



Code-Mixing as an Epistemological Strategy in Arabic Semantic Learning: An Ethnopedagogical Study in Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract

The growing emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy has highlighted the need to integrate indigenous knowledge into language education; however, limited attention has been given to how local cultural values can function as epistemological resources in Arabic semantic learning. This study examines how code-mixing serves as an epistemological strategy for connecting Arabic semantic concepts with the indigenous values of Gorontalo, Indonesia, namely tulodu (exemplary conduct), lo lipu (social affection), and momuliyo (dignified patience). Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis involving Arabic language lecturers and undergraduate students at an Islamic higher education institution. The data were analyzed using an integrated framework combining Muysken's code-mixing typology, contextual semantics, and ethnopedagogical principles. The findings reveal that code-mixing functions not merely as a linguistic practice but as a pedagogical and epistemological mechanism that contextualizes meaning, facilitates semantic comprehension, and promotes moral and cultural internalization. By linking abstract Arabic concepts with culturally familiar references, learners develop deeper cognitive, affective, and reflective engagement with language. The study contributes to the advancement of multilingual education and ethnopedagogical scholarship by demonstrating how indigenous knowledge can enrich semantic learning and offers a culturally grounded model for language education in multicultural and religiously diverse contexts.

A. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the expansion of multilingual education has transformed language learning across culturally diverse societies. Yet a persistent paradox remains unresolved. While contemporary educational discourse increasingly advocates culturally responsive and contextualized pedagogies, language instruction in many higher education settings continues to prioritize grammatical competence and textual mastery over culturally grounded meaning-making (Ritonga et al., 2023; Pardo-Baldoví et al., 2023; Monbec, 2018). This tendency is particularly evident in the teaching of Arabic as a non-native language, where learning is often evaluated through linguistic accuracy rather than learners' ability to connect language with cultural experience, moral values, and social realities (Nugraha et al., 2025). Consequently, language is frequently treated as a formal system detached from the contexts in which meaning is constructed, creating a gap between linguistic knowledge and lived experience.

The Indonesian context provides a particularly important setting for examining this issue. Arabic language pedagogy is shaped by a sociocultural environment characterized by multilingual interaction, local wisdom, and strong religious traditions (Ritonga et al., 2023; Saifullah & Nurjanah, 2024). In university classrooms, interactions among Arabic, Indonesian, and regional languages frequently lead to code-mixing that extends beyond communicative convenience (Nur, 2021; Tamara, 2021). Through these linguistic encounters, students often interpret unfamiliar concepts by connecting them with cultural experiences already embedded in their daily lives. Such practices indicate that code-mixing may function not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a medium through which meaning, values, and knowledge are negotiated (Widigdo & Awang Pawi, 2025; Robinson & Reif, 2016).

Historically, the integration of Arabic and local languages has long been embedded within Indonesian Islamic educational traditions. In *pesantren* environments, regional languages have traditionally been used to facilitate the interpretation of classical Arabic texts and abstract theological concepts (Keysha et al., 2023; Ramadhan & Luthfi, 2020). The use of Javanese, Sundanese, and other vernacular languages in the study of *kitab kuning* demonstrates that linguistic hybridity has long served as an interpretive resource rather than a linguistic deficiency (Ali et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Ibrahim, 2017). Despite this legacy, contemporary Arabic instruction in many higher education institutions remains dominated by formal semantic and grammatical approaches. Arabic is often positioned



as an autonomous linguistic system, while students' cultural identities, local knowledge, and epistemic experiences receive limited pedagogical attention. As a result, language learning frequently becomes disconnected from the sociocultural realities through which meaning is actually understood and internalized.

