positions Islamic educational psychology as a guiding framework for inclusive pedagogy, highlighting the emotional and spiritual dimensions of language acquisition; and third, it operationalizes William Francis Mackey's language learning theory within the inclusive Islamic educational context. This synthesis creates a new interdisciplinary model that bridges linguistic theory, cultural heritage, and Islamic educational psychology, offering a unique and holistic approach rarely explored in previous studies.

In conclusion, this study presents an innovative perspective on inclusive Arabic language instruction by embedding cultural media within an Islamic psychological framework. The Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning design not only facilitates linguistic development but also fosters emotional resilience, cultural appreciation, and spiritual awareness among students. This holistic model embodies the essence of Islamic education comprehensive, inclusive, and humane while contributing a novel pedagogical pathway for future Arabic language teaching practices in inclusive learning environments.

Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning design in inclusive Arabic language education (Miles & Michael, 1992). The study was conducted at MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya, one of the pioneering inclusive Islamic schools that integrates students with special educational needs into mainstream learning environments. The selection of this site was based on its inclusive policy and diverse student population, which includes learners with ADHD, hearing impairments, speech difficulties, slow learning characteristics, and emotional challenges (Hasan, Naseha, & Rido'i, 2024). Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021). The researcher observed Arabic learning activities, particularly Muhadatsah sessions using Wayang Puppet Theater, to understand the dynamics of interaction, student engagement, and teacher facilitation. Interviews were conducted with Arabic teachers, inclusive education coordinators, and selected students to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions of the learning process.

The data obtained were analyzed using an interpretative and inductive approach following the stages of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 1992). The analysis focused on identifying patterns of student responses, emotional involvement, and the pedagogical effectiveness of Wayang-based media in enhancing Arabic speaking competence. Triangulation was applied to ensure the validity of findings by comparing observation data with interview narratives and documentation results (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021). The researcher also reflected on the integration of Islamic educational psychology principles, such as motivation, empathy, and affective balance, within the observed classroom practices. Through this method, the study aimed to produce a comprehensive understanding of how Wayang Puppet Theater contributes to inclusive Arabic language learning and to develop a model that aligns with the pedagogical values of Islamic education.

Result

The implementation of Wayang-Based Muhadatsah Learning in the inclusive Arabic classroom of MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya revealed significant pedagogical and psychological transformations. The learning process, designed according to William Francis Mackey's four aspects of language learning conceptual, functional, structural, and situational was adapted to accommodate students with various special needs, including ADHD, speech impairment, hearing impairment, and slow learners. The use of Wayang puppets provided a multisensory learning experience that stimulated both linguistic and emotional engagement. This setting created a psychologically safe environment aligned with the principles of Islamic educational psychology, where emotional balance (*al-tawazun al-nafsi*) and motivation (*al-daf' al-dakhili*) are essential for achieving *takamul al-syakhsiyyah* (personal wholeness) in learning.

Table 1.1: Research Findings on Wayang-Based Muhadatsah Learning at MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya

Aspect Observed	Findings	Interpretation Based on Islamic Educational Psychology
Student Engagement	Students showed increased attention and participation during Muhadatsah sessions using Wayang puppets. They responded actively to character dialogues	Reflects <i>tawjih al-nafs</i> (self-direction) and <i>al-daf' al-dakhili</i> (intrinsic motivation), as students become emotionally and cognitively involved in the learning process.

	and expressed emotions through role play.	
Language Output (Speaking Skills)	Improvement in vocabulary recall, sentence structure, and pronunciation, especially for ADHD and slow learner students.	Demonstrates Mackey's <i>performance aspect</i> students use acquired linguistic knowledge in real communication contexts.
Social Inclusion and Empathy	Interaction between special needs and regular students became more natural and cooperative during performance activities.	Embodies <i>ta'awun</i> (cooperation) and <i>rahmah</i> (empathy), fostering inclusive and emotionally balanced learning.
Teacher's Role and Adaptation	Teachers employed adaptive strategies: slower speech, visual cues, and emotional support during storytelling.	Represents <i>murā'at al-furūq al-fardiyyah</i> (attention to individual differences) and reflects the Islamic pedagogical principle of <i>tarbiyah bil-hikmah</i> (education with wisdom).

