Student-Centered Arabic Teaching Materials in Internasional Undergraduate Programs: Empirical Evidence from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

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Abstract: Student-centered learning (SCL) has been widely validated in foreign language education, yet empirical evidence from Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), particularly in Islamic higher education contexts, remains limited. This study investigates how student-centered principles are embedded in Arabic teaching materials and examines their pedagogical impact in an international higher education program. Employing a mixed-methods classroom-based design, data were collected from 15 international students through pre- and post-tests, structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with a purposive sub-sample of six students. Quantitative findings reveal statistically significant improvements in Arabic learning outcomes, alongside high levels of student engagement, autonomy, and collaboration. Qualitative evidence demonstrates that teaching materials functioned as mediational artifacts, structuring peer interaction and promoting active language use in multilingual classrooms. By foregrounding teaching materials as the primary vehicle of student-centered pedagogy, this study extends SCL research and repositions Islamic higher education as a globally relevant site of pedagogical innovation. The findings contribute to Arabic language education by offering empirically grounded insights into material design for international programs and by advancing a material-centered understanding of student-centered learning in applied linguistics.

Keywords: student-centered learning; Arabic as a foreign language; teaching materials; international programs.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, student-centered learning (SCL) has gained widespread recognition as a dominant pedagogical orientation in higher education and second language instruction (Brinton, 2018; Jacobs & Renandya, 2016). Grounded in constructivist and sociocultural theories, SCL conceptualizes learners as active participants who construct knowledge through interaction, reflection, and meaningful engagement with learning tasks, materials, and peers (August & Henderson, 2025; Vagele-Kricina, 2021). A substantial body of empirical research—particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and other widely taught European languages—has demonstrated that student-centered approaches contribute to increased learner autonomy, sustained motivation, enhanced communicative competence, and improved long-term language retention. These outcomes have led to the institutionalization of SCL within international curricula, accreditation mechanisms, and quality assurance frameworks across global higher education (Alrabai, 2021; Alshraah et al., 2023; Kayyali, 2024).

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Nevertheless, the global diffusion of student-centered learning has been uneven across language education contexts. While SCL has been extensively examined in EFL and other major world languages such as Chinese and Spanish, Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) remains marginal in this line of inquiry (Yaakub et al., 2012). Much of the existing AFL scholarship continues to prioritize grammatical explanation, textual interpretation, or the use of classical sources, frequently within instructional models that position teachers as the primary authorities (Grozdanoski, 2019; Versteegh, 2018). Consequently, Arabic language pedagogy is often implicitly framed as incompatible with learner-centered innovation, reinforcing the perception that Arabic—due to its structural and textual complexity—is best taught through transmission-oriented approaches.

The persistent imbalance in the literature on student-centered learning reflects not merely a lack of empirical attention but a more fundamental epistemological orientation within applied linguistics. The long-standing dominance of English-centered research paradigms has shaped implicit assumptions regarding which languages, institutions, and regions are recognized as legitimate sites of pedagogical knowledge production. Consequently, instructional practices developed in non-Western and Islamic higher education contexts are frequently framed as context-specific adaptations rather than as contributions with broader theoretical relevance. This positioning marginalizes Arabic language education and restricts its potential to inform global debates on student-centered pedagogy.

Within this landscape, teaching materials represent a crucial yet under-theorized dimension of student-centered learning. While SCL is commonly examined through the lenses of teaching strategies or learner characteristics, pedagogical principles are ultimately enacted through instructional materials. Materials mediate not only curricular content but also learner agency, interactional patterns, and engagement with linguistic and cultural meaning (Rosyad & Kabir, 2025). In Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) context, however, many instructional materials continue to privilege decontextualized grammar practice, teacher-dominated explanation, and culturally uniform representations (Jamil et al., 2024; Kamal, 2025). Such features are particularly problematic in international programs, where learners' diverse linguistic repertoires, educational trajectories, and cultural experiences necessitate materials that facilitate interaction, autonomy, and intercultural negotiation.

