



**CENDEKIAWAN:
JURNAL PENDIDIKAN DAN STUDI KEISLAMAN**

Volume 5 Nomor 2 Tahun 2026 Page 990-999

<https://zia-research.com/index.php/cendekiawan>



Islamic Modernism in the Perspective of Teachers and Its Implications for the Design of A Love-Based Curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah

Jalaludin Faruk Azhari¹, Mohammad Muchlis Solichin², Nor Hasan³, Mohammad Hasan⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Indonesia

Email: faruk.saya@gmail.com¹; muchlissolichin@iainmadura.ac.id²;

nor.hasan@iainmadura.ac.id³; moh.hasan@iainmadura.ac.id⁴

Abstract

This study aims to identify the Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic teachers at MA Miftabul Ulum Al-Islamy Bangkalan, analyzing its implications for the design of a love-based curriculum. This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of phenomenology. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. The results of the study show that the Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic teachers is reflected in five main characters, namely rational orientation in understanding texts, integration of ICT in learning, acceptance of new methods without leaving the tradition of pesantren, contextualization of Arabic materials with modern life, and emphasis on developing students' communication skills. This thinking has implications for the design of a love-based curriculum in the form of strengthening learning philosophy, developing integrative and humanist teaching tools, and creating a warm, safe learning environment that supports students' academic and affective growth.

Keywords: Arabic, Curriculum, Islamic Modernism.

PRELIMINARY

Islamic modernism has brought a current of thought that always tries to change the construction of religious understanding in order to answer the modern social dynamics that give the color of Islamic education in the territory of Indonesia.(Afendi, 2012)(Asrin & Suherlan, 2023) Several figures such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Fazlur Rahman, Muhammad Abduh to Harun Nasiton have established an epistemological framework for Islamic reform that emphasizes ijtihad, rationality and acceptance of the development of modern science and science without having to ignore the main teachings of Islamic faith and shari'a. This kind of thinking has infiltrated various sectors and joints of Muslim life, not to mention education under the auspices of Islamic institutions (Swandi et al., 2025).

Islam is a religion that goes hand in hand between reason and science.(Lestari, 2021) This perspective was further elaborated by Harun Nasition who views Islamic Modernism as a concrete step to restore the way Muslims view their religious teachings, so that they are able to adapt to the development of science, science and technology.(Nasution, 1992)(Pohan et al., 2025) From here, Islamic modernism can be interpreted as a maneuver carried out by intellectuals who always try to answer the challenges of modernity through rational and contextual-based interpretation of Islamic values.(Rahman, 1982)(Hakim et al., 2023) According to the perspective of Islamic education, modernism aims to transform all aspects starting from goals, curriculum, methodology to learning evaluation.(Rachma et al., 2025)(Ardat et al., 2023) This is in line with Ahmad Tafsir, et al.'s assertion that revelation, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, remains the foundation of modern Islamic education, and is able to become a space for dialogue with contemporary reality.(Tafsir et al., 2004)(Al-Kahfi et al., 2025)(Violeta et al., 2024).

In the realm of Indonesia, it can be detailed into the typology of the current of Islamic modernism, *first*, Muhammadiyah which was pioneered by KH Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 with its teachings known as the purification of the faith and the modernization of Islam. (Haedar Nashir, 2015) (Noer, 1982) *Second*, neo-modernism developed by Nur Cholis Madjid around 1970, proclaimed secularization and pluralism as a form of responsiveness to modern times and challenges. (Madjid, 2019) (Greg Barton, 1999) *Third*, Islam Nusantara which was developed by Nahdlatul Ulama in 2015. Although NU has been established since 1926, this concept was born during the 33rd NU congress in Jombang. Islam Nusantara is defined as a model that integrates the treasures of classical turats (Ash-'ari-Shafi 'i-Ghazali) with a variety of modern-based contextuels. (Mujamil Qomar, 2015) (Idris Siregar, 2020) (Moqsith, 2016) (Bahar & Harnadi, 2021).