The findings presented in Table 1 highlight how the Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning not only improved students' linguistic skills but also strengthened emotional bonds and inclusivity in the classroom. The use of Wayang as a teaching medium bridged the abstract nature of language with visual and narrative symbolism, allowing students with different learning profiles to understand meaning through emotional cues and contextual imagination. This aligns with the *dual coding theory* in educational psychology, where verbal and visual stimuli together enhance memory retention. Moreover, the adaptation of Wayang in an Islamic context reflected cultural appreciation intertwined with spiritual values, ensuring that the learning experience remained both meaningful and ethically grounded.

From a psychological and pedagogical standpoint, the results show that integrating traditional art-based media such as Wayang within Arabic language learning can optimize *affective engagement* and *social interaction* in inclusive classrooms. Teachers reported that students who were previously passive began to participate more actively when dialogues were dramatized using puppets. Such participation indicates the success of contextualized communication as proposed by Mackey, where the act of performing language is a manifestation of internalized competence. Therefore, Wayang-based Muhadatsah not only bridges the linguistic gap for students with special needs but also reinforces the Islamic educational psychology principle that *learning is an act of balance between intellect, emotion, and faith*.

Discussion

Enhancing Student Engagement through Emotional and Visual Stimulation

The implementation of Wayang Puppet Theater in Muhadatsah learning has proven to significantly enhance student engagement, particularly among learners with attention and concentration difficulties such as ADHD and slow learners. The combination of visual and emotional elements in the Wayang performance encouraged students to actively participate and maintain focus throughout the learning sessions. This finding supports the theory of **multisensory learning**, which emphasizes that the integration of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs stimulates cognitive processes more effectively than single-sense learning. In the context of Islamic educational psychology, this aligns with the value of *ihsan* performing learning activities with enjoyment and excellence which transforms learning from a mere task into an act of self-fulfillment and spiritual growth.

Furthermore, the increase in student engagement through Wayang-based activities resonates with Mackey's conceptual and performance aspects of language learning, which highlight the importance of meaningful communicative contexts in developing speaking competence (Hariana, 2021). The puppets served as mediators for linguistic expression, enabling students to internalize vocabulary and structure through real-time interaction. This also reflects **Vygotsky's sociocultural theory**, where learning occurs through socially and emotionally rich environments (Cole & SCRIBNER, 1978). Students were not merely memorizing dialogues but experiencing them as part of a story, making learning more authentic and memorable. The emotional connection built through storytelling also reduced affective barriers such as speaking anxiety, a common challenge for special needs students in inclusive classrooms.

These findings align with previous studies showing that visual narrative media foster engagement and self-expression in language learning (Alita & Bonta, 2021). However, this research contributes novelty by integrating the traditional art of Wayang with Islamic educational psychology principles, a combination that has rarely been explored (Johnstone, 1996). While previous studies focused primarily on digital or visual aids, this study reveals that culturally grounded, emotionally resonant media can achieve similar or greater impacts on motivation and interaction. Thus, Wayang Puppet Theater not only serves as a pedagogical innovation but also as a bridge between local cultural heritage and Islamic pedagogical values, fostering engagement that is emotionally meaningful, spiritually guided, and linguistically empowering.

Language Acquisition through Contextual and Expressive Interaction

The Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning design effectively facilitated natural language acquisition by embedding Arabic vocabulary and expressions into contextualized, story-driven dialogues. Students were encouraged to practice speaking through role-play that simulated authentic social situations such as greeting others, describing time, or discussing daily activities. This method resonates with Mackey's functional and situational aspects of language learning, emphasizing the use of language as a tool for meaningful communication rather than mechanical repetition. By engaging students in expressive interaction, the learning process moved beyond rote memorization and encouraged cognitive processing rooted in context and emotional engagement. In Islamic educational psychology, this process reflects the principle of *ta'lim ma'a al-tathbiq* (learning through practice), which integrates understanding with action, nurturing both intellectual and affective dimensions of learning.