This tendency is also reflected in contemporary scholarship. Research on code-mixing has predominantly focused on structural patterns, communicative functions, and identity negotiation. Building upon Muysken's framework, studies have examined insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization as linguistic manifestations of bilingual interaction (Clahsen, 2021; Putri et al., 2022; Ramzan et al., 2021). Other studies have highlighted the role of code-mixing in social communication and multilingual identity formation across different contexts (Bukhari et al., 2015; Kuemphukhieo et al., 2022; Md Zolkapli et al., 2022; Riadil & Dilts, 2022). Similarly, research on Arabic language pedagogy has increasingly emphasized contextual learning and communicative effectiveness (Shehab et al., 2022). While these studies provide valuable insights, they largely conceptualize code-mixing as a structural, communicative, or sociocultural phenomenon. Little attention has been devoted to understanding how code-mixing functions as an epistemological mechanism through which learners construct meaning by integrating linguistic knowledge with indigenous cultural and moral values.

This limitation reveals an important theoretical gap. Existing studies generally treat local languages as supportive tools that facilitate comprehension, yet they rarely examine how local wisdom actively participates in shaping semantic understanding itself. Consequently, the relationship between multilingual language practices, contextual semantics, and indigenous ethical values remains insufficiently theorized. More importantly, the potential of code-mixing to transform language learning from a process of textual decoding into a process of moral reflection, cultural internalization, and knowledge construction remains largely unexplored (Fatawi, 2019; Koptseva et al., 2021; Labinska, 2023).

To address this gap, this study develops an integrated analytical framework that combines Muysken's typology of code-mixing, Lyons' contextual semantics, and ethnopedagogical principles. Within this framework, code-mixing is examined not merely as a structural linguistic practice but as an epistemological strategy through which meaning is negotiated, localized, and internalized. Ethnopedagogy serves as a conceptual bridge linking linguistic forms to indigenous cultural values, allowing semantic understanding to emerge through interactions among text, context, and lived experience.

The novelty of this study lies in its systematic repositioning of code-mixing from a peripheral linguistic phenomenon to a central epistemological unit of analysis. Unlike previous studies that primarily view local languages as passive mediators of comprehension, this research argues that indigenous values actively reshape and humanize Arabic semantic learning. Focusing on the Gorontalo cultural values of *tulodu* (exemplary conduct), *lo lipu* (social affection), and *momuliyo* (dignified patience), this study demonstrates how structural language forms, contextual semantics, and local ethical knowledge converge in the construction of meaning. In doing so, it advances a theoretical synthesis that connects sociolinguistics, contextual semantics, and ethnopedagogy within a single explanatory framework.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine how code-mixing operates as an epistemological strategy in Arabic semantic learning within Indonesian higher education. Specifically, it investigates how linguistic hybridization facilitates moral awareness, the preservation of cultural identity, and the construction of dialogical knowledge among university students. By doing so, the study contributes to broader international discussions on multilingual education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the role of indigenous knowledge in contemporary language learning.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using an exploratory case study design to examine how code-mixing functions as an epistemological strategy in Arabic semantic learning within a culturally embedded educational setting (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2020; Makri & Neely, 2021). The study was conducted at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia, an Islamic higher education institution where Arabic language instruction intersects with local Gorontalo cultural traditions. This context was selected because it provides a natural environment in which Arabic, Indonesian, and local linguistic resources interact in the learning process, allowing the exploration of code-mixing as both a pedagogical and epistemological practice (Koptseva et al., 2021).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure direct engagement with the phenomenon under investigation. The study involved four Arabic language lecturers specializing in Arabic semantics and syntax and twenty undergraduate students enrolled in the third to fifth semesters of the Arabic Language Education program. All participants were actively involved in advanced Arabic semantic learning in which code-mixing was regularly employed as part of classroom interaction.

Data were collected over two months during the 2024–2025 academic year using three complementary qualitative techniques: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (Pardo-Baldoví et al., 2023). Classroom observations were conducted across 16 instructional sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, to document code-mixing patterns and pedagogical practices linking Arabic semantic concepts to local Gorontalo expressions (Amadu et al., 2023; Granström et al., 2023). To explore participants’ experiences and interpretations, in-depth interviews were conducted with all four lecturers, and four focus group discussions, with five students per group, were organized to capture collective perspectives on semantic learning and cultural integration. Document analysis included four course syllabi, sixteen lesson plans, and classroom transcripts, providing additional evidence for data triangulation.