Madura, which is famous for its Islamic tradition and many pockets of Islamic boarding schools, has a uniqueness that is its own attraction in terms of Islamic modernism. This is because Madura has long had a special network of Indonesian scholars who continue to be connected to Islamic centers in the Middle East, so that not a few Islamic currents of thought, both conservative and reformist, always flow to Madura through its pesantren. The meeting point between Islamic modernism and local traditions and culture creates its own dynamics that need special study.

MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy is one of the Islamic educational institutions located in the Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy Islamic Boarding School. The madrasah was founded by Madura scholar KH. Moch. Ilyas chotib has the goal of interacting the values of pesantren in line with the demands of modern education. The curriculum that applies in learning at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy is a love-based curriculum which is a conception that puts affective abilities, especially love values, as the foundation in designing and implementing the educational curriculum.

Arabic is one of the curriculum contents taught at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy. As a language that is the object of study in Islamic boarding schools, Arabic occupies an important place in learning at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy, this is because Arabic is not only a means of communication and subjects but all discussions in Islamic boarding schools regarding the Qur'an and hadith as well as reinterpretations of both that use Arabic. However, along with the development of a more contemporary learning context, Arabic learning needs to be recontextualized based on the modernization of education and learning.

Several previous studies that have an interdiction with Islamic modernism have generally focused on discussing the thoughts of figures such as Muhammad Abduh, (Jaelani, 2023) Fazlur Rahman, (Hamsah & Nurchamidah, 2019) Mahmud Yunus, (Asror et al., 2023) (Oktikasari & Ibrahim, 2025) (Zulfadhilah & Rahman, 2022) Azyumardi Azra, (Barus, 2017) [Mohamad Rasjidi](#) (Azani & Harris, 2019) or focusing on comparative analysis discourse such as the study conducted by Ahmad Baso on Neo-Modernism Islam VS Post Islamic Traditionalism (Ahmad Baso, 2000) as well as studies that intersect with certain organizational movements such as Muhammadiyah (Hilmy, 2012) or Nahdlatul Ulama. (Purnama et al., 2017) However, from all previous studies, it is very rare to touch the more micro side of the thinking in terms of whether the thought is interpreted and translated in a curriculum by teachers as the main actors of education in the classroom. In this regard, this study explicitly becomes a very important research dimension considering that there has been no previous research that discusses thinking and its implications in a love-based curriculum.

Reflecting on the background that has been revealed in advance, this study has the intention and purpose of identifying and analyzing the Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy Bangkalan Madura, as well as examining the implications of this thinking on the design of a love-based curriculum.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Islamic modernism can be understood as an intellectual movement that constantly reconstructs Islamic values with the reality of modern developments. The movement that is present is based as a form of response to the backwardness of Muslims in various sectors, especially in science and technology which are still dominated by western powers. Islamic modernism, if interpreted, means an effort to transform the tradition of Islamic treasures so that it is able to coexist with modern civilization without having to eliminate the essence that has been enshrined in the text of revelation. (Rahman, 1982) (Parisaktiana Fathonah, 2018).

In the context of Indonesia, Islamic modernism continues to grow and develop in such a distinctive context, especially in the Islamic education sector. This distinctiveness can be seen from the tension between two sides, namely radicalism which openly expresses its rejection of modernism, and liberalism which is considered to be beyond the limits in the reconstruction of Islamic values. However, between the two opposing sides, a more moderate mediator emerged by maintaining the essence of Islamic values and being open to the development of scientific modernism. (Faiqah & Pransiska, 2018) (Asrin & Suherlan, 2023) This is in line with what Nasution has explained that the progress of Islamic science can only be achieved through rational and scientific thinking (Afendi, 2012).