International Arabic language programs thus constitute a particularly productive site for examining the pedagogical affordances of student-centered teaching materials. These programs are characterized by multilingual and multicultural classrooms in which traditional teacher-centered materials often prove insufficient for sustaining engagement or fostering meaningful communication. By contrast, materials grounded in tasks, collaboration, and contextual relevance have the capacity to reconceptualize Arabic learning as an active, socially mediated process rather than as the passive accumulation of linguistic knowledge.

Despite this pedagogical promise, empirical research on student-centered Arabic teaching materials in international higher education remains limited. Existing studies frequently rely on conceptual discussions or small-scale descriptive analyses, offering little insight into how such materials operate in authentic classroom settings or how learners experience them (Soliman & Khalil, 2024). Systematic investigations that connect material design with learner perceptions and measurable learning outcomes are particularly scarce, especially in studies conducted outside dominant Western academic environments.

Islamic higher education institutions that host international programs occupy a strategic yet insufficiently recognized position in this regard. Situated at the intersection of religious tradition, institutional reform, and global engagement, these institutions are increasingly involved in international education. Nevertheless, pedagogical innovations emerging from such contexts are often treated as locally bounded, thereby diminishing their perceived contribution to international scholarship.

This study challenges these assumptions by positioning an international Arabic language undergraduate program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta as a globally relevant pedagogical case. As an Islamic university committed to internationalization, academic modernization, and moderate Islamic values, UIN Sunan Kalijaga enrolls international students who study Arabic for academic, professional, and intercultural purposes. The program's multilingual classrooms, varied proficiency levels, and explicit orientation toward student-centered learning render it an analytically rich context for examining how student-centered Arabic teaching materials mediate learning in complex educational environments.

Importantly, UIN Sunan Kalijaga is conceptualized not as an exceptional case but as representative of a broader category of international Islamic higher education institutions increasingly integrated into global academic networks. The study is theoretically grounded in constructivist and sociocultural perspectives, viewing teaching materials as mediational artifacts that structure participation and interaction. Empirically, it employs a mixed-methods, classroom-based approach to capture both learning outcomes and learner experiences. Through this framework, the study seeks to contribute to the diversification of knowledge production in applied linguistics and to expand the empirical and theoretical scope of Arabic as Foreign Language research.

METHOD
Research Design
This study adopted a mixed-methods, classroom-based research design to examine both the implementation and pedagogical effects of student-centered Arabic teaching materials within a higher education setting. A mixed-methods approach was methodologically justified, as the research questions necessitated the integration of measurable learning outcomes with nuanced insights into learners' perceptions and classroom practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Accordingly, a convergent parallel design was employed, whereby quantitative and qualitative data were gathered concurrently, analyzed independently, and subsequently integrated to strengthen analytical rigor and validity.

The study was conducted in an international Arabic language undergraduate program at an Islamic higher education institution. Participants included international undergraduate students, with 15 students involved in the quantitative phase and a purposively selected sub-sample of six students participating in qualitative data collection. All participation was voluntary and preceded by informed consent, with participant diversity treated as an analytical strength rather than a methodological limitation.

The teaching materials examined in this study were student-centered Arabic instructional modules developed and implemented by the lecturer or course instructors. These materials were systematically designed to operationalize student-centered learning principles through the following features:
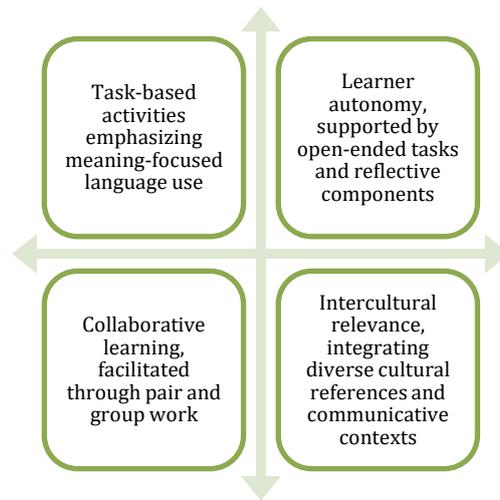
Task-based activities emphasizing meaning-focused language use	Learner autonomy, supported by open-ended tasks and reflective components
Collaborative learning, facilitated through pair and group work	Intercultural relevance, integrating diverse cultural references and communicative contexts

Diagram 1. student-centered learning principles

Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were gathered using two main instruments. First, Arabic language proficiency tests were administered as pre- and post-tests to assess changes in learners' language performance across the instructional period. These assessments targeted reading comprehension and communicative competence in line with the program's learning objectives. Second, structured questionnaires were employed to elicit students' perceptions of the teaching materials and their engagement with student-centered learning, using a five-point Likert scale. Both instruments underwent expert review by specialists in Arabic language education to ensure content validity.

