

Language Ideology in Military Arabic Learning: A Case Study of Language Policy at a Military Educational Institution

Mia Nurmala¹, Rinaldi Supriadi², Keysha Shira Zafirah³, Farhan Fuadi⁴,
Iqlima Najmi Amalia Anandiar⁵

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia^{1,2,3,4,5}

nurmalamia7@upi.edu¹, rinaldisupriadi@upi.edu², keyshashzafirah@upi.edu³,
fuadifarhan4@upi.edu⁴, najmianandiar@upi.edu⁵

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Abstract

This study investigates the language ideology that informs policy and practice in military educational institutions, with a particular focus on Arabic instruction for military personnel. It explores how beliefs about Arabic as a strategic foreign language are embedded within institutional policies and pedagogical approaches. Employing a qualitative case study at the Language Education and Training Center under the Indonesia's Ministry of Defense, data were gathered through document analysis, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings indicate that Arabic is ideologically positioned as a language of strategic significance for international defense cooperation, aligning with the national motto *Trigatra Bangun Bahasa*. The Arabic curriculum, guided by the Ministry of Defense Regulation No. 1 of 2024, reflects an instrumental ideology that links language learning with defense objectives and intercultural competence. This study underscores the dynamic interplay between ideology, policy, and pedagogy in shaping linguistic competence in military settings. Hence, it contributes to broader discussions on how institutional language policies articulate forms of strategic nationalism in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: Arabic language, Arabic for military, language ideology.

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Introduction

In the context of global geopolitics, foreign language proficiency is increasingly regarded as a strategic asset. Foreign languages function not only as tools of communication or representation but also as active geopolitical instruments that shape global dynamics.¹ Many countries integrate foreign language education into their defense and diplomatic strategies, particularly for languages considered critical, such as Arabic, Mandarin, and Russian. Language becomes an instrument for framing reality, defining who is perceived as the enemy, identifying vulnerable territories, and determining which values are upheld as nationalism or viewed as threats.² Zein (2020) demonstrates that language policy in Indonesia is closely connected to tensions between national identity, global pressures, ideological interests, and multilingual everyday practices.³

Within this framework, the state established the *Trigatra Bangun Bahasa* principle as a national language strategy, prioritizing Indonesian, preserving regional languages, and promoting foreign language mastery. This *Trigatra* reflects state efforts to strengthen linguistic resilience and sovereignty, known as the efforts that are not only symbolic but also strategic.⁴ In the context of military education, implementing *Trigatra* presents distinct challenges. In this regard, Indonesian functions as a unifying language and a symbol of national identity that all soldiers must master.⁵ Foreign languages, including Arabic, are a strategic necessity for defense diplomacy and international cooperation. Meanwhile, the preservation of regional languages, although not a primary focus within military settings, still reflects soldiers' cultural diversity and reinforces sociocultural approaches in the field.⁶ Thus, language policy in military education must be understood within the broader context of state ideology and evolving global demands.

According to critical sociolinguistic studies, language ideology refers to the beliefs, assumptions, and social representations that reflect the interests of particular groups and underpin language practices in society.⁷ Schieffelin et al. (1998) explain that language ideology shapes power relations, determines language legitimacy, and informs policies that appear linguistically neutral yet carry political

¹ Ingrid A Medby and Pip Thornton, 'More than Words: Geopolitics and Language', *Area* 55, no. 1 (2023): 2–9.

² Júlio Reis Jatobá, 'Geopolitics and Language Planning', 742 (2023): 177–177.

³ Subhan Zein, *Language Policy in Superdiverse Indonesia* (Routledge, 2020).

⁴ Tri Indri Hardini et al., '21st Century Skills-Based Trigatra Bahasa Learning Model', Atlantis Press, 2024, 467–72.

⁵ Carolyn Heward et al., 'A Scoping Review of Military Culture, Military Identity, and Mental Health Outcomes in Military Personnel', *Military Medicine* 189, nos 11–12 (2024): e2382–93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usae276>.

⁶ Mia Nurmala, *سياسة تعليم اللغة العربية للعسكريين في مركزي التربية و التعليم التابعة لهيئة الجيش الوطني: دراسة الحالة*, (Malang), 2025, <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/78338/>.

