



Arabic for Religious Purposes: A Curriculum Analysis at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya

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Abstract

Arabic in Islamic higher education is commonly expected to provide access to religious sources, but the presence of Islamic content does not necessarily show that a curriculum develops functional competence for religious tasks. This study analyzed how religious purposes are enacted across the Arabic language curriculum at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya. A qualitative single-case study examined the 2021 Curriculum Handbook, 19 prescribed books or instructional sections across six course clusters, classroom observation notes for the six clusters, and semi-structured interviews with one program administrator, seven lecturers, and one fourth-level student. Data were condensed, coded into seven thematic categories, compared in analytical matrices, and triangulated across documents, interviews, and observations. The findings show a vertically sequenced curriculum in which religious purposes are distributed across institutional orientation, materials, teaching practices, and assessment. Islamic representation and content are strongly embedded across courses, while performance outcomes and assessment criteria for tasks such as analyzing sources, explaining religious knowledge, teaching, and da'wah communication are less consistently articulated. The study conceptualizes this pattern as a distributed specific-purpose curriculum and proposes a development framework centered on multi-stakeholder needs analysis, graded performance outcomes, contemporary authentic materials, text-task cycles, performance assessment, and cross-course alignment governance. The framework is conceptual rather than experimentally validated.

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic programs in Islamic higher education can appear deeply religious while still leaving an unresolved curricular question: does the presence of Qur'anic passages, hadith, Islamic history, and religious vocabulary actually develop the language performances students need to study, teach, and communicate Islamic knowledge? This distinction matters because Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) treats specificity as a relationship among learner needs, target situations, discourse practices, and curricular decisions rather than as the simple inclusion of specialized topics (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010; Nunan, 1990; Serafini et al., 2015; Liu & Hu, 2021). In Arabic education, religious purposes have long shaped institutional expectations, especially where Arabic functions as a means of accessing Islamic sources and disciplinary knowledge (Nisa & Arifin, 2020; Rekan et al., 2025; Salsabila et al., 2026). Yet a curriculum may be rich in religious themes while its learning outcomes remain oriented toward general grammar, reading, or memorization. The central issue is therefore not whether religious content is present, but how that content is converted into increasingly complex and assessable language use.

International research on specific-purpose language education places needs analysis at the beginning of curriculum design because the target tasks of learners provide a basis for deciding what should be taught and assessed. Studies across agriculture, marine engineering, nursing, academic communication, aviation, and college contexts show that discrepancies often emerge when prescribed materials or classroom routines are not closely connected to the communicative tasks

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expected in academic or professional environments (Alibakhshi & Labbafi, 2021; Arias-Contreras & Moore, 2022; Smith et al., 2022; Huang & Yu, 2023; Treadaway & Read, 2025; Smith et al., 2025). This literature also shows that stakeholder perspectives should be triangulated rather than inferred from a single group, because students, teachers, and domain specialists may prioritize different forms of language use (Serafini et al., 2015; Li, 2024). For Arabic used for religious purposes, comparable target tasks may include reading unvowelled texts, explaining terminology, comparing sources, presenting a lesson, or responding to questions in a particular audience context. A curriculum intended to support such tasks therefore requires more than thematic relevance; it requires explicit progression from linguistic resources to purposeful performance.

A second problem concerns alignment across curriculum layers. Constructive alignment requires intended outcomes, learning activities, and assessment tasks to represent the same forms of learning rather than operate as separate components (Biggs, 1996). Recent language-education research continues to identify misalignment when communicative aims coexist with teaching or assessment practices that privilege discrete knowledge, when authenticity is assumed rather than examined, or when alternative assessment is insufficiently connected to intended performance (Abrar-ul-Hassan et al., 2021; Hasrol et al., 2022; Rouffet et al., 2023). Curriculum reform studies similarly show that disciplinary learning improves when language tasks, classroom activity, and assessment are designed around situated practices instead of generic proficiency alone (Rajendram & Shi, 2022; Yung & Fong, 2024). These findings are relevant to Arabic in Islamic higher education because institutional goals such as understanding Islamic sciences, teaching, or da'wah are broad unless they are translated into observable language performances. The analytical challenge is to determine whether institutional purposes remain at the level of identity and content or extend consistently into pedagogy and assessment.