From a psychological perspective, the expressive and interactive nature of Wayang dialogues helped students overcome linguistic hesitation and anxiety. Special needs students, particularly those with ADHD and slow learning characteristics, benefited from repeated exposure to structured yet flexible conversational patterns (Hamzah & Wirawan, 2024). This mirrors Krashen's input hypothesis, where comprehensible and emotionally low-stress input fosters better language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). In this study, the puppetry context acted as a mediating tool that lowered the affective filter, allowing students to use Arabic more spontaneously. Teachers also reported that contextual storytelling enabled students to connect new linguistic forms with previously acquired vocabulary, reinforcing long-term memory and comprehension (Khaliq, 2024). These findings validate that emotional engagement combined with contextual practice enhances both fluency and retention, fulfilling the holistic goals of Islamic education to balance knowledge (*'ilm*), practice (*'amal*), and character (*akhlaq*) (Salma et al., 2021).

Compared with earlier studies that used digital media or flashcards for vocabulary learning (Setyaningrum et al., 2024), this research offers a novel cultural-pedagogical model that integrates traditional art with communicative language pedagogy (Hasan, Nurharini, &

Salma, 2024). The use of Wayang as an expressive and narrative medium allows for a deeper personalization of learning experiences, grounded in local identity and spiritual values. This innovation contributes not only to Arabic language pedagogy but also to the broader discourse on inclusive education by demonstrating that traditional media can be transformed into an effective, psychologically responsive tool for 21st-century classrooms. Ultimately, Wayang-based contextual interaction promotes *living language* Arabic that is felt, spoken, and lived harmonizing linguistic competence with emotional intelligence and faith-based learning principles.

Strengthening Inclusion and Empathy in Classroom Interaction

The integration of Wayang Puppet Theater into Muhadatsah learning created an inclusive learning atmosphere that bridged the social and emotional gaps between students with special needs and their peers. The collaborative nature of puppet performances encouraged teamwork, respect, and empathy, allowing each student to contribute meaningfully regardless of their cognitive or emotional differences. This interaction transformed the classroom into a microcosm of inclusive society where language learning was not limited to linguistic outcomes but also served as a medium for cultivating mutual understanding and acceptance. From the lens of Islamic educational psychology, such dynamics reflect the principles of *rahmah* (compassion) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which emphasize that the purpose of education extends beyond intellectual achievement toward nurturing social harmony and moral virtue.

The findings also suggest that Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning strengthened students' emotional intelligence (Hasan, Aziz, & Nurharini, 2024), a vital component for both effective communication and spiritual maturity. When students engaged in role-play, they learned to express emotions, interpret others' feelings, and respond appropriately within social dialogue key skills aligned with Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence (Aamir, 2023). In the Islamic pedagogical context, this corresponds with *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the self), which integrates emotional regulation and empathy as parts of holistic education (Safarli, 2021). Students who previously showed social withdrawal or anxiety became more open and cooperative when given narrative roles that reflected their own experiences. Thus, Wayang not only functioned as a visual-linguistic aid but also as a transformative emotional space that encouraged humanistic learning grounded in spiritual values (Asri et al., 2023).

This study's findings expand upon prior research that explored cooperative learning in inclusive classrooms (Sumiati & Gumindari, 2022), by demonstrating how cultural narrative media can serve as an equalizing platform for both cognitive and social-emotional inclusion. The novelty lies in the intersection of *Islamic educational psychology* and *culturally rooted pedagogy*, revealing that empathy and inclusion can be effectively nurtured through local art forms when integrated purposefully into language education (Ramadani & Hasan, 2024). In this regard, Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning not only enhances linguistic competence but also contributes to the moral and affective formation of students preparing them to embody *insan kamil* (the complete person) who communicates with empathy, intellect, and faith.