⁷ Wa Muna, 'Social Competence in Arabic Language Teaching: Insights from Faculty Members in Southeast Sulawesi', *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 2 (2024): 537–58.

implications in social practice.⁸ In a multicultural country like Indonesia, language policies tend to be pragmatic and accommodating, addressing linguistic diversity and social identities.⁹ However, these policies still contain dominant ideologies produced and reproduced by the state, primarily through formal institutions such as schools and the military.¹⁰

Language education in military institutions is not simply a linguistic endeavor but part of the state's ideological strategy for shaping national identity and geopolitical readiness.¹¹ The process of language instruction in military settings can be understood as a manifestation of language ideology, inseparable from broader national geopolitical projects.¹² Language functions as a tool for shaping strategic perceptions, framing conflict zones, and constructing military identity and awareness within the shifting landscape of international relations.¹³ Military education thus plays a strategic role in developing human resources who are not only physically resilient but also ideologically and intellectually prepared.¹⁴ In the Indonesian military education system, these values are instilled not only through physical training and defense strategies but also through habitual language use that reflects military ethos and state ideological orientations.¹⁵ Therefore, language is taught not merely as linguistic knowledge but as a symbol of power and a tool for ideological formation.¹⁶

Foreign languages, in particular, play a crucial role in supporting various military tasks such as international cooperation, peacekeeping missions, intelligence work, and the operation of primary weapons systems originating from

⁸ Bambi B Schieffelin et al., *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, vol. 16 (Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹ Ron Darvin and Bonny Norton, 'Multilingual Education, Language Policy, and Social Justice', *Language Teaching Research* 25, no. 4 (2021): 448–60.

¹⁰ Yalan Wang, 'Bernard Spolsky: Rethinking Language Policy', *Language Policy* 21, no. 4 (2022): 621–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-022-09633-4>.

¹¹ M Ayeomoni, 'Language and Political Ideology in the Nigerian Military Coup Speeches: A Case Study of General Aguiyi Ironsi's, General Yakubu Gowon's and General Murtala Muhammed's', *Lumina* 22, no. 2 (2012): 1–30.

¹² Huseyin Uysal and Pramod K Sah, 'Language Ideologies and Language Teaching in the Global World: An Introduction to the Special Issue', *International Journal of Bilingualism* 28, no. 4 (2024): 611–17.

¹³ Sudartomo Macaryus et al., *The Power of Language Ideologies in Advertisements: Critical Reflections*, 58 (2021); Tsung-Lun Alan Wan, 'Islands, Geopolitics and Language Ideologies: Sociolinguistic Differentiation between Taiwanese and Kinmenese Hokkien', *Language & Communication* 83 (2022): 36–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2022.01.001>.

¹⁴ Abdusalomov Firuz Abdukholikovich, 'Revisiting Discourse in Linguistic Theory: Insights into Military Communication', *International Journal Of Literature And Languages* 5, no. 04 (2025): 71–74.

¹⁵ Mia Nurmala et al., 'The Fostering Religious Devotion in Arabic Military Students through Language Proficiency Development', *Al-Fusha: Arabic Language Education Journal* 6, no. 1 (2024): 10–20.

¹⁶ Medby and Thornton, 'More than Words: Geopolitics and Language'.

other countries.¹⁷ The ability to understand a foreign language enables military personnel to read technical documents, participate in training with foreign militaries, and build diplomatic relations across borders more effectively.¹⁸ Furthermore, Machdalena et al. (2021) state that language functions as an operational tool and as a symbol of troops' intellectual and ideological readiness in navigating global geopolitical dynamics. For example, foreign language training is provided for pilots, co-pilots, and technicians to help them operate foreign-made Mi-17 helicopters, whose manuals and control panels are entirely in a foreign language. This training has been shown to facilitate soldiers' understanding of the helicopter's manual and instrumentation.

The urgency of Arabic language proficiency among military personnel is increasingly evident. Arabic holds a strategic position in international relations and global security.¹⁹ It functions not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for diplomacy, security cooperation, and interaction during humanitarian and peacekeeping missions in the Middle East. Razak (2015) argues that Arabic proficiency is essential for conducting peacekeeping missions, defense cooperation, and operations in Arabic-speaking regions.²⁰ When military personnel operate in cross-cultural and cross-national contexts, the ability to understand the local environment and communicate effectively becomes a key component of strategic readiness. Therefore, military institutions must design and implement Arabic language programs that are contextual, practical, and aligned with military functions and international roles. In Indonesia, Arabic language education for military purposes has been conducted for more than two decades under a structured language management system.²¹ This training is organized by the Indonesian Army Military Education and Training Center, which serves as a national hub for army language training.²² Grounded in the view that Arabic can

¹⁷ Susi Machdalena et al., 'Pelatihan Bahasa Rusia Bagi Anggota Pusat Penerbangan TNI AD Skadron 31 Penyerbu Di Pusat Pendidikan Militer Cimahi', *BERNAS: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2021): 333–40.

