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The Historical Transformation of Arabic in the Multilingual Landscape of the Muslim Community of Tidore Island

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the historical transformation of the Arabic language in the multilingual landscape of the Muslim community on Tidore Island, North Maluku. This study aims to understand how Arabic interacts with local and immigrant languages, as well as its role in the traditions, education, and social identity of communities. The research method uses a qualitative approach with ethnography and literature studies, as well as data collection through documents, interviews, and field observations. The results of the study show that Arabic was originally present as a ritual and religious language, used in prayers, manuscript texts, as well as naming terms and regions. Over time, this language has undergone a transformation into a means of communication, education, and social identity, which is strengthened through formal and non-formal educational institutions such as madrassas and pesantren. The interaction of Arabic with Tidore, Makian, Ternate, and immigrant languages creates a distinctive multilingual landscape, where Arabic becomes an integral part of people's social and cultural lives. These findings confirm that Arabic is not only a religious heritage, but also a social and cultural agent that shapes the linguistic dynamics and traditions on Tidore Island. This research opens up opportunities for further studies on language adaptation, language contact, and the development of Arabic language learning based on local culture in multiethnic areas.
Keywords: *Arabic Language; Historical Transformation; Tidore Island.*

ABSTRAK
Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi historis bahasa Arab dalam lanskap multilingual masyarakat Muslim di Pulau Tidore, Maluku Utara. Studi ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana bahasa Arab berinteraksi dengan bahasa lokal dan bahasa pendatang, serta perannya dalam tradisi, pendidikan, dan identitas sosial masyarakat. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan etnografi dan studi pustaka, serta pengumpulan data melalui dokumen, wawancara, dan observasi lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Arab awalnya hadir sebagai bahasa ritual dan keagamaan, digunakan dalam doa, teks manuskrip, serta penamaan istilah dan wilayah. Seiring waktu, bahasa ini mengalami transformasi menjadi sarana komunikasi, pendidikan, dan identitas sosial, yang diperkuat melalui lembaga pendidikan formal dan nonformal seperti madrasah dan pesantren. Interaksi bahasa Arab dengan bahasa Tidore, bahasa Makian, bahasa Ternate, serta bahasa pendatang menciptakan lanskap multilingual yang khas, di mana bahasa Arab menjadi bagian integral dari kehidupan sosial dan budaya masyarakat. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa bahasa Arab tidak hanya sekadar warisan agama, tetapi juga agen sosial dan budaya yang membentuk dinamika linguistik dan tradisi di Pulau Tidore. Penelitian ini membuka peluang untuk studi lanjutan mengenai adaptasi bahasa, kontak bahasa, dan pengembangan pembelajaran bahasa Arab berbasis budaya lokal di wilayah multietnis.
Kata Kunci: *Bahasa Arab; Transformasi Historis; Pulau Tidore*

INTRODUCTION
Talking about Arabic in the context of global history, it cannot be separated from the expansion and development of Islam since the 7th century AD. Arabic has transformed an ethnic language in the Arabian Peninsula to a language of religion, science, administration, and civilization as Islamic power expanded. The main factors that drove the expansion included the fact that Islam was born in the Arabian Peninsula,

the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, and the political policies of Islamic dynasties such as the Umayyads and Abbasid that made Arabic the official language of administration and science. It was during this period that the Arabic language underwent codification and standardization, whose influence reached Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Vertically, Arabic has become an irreplaceable language of religious ritual in the worship of Muslims, while horizontally it has developed as a language of civilization that influences the value system and culture of the Muslim community (Lintang, 2023).