Existing Arabic curriculum studies provide important evidence about standards, materials, learning environments, and the integration of Islamic content. Research in Indonesian Islamic education has examined competency standardization, Arabic textbooks, curriculum reorientation, nested curriculum integration, and the relationship between global materials and local educational contexts (Wahab et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2023; Mukmin et al., 2023; Febriani et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025). Other studies have addressed Arabic for specific purposes in Islamic banking and related disciplinary settings, showing the need to connect language content with field-specific demands (Khambali et al., 2022; Nisa & Arifin, 2020). At STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya, previous work has also considered textbook quality, campus language environments, instructional techniques, and specific language difficulties (Sodik et al., 2023; Gogari et al., 2024; Mustain et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies establish a substantial contextual foundation, but they do not fully explain how a religious purpose is distributed across an entire Arabic program. That system-level question becomes especially important when no single course is formally labeled Arabic for Religious Purposes.

Materials and pedagogy create another point of tension between content exposure and functional competence. International ESP research shows that specialized learning depends on how texts are selected, simplified, analyzed, and transformed into tasks, not merely on whether a text belongs to the target field (Cheng, 2021; Rets et al., 2022; Huang & Wible, 2024). Studies of workplace and disciplinary communication further suggest that learners benefit when instruction reflects situated discourse practices, genre expectations, and the social conditions in which communication occurs (Al Hilali & McKinley, 2021; Chan, 2021; Nateghian, 2024). In classroom terms, this implies that grammar, memorization, and text explanation can remain valuable, but their function changes when they become resources for comprehension, interpretation, and production rather than endpoints. Research on task-supported and technology-mediated language learning likewise indicates that carefully designed tasks can connect linguistic practice with meaningful performance and contemporary communicative settings (Guest & Le, 2024; Morgana, 2024). For religious-purpose Arabic, this raises the question of whether traditional materials and methods are being used as cumulative resources for authentic religious communication or primarily as self-contained course content.

The literature therefore reveals a specific gap. Much specific-purpose research examines a designated ESP or EAP course, a single professional domain, or a particular language skill, while Arabic studies often focus on textbooks, standards, instructional methods, or individual curriculum

initiatives (Choi, 2021; Mortenson, 2022; Tang, 2023; Dang et al., 2024). Less attention has been given to programs in which a specific purpose is not concentrated in one course but is dispersed across institutional goals, multiple skill and language-system courses, teaching practices, and assessment. This condition requires an analytical unit larger than the textbook and more integrated than a list of religious themes. It also requires caution because most international LSP evidence is derived from English, even though its principles of needs analysis, task specificity, authenticity, and alignment can inform analysis of other languages when applied contextually. A program-level case study can therefore clarify how religious purposes are enacted, where alignment is strong, and where the relationship among curriculum layers remains incomplete.

This study examines how religious purposes are operationalized across the Arabic language curriculum at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya through four connected dimensions: institutional orientation, instructional materials, classroom pedagogy, and assessment. It asks whether religious elements function primarily as representation and content or whether they are systematically translated into graded, performance-based competence for understanding, analyzing, teaching, and communicating Islamic knowledge in Arabic. Empirically, the study provides a curriculum-wide account based on documents, prescribed materials, interviews, and classroom observations. Conceptually, it develops the notion of a distributed specific-purpose curriculum to describe a program in which a specialized purpose is enacted across courses and institutional layers rather than assigned to one dedicated subject. Practically, the analysis identifies areas in which needs analysis, contemporary materials, target-task design, performance assessment, and cross-course alignment could strengthen the connection between the institution's religious mission and observable student language use.