¹⁸ Allon J Uhlmann, 'Military Intelligence and the Securitization of Arabic Proficiency in Israel: The Limits of Influence and the Curse of Unintended Consequences', *Intelligence and National Security* 37, no. 4 (2022): 541–55.

¹⁹ Mia Nurmala and Rinaldi Supriadi, 'Arabic Learning for Military Purposes in Indonesia', 2022, 315–21.

²⁰ Najjah Salwa Abd Razak et al., 'Planning an Arabic Language Syllabus for Military Religious Corps (KAGAT) Personnel Deployed in Arabic Speaking Countries', *The Journal of Defence and Security* 5, no. 2 (2015): 197–197.

²¹ Abd Razak et al., 'Planning an Arabic Language Syllabus Ffor Military Religious Corps (KAGAT) Personnel Deployed in Arabic Speaking Countries'; Ali Kovari et al., 'The Challenges of Oral Interpretation from Persian to Arabic (a Case Study of Military Discourse)', *Translation Researches in the Arabic Language and Literature* 9, no. 21 (2019): 73–94.

²² Sudartomo Macaryus et al., *The Power of Language Ideologies in Advertisements: Critical Reflections*, 58 (2021).

support military duties, the program is tailored to meet soldiers' practical needs in the field.²³

However, the position of Arabic in Indonesian society is not entirely ideologically neutral. It is often associated exclusively with Islam due to its close connection with the Qur'an, religious practices,²⁴ and Muslim identity.²⁵ This association frequently confines Arabic within a religious framework rather than positioning it as a strategic language for diplomacy or defense.²⁶ Such a view potentially shapes new perspectives on national language policy, especially within formal institutions such as the military, which require pragmatic and strategic approaches free from identity-based politicization.²⁷

This tension underscores the need for a more inclusive and adaptive language policy that aligns with Indonesia's military geopolitics and global engagement. Adopting a critical perspective, this study examines language policy in military educational institutions, a field rarely explored in Indonesian language studies, particularly regarding Arabic instruction. By focusing on the ideological tension between Arabic's strategic and religious dimensions, it provides an original contribution to understanding how Arabic functions as a strategic, rather than solely religious, language in military education, thereby filling a notable gap in sociolinguistic research. Accordingly, the study addresses two main questions: (1) How does language ideology shape the status and role of Arabic in Indonesian military educational institutions? and (2) How are beliefs and attitudes toward Arabic reflected in the policies and practices of Arabic language learning?

The research was conducted at the Language Education and Training Center under the auspices of Ministry of Defense using a qualitative case study design to examine the ideology and implementation of Arabic instruction. The program involved personnel from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Informants were selected through purposive sampling and included student representatives, instructors, and key officials responsible for Arabic education and curriculum planning. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using Yin's (2018) four-stage case study procedure:

²³ Mia Nurmala, 'Manajemen Perencanaan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Berbasis Kurikulum Militer Di Pusdik Pengmilum Kodiklat TNI AD', *FASHOHAH: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 2022, <http://riset.unisma.ac.id/index.php/fashoha>.

²⁴ Noza Aflisia and Partomuan Harahap, "Perbandingan Pengajaran Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Arab Dan Bahasa Inggris Di Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Curup," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 1, no. 2 (December 29, 2017): 153, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v1i2.323>.

²⁵ Zein, *Language Policy in Superdiverse Indonesia*.

²⁶ Elma Blom et al., 'A Longitudinal Study of Turkish-Dutch Children's Language Mixing in Single-Language Settings: Language Status, Language Proficiency, Cognitive Control and Developmental Language Disorder', *Cognitive Development* 71 (2024): 101481.

²⁷ Ahmad Rifa'i and Maziyyatul Muslimah, 'Unlocking Potential: Rethinking MBKM Curriculum Reformation with Constrained Resources in Arabic Education Study Program', *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 1 May (2024): 25–54.

organizing data, categorizing themes, developing propositions, and validating findings through triangulation and peer debriefing.

Following Yin's (2018) analytical framework, the data analysis proceeded through four steps: (1) organizing the collected information into a structured repository, (2) categorizing data based on consistent indicators, (3) identifying emerging themes in relation to theoretical propositions, and (4) refining these propositions through deeper analysis, triangulation, and peer debriefing.²⁸ The selection of informants ensured representation from policy-makers, instructors, and students directly involved in the Arabic language program, whose professional backgrounds ranged from linguistic education to operational military service.