Qualitative data collection drew on multiple sources to facilitate triangulation. Classroom observations documented patterns of learner interaction, engagement, and material use, while semi-structured interviews with selected students explored their experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges associated with the materials. In addition, document analysis of the instructional materials examined the extent to which student-centered principles were embedded in task design and content. These methods were chosen to capture dimensions of classroom practice not fully accessible through quantitative data.

Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, with pre- and post-test scores compared using paired-sample tests. Questionnaire responses were examined for patterns of perception and engagement, with statistical assumptions assessed prior to analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically through iterative coding, progressing from open to axial coding. Integration occurred during interpretation, where quantitative trends were examined alongside qualitative themes. Rigor was ensured through methodological triangulation, expert validation, transparent procedures, reflexive analysis, and adherence to ethical standards, including informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality (Sugiyono, 2023).

RESULTS
Student-Centered Features Embedded in Arabic Teaching Materials

Document analysis was conducted on 8 instructional units used throughout one academic term. The analysis revealed systematic integration of student-centered learning principles across all units.
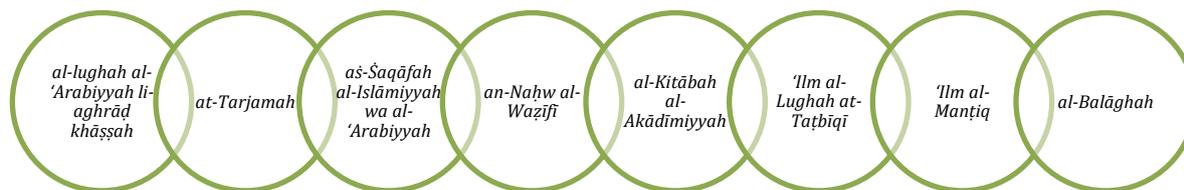
Diagram 2. Eight of Instructional Arabic Teaching Materials

Of the eight units analyzed, 75% (6 units) included task-based activities requiring learners to actively produce spoken or written Arabic in response to contextualized prompts. These tasks consisted of information-gap activities, short oral presentations, collaborative dialogue construction, and problem-solving exercises. Grammatical explanations were present but consistently embedded within communicative tasks rather than presented as isolated instructional segments.

Learner autonomy was reflected in 5 out of 8 units (62.5%), where students were allowed to select discussion topics, choose textual references, or determine task outcomes based on their academic or cultural interests. Reflective learning prompts, including brief self-assessment questions and learning journals, appeared in 4 units (50%).

Collaborative learning constituted a core feature of the materials. Pair and group work activities were identified in all instructional units (100%), with explicit instructions encouraging peer negotiation of meaning. Task guidelines explicitly discouraged grouping by shared first language in 6 units, promoting multilingual interaction.

Intercultural relevance was embedded through texts and communicative scenarios representing academic, social, and professional contexts from multiple cultural settings. Rather than privileging a single cultural perspective, the materials incorporated references relevant to international learners from diverse regions.

Students' Perceptions of Teaching Materials

Questionnaire Reliability and Overview: The structured questionnaire consisted of 20 items measuring four dimensions: engagement, learner autonomy, collaboration, and material relevance. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency. Responses were collected from 15 international students, representing 100% of the enrolled students in the courses examined.

Engagement and Motivation: Descriptive analysis indicated high levels of student engagement. On a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), engagement-related items yielded a mean score of M = 4.32 (SD = 0.51). A total of 86.7% (13 students) agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching materials encouraged active participation during class sessions. Similarly, 80% (12 students) reported that the tasks increased their motivation to use Arabic in classroom interactions.