Teacher Adaptation as the Key to Inclusive Pedagogical Success

The success of Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning at MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya was deeply rooted in the teacher's adaptive capacity to manage diverse student needs. Teachers played multidimensional roles as facilitators who guided discussion, as storytellers who enlivened narratives, and as emotional anchors who maintained a positive classroom climate. This adaptability reflects the Islamic educational virtues of *hikmah* (wisdom) and *rifq* (gentleness), emphasizing that effective teaching is not only about transferring knowledge but also about nurturing the learner's emotional and spiritual well-being. The teachers adjusted the pace of instruction, tone of delivery, and interaction style based on students' cognitive

readiness and socio-emotional responses. For example, teachers used visual prompts and slower articulation when communicating with slow learners and provided verbal reinforcement to students with ADHD to sustain focus. Such pedagogical flexibility corresponds to Mackey's balance between input and performance dimensions, where successful language learning depends on the synchronization between instructional delivery and learner capacity.

Moreover, the teachers' spiritual awareness and empathy contributed significantly to building an emotionally safe learning space a core tenet in Islamic educational psychology (Hasan, Nurharini, & Hasan, 2024). By embodying patience (*sabr*) and compassion (*rahmah*), teachers created an environment where special needs students felt respected and valued, which in turn increased their motivation to engage in Arabic communication. This approach is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which posits that learning outcomes are shaped by the quality of relationships within the educational environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this case, the teacher served as a *microsystem* agent who directly influenced the emotional and linguistic growth of each learner (Ady Dharma, 2023). The Wayang medium amplified this role by providing teachers with a creative pedagogical tool to sustain engagement and differentiate instruction (Manalu et al., 2021). The act of storytelling allowed the teacher to connect moral values, linguistic patterns, and affective engagement into one coherent experience, reinforcing the unity of knowledge and ethics that characterizes Islamic education (Cendana et al., 2022).

This study reinforces prior findings that highlight the teacher's adaptive and reflective role as crucial in inclusive language learning (Aziz et al., 2024). However, it introduces a novel integration of teacher adaptability with spiritually informed pedagogy, revealing that professional competence in inclusive education can be enhanced through *spiritual intelligence* and culturally embedded teaching media (Nurharini et al., 2024). The combination of adaptive methodology and Islamic pedagogical ethics not only optimized language learning outcomes but also elevated the classroom to a moral and emotional community. Hence, the teacher's role transcends the technical function of instruction it becomes an act of *tarbiyah*, shaping character, empathy, and linguistic proficiency in harmony.

Conclusion

The study on Wayang-Based Muhadatsah Learning in Inclusive Arabic Language Education at MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya revealed that integrating cultural art forms into language pedagogy significantly enhances both linguistic and emotional learning outcomes. Through the use of Wayang Puppet Theater, students especially those with special needs such as ADHD, speech, and learning difficulties showed remarkable improvement in engagement, verbal participation, and confidence in using Arabic. The contextual and expressive dialogues embedded in Wayang performances enabled natural language acquisition aligned with Mackey's functional and situational aspects of language learning, while also embodying Islamic educational psychology values such as *ihsan*, *rahmah*, and *ta'lim ma'a al-tathbiq*. Teachers' adaptive roles, characterized by *hikmah* (wisdom) and *rifq* (gentleness), were pivotal in facilitating inclusive and emotionally safe classroom interactions, ensuring that every student could learn according to their unique capacities. The findings demonstrate that Wayang-based Muhadatsah learning not only bridges linguistic gaps but also fosters empathy, cooperation, and moral growth, transforming the classroom into a holistic learning community. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of Islamic psychological principles with culturally grounded media, offering a pedagogically feasible and spiritually meaningful model for inclusive Arabic language education.

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