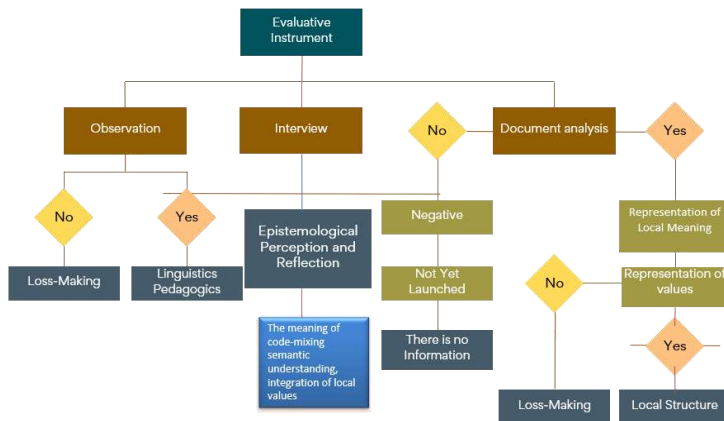


Figure 1. Research evaluative matrix

To enhance trustworthiness, data obtained from observations, interviews, and institutional documents were systematically cross verified through triangulation. The analytical process followed three stages of qualitative content analysis (Agrawal & Narain, 2023; Hughes et al., 2020). First, observation records and interview transcripts were transcribed and subjected to line-by-line open coding to identify instances of code-mixing, linguistic patterns, and semantic representations (Ashraf et al., 2023; Ayesha et al., 2020). Second, the codes were grouped through constant comparative analysis into broader thematic categories related to linguistic typology, pedagogical functions, and indigenous ethical meanings (Khokhar et al., 2020). Finally, an evaluative synthesis was conducted to connect the emerging themes to the study’s ethnopedagogical framework, thereby

enabling interpretation of how Arabic semantic learning was localized through cultural values (Kurysheva et al., 2023). Coding and category refinement were managed manually using a spreadsheet matrix to ensure analytical consistency and transparency throughout the process.

This study received approval from the Ethics Committee of IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo. All participants provided written informed consent before data collection, and confidentiality was maintained using alphanumeric pseudonyms. Participation was voluntary, and all data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are categorized into five empirical domains identified during classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis at the Gorontalo State Islamic Higher Education College.

1. Results

The findings of this study indicate that code-mixing plays a central role in Arabic semantic learning by facilitating connections between linguistic concepts, local cultural knowledge, and students' lived experiences. Analysis of classroom observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and instructional documents revealed five interconnected domains that characterize this process: local learning contexts, pedagogical strategies, linguistic typologies of code-mixing, contextual meaning construction through local equivalents, and students' spiritual and social internalization. These domains collectively demonstrate how Arabic semantic learning is localized through the integration of Gorontalo cultural values and everyday social realities.

a. The local learning context: Culture and traditions as epistemic sources

The empirical data collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews reveal that the academic environment at the IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo is deeply embedded in a cultural-epistemic framework. In fact, lecturers do not merely deliver linguistic content; they serve as facilitators who actively bridge the gap between foreign vocabulary and local reality. This pattern of practice is grounded in the use of regional values as the primary scaffolding for understanding, as evidenced by the testimony of a senior lecturer:



*"I view local culture not as a complement, but as an epistemic foundation. In the context of Gorontalo, values such as *dudu'a* (exemplary behavior), *lo lipu* (love for the homeland/social affection), and *momuliyo* (dignified patience) are very helpful in understanding the meaning of abstract Arabic words. For example, when I explain wisdom, I am not only referring to the dictionary definition, but I am associating it with the practice of *dudu'a* being an example in society." (Interview with BB, 2025).*

These findings revealed that lecturers actively connect Arabic vocabulary with local moral concepts, enabling students to relate foreign terms to familiar cultural practices.