METHOD

2.1 Research design and setting

This study used a qualitative single-case study design because the object of inquiry was one bounded curriculum system and the relationships among its institutional goals, prescribed materials, classroom practices, and assessment. The case was the Arabic Language Education program at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya, Indonesia, where Arabic is institutionally connected with Islamic sciences, education, and da'wah. The analytical unit was not an individual course but the systemic relationship among four curriculum dimensions: objectives, materials, teaching methods, and assessment. The case was bounded by the 2021 Curriculum Handbook and six course clusters represented in the available documentary and observational corpus. The source manuscript does not report the calendar period of fieldwork, so the study period must be inserted by the authors before submission [PERLU VERIFIKASI: STUDY PERIOD].

2.2 Participants and data corpus

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had direct involvement in curriculum design, teaching, or learning. Nine human participants were included: one program administrator (PA-1), seven lecturers representing six course clusters (L-1 to L-7), and one fourth-level student (ST-1). The documentary corpus consisted of the 2021 Curriculum Handbook (CD-1) and 19 prescribed books or instructional sections (TB-1 to TB-19), while the observational corpus consisted of classroom observation notes from six course clusters (OBS-1 to OBS-6): ta'bīr, qirā'ah, kitābah, naḥw, ṣarf, and balāghah. The student interview was used as a contextual learner perspective rather than as a basis for generalizing student experience because only one student was included. Table 1 summarizes the data sources and their analytical functions.

Table 1. Data sources and their analytical functions

Source	Number/Scope	Aspects Analyzed	Function
Curriculum handbook	2021 document	History, vision, mission, objectives, and graduate profiles	Identifying institutional orientation
Prescribed materials	19 books/sections	Objectives, progression, texts, exercises, and religious themes	Analyzing content and continuity
Interviews	1 administrator, 7 lecturers, 1 student	Selection rationale, methods, assessment, and relevance	Explaining decisions and experiences
Classroom observations	Six course clusters	Interaction, use of texts, application, and formative assessment	Comparing the written curriculum with practice

2.3 Instruments and trustworthiness

Three qualitative instruments structured data collection: a document-analysis matrix, semi-structured interview protocols, and a classroom-observation framework. The document matrix examined institutional objectives, course progression, text types, exercises, religious themes, and the functional role of religious content. Interview questions addressed course objectives, textbook-selection rationales, presentation and practice methods, the integration of Islamic values with linguistic knowledge, perceived relevance, and assessment patterns. The observation framework recorded classroom interaction, use of texts, movement between rules and application, and formative assessment practices. Because the study was qualitative, psychometric indices such as Cronbach's alpha were not applicable. Trustworthiness was addressed through source and method triangulation, a traceable chain of evidence linking claims to source codes, and deliberate attention to disconfirming cases, including outdated textbook themes and assessment practices that did not visibly align with broad curriculum goals.

2.4 Data collection procedure

Data collection followed a sequential but interconnected procedure. First, official curriculum documents and 19 prescribed books or instructional sections were collected, catalogued, and entered into the document-analysis matrix. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the program administrator, seven lecturers, and one student, after which participant identities were represented by source codes. Third, classroom observation notes from all six course clusters were examined to compare the written curriculum and reported teaching rationales with observed practice. Documentary, interview, and observational evidence was retained as separate source types during initial coding so that convergence and divergence could later be compared explicitly. Figure 1 summarizes the data-collection and analytical workflow.



Figure 1. Research procedure and analytical workflow

2.5 Data analysis

Qualitative analysis followed the data condensation, data display, and conclusion-drawing logic described by Miles et al. (2014), operationalized in four stages for this study. First, raw documentary, interview, and observational material was condensed to remove repetition while retaining source-specific evidence. Second, relevant segments were coded into seven categories: institutional orientation, progression, religious representation, religious content, performance competence, pedagogy, and assessment. Third, analytical matrices were used to compare curriculum documents with classroom practice and interview accounts, and to examine continuity and discontinuity across the six course clusters. Fourth, relationships among categories were interpreted through LSP principles, particularly needs and target-task orientation, and through constructive alignment between outcomes, learning activities, and assessment. Descriptive counts, such as the number of religious texts in selected textbook sections, were treated as corpus descriptions rather than population estimates. The source manuscript does not report the use of qualitative analysis software, ethics-committee approval, or consent procedures; these reporting details should be verified and added before submission [PERLU VERIFIKASI].