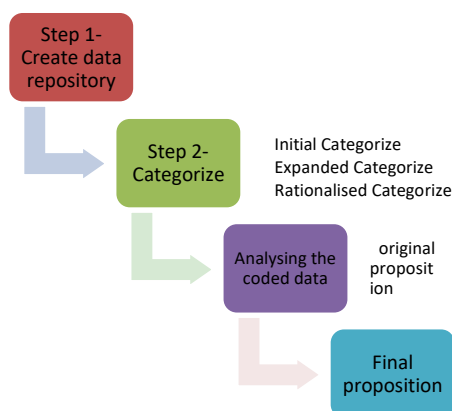


Figure 1. Stages of Data Analysis

Findings and Discussion

The Status of the Arabic Language at the Language Education and Training Center of the Indonesian Ministry of Defense

Investigating the status of a language in Indonesia cannot be separated from the ideology of Pancasila and Law No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, and Emblem, as well as the National Anthem. This law serves as a concrete manifestation of national consciousness, positioning language as an ideological pillar and a marker of collective identity. In this context, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as an ideological instrument that affirms sovereignty, strengthens unity, and maintains national integrity.²⁹ Article 25, paragraph (1) explicitly states that Indonesian is the official language of the state and functions as the unifying language of the nation. This affirmation is not merely regulatory; it reflects the historical and sociolinguistic reality of Indonesia

²⁸ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications*, vol. 6 (Sage Thousand Oaks, CA, 2018).

²⁹ Bushra Sabah et al., 'Headlines and Hegemony: Unraveling Ideological Narratives in Arab and Western Media's Portrayal of Arab Women', *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 10 December 2023, 82–94, <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v23i4.315>.

as an archipelagic nation with a rich diversity of regional languages. Amid this diversity, the Indonesian language plays a crucial role in facilitating cross-cultural communication and fostering an inclusive sense of national identity.³⁰

Awareness of the importance of language as a unifying force emerged long before independence. The historic moment of October 28, 1928, when youth from various regions declared the Youth Pledge, marked a turning point in the development of Indonesian linguistic nationalism. The pledge explicitly recognized Indonesian as the “language of unity,” establishing a cultural foundation for building collective identity across the archipelago. This milestone solidified Indonesian as a symbol of unity that transcended ethnolinguistic boundaries from Sabang to Merauke. This historical basis was later given constitutional force through the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, whose article 36 states that “The national language is Indonesian.” This constitutional mandate provided the normative foundation for subsequent language policies, including Law No. 24 of 2009. The presence of this law cannot be separated from the spirit of linguistic nationalism initiated by the nation’s founders. Ideologically, Law No. 24 of 2009 aims to strengthen national identity, maintain national integration, and affirm the position of the Indonesian language in the public sphere, including government, education, and professional domains.³¹



Figure 2. Law No. 24, Article 25 of 2009

The strengthening of Indonesian’s position in formal domains was also evident during President Soeharto’s administration, particularly through the

³⁰ Undang-Undang (UU) No. 24 Tahun 2009 Bendera, Bahasa, Dan Lambang Negara, Serta Lagu Kebangsaan, (Jakarta), 2009, <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/38661/uu-no-24-tahun-2009>.

³¹ Undang-Undang (UU) No. 24 Tahun 2009 Bendera, Bahasa, Dan Lambang Negara, Serta Lagu Kebangsaan.

centralistic and nationalistic policies of the New Order. In this period, the use of Indonesian became an ideological instrument for constructing a stable and controlled national identity. All state officials, including civil servants and members of the Indonesian Armed Forces, were required to use Indonesian in official communication, as noted by Spolsky (2004) in his discussion of top-down language policy.³² For Soeharto, Indonesian functioned not merely as a medium of communication but as a tool of social control and a symbol of loyalty to the state. This policy reinforced the dominance of Indonesian in public and bureaucratic spheres, while implicitly limiting the visibility of regional and foreign languages.³³ Over time, however, socio-political developments have demonstrated that Indonesian possesses a flexible and dynamic character. It serves not only as a symbol of unity but also as a space for negotiating national, local, and global identities.