b. Pedagogical strategies: Contextual integration of local terms

The implementation of Arabic instruction at the IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo is characterized by a deliberate shift away from purely textual delivery toward a contextualized pedagogical framework. Data collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews establish that lecturers systematically use regional linguistic markers to decode high-level Arabic terminology. This is not a random occurrence but rather a consistent strategy in which Gorontalo cultural terms serve as the primary interpretive tools. An informant detailed this practice:

*"I deliberately use local terms such as *takwa* or *sabari* when explaining concepts such as *taqwa* and *sabr*. College students find it easier to grasp the meaning because the term has become a part of their lives. It's not just a method, it's a way of building a bridge between Arabic texts and local experiences." (Interview with DA, 2025)*

Data from field notes and interviews showed that lecturers systematically integrated local terms into their teaching. Other indigenous concepts, such as *batata* (self-awareness) and *momuliyo* (patience with dignity), were frequently used as interpretive tools.

c. Linguistic typology of code-mixing

The linguistic interactions recorded during classroom observations and documented in interview transcripts reveal a systematic use of code-mixing that aligns with specific structural patterns. The data shows that lecturers and students do not switch languages haphazardly; instead, they employ three distinct types of mixing to bridge the gap between Arabic semantics and local understanding.

Firstly, Intra-sentential Insertion. The primary structural pattern proven in the classroom is the strategic insertion of specific Gorontalo words or phrases directly into an Arabic sentence structure. This pattern occurs most frequently during the clarification of abstract lexical items, as noted by an informant: *"I inserted local words*

like *bi: lohe* into Arabic sentences. For example, I say *‘الحكمة’* is not only wisdom, but also an example in Gorontalo customs.’ Students immediately associate that meaning with the values they know.” (Interview with TA, 2025).

Secondly, Inter-sentential Alternation. Field observations show the regular deployment of alternation, where lecturers switch entirely between Arabic, Indonesian, and *Hulontalo* at sentence boundaries within a single explanation to emphasize specific moral values: “In one explanation, I can move from Arabic to Indonesian and then to local terms. For example, the meaning of *852ahmah* is compassion, but also social affection (*toliang*) in our culture. This change makes the meaning more alive and contextual.” (Interview with CC, 2025).

Thirdly, Congruent Lexicalization. The empirical data identify a third structural pattern in which grammatical elements from multiple languages are blended fluidly within a shared syntactic structure. This phenomenon occurs most prominently during spontaneous student responses: “Students often respond with mixed sentences such as ‘I understand *niyyah* is intention, but intentions that are sincere *toliang* for the community.’ They combine Arabic and local structures naturally.” (Interview with BB, 2025).

These patterns confirm that code-mixing was consistently structured and functioned as a pedagogical tool. By mapping these occurrences, the data illustrate how the classroom creates a dialogue between formal religious language and the students’ cultural reality.

d. Contextual meaning and local equivalents

The investigation into semantic learning identifies a consistent pattern of meaning construction rooted in the surrounding cultural landscape. The empirical data indicate that participants do not rely solely on formal dictionary definitions; rather, they actively establish equivalents between Arabic concepts and local wisdom to achieve semantic precision. Focus group discussions with students revealed that they engage in active meaning-seeking by mapping Arabic moral values onto specific Gorontalo behavioural descriptors:

*“If I explain the meaning of the word *ṣidq* (honest), I like to add examples from regional languages. I told the students, in the Gorontalo language, there is a term *Ta Ohilawo Molango*, which means ‘a word that comes out of a clean heart’. It is similar to the concept of honesty in Islam.”* (Interview with TA, 2025).

Further data demonstrate that this search for local equivalents extends to deep connotative nuances, allowing students to anchor religious definitions in local expressions of virtue:

“When discussing the connotative meaning, the lecturer asked us to find a local equivalent. I took the word ‘huhutu mipiyo’, which means a person who likes to help. From there, we understand that the meaning of words is not only in the dictionary, but also in our culture.” (Interview with BA, 2025).