Islamic modernism in the perspective of Islamic education can be interpreted as a transformation of Islamic education, starting from its epistemological framework, its practice and learning techniques. In an epistemological perspective, for example, the relationship between revelation and reason is not a conflicting side, but two interconnected and complementary sources. Revelation provides space for the development of scientific treasures, while reason makes the knowledge expanded and deepened in order to understand what has been shown by revelation. (Maimun, 2020) Modernism of curriculum governance in Islamic educational institutions is mandatory and non-negotiable if Islamic education wants to remain competitive and relevant (Rachma et al., 2025).

Teachers are seen from the Islamic scientific tradition, not only acting as a *mere transfer of knowledge*, but as a *murabbi* figure who always maintains and grows the potential of students through compassion, example, and wisdom. (Aris, 2002) In another perspective, teachers are *warastatu al-anbiya'*, so from here teachers always have skills and depth of knowledge and have a noble personality (akhlak). (Sukiman & Yap, 2022) (Zahro et al., 2023).

METHOD

The qualitative approach was chosen in this study because the data to be excavated in the field is not numbers but a descriptive narrative. (Amir Hamah, 2019) (Sugiyono, 2016) Phenomenology is a type of research design that specifically serves as a frame of reference for this study with the intention of describing the essential components based on the experience of human consciousness without untested assumptions and prejudices. (Husserl, 1983) (Amir Hamzah, 2020) This type of selection is based on Islamic modernism, the perspective of Arabic language teachers and its cognitive map in a love-based curriculum can only be explored by exploring their experiences.

The location of this research was carried out at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy Bangkalan, the choice of this madrasah is because this institution is in the pulse of the Madura pesantren community, especially in the southern part of Bangkalan, which results in deep-rooted traditions and challenges of modernity are not a mere discourse but a reality that can be lived and can be felt. The data collection technique encompasses three main methods; namely a semi-structured interview with the informant, mainly an Arabic subject teacher. observation and documentation are supporting elements. (Arikunto, 2016) Data analysis is carried out through *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA). This procedure includes: (1) reading and re-reading the transcript of the interview results; (2) marking significant (exploratory) units of meaning; (3) develop emerging themes; (4) looking for patterns of connections between themes; and (5) to develop a descriptive narrative that represents the informant's experience. (Smith et al., 2021) Triangulation of sources and methods as well as *member checking* is a guarantee of the validity of the data in this research (Susanto et al., 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Islamic Modernism Thought Arabic Language Teacher

Madura as a famous region with a well-rooted Islamic tradition has a distinctive feature in facing Islamic modernism. (Syukron Affani et al., 2025) Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah, which is the understanding of the majority of scholars and their followers, is able to collaborate between *taqlid* to the four madhhabs with the openness of *ijtihad* and its products related to contemporary problems. (Hasan, 2021) (Muhammad Ulil Abshor, 2016) In the context of education, teachers as the main actors in the learning practice space do not close their eyes to Islamic modernism. At MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy, Arabic teachers showed their ability to combine the spirit of modernism without eliminating the tradition of learning in Islamic boarding schools. This can be seen from the data of research results in the field

identified five main characteristics of Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic language teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy, namely:

First, the orientation of rationalism in the understanding of the text. The prominent characteristic of the Arabic language teacher at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy is the orientation of rationalism in the understanding of the text which is manifested in the learning of *mabarab qira'ah* and *kitabab*. Based on the results of data findings in the field, it is explained that language teachers in this madrasah prefer to allow their students to practice independently on the rules of the Arabic language that they understand through test exploration. As explained by one of the Arabic teachers

We invite students here to do independent learning regarding the material that has been discussed together, for example the material on the rules of counting (عدد معنود), then students independently explore the text about shopping (التسوق) regarding the rules عدد معنود. In the next stage, students are given exercises related to the teks التسوق and qa'idab. عدد معنود. Our hope is that students will not only learn the rules as part of the kitabab skills but also learn to read and understand the text which is the essence of learning qira'ab skills (Hilmy, 2026).