This situation created the need to reformulate language policies that are more adaptive and reflective of Indonesia's linguistic complexity. Consequently, during the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Law No. 24 of 2009 was enacted. This law not only regulates the Indonesian language in legal and formal terms but also serves as a policy umbrella for restructuring the status of regional and foreign languages in Indonesia. Within this context, the concept of *Trigatra Bangun Bahasa* emerged, emphasizing three pillars: honoring regional languages, prioritizing Indonesian, and mastering foreign languages.³⁴ This concept opens strategic opportunities for foreign languages, including Arabic, to contribute across sectors, from education and diplomacy to military affairs. Foreign languages are viewed not as threats but as opportunities to strengthen Indonesia's global competitiveness, provided they do not displace Indonesian as a marker of national identity. Thus, Law No. 24 of 2009 and *Trigatra Bangun Bahasa* reflect a paradigm shift from rigid linguistic nationalism toward a more inclusive and globally oriented language policy.



Figure 3. The *Trigatra* Concept of Language Structure

³² Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge university press, 2004).

³³ Ben Anderson, 'The Languages of Indonesian Politics', *Indonesia*, no. 1 (1966): 89–116.

³⁴ Hardini et al., '21st Century Skills-Based Trigatra Bahasa Learning Model'.

Trigatra Bangun Bahasa is a strategic framework integrating three language pillars: regional languages, Indonesian, and foreign languages. Regional languages function as cultural identities, Indonesian serves as a national unifier, and foreign languages provide global access. This concept, aligned with the 1928 Youth Pledge and supported by Law No. 24 of 2009 (consideration point b and Article 25 paragraph 1), forms the basis of an adaptive and competitive national language policy. Within this framework, foreign languages play a key role in strengthening national identity amid globalization.³⁵ They are learned not only for communication but also to broaden knowledge and reinforce Indonesia's global standing. Arabic, which has a long history in Indonesia through the spread of Islam, holds a special position in the national linguistic landscape (Zein, 2020). Today, its use extends beyond religious education to strategic sectors, including the military.³⁶

The foundation of Indonesia's language policy rests on the belief that language represents unity, sovereignty, and moral order. Within the Ministry of Defense, this aligns with Woolard and Schieffelin's (1994) concept of language ideology, which links language to power, discipline, and identity. Here, linguistic competence functions not only as a technical skill but also as an ideological expression of national loyalty.³⁷ Arabic is therefore positioned not merely as a foreign language but as strategic linguistic capital supporting Indonesia's defense and diplomatic interests. Its regulation under the Ministry of Defense demonstrates how ideology becomes institutionalized through language policy. In this context, Arabic serves both as a communication tool and as a means of shaping soldiers who are globally competent yet ideologically loyal.³⁸

Through curriculum design, terminology, and classroom routines, the institution instills values of obedience, order, and loyalty to the state. The Arabic classroom becomes a site where state ideology materializes, shaping individuals who embody *Sapta Marga* and the ethos of national defense.³⁹ The integration of ideological, intellectual, and physical formation reflects the belief that language learning cultivates not only communicative skills but also ideological identity.⁴⁰ This illustrates Indonesia's language ideology in practice, where education functions as a semiotic tool of governance. In this context, Arabic operates as an ideological instrument aligning communication with national values and disciplined nationalism.⁴¹

³⁵ Hardini et al., '21st Century Skills-Based Trigatra Bahasa Learning Model'.

³⁶ Zein, *Language Policy in Superdiverse Indonesia*.

³⁷ Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity, *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, vol. 16.

³⁸ مجدي حاج ابراهيم، *السياسة اللغوية والتخطيط اللغوي لتعليم اللغة العربية لغة ثانية في ماليزيا*.

³⁹ طلال عبداللطيف الجستار، 'السياسة اللغوية العربية المبكرة ودور الدعم السياسي في تقعيد اللغة العربية

(إبراهيم، خضر، 'مفهوم الإيديولوجيا (مطالعة في تاريخ المصطلح ومعانيه ومجالات استعماله

⁴¹ King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language, 'Journal of Language Planning and Policy [Digital Edition, Issue 1, Vol. 445]'.