This practice demonstrated that meaning was constructed by linking Arabic values to Gorontalo moral descriptors.

e. Student reflections: Spiritual and social internalization

The final domain focuses on the personal internalization of meaning observed during the terminal stages of the instructional process. The empirical data derived from student focus groups and classroom dialogues reveal that the strategic use of regional languages facilitates a cognitive transition from passive academic comprehension to active self-reflection. Students naturally employ code-mixing to articulate the spiritual harmony between Islamic ethics and indigenous Gorontalo identity:

“I feel that if I learn about the meaning of akhlaq or amanah, it continues to be associated with local Gorontalo terms such as Ta Ohilawo Molango (clear heart), it makes me more aware that the regional language also teaches morals. So it’s not just semantic theory, but also self-reflection.” (Interview with SA, 2025).

Additional data highlights that these reflections occur as a dialogue between the lecturer’s guidance and the student’s existing cultural framework. Factually, the classroom environment encourages students to seek spiritual depth through linguistic comparison, as observed in this lecturer’s report:

“My students sometimes say, ‘Sir, the word ikhlas is the same as sincere, huh?’ I said yes, but in the context of Gorontalo it is deeper, because ikhlas is a heart that does not like to deceive. From there came a beautiful spiritual discussion.” (Interview with BB, 2025).

In summary, these reflections show that students used code-mixing not only to understand vocabulary but also to connect Arabic ethics with their own cultural identity.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that code-mixing in Arabic semantic learning cannot be adequately understood as a mere linguistic adaptation strategy or a communicative

consequence of multilingual interaction. Rather, the evidence suggests that code-mixing functions as an epistemological mechanism through which learners construct meaning by connecting Arabic linguistic concepts with culturally embedded systems of knowledge, moral values, and lived social experiences. This finding is particularly important because it challenges the dominant orientation of Arabic language instruction, which often privileges grammatical mastery and lexical accuracy while overlooking the cultural and interpretive dimensions through which meaning is actually internalized by learners (Ritonga et al., 2023; Pardo-Baldoví et al., 2023; Monbec, 2018). The significance of the present findings lies in the fact that semantic understanding emerged not primarily through textual explanation but through the interaction between linguistic forms and indigenous cultural frameworks familiar to students.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the findings extend the conventional understanding of code-mixing proposed within Muysken's typology of insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization (Ramzan et al., 2021). Existing scholarship has predominantly interpreted code-mixing as a structural manifestation of bilingual competence, communicative flexibility, or identity negotiation (Bukhari et al., 2015; Putri et al., 2022; Kuempukhio et al., 2022; Md Zolkapli et al., 2022; Riadil & Dilts, 2022). While such interpretations remain relevant, they do not fully explain why code-mixing becomes pedagogically effective in facilitating semantic understanding.

The present study argues that the educational power of code-mixing derives not from linguistic hybridity itself but from the cultural meanings embedded within the inserted expressions. In the Gorontalo context, lexical insertions such as *tulodu*, *lo lipu*, and *momuliyo* carry collective moral authority, enabling students to interpret abstract Arabic concepts through culturally meaningful references. Consequently, code-mixing functions as a bridge between language and culture, cognition and ethics, text and experience, thereby transforming semantic learning into a process of contextual knowledge construction (Ezeh et al., 2022; Ahmad, 2019; Qazalbash et al., 2023).

This interpretation contributes to the refinement of contextual semantic theory. Lyons' conception of contextual meaning emphasizes that linguistic interpretation is inseparable from the circumstances in which language is used. However, the findings of this study suggest that contextuality extends beyond immediate situational factors and includes deeper cultural structures that shape how meaning is perceived and internalized (Bacq, 2017; Inahama, 2019). When students understand the concept of *hikmah* through the cultural value of *tulodu*, they are not merely translating vocabulary from one language to

another. Instead, they are reconstructing semantic meaning through local ethical practices that already possess experiential significance. Meaning therefore becomes a negotiated product emerging from the interaction between Arabic textual knowledge and indigenous cultural wisdom. This finding expands contextual semantics by demonstrating that cultural memory and local value systems function as active semantic resources rather than passive contextual backgrounds.