Learner Autonomy: Items related to learner autonomy produced a mean score of M = 4.18 (SD = 0.56). Specifically, 73.3% (11 students) agreed that the materials allowed them to make choices regarding task completion, while 66.7% (10 students) reported that reflective components helped them monitor their own learning progress.

Collaboration and Peer Interaction: Collaboration-related items received consistently high ratings, with a mean score of M = 4.41 (SD = 0.48). A total of 93.3% (14 students) agreed that working in pairs or groups helped them understand learning

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materials more effectively. All respondents reported frequent interaction with peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds during task-based activities.

Learning Outcomes

Pre-test and Post-test Performance: Arabic language proficiency was measured through pre-tests and post-tests focusing on reading comprehension and communicative competence. Data from 15 students were included in the analysis. The mean pre-test score was M = 62.4 (SD = 6.8), while the mean post-test score increased to M = 76.9 (SD = 7.2). A paired-sample t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores (t (14) = 6.21, p < .001).

Skill-Specific Performance: When analyzed by skill area, improvements were observed across all measured components. Mean reading comprehension scores increased from 64.1 (SD = 7.1) to 78.3 (SD = 6.9), while communicative competence scores increased from 60.7 (SD = 6.5) to 75.4 (SD = 7.6).

Variability Across Learners: Descriptive analysis indicated variation in learning gains among participants. Students with lower initial proficiency (pre-test scores below the cohort mean) demonstrated larger relative gains, ranging from 18 to 22 points, while students with higher initial proficiency showed gains ranging from 8 to 12 points.

Classroom Observations and Interviews

Classroom observations were conducted over 5 instructional sessions. Observational data focused on learner engagement, interaction patterns, and use of teaching materials. Across observed sessions, students were consistently engaged in task-based activities. Learners frequently referred to the teaching materials during peer interaction, using them as procedural guides rather than authoritative texts. Teacher talks time was limited, with instructors primarily facilitating task transitions and providing brief feedback.

Peer interaction was sustained and purposeful. Students engaged in clarification requests, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative problem-solving. Instances of code-switching were observed during initial task planning, followed by increased use of Arabic during task execution.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 purposively selected students representing diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels.

Table 1. Interview Aspects with International Class Students

Perceived Role of Teaching Materials	Interviewees consistently described the materials as flexible learning frameworks. Students reported that tasks encouraged active language use and reduced reliance on teacher explanation.
Engagement and Participation	Participants reported increased involvement in classroom activities. Several students contrasted the materials with previous Arabic learning experiences that emphasized memorization and grammar explanation.
Intercultural Interaction	Students highlighted that materials prompted interaction with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Tasks requiring personal or cultural input were frequently mentioned as facilitating extended discussion in Arabic.

Observation and interview data revealed consistent patterns of material use. Tasks were introduced briefly by instructors and enacted primarily through peer interaction.

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Students adapted task instructions to suit group dynamics while maintaining task objectives.

The results indicate that the Arabic teaching materials analyzed in this study embedded student-centered features such as task-based learning, learner autonomy, collaboration, and intercultural relevance. Quantitative findings showed positive student perceptions and statistically significant improvements in learning outcomes, while qualitative data documented active engagement and material-mediated interaction in international classrooms.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine how student-centered principles are embedded in Arabic teaching materials used in an international undergraduate program and to assess their pedagogical impact through empirical classroom-based evidence. The findings reported in the Results section demonstrate consistent patterns across quantitative and qualitative data, revealing that student-centered Arabic teaching materials were associated with high learner engagement, positive student perceptions, and statistically significant improvements in learning outcomes. This section discusses these findings in dialogue with existing literature and situates the study's contributions within broader theoretical and empirical debates in applied linguistics and language education.

Student-Centered Learning Beyond English-Centric Paradigms

One of the most salient contributions of this study lies in its empirical extension of student-centered learning (SCL) into Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL), a domain that has remained peripheral in mainstream SCL research. Much of the foundational literature on student-centered pedagogy has been developed within English-dominant contexts, where learner autonomy, task-based learning, and collaborative interaction are well-established instructional norms (Bánhegyi & Fajt, 2025; Nazim et al., 2024c, 2024a, 2024b). The present findings challenge the implicit assumption that these pedagogical principles are inherently tied to English language education or Western institutional settings.