Since 1979, the Language Education and Training Center has served as the primary institution for providing language education and training to military personnel and civil servants within the Ministry of Defense. Language instruction is customized according to assignment needs: regional languages, such as Papuan, for troops deployed to specific areas; Indonesian for foreign trainees stationed in Indonesia; and Arabic for soldiers assigned to the Middle East. In this context, Arabic functions not only as a means of communication but also as a strategic and ideological instrument, reflecting a pragmatic and functional approach that supports Indonesia's defense and military diplomacy objectives.⁴²

Given the increasingly strategic role of Arabic in international military operations, the need for structured and standardized instruction that aligns with the characteristics of military education has become more urgent. Arabic language learning in military institutions cannot be conducted casually or equated with general instruction in civilian settings.⁴³ The status of Arabic within the defense sector plays a crucial role in shaping the curriculum, methods, and learning objectives that align with the nation's defense vision. Arabic operates as an ideological instrument that translates national defense values into linguistic practice, ensuring that communicative competence is closely integrated with ideological discipline.⁴⁴ To meet these demands, the Ministry of Defense has established a foreign language learning system, including Arabic, under the auspices of the Language Education and Training Center, within the Ministry's Education and Training Agency. This institution is responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating Arabic language instruction for military personnel and civil servants. Learning programs are tailored to operational needs, both domestic and international.⁴⁵ Therefore, understanding the regulations governing Arabic language instruction at the Language Education and Training Center is essential for understanding how the state frames language as an ideological and functional instrument within the defense context.

⁴² Nurmala and Supriadi, 'Arabic Learning for Military Purposes in Indonesia'.

⁴³ Nurmala Mia et al., 'Language Management in Arabic Learning for Military Purposes: A Pathway to SDG 4', *Ta'lim al-'Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 8, no. 2 (2024).

⁴⁴ Mai Shirahata and Malgorzata Lahti, 'Language Ideological Landscapes for Students in University Language Policies: Inclusion, Exclusion, or Hierarchy?', *Current Issues in Language Planning* 24, no. 3 (2023): 272–92.

⁴⁵ Syaikha Dziyaulhaq Zein, *Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Pada Kursus Intensif Bahasa Di Pusdiklat Bahasa Badiklat Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia Ditinjau Dari Teori Konstruktivisme Lev Vygotsky*, (Yogyakarta), 2023.

Regulations for Arabic Language Learning at Military Education Institutions/The Language Education and Training Center under the Indonesian Ministry of Defense

The status of Arabic in Indonesia directly influences the regulation of its instruction. At the Language Education and Training Center, Arabic language learning is regulated through the Regulation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2024 on the Organization and Work Procedures of the Ministry of Defense.



Figure 4. Cover of the Indonesian Ministry of Defense Regulation 2024

This regulation serves as the legal foundation for the structure, functions, and implementation of language education programs within the defense sector, including Arabic instruction. In this context, Arabic is not merely taught as a foreign language but as a strategic competency supporting the military's involvement in overseas operations, international defense cooperation, and engagement with global issues related to the Arab and Islamic worlds. This demonstrates that the policy governing Arabic instruction in military institutions is closely tied to Indonesia's national interests and geopolitical orientation.⁴⁶ Consequently, the learning process is systematically and professionally regulated to align with national defense priorities.⁴⁷

The implementation of Arabic language instruction at the Language Education and Training Center is grounded in the 2024 Ministry of Defense Regulation as part of the government's strategy to strengthen foreign language capabilities within the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian National Armed Forces. Arabic is designated as a strategic language supporting Indonesia's diplomatic relations with the Middle East and its position in global geopolitics. The regulation guides curriculum development tailored to military needs in areas

⁴⁶ Pawel Kamocki et al., 'Legal Status and Regulation of the German Language in the Federal Republic of Germany', *Current Issues in Language Planning* 26, no. 1 (2025): 7–21.

⁴⁷ Amani Batakji Chazy and Hanada Taha Thomure, 'Arabic Language-in-Education Policy Opportunities: Pathways to Policy Change', *European Journal of Language Policy* 14, no. 2 (2022): 205–26.

such as international communication, diplomacy, humanitarian missions, and overseas operations. It also establishes competency standards and instructor qualification requirements to ensure high-quality language education.⁴⁸ Beyond linguistic proficiency, the regulation underscores the importance of cultural understanding as a key component of cross-cultural communication for defense personnel. Chapter XII of the regulation outlines specific provisions related to language education within the Language Education and Training Center under the Defense Education and Training Agency.