In the context of the archipelago, the development of the Arabic language took place through complex historical paths, especially through trade and da'wah networks. Indonesia as a region with more than 700 regional languages, is a dynamic multilingual space. The Indonesian language, which has its roots in Malay, also absorbs lexical elements from various foreign languages, including Arabic, Sanskrit, and Dutch. This cross-ethnic and cross-national interaction gives birth to sustainable language variation and assimilation (Shazana, 2023). The process of acculturation of Arabic and Indonesian cultures also strengthens trade and education networks, which then encourages Arabic language learning in various regions of the archipelago (Amrillah, 2022). Apart from being a religious language, Arabic has developed as an intellectual medium and a symbol of global Islamic solidarity (Mubin, 2023).

Historically, to understand the transformation of the Arabic language on Tidore Island, it is first necessary to trace the process of the entry and development of Islam in the North Maluku region. The history of the entry of Islam in Maluku still leaves a chronological debate. Traveler's records mention early contact as early as the 7th century, while local sources point to the 8th century, and according to de Graaf, Islamic influence was significantly seen in the 14th century. This difference shows the need for historical reconstruction based on primary and secondary data in tracing the traces of Islam in Maluku (Achruh, 2023). It was from this process that the Arabic language began to transform as part of the local religious and cultural system.

Islam in North Maluku is growing rapidly along with the region's strategic position in the world's spice trade route. The Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore have been the center of Islamic power in Eastern Indonesia since the 15th century. Islam had been present in Ternate around 1440, and when the Portuguese arrived in 1512, its rulers had already converted to Islam. The Sultanates of Tidore and Bacan also experienced a relatively early process of Islamization, so that their government structure and social system were influenced by Islamic teachings (Wikipedia, n.d.). In this context, Arabic began to exist not only as a ritual language, but also as a symbol of the legitimacy of Islamic power and political identity.

As the majority religion in North Maluku, Islam forms the socio-cultural foundation of the community. The mosque became the center for the transmission of religious teachings, including learning Arabic in the context of worship and traditional education. The majority of the population follows the Sunni sect, although there are Shia communities and adherents of other religions such as Protestants and Catholics. In the course of its history, Arabic did not develop as a language of daily communication, but as a sacred and institutional language tied to religious and customary structures.

The presence of the Arab community in North Maluku since the 15th century has also strengthened the historical transmission of the Arabic language. They are generally descendants of traders who settle and interact with the local community. Although relatively small in number, these communities play a role in trade, religious education, and the strengthening of Islamic networks. Their integration process reveals a historical dynamic in which Arabic does not stand alone, but interacts with local languages in the local social and cultural context.

If traced further, the historical transformation of the Arabic language in North Maluku appears in various forms of religious texts and practices. In Ternate, for example, there is the use of Arabic vocabulary in oral communication, complex Arabic prayer texts in religious rituals, sultanate sermons, and religious manuscripts that have been passed down from generation to generation (Amri, 2023). This fact shows that Arabic is undergoing institutionalization in customary and sultanate structures, rather than just the usual lexical adoption.

Linguistically, the contribution of Arabic to the languages of the archipelago is very significant. The absorption of Arabic vocabulary enriches the lexical structure of the Indonesian language, including in the fields of religion, literature, and constitutionality. Phonological interference also occurs when speakers adapt Arabic sounds according to their native language's phonological system (Wahyuni, 2018). This process shows the transformation of sound and meaning as part of the historical dynamics of language contact.

The historical influence of the Arabic language also reached the territory of Eastern Indonesia, including former Islamic sultanate areas such as Sulawesi and Maluku. These traces can be seen in the

naming of regions, traditional rituals, and the use of the Arabic-Malay script (Jawi) in various written media (Duwila, 2023). Although it has not become the dominant language in everyday communication (Fokaaya et al., 2014), elements of Arabic remain alive as part of cultural identity. Even etymologically, the term "Moluccas" is often associated with the Arabic phrase Jazirah al-Muluk which means the Land of Kings (Ihwan Wahid Minu et al., 2022), which shows the strength of the historical narrative of Arab influence in the construction of regional identity.

Especially in Tidore, historical ties with Arab merchants since the 15th century became an important point in the transformation of the Arabic language. These traders brought not only trading commodities, but also Islamic teachings, Arabic literacy traditions, and socio-religious practices. Over time, some settled and formed communities that were integrated with the structure of the sultanate and the local community.