RESULTS

3.1 Institutional orientation toward religious language use

The curriculum documents indicate that the religious orientation of the program was embedded in its institutional history rather than added to an otherwise general-language curriculum. The institution that preceded STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya was founded in 1996 to teach Arabic and Islamic sciences and used an Arabic instructional series for non-native speakers associated with Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University. In the 2021 Curriculum Handbook, this relationship

reappears in the program's vision, mission, objectives, and graduate profiles. Alongside preparation for professional work in Arabic language education, the curriculum identifies religious commitments and includes preacher or religious communicator among the anticipated graduate roles. These documents position Arabic as an instrument for education, access to Islamic knowledge, and community religious communication.

Interview and observational evidence was consistent with this institutional orientation. The program administrator stated, "The Arabic Language Education Study Program was designed so that Arabic would serve as a means of understanding and teaching Islamic sciences" (PA-1, translated). Observation notes also recorded Islamic greetings, praise of God, blessings upon the Prophet, and references to prophets, Companions, and scholars in classroom explanations. These practices establish a visible religious learning environment and provide recurrent entry points into religious discourse. At the same time, the data distinguish a religious educational climate from a specific-purpose performance outcome. Broad goals such as "understanding Islamic sciences" were not consistently expressed as level-specific tasks with explicit performance criteria across the curriculum.

3.2 Material progression and the functions of religious content

The prescribed materials were vertically organized from foundational language work toward more advanced comprehension, analysis, and production. Students began with *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, which connected listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and everyday situations, and then moved to *qirā'ah-kitābah* materials that linked sound and written symbols. *Ta'bīr* developed from imitation and guided expression toward freer production, while *naḥw* and *ṣarf* progressed from basic forms to complex analysis, derivation, and dictionary use. *Qirā'ah* and *kitābah* moved from fluency and orthographic control toward comprehension, analysis, and composition, and *balāghah* focused progressively on imagery, style, meaning, and linguistic aesthetics. The overall sequence therefore displayed clear vertical progression within course clusters.

Religious content appeared throughout the curriculum rather than only in reading courses. Preparatory materials included Islamic greetings, the expression *al-ḥamdu lillāh*, Islamic names, and representations of Muslim dress. *Qirā'ah-kitābah* materials used Qur'anic chapters and verses for pronunciation, reading, and copying, while *ta'bīr* included worship, fasting, 'umrah, filial piety, equality, cleanliness, promise keeping, and narratives of the Companions. *Naḥw* and *ṣarf* drew on monotheism, prophets, pilgrimage, Ramadan, faith, and Islamic narratives, whereas *kitābah* and *balāghah* included Qur'anic passages, hadith, and poetry on advice and piety. In one analyzed *naḥw* section, 11 of 22 texts contained Islamic content, while 7 of 19 texts in an advanced section did so. These counts describe content density in the analyzed materials but do not by themselves establish competence attainment.

Across the corpus, religious elements performed at least three distinguishable functions. Religious representation referred to markers such as names, greetings, clothing, and familiar expressions that signaled institutional and cultural affiliation. Religious content referred to texts or themes, such as pilgrimage or stories of the Companions, that became material for reading, grammar, or vocabulary work. Religious-purpose competence referred to what students were expected to do with language in relation to Islamic knowledge, for example identifying an argument, explaining terminology, summarizing a source, comparing interpretations, or delivering a lesson. The first two functions were consistently visible in the materials, whereas the third appeared unevenly and was not formulated as a shared graded competence ladder across courses. Table 2 summarizes course progression, examples of religious content, and the performance gaps identified in the corpus.