The documented improvement in Arabic learning outcomes and the high levels of learner engagement observed in this study suggest that student-centered learning is pedagogically transferable across languages when operationalized through appropriately designed teaching materials. This supports a growing body of scholarship that calls for decentering English in applied linguistics and expanding empirical inquiry into underrepresented languages and contexts. By demonstrating that student-centered Arabic teaching materials can function effectively in international classrooms, this study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of SCL as a language-independent pedagogical framework.

From a constructivist and sociocultural perspective, the effectiveness of the Arabic teaching materials examined in this study can be attributed to their grounding in natural communicative situations and their systematic development based on early-stage learner needs analysis. Constructivist theory posits that learning occurs when learners actively construct meaning through engagement with relevant tasks, while sociocultural theory emphasizes interaction and mediation as central to language development (Alkhudiry, 2022; August & Henderson, 2025; Jumaat et al., 2017). The materials functioned as mediational artifacts that structured opportunities for meaningful input, collaborative interaction, and purposeful output, thereby supporting the development of both

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receptive and productive Arabic skills. The observed improvements in listening comprehension and communicative competence indicate that situationally authentic tasks facilitated learners' participation in socially situated language use rather than isolated form-focused practice (Khair, 2025; Rosyad et al., 2023). These findings reinforce student-centered learning as a theoretically grounded and pedagogically effective framework in Arabic Language Education at the tertiary level, particularly within programs seeking to align instructional design with learners' communicative and academic realities.

The study does not merely replicate established SCL models in a new language context. Instead, it illustrates how student-centered principles are recontextualized through Arabic teaching materials that account for linguistic complexity, cultural diversity, and varied learner motivations. This recontextualization underscores the adaptability of SCL and challenges deterministic views that portray Arabic as resistant to communicative and learner-centered pedagogy.

Teaching Materials as Mediational Artifacts

A key theoretical contribution of this study is its material-centered perspective on student-centered learning. While prior research has frequently emphasized teacher practices or learner strategies, the present findings foreground teaching materials as the primary mediational artifacts through which student-centered pedagogy is enacted. The results demonstrate that the analyzed materials consistently structured classroom interaction by prioritizing tasks, collaboration, and learner choice, thereby shaping how students engaged with Arabic during instruction.

This finding aligns with sociocultural theory, which conceptualizes learning as mediated by cultural tools, including texts and instructional materials (Alkhudiry, 2022; Antón, 2014). In this study, teaching materials did not function as authoritative repositories of linguistic knowledge but rather as scaffolding devices that facilitated peer interaction and meaning making. Students' descriptions of materials as "guides" or "frameworks" further reinforce this interpretation, indicating a shift in the perceived role of instructional texts from objects of memorization to resources for action.
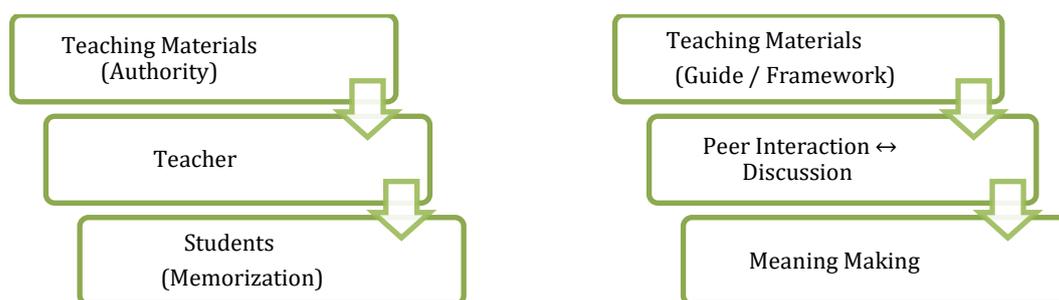

Diagram 3. Shifting Role of Teaching Materials

Table 2. Conceptual Contrast

Traditional	Bases on Study
Authority	Scaffolding
Memorization	Meaning Making
Teacher/Text-Centered	Student & Peer-Centered
Passive	Active And Collaborative

By empirically demonstrating how materials mediate student-centered learning in Arabic classrooms, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature. It suggests that pedagogical innovation in language education cannot be fully understood without close attention to material design. This insight has implications beyond Arabic language education, highlighting the need for material-focused analyses in studies of learner-centered pedagogy across languages.