The findings also strengthen and extend Leech's understanding of language as a carrier of social meaning (Leech, 2016). Within the learning practices observed in this study, Arabic vocabulary acquired significance not because students memorized definitions but because those definitions became connected to socially recognized moral expectations. The use of local expressions such as *Ta Ohilawo Molango* and *Ta Paduli* illustrates how linguistic meanings are enriched through social values and behavioral norms (Tran et al., 2024). This process explains why students reported deeper engagement with concepts such as honesty, sincerity, responsibility, and compassion. Their understanding developed not through linguistic simplification but through moral contextualization. Such findings indicate that semantic competence is fundamentally relational, involving not only cognitive recognition of meaning but also affective and social engagement with the values embedded within that meaning (Monbec, 2018; Джарбо Саяр Омар, 2017).

More importantly, the present study positions ethnopedagogy as a central explanatory framework for understanding how semantic learning occurs in culturally diverse educational environments. Previous studies have generally highlighted the importance of local wisdom in strengthening educational relevance and cultural identity (Fatawi, 2019; Koptseva et al., 2021; Labinska, 2023).

However, these studies often treat indigenous knowledge as a supplementary pedagogical resource. The findings of this research suggest a more substantial role. Indigenous knowledge does not merely support learning; it actively shapes the epistemological processes through which meaning is generated. The integration of Gorontalo cultural values into Arabic instruction demonstrates that ethnopedagogy can transform language learning from a process of linguistic transfer into a process of cultural mediation and ethical reflection. In this regard, local wisdom serves not as mere contextual decoration but as a legitimate source of knowledge that shapes how learners understand, interpret, and internalize semantic concepts (Baisheva et al., 2017; Musakhanova et al., 2023).

The cultural-spiritual dimension emerging from the findings further reveals the limitations of purely cognitive approaches to language acquisition. Contemporary language education frequently emphasizes communicative competence, vocabulary mastery, and grammatical accuracy as indicators of successful learning. Although these dimensions remain important, the present study demonstrates that semantic mastery is also shaped by spiritual and moral engagement. Students consistently associate Arabic concepts with local expressions carrying ethical significance, allowing them to perceive language as a vehicle for identity formation and moral self-development. This finding resonates with studies that emphasize the relationship among language, emotional intelligence, and spiritual awareness in educational contexts (Abdulwahid, 2021; Mahmut, 2024). However, the present research goes further by showing that moral internalization occurs through linguistic interaction itself. Code-mixing, therefore, becomes a pedagogical mechanism through which students negotiate the relationship between religious teachings, cultural heritage, and personal identity.

The theoretical implications of these findings become even more apparent when viewed within broader international discussions on multilingual education. Across Southeast Asia, code-mixing has frequently been examined as a marker of bilingual identity and communicative adaptation in multilingual societies (Bukhari et al., 2015; Kuempukhio et al., 2022; Md Zolkapli et al., 2022; Riadil & Dilts, 2022). Similar patterns have been documented in Malaysia, where code-mixing reflects multilingual social realities, and in Thailand, where linguistic hybridity has become increasingly visible in educational and popular cultural contexts (Mahardika, 2023; Pimpuang & Yuttapongtada, 2023; Thongpan & Thumawongsa, 2023). Likewise, studies of Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States have demonstrated how language mixing functions as a mechanism for negotiating cultural identity and social belonging (Cavallari, 2023; Casielles-Suárez, 2017). Nevertheless, much of this literature remains focused on communicative and sociocultural functions. The present study advances this conversation by demonstrating that code-mixing may also function as an epistemic strategy through which learners construct moral, spiritual, and semantic understanding.

This contribution is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary debates concerning the relationship between globalization and cultural sustainability.