Figure 5. Regulation of the Language Training Center as the Organizing Institution for Arabic Language Learning

Articles 1017 to 1019 define the duties, positions, and functions of military education and training institutions, providing a legal basis ensuring that learning follows state-established guidelines. Article 1020 details the organizational structure and officials responsible for managing educational activities, including strategic roles in language training. Articles 1067–1086 of the Ministry of Defense Regulation No. 14 of 2024 further reinforce that Arabic instruction at the Language Education and Training Center has a strong legal foundation. Section 5 mandates the Center to design, implement, evaluate, and enhance language education in Indonesian, regional, and foreign languages, emphasizing the strategic importance of Arabic in developing linguistic competence within the defense sector.⁴⁹

An interview conducted on July 2, 2025, with the Head of the Curriculum Subdivision at the Language Education and Training Center confirmed that Arabic instruction is institutionally grounded in the Ministry of Defense Regulation No. 1 of 2024. The regulation mandates the Center to provide strategic

⁴⁸ Supardi Supardi et al., 'Exploring Curriculum Ideology and Religion in Arabic Language Teaching: A Case Study', *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language* 12, no. 3 (Themed Issue on Culture&Communication) (2024): 151–65.

⁴⁹ Wiwik Prasetyo Ningsih et al., 'The Designing of Teaching Materials by Using Mnemonic Music Techniques to Strengthen Vocabularies Memorizing', *Arabiyyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 2 (2024): 757–78.

foreign language education to support national defense, international cooperation, and overseas missions.

“The Language Education and Training Center operates under the structural authority of the Ministry’s Training and Education Agency. The updated Ministerial Regulation clearly mandates our role, which is to provide strategic foreign language education, including Arabic, to support national defense objectives, international cooperation, and overseas assignments,” he explained.

He further emphasized that Arabic instruction at the Center is not limited to linguistic competence but is closely aligned with operational needs. *“This includes instruction in cultural communication norms of Middle Eastern countries, diplomatic and military terminology, and translation of defense-related texts and documents,”* he added.

“Arabic holds a unique level of urgency due to its relevance in defense diplomacy, joint military training, and international deployments. Therefore, the curriculum and syllabus are developed based on operational needs analysis,” he continued.

The Colonel also highlighted that the regulation functions not merely as an administrative reference but as a guiding framework for all phases of the training process, from planning and instructional design to instructor recruitment and learning assessment. *“Intensive training, the incorporation of mission-specific content, and standardized testing systems are all part of the regulatory implementation,”* he concluded. This institutional perspective reveals how the state’s language ideology shapes the purpose of Arabic instruction. Arabic is not learned for cultural appreciation alone but as part of an ideological project to form disciplined and internationally competent soldiers who embody state loyalty. This reflects a militaristic ideology that links linguistic proficiency with ideological commitment.

The regulation demonstrates that the Arabic language learning extends beyond linguistic mastery to developing personnel’s capacity to communicate effectively with Arabic-speaking communities, both domestically and abroad. Such competence is essential for strategic, diplomatic, and academic purposes, granting access to Arabic sources in science, religion, and culture.⁵⁰ Consequently, Arabic instruction supports human resource development that is globally adaptive while maintaining national identity through an inclusive and strategic linguistic policy. It represents not only a communicative initiative but also a national linguistic strategy that bridges ideological and global interests. Meanwhile, national language ideology emphasizes unity, nationalism, and cultural preservation, whereas military language ideology adds dimensions of discipline, hierarchy, and strategic function. Within this framework, Arabic serves as a symbolic and operational tool, reinforcing national sovereignty. The intersection of civilian and military language ideologies illustrates how defense language policy reflects and reproduces state ideology.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Yasir Suleiman, ‘Arab Linguistics, Arabic Linguistics, and Language Ideology’, *Journal of Arabic Sociolinguistics* 1, no. 1 (2023): 98–122.

⁵¹ Andreas Hallberg, ‘Standard Language Ideology and Prescriptivism in the Arabic-Speaking World’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Prescriptivism* (Routledge, 2023).

This regulation is implemented through a curriculum structured around the Three Basic Patterns of Military Education: development of struggle and personality, development of knowledge and skills, and physical development. The Arabic curriculum integrates all three components. The development of struggle and personality (30%) emphasizes internalizing *Sapta Marga* values, nationalism, and discipline through character-building learning. The development of knowledge and skills (60%) focuses on mastering *maharab istima'* (listening), *kalam* (speaking), *qira'ah* (reading), and *kitabab* (writing) within a military context, including terminology, official communication, and diplomatic protocol. Physical development (10%) supports endurance during the intensive learning process.⁵²



Figure 6. Three Basic Patterns of Military Education

All three aspects are implemented cohesively within a structured military education system that emphasizes discipline and rigor. The curriculum adheres to the core subject framework, which is divided into basic, core, and supporting areas. Basic subjects, such as Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and national insight, serve as the ideological foundation for shaping military attitudes.⁵³ Core subjects center on Arabic language instruction, taught by qualified instructors from pesantren, universities, and Arab countries using standardized, communicative, and military-oriented materials.⁵⁴ Supporting subjects include physical training, organizational knowledge, and cross-cultural studies that prepare participants for global assignments. This integrated system produces personnel who are not only linguistically skilled but also ideologically grounded, intellectually adaptable, and physically prepared for multilingual and multicultural duties.⁵⁵

⁵² Mia et al., 'Language Management in Arabic Learning for Military Purposes: A Pathway to SDG 4'.