Table 2. Course progression and functions of religious content

Course Cluster	Progression Path	Examples of Religious Content	Performance Gap
Ta'bīr	From guided dialogue to free expression	Worship, ethics, Muslim life, and sirah	Limited contemporary tasks for education and digital da'wah
Qirā'ah	Fluency, comprehension, analysis, and inference	Creed, Islamic history, and values	Limited disciplinary reading and source-comparison practice

Kitābah	Orthography and rules toward paragraphs and composition	Qur'anic verses, sīrah, worship, and ethics	Limited summarizing, documentation, and source-based writing
Naḥw	From simple to complex sentences and i'rāb	Qur'an, hadith, sīrah, and ethics	Relationship between structure and textual meaning is not consistently developed
Şarf	Conjugation, weak verbs, derivation, and dictionary use	Ramadan, prayer, faith, and Islamic narratives	Limited construction of terminological networks in the Islamic sciences
Balāghah	From concepts to analysis of imagery and style	Qur'an, hadith, and poetry on advice and piety	Limited use of rhetoric to analyze contemporary religious discourse

3.3 Teaching practices and task orientation

Interviews and observations showed a hybrid teaching pattern rather than reliance on a single method. Tasmi' and memorization were used for vocabulary, expressions, dialogues, morphological patterns, and selected rules, especially at foundational levels. Discussion typically followed reading in order to examine vocabulary, structure, ideas, and comprehension questions. Lecturers used both inductive teaching, in which rules were derived from examples, and deductive teaching, particularly when structures were complex or students needed direct clarification. Storytelling contextualized vocabulary and texts, and project-like activities were reported in ta'bīr and naḥw, although the available evidence did not document their procedures, products, or rubrics sufficiently to classify project-based learning as an established program-wide pattern.

The observations also showed that the same method could support different levels of performance depending on the task that followed it. Memorization expanded students' linguistic repertoire, but the records did not consistently show a subsequent requirement to use memorized language in novel interpretive or communicative tasks. Inductive work connected rules with examples, yet lecturer guidance sometimes remained dominant during the discovery process. Dialogue and discussion provided opportunities for interaction, but they were often anchored to textbook questions rather than extended to source comparison, justification, audience adaptation, or response to objections. The observed methods therefore contained resources for specific-purpose learning, but the target religious tasks were not consistently made the organizing endpoint of instruction. Table 3 presents the observed methods, their instructional value, and the development requirements inferred from the data.

Table 3. Teaching methods and their potential orientation toward religious tasks

Method	Observed Application	Instructional Value	Development Requirement
Tasmi' and memorization	Vocabulary, expressions, dialogues, word patterns, and rules	Strengthens language repertoire and retrieval speed	Follow memorization with comprehension or novel-use tasks
Dialogue and discussion	Reading texts, discussing meanings, and answering questions	Builds fluency, interpretation, and interaction	Add reasoning, comparison, and defense-of-position tasks
Inductive teaching	Presenting examples and deriving the rule	Connects form with evidence and develops analysis	Reduce lecturer dominance and increase student examination of evidence
Deductive teaching	Explaining the rule and applying it	Supports complex patterns and repairs misunderstanding	Use selectively with contextualized application
Storytelling	Explaining texts and vocabulary in narrative context	Connects language, values, history, and retelling	Transform narratives into summarizing, comparison, and production tasks
Projects	Indications in ta'bīr and naḥw	Potentially produces discourse or instructional materials	Specify products, procedures, time, and rubrics

3.4 Assessment practices and alignment

The program used diverse forms of assessment, including written tests, oral tests, dialogue performance, presentations, tasmi', memorization, and participation. In naḥw, written tests assessed i'rāb, rule explanation, and application; in şarf, they assessed conjugation, word patterns, and morphological change. Kitābah assessment addressed paragraph production and orthographic

application, while balāghah assessment focused on identifying and analyzing aesthetic features. Oral assessment included reading, explaining meaning, answering questions, conjugation, sentence construction, speaking, and expressing opinions. This diversity provided evidence of multiple language components and skills rather than dependence on a single examination format.