Learner Engagement, Autonomy, and Collaboration in International Classrooms

Student engagement is a critical factor in academic achievement and is influenced by various factors such as choice, autonomy, and shared decision-making. Teacher-student interactions and the role of educators as social agents are crucial in fostering student autonomy and engagement through supportive and interactive contexts (Han, 2021; Nerlino, 2025). The high levels of reported engagement, autonomy, and collaboration observed in this study resonate with established findings in student-centered language education research. However, the international and multilingual nature of the classrooms examined adds an important dimension to these findings. In contrast to monolingual or culturally homogeneous settings, international classrooms introduce additional layers of complexity, including divergent educational expectations, linguistic repertoires, and cultural norms.

The findings suggest that student-centered Arabic teaching materials played a central role in managing this complexity. Tasks that required collaboration across linguistic and cultural boundaries encouraged students to negotiate meaning and share responsibility for learning outcomes. This process aligns with sociocultural accounts of language development that emphasize interaction as a driver of learning (Eun, 2016). These interactions help in the development of social resources necessary for language learning, such as motivation and socialization (Carhill-Poza & Kurata, 2020). Moreover, the materials' intercultural relevance appeared to support sustained interaction by providing content that resonated with learners' diverse backgrounds.

Notably, the observed patterns of peer interaction challenge deficit-oriented narratives that portray international students as passive or overly dependent on teacher guidance. Instead, the results indicate that when provided with appropriately designed materials, international learners actively engage in collaborative learning and exercise agency in their use of the target language. This finding reinforces arguments for designing pedagogy that leverages, rather than suppresses, the diversity inherent in international classrooms.
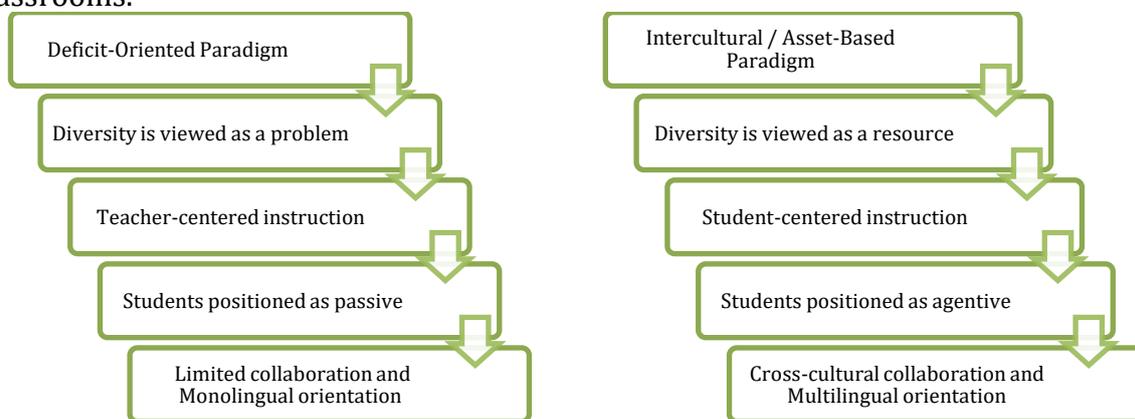

Diagram 4. From Deficit Narratives to Collaborative Agency in International Classrooms

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The statistically significant improvement in pre-test and post-test scores provides quantitative evidence of the pedagogical effectiveness of student-centered Arabic teaching materials. While the sample size reflects the realities of classroom-based research in international programs, the consistency of learning gains across participants strengthens the credibility of the findings. The observed pattern in which learners with lower initial proficiency demonstrated larger relative gains is consistent with previous research on task-based and learner-centered instruction, which suggests that such approaches may be particularly beneficial for learners who struggle in teacher-centered environments.