The Arab community in Tidore maintains cultural and religious traditions while adapting to local customs. This heritage is reflected in the practice of marriage, art, music, and trade networks. In this context, Arabic underwent a multi-layered historical process: from a language of da'wah, to a language of political legitimacy, then to develop as a symbol of religious and cultural identity. It is important to note that Arabic in North Maluku, especially in Tidore, is not exclusively spoken by Arabs. It was studied by the local community through religious educational institutions and sultanate traditions. Thus, Arabic became an integral part of the multilingual landscape of the Tidore people. Based on this historical background, this study seeks to reconstruct and analyze the historical transformation of the Arabic language in the multilingual dynamics of the Muslim community of Tidore Island.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a type of library research combined with the study of historical documents. The approach used is a historical and historical linguistic approach to reconstruct the process of transformation of the Arabic language in the multilingual landscape of the Muslim community of Tidore Island. The research design is descriptive-analytical, namely describing linguistic historical data and then analyzing the forms of transformation that occur in a certain period of time.

The subjects of this research are historical documents, religious manuscripts, sultanate sermon texts, local archives, and scientific literature that contain information on the development of Islam and the use of Arabic in North Maluku, especially on Tidore Island. In addition, secondary data in the form of previous research results, scientific journals, and historiographic sources were also used to strengthen the data reconstruction. The research procedure is carried out through several stages, namely: (1) heuristic, by collecting relevant primary and secondary sources; (2) source criticism, to assess the authenticity and credibility of the data; (3) interpretation, by relating historical facts with linguistic developments; and (4) historiography, which is the preparation of a scientific narrative about the historical transformation of the Arabic language in Tidore.

The research instruments used were document analysis guidelines and linguistic data classification formats to identify forms of lexical absorption, the use of religious terms, and changes in the function of Arabic in socio-religious contexts. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies and literature search that were relevant to the focus of the study. The data analysis technique uses content *analysis* and historical linguistic analysis. Content analysis was used to identify historical themes related to the development of Islam and the role of the Arabic language, while historical linguistic analysis was used to examine the forms of lexical, functional, and symbolic transformation of the Arabic language in the Muslim society of Tidore Island.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The Historical Transformation of the Arabic Language

The Arabic language on Tidore Island is present as part of the historical process of the spread of Islam since the 15th century. The entry of Islam was brought by Arab traders who came to trade spices and at the same time, spread religious teachings. Their presence marked the beginning of the integration of Arabic into the social and cultural life of the people of Tidore (Achruh, 2023; Wikipedia, n.d.). Record texts and manuscripts became the main historical witnesses of the transformation of the Arabic language in Tidore. Manuscripts such as the Tidore Writings and religious texts in Jawi Arabic script reflect that Arabic not only functions as a language of worship, but also as a means of recording local history and traditions (Idham, 2017). Some manuscripts, including the Tuhfah al-Gharibin, the rabib rule, and the Friday sermon text, show the use of Arabic with a complex structure and distinctive diction. This marks the ability of the

people of Tidore to assimilate Arabic into the local context significantly (Idham, 2017).

The transformation of the Arabic language is also seen in religious rituals. Prayers, dhikr, and sermons spoken in Arabic have become common practices, proving the integration of Arabic in the religious rituals of the Muslim community of Tidore vertically and horizontally (Amri, 2023). Rituals such as the Ratib Taji Besi show the use of Arabic terms inherent in traditional practices. For example, the Alwan tool and the Sarabat drink used in rituals have Arabic root words, namely launun and shariba, although they have undergone phonological and semantic adaptations in the local context (Faruq, 2023).