The alignment problem appeared when these assessment practices were compared with the broader graduate purposes. Institutional goals emphasized understanding Islamic sciences, teaching, and da'wah, but many assessment tasks remained centered on grammatical knowledge, direct comprehension, or general language performance. Some tasks approached the intended religious purposes, such as reading a text and explaining its meaning or presenting a grammatical concept, but the available corpus did not show stable rubrics for source comparison, teaching a religious concept to a defined audience, summarizing multiple sources, or producing documented da'wah discourse. Memorization also operated as both a teaching method and an assessment practice without consistent evidence that comprehension criteria were separately specified. Table 4 maps current assessment against intended purposes and shows which aspects were well represented and which required clearer performance evidence.

Across the four curriculum dimensions, the evidence formed a consistent pattern: institutional religious purposes were explicit, Islamic content was dense and vertically distributed, pedagogy combined multiple techniques, and assessment was varied, but horizontal integration across courses was less visible. A student could encounter a religious text in qirā'ah, analyze related structures in naḥw, examine derivations in ṣarf, and discuss stylistic effects in balāghah without necessarily completing a culminating task that required those resources to be integrated. The case can therefore be described empirically as a curriculum in which a specific religious purpose is distributed across layers and courses rather than concentrated in a single subject. Its principal strength is continuity of identity and content; its principal weakness is the absence of a shared map linking course-level learning to cumulative religious-language performance.

Table 4. Alignment among graduate purposes, current assessment, and identified gaps

Purpose	Current Assessment	Well-Measured Aspects	Aspects Requiring Development
Understanding Islamic sources	Reading, comprehension questions, and i'rāb	Decoding, structure, and direct meaning	Argumentation, terminology, comparison, and summarization
Teaching language or knowledge	Presentation of rules or content	Explanation and basic fluency	Lesson planning, simplification, and feedback
Da'wah and religious communication	Dialogue and opinion expression	Confidence and general interaction	Sermons, lessons, and responses with audience-specific content and language criteria
Academic competence	Written tests and analysis	Naḥw and ṣarf accuracy	Source-based writing, documentation, and synthesis
Digital competence	Not regularly evident	Not sufficiently evidenced	Instructional video, digital presentation, and reliable-source selection

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that religious purpose at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya is best understood as a curriculum-wide organizing tendency rather than a feature of one specialized course. This extends the usual LSP focus from a bounded ESP or EAP subject to a program in which specificity is dispersed across institutional aims, materials, classroom activity, and assessment. Classic and contemporary LSP work treats needs, target situations, and domain practices as the basis for specifying what learners should be able to do (Nunan, 1990; Boshier & Smalkoski, 2002; Liu & Hu, 2021). In the present case, however, the specialized purpose is already institutionally strong before target tasks are fully articulated. The conceptual value of the term distributed specific-purpose curriculum lies in capturing this configuration: specificity can be explicit at the level of mission and content while still remaining partially implicit at the level of performance. The distinction prevents religious density from being treated automatically as evidence of religious-language competence.

The strong institutional orientation is an asset because it provides a coherent rationale for why Arabic is taught, but LSP research suggests that broad purposes become pedagogically useful only when they are translated into concrete target tasks. Multi-source needs analyses in academic and professional settings have repeatedly shown that course priorities become clearer when

learners, teachers, and domain insiders identify the communicative activities required outside the language classroom (Serafini et al., 2015; Arias-Contreras & Moore, 2022; Smith et al., 2022; Huang & Yu, 2023). More recent work in engineering, aviation, and college EAP likewise reports mismatches when course materials or assessment are not sufficiently responsive to actual target practices (Nateghian, 2024; Treadaway & Read, 2025; Smith et al., 2025). Applied to this case, “understanding Islamic sciences” could be decomposed into tasks such as locating an argument in an unvowelled text, explaining technical terminology, comparing definitions across sources, or presenting a concise lesson for a specified audience. Such task specification would not replace the institution’s religious mission; it would make that mission teachable and assessable across levels.