The study does not claim that student-centered materials alone account for learning gains. Rather, the findings indicate that material design constitutes a critical component of a broader pedagogical ecology that includes teacher facilitation, peer interaction, and institutional support. By isolating the role of materials within this ecology, the study contributes a more nuanced understanding of how learning outcomes are shaped in student-centered environments.
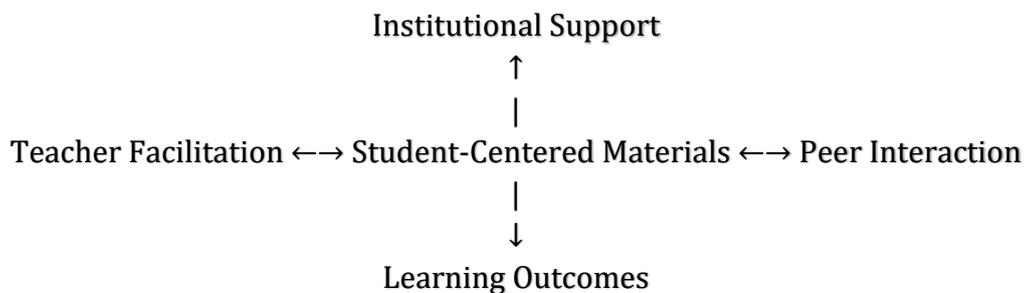
<p align="center">
Institutional Support
↑
|
Teacher Facilitation ←→ Student-Centered Materials ←→ Peer Interaction
|
↓
Learning Outcomes
</p>

Diagram 5: Material Design within a Student-Centered Pedagogical Ecology

These findings also have implications for ongoing debates regarding evidence-based practice in language education. The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence presented in this study demonstrates the value of mixed-methods research in capturing both the measurable and experiential dimensions of learning. Such methodological pluralism is increasingly recognized as essential for advancing applied linguistics research that is both rigorous and contextually grounded (Riazi, 2016).

Implications for Arabic Language Education

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on Arabic language pedagogy in higher education by problematizing the continued reliance on teacher-centered instructional materials. The results suggest that learning materials grounded in student-centered principles—particularly those incorporating task-based, collaborative, and interculturally oriented activities—are more effective in addressing the communicative and academic needs of international learners. This aligns with prior research demonstrating the efficacy of task-based learning (TBL) in facilitating authentic language use beyond the classroom, especially in contexts that demand intercultural engagement, such as study abroad programs (Camus & Advani, 2021). However, the present findings extend existing scholarship by emphasizing the role of transcultural content within task-based frameworks, suggesting that linguistic competence alone is insufficient without the development of intercultural communicative awareness.

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Collaborative tasks involving learners from diverse cultural backgrounds appear to function not merely as pedagogical tools, but as sites of negotiated meaning that foster critical intercultural reflection (Juan-Garau & Jacob, 2015; Yamamoto, 2004). Consequently, these findings call for a reconceptualization of Arabic language curricula that moves beyond functional language training toward an integrative model combining linguistic, intercultural, and critical competencies.

Second, the findings engage directly with theoretical debates in applied linguistics concerning the locus of pedagogical change, particularly the relative roles of methodology, teacher agency, and instructional materials. From a materials development perspective, the results resonate with Tomlinson's argument that teaching materials function as a primary carrier of pedagogical principles, shaping learners' cognitive and affective engagement regardless of teachers' methodological intentions (Tomlinson, 2012). The present study extends this view by demonstrating that systematically designed materials can mitigate pedagogical variability among instructors from heterogeneous educational backgrounds, thereby supporting curricular coherence. In this respect, materials operate not merely as supplements to pedagogy but as enactments of it.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on task-based and collaborative activities aligns with Ellis's framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), particularly the claim that meaning-focused tasks promote authentic language use and interaction-driven learning (Ellis, 2017b, 2017a). However, the findings also suggest a need to move beyond a narrow interpretation of TBLT by foregrounding intercultural and transcultural dimensions of task design. This position intersects with Kumaravadivelu's post method pedagogy, which critiques the overgeneralization of universal methods and advocates for context-sensitive, principle-based pedagogical practices (Akbari, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The materials examined in this study appear to operationalize such post method principles by embedding flexibility, learner agency, and contextual relevance within task structures.