The existence of students who carry out independent practice about language rules through text exploration, students are not only able to understand and memorize the rules of Arabic grammar, but are able to play the role of their intellect in the learning process. This is in line with the principle of Islamic modernism which recognizes and positions reason as a medium of knowledge seeking.

The first characteristic is also emphasized by Ahmad Fikir et al. and Jahid Muttaqin et al. about the rational approach in the practice of learning modern Arabic language focusing on the mastery of rules inductively and logically based on real examples, not just the memorization of deductive rules. (Fikri et al., 2025) (Muttaqin et al., 2023) Likewise, Ibrahim Muhammad 'Atha' emphasized that the inductive approach is more effective in constructing students' understanding over a long period of time than the deductive approach ("Atha," 1995).

Second, the integration of ICT in Arabic language practice. The next characteristic is the presence of the integration of ICT-based learning in Arabic language practice. The use of ICT-based media in Arabic language practice is not just to simplify learning procedures or mere aesthetic innovations, but also a teacher's response to the development of educational modernism with changes in the learning style of digital-based students. (Novel & Khasairi, 2025) It is clear in the field that Arabic teachers have collaborated with visual audio-based media such as interactive learning videos, or digital platforms such as sparkoll video scribes. Jalaludin Faruk Azhari, "Observation" (Bangkalan, 2026). This emphasizes that the integration of ICT-based media is a necessity in contemporary Arabic learning so that it is relevant to the needs of students. (Munir et al., 2014) (Failasuf et al., 2022) (Abdurrozak et al., 2025).

Third, the acceptance of new methodologies without eliminating the tradition of Islamic boarding schools. The third characteristic, which seeks the characteristic of this madrasah is the adaptive ability of Arabic teachers in opening themselves to the use of new learning methodologies by not immediately removing the tradition of pesantren that has been running and taking root. This kind of finding is clearly recorded in the learning of *kalam* and *mufradat skills*. By using the halafan mufradat method and communication manners that are characteristic of pesantren and integrated with communicative drilling methods, *game education*, and *role playing*, methodological reform comes to revive the practice of Arabic in the classroom and Arabic as a communication tool without having to eliminate the characteristic methodological identity of pesantren students. Rofiq, "Extracted from the Interview Results." This kind of characteristic is identified as adaptive modernism, with the distinctive feature that Arabic teachers are able to combine two methodological elements in classroom learning.

Fourth, contextualization of language materials in modern life. The next characteristic is the teacher's action of contextualizing Arabic language material that is in line with the modern life of students. Contextualization of the material here is the main key in learning Arabic so that students do not only understand classical text material but also several text narratives that are more contemporary with digital-based life.

In practice, language teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy on *qira'ab skills* in addition to utilizing textual narratives in accordance with textbooks, some contemporary Arabic texts adopted from mass media such as Arabic newspapers and magazines, official documents of letters, or scientific literature

such as scientific articles are used as teaching materials or supporting references. (Azhari, 2025) This indicates the teacher's understanding of Islamic modernism which provides a description that Arabic is not only an instrument for understanding religious narratives, but also a language of science and the language of international communication. (Nurjana, 2022) This concrete step by Arabic teachers is a key strategy in delivering ICT-based Arabic language learning (Euis Sholihah et al., 2022).

Fifth, the development of communication skills. The last characteristic focuses on the emphasis on strengthening students' communication skills as a learning goal. This can be manifested through an increase in the number of meetings and an emphasis on *kalam* and *istima'* skills. This communicative orientation is a manifestation of Islamic modernism thinking that places humans as social beings who communicate effectively.

The results in the field recorded that Arabic teachers in this madrasah have carried out this activity, by giving a larger portion to *kalam* (*muhadastah*) and *istima'* skills through the practice of discussions, presentations, and demonstrations. (Hilmy, 2026) This kind of practice is an Arabic language learning innovation that prioritizes language communication which requires the transformation of the teacher's role from knowledge transfer to communication facilitator.