The material analysis further shows why the distinction among religious representation, religious content, and religious-purpose competence is necessary. Specialized texts do not become effective specific-purpose materials simply because their topics belong to the target domain. ESP research on genre, disciplinary reading, and text accessibility shows that instructional value depends on what learners are asked to notice, interpret, and produce with those texts (Cheng, 2021; Rets et al., 2022; Casal et al., 2022; Huang & Wible, 2024). Authenticity also depends on correspondence with target language-use practices rather than on the origin or religious status of a text alone (Hasrol et al., 2022; Jurkovič, 2022). The older themes identified by a ta'bīr lecturer illustrate this point: a grammatically useful text may have decreasing situational relevance when its communicative scenario no longer reflects students’ present lives. The finding therefore supports retaining the graded textbook sequence while supplementing it with contemporary, credible religious and academic discourse that can support source-based reading, digital communication, and audience-sensitive production, consistent with contextual material evaluation in Arabic education (Mustain et al., 2025; Zakiyah et al., 2025).

The observed hybrid pedagogy should also be interpreted in functional rather than method-label terms. Memorization, drill, inductive analysis, direct explanation, dialogue, storytelling, and projects can all contribute to language learning when their role in a larger task sequence is clear. Local studies at the same or related institutions have reported benefits from drill, audiolingual practice, show-and-tell, and web-based project learning for particular Arabic skills (Alimuiddien et al., 2022; Shadiq & Mustain, 2023; Riduan & Mustain, 2024; Rahmah et al., 2024). International research similarly shows that specific-purpose pedagogy benefits from balancing explicit language work with situated communication, learner discovery, and task-supported performance (Chan, 2021; Guest & Le, 2024; Morgana, 2024). The present findings do not suggest abandoning memorization or grammar; instead, they suggest repositioning them as resources within a text-task cycle that moves from comprehension and linguistic analysis to controlled practice, independent production, and reflection. This interpretation is especially relevant in a curriculum where classical textual accuracy remains important but graduates are also expected to teach and communicate religious knowledge.

Assessment is the point at which the gap between institutional purpose and observable performance becomes most consequential. The program already uses multiple assessment formats, yet diversity of instruments is not the same as alignment. Constructive alignment requires the assessed action to correspond to the intended learning outcome, and language-curriculum research has shown that communicative goals can be weakened when assessment continues to privilege discrete or decontextualized knowledge (Biggs, 1996; Rouffet et al., 2023). Research on language-assessment authenticity similarly emphasizes the need to compare test tasks with the characteristics of the target language-use domain (Hasrol et al., 2022), while portfolio and domain-specific assessment studies show the value of performance evidence collected across multiple tasks (Abrar-ul-Hassan et al., 2021; Grande et al., 2022). In the present case, a stable rubric for explaining a religious text, teaching a concept, synthesizing sources, or delivering audience-appropriate da'wah would make the intended graduate profile more visible in assessment. The phonological difficulties documented by Gogari et al. (2024) also suggest that performance rubrics should include relevant linguistic dimensions rather than relying only on written grammatical accuracy.

A further contribution of the case is the identification of horizontal integration as a distinct curriculum problem. Vertical progression was visible within ta'bīr, qirā'ah, kitābah, naḥw, šarf, and balāghah, but the data provided less evidence of culminating tasks that required students to combine resources from several courses. Research in specific-purpose and disciplinary literacy contexts

shows that complex performance often depends on integration across language form, genre, content knowledge, and situated practice (Al Hilali & McKinley, 2021; Rau, 2021; Rajendram & Shi, 2022). Curriculum reform in ESAP likewise benefits from collaboration across subject boundaries and from tasks that make disciplinary learning practices explicit (Yung & Fong, 2024). For this Arabic curriculum, a cross-course task such as preparing a short lesson from a classical source could require qirā'ah for comprehension, naḥw and ṣarf for linguistic evidence, balāghah for interpretation, kitābah for written organization, and ta'bīr for oral delivery. Such integration would make the distributed curriculum function as a coordinated system rather than as a collection of religiously relevant courses.