Educational systems worldwide increasingly face the challenge of balancing global knowledge with local identity. The dominance of international languages often generates concerns regarding the marginalization of indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions. The findings from Gorontalo suggest an alternative trajectory. Rather than viewing local culture and global knowledge as competing forces, the study demonstrates that meaningful learning emerges when both are placed in constructive dialogue. This perspective aligns with recent scholarship emphasizing linguistic hybridity as a productive response to cultural globalization (Munandar & Octoveria, 2025; Wibowo & Hamidah, 2023; Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022; Yong et al., 2023). The Gorontalo experience shows that preserving local wisdom does not hinder the acquisition of global languages; instead, it can strengthen learners' capacity to understand and internalize foreign linguistic concepts.

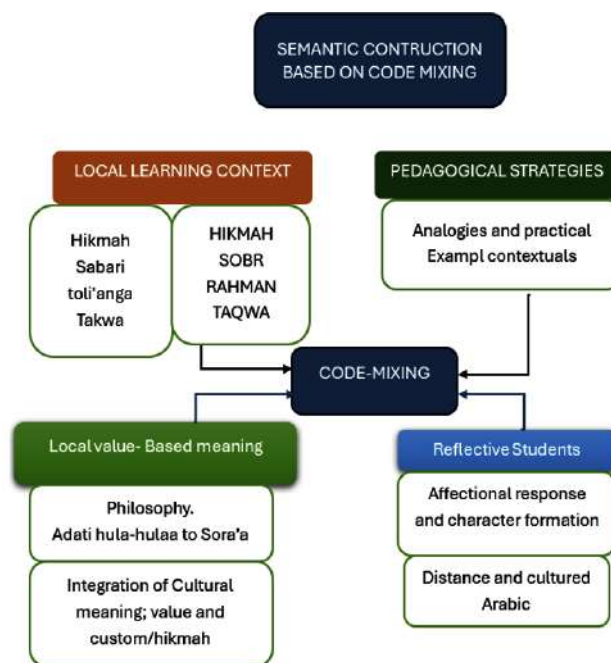


Figure 2. Theoretical contributions

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual integration emerging from the findings. The model demonstrates that code-mixing operates at the intersection of sociolinguistic structures, contextual semantic interpretation, and ethnopedagogical values. Rather than functioning as independent dimensions, these components interact dynamically to

produce deeper forms of semantic understanding. The figure, therefore, visualizes the study's central theoretical contribution: the repositioning of code-mixing from a linguistic phenomenon toward an epistemological strategy of meaning construction.

The practical implications of this model extend beyond the specific context of Arabic language learning. The findings suggest that educational institutions, particularly those operating in multilingual and multicultural environments, should reconsider the pedagogical role of local languages. Rather than treating indigenous languages as obstacles to academic learning, educators may use them as intellectual resources that facilitate conceptual understanding. Such an approach is consistent with broader ethnocultural educational frameworks that emphasize the importance of local knowledge systems in fostering meaningful learning experiences (Ahmed & Abdelgalil, 2026; Baisheva et al., 2017; Musakhanova et al., 2023). The model developed in this study may therefore be applicable not only within Islamic higher education but also across diverse educational settings where cultural diversity intersects with language instruction (Ma'arif et al., 2025; Mussa-Akhunov et al., 2024).

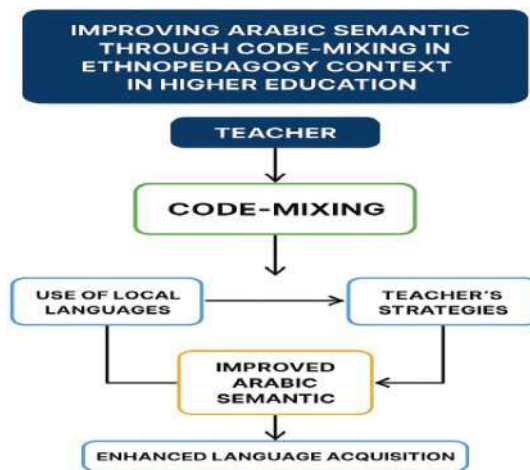


Figure 3. Increased language acquisition

As illustrated in Figure 3, the pedagogical process identified in this study ultimately contributes to enhanced language acquisition by integrating linguistic, cultural, and ethical dimensions. Students do not merely acquire vocabulary and grammatical structures; they develop a deeper capacity to interpret meaning within social and cultural contexts. This finding suggests that semantic competence should be understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions

simultaneously. Such an understanding broadens existing perspectives on language acquisition by emphasizing that successful learning involves not only linguistic proficiency but also contextual and moral understanding.