Table 1. Class IX language skills division structure

Bab	Materi	Learning Objectives	Maharah Focus	Activities	Time allocation
1	التسوق (Shopping)	Tell us about your shopping experience	Kalam, Istima' Kitabah	Demonstrations; shopping experience at the Market or Plaza	6 JP
2	الصحة (health)	Conducting a conversation simulation (الحوار) in a clinic/hospital	Kalam, Istima' Qira'ah	Doctor-patient roleplay, Understanding text	6 JP
3	السفر (travel)	Expressing experiences while traveling/recreation/study tour	Kalam, Istima' Kitabah	Writing a description of a trip: a descriptive text analysis	6 JP
4	الحج والعمرة (hajj and umrah)	Understanding Texts about Hajj and Umrah	Kitabah, Qira'ah	Authentic text analysis; Write a short essay	6 JP
5	تكنولوجيا الإعلام والاتصال (ICT)	Conducting a conversation in an ICT Laboratory	Kalam, Istima'	Teacher and student roleplay;	6 JP
6	الأديان في إندونيسيا (religions in Indonesia))	Describing religions in Indonesia: Religious moderation	Qira'ah, Kitabah	Descriptive text analysis	6 JP

The Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy is manifested in the practice of learning through several identifiable patterns of the five as mentioned earlier. Thus, it provides an explanation that a renewal in the effectiveness of Arabic teaching methods is impossible to separate from a renewal in the paradigm of thinking of teachers as the main actor (Amalia et al., 2025).

Modernism's Implications for Love-Based Curriculum Design

The Love-Based Curriculum is a curriculum designed with an emphasis on character development, experiential learning, and deep attention to social and emotional aspects in education. This curriculum aims to produce people who are humanist, nationalist, naturalist, tolerant, and always prioritize love as a basic principle in life. (Islam & Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025)

The internalization of the values of love, empathy, social justice and empathy can be carried out in a structured and massive manner from an early age. In the context of the madrasah environment, the presence of a love-based curriculum is presented in order to be able to produce humane, tolerant, naturalist, nationalist human beings and always prioritize love as the main principle in every joint of life. (Afryansyah & Sirozi, 2025)

Teachers are agents of curriculum design, curriculum theory perspectives, teachers are not only the implementers of curriculum policies that have been prepared by the government, but also the designers of the curriculum itself at the level in the classroom. (Rosiek & Clandinin, 2016) At the madrasah level such as in MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy, the idea of Islamic modernism for Arabic teachers has had significant implications for the love-based curriculum. These implications are formulated in the philosophy of the curriculum, learning tools and learning environment.

First, the philosophy of the curriculum, which is based on a basic principle that the Arabic language is designed to foster love for the Arabic language itself, for science, and for Allah SWT.

We want our students not only to be fluent in Arabic, but also to love the language, the knowledge and the Substance that created that knowledge. Because if they are in love, students will get used to learning independently without any coercion and deepen their knowledge (Hilmy, 2026).

This philosophy provides an understanding that intrinsic motivation that comes from love will be much more effective and meaningful than extrinsic motivation that comes from reward and punishment. (Rasyid et al., 2025) Likewise, a love-based curriculum will naturally motivate integration between cognitive, affective and spiritual. Because love of work gives energy to these three abilities. (Islam & Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025) (Farihin et al., 2025).

Second, the integration of love values in the Learning Objectives and Learning Objectives Flow. The implications of Islamic modernism are evident in the learning tools starting from the learning objectives, the flow of learning objectives, and the in-depth learning plan. Based on document analysis of the learning tools used by language teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy. As the learning objectives show that the values of compassion have been integrated into it, the discussion (الحج والعمرة) for example, the teacher does not only include the cognitive aspect, but also includes the affective aspect as well, such as "students show an attitude of love for Allah SWT and His Messenger through the values of piety as taught in Islam. In the learning objectives flow device, Arabic teachers have combined the dimensions of the profile of graduates that are already based on love, including love for Allah and the Messenger, love for you, love for yourself and fellow humans, love for the environment and love for the homeland as well as in the set of love-based deep learning plans.