Finally, the observed impact of interculturally oriented tasks can be theoretically situated within Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), particularly the integration of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2020). The findings suggest that instructional materials designed with intercultural objectives can function as sites of negotiated meaning, enabling learners to develop not only linguistic proficiency but also reflective and critical engagement with cultural difference. Taken together, these results contribute to a growing body of scholarship advocating for an integrative model of Arabic as a Foreign Language curriculum design that synthesizes task-based pedagogy, materials-driven reform, and intercultural competence development.

A central argumentative move of this study is its deliberate repositioning of an Islamic higher education institution from the perceived periphery of applied linguistics research to a site of global pedagogical relevance. Engaging directly with center–periphery critiques articulated by Canagarajah (Canagarajah, 2002, 2005), the study challenges the entrenched assumption that pedagogical theory and innovation predominantly originate from Western, Anglophone, or Global North institutions, while contexts in the Global South merely serve as sites of theory implementation. Instead, the research context is conceptualized as representative of a growing constellation of international Arabic language programs that confront shared challenges related to multilingualism, learner diversity, and the negotiation of local epistemologies with global

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pedagogical norms. This positioning aligns with Pennycook's call for a critical applied linguistics that foregrounds the politics of knowledge production and interrogates whose pedagogical practices are legitimized as theory (Pennycook, 2021). From the perspective of epistemic justice, the study resists deficit-oriented framings of Islamic higher education by affirming it as a legitimate knowledge-producing site rather than a marginal or exceptional case. Moreover, echoing Kubota's decolonial critique of linguistic universalism (Kubota, 2024), the study advances a pluralized understanding of pedagogical expertise, one that recognizes contextually grounded insights as central to, rather than derivative of, global theory-building. In doing so, the study contributes to a more inclusive and epistemologically diverse conception of Arabic language pedagogy in international higher education.

Taken together, the findings suggest the potential for re-examining Arabic language pedagogy as an evolving field that can inform broader discussions on student-centered learning. By offering empirically grounded insights into materials-mediated instruction in an international context, this study contributes to addressing underexplored areas in the literature and indicates possible directions for future research and pedagogical development in international language education.

While this study offers several pedagogical and theoretical contributions, its limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size, a common constraint in international and multilingual classroom research, limits the scope of analytical generalization and calls for caution in extrapolating the findings. Future research should therefore extend this work through multi-institutional or comparative designs that examine diverse material types and instructional contexts, while also incorporating affective and sociocultural variables such as learner identity, investment, and intercultural communicative competence. Moreover, longitudinal research is needed to assess the durability of learning gains associated with student-centered materials and to examine how sustained engagement with interculturally oriented, task-based pedagogy shapes learners' long-term participation in Arabic language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence suggesting that student-centered Arabic teaching materials can function as effective pedagogical mediators in international higher education contexts. The observed learning gains and indications of learner engagement challenge the assumption that Arabic language instruction necessarily depends on teacher-centered transmission. Instead, the findings indicate that systematically embedding student-centered principles in instructional materials may support more interactive and collaborative learning experiences for international undergraduate students.

Beyond pedagogical implications, the study contributes to applied linguistics research by extending discussions of student-centered learning to a non–English-dominant and non-Western institutional context. By positioning an Islamic higher education institution as a relevant site of pedagogical inquiry, the study responds to calls to diversify the geographical and epistemological bases of language education research, while maintaining caution regarding the generalizability of its findings.

Theoretically, the study supports a materials-oriented view of student-centered learning, emphasizing teaching materials as mediational artifacts that shape classroom interaction and learning opportunities. Empirically, it aligns with calls for classroom-based, mixed-methods research that integrates learning outcomes with learner

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perspectives. Future research employing longitudinal and cross-institutional designs is needed to examine the sustainability and transferability of student-centered Arabic teaching materials across diverse international settings.

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