Taken together, the findings support a broader theoretical proposition: language learning is fundamentally a process of meaning-making rather than merely linguistic transmission. The effectiveness of code-mixing in this study stems from its ability to connect foreign linguistic forms with culturally grounded systems of knowledge and values. By doing so, it transforms Arabic semantic learning into a process of intellectual, cultural, and ethical engagement. This contribution extends existing scholarship on multilingual education by demonstrating that linguistic hybridity can serve not only communicative functions but also epistemological and pedagogical purposes.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. This study was conducted within a specific sociocultural environment characterized by strong cultural continuity and shared Islamic values. Consequently, the transferability of the findings to more heterogeneous educational settings remains uncertain. Furthermore, the relatively homogeneous participant background may limit the representation of alternative perspectives regarding multilingual meaning-making. These limitations should not be interpreted as weaknesses of the study itself but rather as reflections of the context-dependent nature of ethnopedagogical practices. The findings, therefore, invite further comparative investigations across different cultural, linguistic, and institutional settings to deepen scholarly understanding of how indigenous knowledge shapes semantic learning within multilingual educational environments.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that code-mixing in Arabic semantic learning functions not merely as a communicative strategy but as an epistemological mechanism through which learners construct meaning by linking Arabic concepts with culturally embedded knowledge and values. The integration of Gorontalo values—*tulodu* (exemplary conduct), *lo lipu* (social affection), and *momuliyo* (dignified patience)—enables abstract semantic concepts to be understood through culturally meaningful references, transforming language learning from simple vocabulary acquisition into a process of contextual interpretation and ethical internalization.

The primary contribution of this research is its repositioning of code-mixing from a sociolinguistic phenomenon to an epistemic and pedagogical resource. By

integrating sociolinguistic, contextual-semantic, and ethnopedagogical perspectives, the study demonstrates that local wisdom not only facilitates comprehension but also actively shapes how learners construct meaning, knowledge, and identity. This finding contributes to broader discussions on multilingual education, indigenous knowledge, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

The implications extend beyond Arabic language instruction. The findings suggest that educational institutions can strengthen meaningful learning by positioning local cultural resources as legitimate components of formal education. The Gorontalo case illustrates that preserving cultural identity and developing global competencies are not contradictory goals; rather, both can be advanced simultaneously through pedagogical approaches that embrace linguistic and cultural hybridity.

Building on the limitations identified in this study, future research should examine the applicability of ethnopedagogical code-mixing models across a wider range of sociocultural and institutional settings. Comparative studies involving different regions, linguistic communities, and educational environments would provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which local wisdom influences semantic learning processes. Furthermore, future investigations should explore how indigenous cultural values are negotiated within digitally mediated learning environments, particularly as students increasingly engage with global knowledge networks and transnational digital identities.

This study confirms that language learning is inherently shaped by culture, identity, and lived experience. Integrating indigenous wisdom into language pedagogy not only preserves cultural heritage but also deepens learners' understanding of meaning. The findings highlight that connecting local cultural values with global knowledge offers a meaningful pathway toward more inclusive, contextually grounded, and sustainable language education.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial interests, personal relationships, or competing affiliations that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this study. All analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented are solely based on the research findings and scholarly evidence.

Declaration of Generative AI

Generative AI (Microsoft Copilot) was used to refine language and structure in preparing this manuscript. All research design, data collection, and interpretation were conducted independently by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the work.

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