⁵³ Masnun Masnun et al., 'Project-Based Learning: Principles, Characteristics, and Application in Teaching Grammar Rules', *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 2 (2024): 597–616.

⁵⁴ Faisal Bin Shabib Mosleet Alsubaie, 'Arabic Language Use And Islamic Education In Teaching Value To Graduates In Saudi Universities', *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning* 5, no. 3 (2022).

⁵⁵ Chris K Chang-Bacon et al., 'Language Ideologies and Access in a Multilingual Tutoring Program', *International Multilingual Research Journal* 19, no. 1 (2025): 36–52; Darwin and Norton, 'Multilingual Education, Language Policy, and Social Justice.'

The implementation of Arabic instruction at the Language Education and Training Center follows the Intensive Basic Arabic Course as outlined in Ministry of Defense Regulation No. 1 of 2024. The curriculum develops listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills within military and international contexts, emphasizing specialized vocabulary, defense-related dialogues, and cultural scenarios.⁵⁶ Instruction is intensive and discipline-oriented, consistent with the three basic patterns of military education, which integrates ideological, academic, and physical formation. Delivered by qualified instructors, including native speakers and Arabic for Specific Purposes specialists, the program links linguistic proficiency with operational readiness, preparing personnel for multilingual and multicultural missions.⁵⁷ This regulatory framework demonstrates that Arabic instruction at the Language Education and Training Center extends beyond linguistic mastery. It aims to build personnel's ability to communicate effectively with Arabic-speaking communities at home and abroad. Such competence is essential for strategic, diplomatic, and academic purposes, including accessing Arabic-language sources in science, religion, and culture.⁵⁸ Therefore, Arabic education supports the development of globally adaptive human resources while maintaining national identity through an inclusive and strategic language policy. It functions not only as a communication program but also as a national linguistic strategy connecting ideological and global objectives.⁵⁹



Figure 7. Decision of the Head of the Education and Training Agency

⁵⁶ Nurmala, *سياسة تعليم اللغة العربية للعسكريين في مركزي التربية و التعليم التابعة لهيئة الجيش الوطني: دراسة الحالة*.

⁵⁷ Haoyun Zhang et al., 'Language Immersion and Language Training: Two Paths to Enhanced Language Regulation and Cognitive Control', *Brain and Language* 223 (2021): 105043.

⁵⁸ Nur Laila Azizah et al., 'Development of Arabic Language Learning in Indonesia at 19th–21st Century', *Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 16, no. 1 (2024): 219–38.

⁵⁹ Nijmi Edres, 'Religion, Ideology, and Nation-Building in Jordanian Textbooks and Curricula for the Teaching of Arabic Language', *Lingue Culture Mediazioni - Languages Cultures Mediation (LCM Journal)* 8, no. 2 (2022): 5, <https://doi.org/10.7358/lcm-2021-002-edre>.

National language ideology emphasizes unity, nationalism, and cultural preservation, while military language ideology incorporates dimensions of discipline, hierarchy, and strategic function. Within this framework, Arabic operates as a symbolic and operational instrument that reinforces national sovereignty. The convergence of civilian and military language ideologies illustrates how defense language policy reflects and reproduces the state's ideological order.

Conclusion

The implementation of Arabic instruction at the Language Education and Training Center under the Ministry of Defense is guided by the Ministry of Defense Regulation No. 5 of 2020 on Human Resource Development, which designates Arabic as a strategic foreign language for defense and international cooperation. Aligned with the three basic patterns of military education, the program integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains through systematic planning, instruction, and assessment. The findings show that Arabic education in military institutions fulfills strategic and functional objectives, supporting diplomacy, intelligence, and regional operations, rather than religious or cultural purposes. Overall, the policy demonstrates how national language ideology is institutionalized within defense education, fostering discipline, global engagement, and intercultural competence among military personnel.

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