Third, the development of value-based materials. The next implication is related to the development of Arabic language material based on love values. Data from the field is document analysis, material presented to students, several text materials combined with several hadiths about affection and love for Allah. *Fourth*, Humanistic learning strategies. Humanistic learning is the key to a successful Arabic language learning practice, to achieve it needs to design a good learning experience. The learning experience has been integrated with a love-based curriculum and learning principles that are oriented towards awareness-meaning-fun. This can be seen from teachers consistently using words of encouragement and positive affirmation in Arabic to students, such as "أحسنّت" (very good), "بارك الله فيك" (may Allah bless you), and other expressions of appreciation. In addition, teachers are able to present a classroom atmosphere full of warmth and acceptance, where students feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them. Likewise, teachers develop a cooperative learning model in which students who are more proficient in helping those who are still in difficulty, realizing the value of ukhuwah in the learning

process. These three principles are in line with *the principle of al-tasywiq* which presents fun and exciting learning (Wahab Rosyidi & Mamlua'tul Ni'mah, 2011).

Fifth, Evaluation based on affective and character. The evaluation carried out in the love-based curriculum at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy in Arabic language subjects uses the portfolio as a companion to the written exam. The portfolio here includes several student work such as *muhadastah* videos that show the improvement of *kalam* and *istima'* skills. In addition to the cognitive side that is the subject of assessment, at the end of each semester, teachers are obliged to accumulate *a journal of students' affective development* which contains the attitude of students, both the attitude of affection between friends and teachers. This holistic evaluation system does not only look at the ability of students from the academic side, but also links morals and behavior to be the top priority. This kind of evaluation design reflects the values of Islamic humanism as emphasized in the principles of Islamic modernism. In the study of linguistic methodology, the humanism approach is an approach that focuses on students, where students are able to learn independently and provide opportunities for students to use and practice their language skills (Rusydi Ahmad Thu'aimah, 1989)(Zaenuddin et al., 2005).

Sixth, a well-maintained wet learning environment. The implication of Islamic modernism seen at the research site is the existence of a learning environment created by teachers with a caring climate. Where each class occupant will get attention, concern and be heard as a person who has a uniqueness, not as a homogeneous class member. The results of the data in the field give an idea that in every corner of the classroom there has been decorated with calligraphy verses of the Qur'an about affection as stated in Qs. Maryam verse 96. And some hadiths about the environment such as *النظافة من الإيمان*. The existence of this well-maintained environment indicates that everyone in it is cared for and appreciated both physically and psychologically (Azhari, 2026).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Islamic modernism thinking of Arabic teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum Al-Islamy Bangkalan grew in the form of reforms that remained based on the tradition of Islamic boarding schools. Modernism is not interpreted as an attitude of abandoning established Islamic values, but as a rational, open, and contextual effort to answer the needs of learning Arabic in the current era. The findings of the study confirm the existence of five main characters, namely rational orientation in understanding the text, the use of information technology in learning, acceptance of new methods without breaking traditions, contextualization of the material with the lives of students, and emphasis on communication skills. These five aspects show that learning reform is highly determined by the perspective of teachers as the main actors of the educational process.

This research also shows that the idea of Islamic modernism has real implications for the design of a love-based curriculum. The implication can be seen in the formulation of learning objectives that contain the values of love for Allah and the Messenger, love of knowledge, love of others, love of the environment, and love of the homeland; on learning strategies that emphasize a warm, appreciative, and cooperative atmosphere; as well as a more humane evaluation through the use of portfolios as a companion to written exams. Thus, a love-based curriculum in Arabic learning does not stop at the concept level, but is truly present in learning practices that are more humane, meaningful, and relevant to the needs of madrasah students today

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