The development framework derived from the findings should therefore be read as a sequence of curriculum decisions, not as a tested intervention. First, multi-stakeholder needs analysis would identify and prioritize religious, academic, educational, and da'wah tasks across learner levels. Second, those tasks could be converted into graded performance outcomes so that progression is described in terms of what students can do with texts and audiences, not only which grammatical topics they have completed. Third, contemporary authentic materials could supplement the existing textbook series, while teaching would use text-task cycles that connect comprehension, analysis, practice, production, and reflection. Fourth, assessment portfolios and task-specific rubrics could provide direct evidence of graduate-profile attainment, and a shared cross-course matrix could clarify where each competence is introduced, practiced, and assessed. This sequence is consistent with needs-responsive curriculum design and the increasing attention to specialized, situated, and adaptable language instruction in recent LSP research (Tang, 2023; Dang et al., 2024; Li, 2024). Table 5 summarizes the framework while preserving the distinction between a recommendation derived from the case and an empirically validated product.

Table 5. Development framework for a distributed curriculum for religious purposes

Principle	Action	Expected Outcome
Needs analysis	Interview students, alumni, lecturers, Islamic-science specialists, and analyze target tasks	Needs map prioritized by level and importance
Performance outcomes	Formulate observable actions and criteria for comprehension, analysis, and production	Competence ladder from foundational reading to analysis and communication
Contemporary authentic materials	Add credible digital, audio, academic, and institutional religious texts	Clearer relevance to current study and professional contexts
Text-task cycle	Comprehension, analysis, practice, production, and reflection	Integration of rules, skills, and religious knowledge
Performance assessment	Portfolios, microteaching, summaries, speeches, and digital products	Direct evidence of graduate-profile attainment
Alignment governance	Use shared matrices across courses and conduct periodic review	Reduced repetition and gaps, with clearer distribution of responsibility

The interpretation should remain bounded by the evidence available in this single case. Only one student was interviewed, so learner experience was not sampled broadly enough to establish common student perceptions; the archived observation notes also lacked complete dates and visit durations, limiting any frequency-based interpretation. In addition, the corpus contained insufficient student work and assessment rubrics to judge the quality of actual performance outcomes, and the study did not test whether the proposed development framework improves learning. These limitations are important because the concept of a distributed specific-purpose curriculum is analytically generated from one institution rather than statistically generalized. Future research could conduct multi-stakeholder target-task needs analysis, collect longitudinal student performance, validate performance rubrics, and compare similar Arabic programs across Islamic higher education institutions. Such work would test whether the alignment patterns identified here recur elsewhere and whether the proposed framework can support measurable improvement without reducing the distinctive religious and textual character of Arabic education.

CONCLUSION

This study found that religious purposes are not confined to a single Arabic for Religious Purposes course at STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya. They are distributed across institutional objectives, prescribed materials, classroom practices, and assessment, producing a curriculum with

strong religious identity, dense Islamic content, and clear vertical progression within major course clusters. The analysis also identified a recurrent alignment gap: broad goals related to Islamic knowledge, education, and da'wah were not consistently translated into shared, graded performance outcomes and rubrics across courses. The distinction among religious representation, religious content, and religious-purpose competence helps explain why the presence of Islamic material should not be treated as equivalent to demonstrated functional ability.

Conceptually, the study proposes the distributed specific-purpose curriculum as a way to analyze programs in which a specialized purpose is dispersed across a curriculum rather than located in one designated subject. Practically, the findings support a development sequence based on multi-stakeholder needs analysis, explicit target tasks, contemporary authentic materials, integrated text-task cycles, performance assessment, and cross-course alignment governance. These recommendations are derived from the case and have not yet been validated as an intervention. Because the evidence comes from one institution, one student interview, incomplete observation metadata, and limited samples of student work and rubrics, broader claims should be made cautiously. Comparative and longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether the proposed framework can improve the alignment between Arabic language learning and the religious, academic, educational, and communicative performances expected of graduates.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

M conceptualized the study, designed the qualitative framework, collected field data, conducted document analysis, and drafted the original manuscript. **UB** supervised the research design, refined the theoretical grounding in Language for Specific Purposes, and reviewed the analytical matrices. **HZ** provided critical feedback on curriculum alignment, guided thematic interpretation, and revised the manuscript.

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