The naming of titles and terms also shows Arabic influences. The designation Sultan has replaced the local term Kolano since Sultan Ciriliyati ascended the throne in 1495 AD. This confirms that the Arabic language plays a role in the legitimacy of power and a symbol of Islamic identity (Ningsih, 2021). Regional names such as *Laiho, Laise, Ome,* and *Oba* feature Arabic elements integrated into the local language. For example, *Laiho* is associated with the Arabic expression Laa haula walaa kuwwata illaa billah, while *Laise* is likely derived from *Laisa kamithlihi shai'un*. (Sukardi, 2023).

The city of Tidore itself is thought to have originated from a combination of the Arabic dialect of Iraq (*anta thadore*) and the local language (*To ado re*), which reflects the historical process of interaction and acculturation of the Arabic language in the geographical and cultural identity of the people (Faruq, 2023; Nomay, 2019). The historical transformation of Arabic is also seen in everyday vocabulary. Nouns such as *hijab, kitab, quran, mihrab, minbar,* and other terms such as prostration, salam, naf, and zakat have been absorbed and become part of the local language of the Muslim community of Tidore (Wahyuni, 2018).

The assimilation of Arabic in Tidore was not only limited to the written language, but also the spoken language. Many families in Tidore use Arabic names for their family members, such as Muhammad, Ali, and Jafar, indicating the internalization of Arabic in social and cultural life (Faruq, 2023). The process of historical transformation is also seen in the teaching of Arabic informally. The Mat Recital Method, introduced by the Arab Habibs since the 18th century, allowed the people of Tidore to access Arabic texts and understand the structure of the Arabic language practically, before formal educational institutions were present (Faruq, 2023). The ancient manuscripts used in Mengaji Matar combine Jawi Arabic script and Malay, resulting in linguistic acculturation that enriches local vocabulary while maintaining the authenticity of Arabic in a religious context (Idham, 2017).

Phonological and morphological adaptations are also part of the historical transformation. For example, Arabic words such as *shaffun* and *ummu* were adapted into the local terms Sofifi and Ome, indicating a complex historical-lingual process in the integration of Arabic into the vocabulary of Tidore (Faruq, 2023; Sukardi, 2023). In addition to religious functions, Arabic in the Tidore tradition also has a symbolic role and social identity. The use of Arabic terms in titles, rituals, and manuscripts strengthens public awareness of Islamic heritage and its socio-cultural legitimacy (Amri, 2023).

Overall, the historical transformation of the Arabic language on Tidore Island includes the dimensions of textual, ritual, naming, and learning. This process shows that Arabic has adapted and assimilated into the multilingual environment of Tidore, becoming a language of religion, culture, and identity, while serving as a means of communication rich in historical and religious values (Achruh, 2023)

The Existence of Arabic in the Multilingual Ethnic Landscape on Tidore Island

The city of Tidore Islands is an area that has a high diversity of languages. North Maluku Province is made up of hundreds of islands, which creates a multilingual condition naturally. The main regional languages in Tidore include Tidore Language, East Makian Language, and Ternate Language, which are spread across various sub-districts and villages (Fokaaya et al., 2014). The Tidore language is the majority language and is spoken in seven major sub-districts, including North Tidore, South Tidore, and Oba. Eastern Makian and Ternate languages are present as ethnic minority languages in some regions, but they still have a role in daily communication, trade, and inter-ethnic social relations (Fokaaya et al., 2014).

In this multilingual landscape, Arabic is present as an immigrant language adopted through social interaction, religious education, and ritual practices. The existence of Arabic in Tidore is not the majority's everyday language, but serves as a religious language, a symbol of Islamic identity, and a means of communication within the Muslim community (Mubin, 2023). Arabic is also a means of cultural assimilation. The presence of the Arab community since the 15th century has introduced vocabulary, titles, ritual terms, and religious texts that were later partially adopted by the people of Tidore. This creates Arabic interventions in local linguistic structures historically and socially (Achruh, 2023).

The transformation of Arabic in a multiethnic context can be seen in the phenomenon of linguistic interference. Arabic words are absorbed into local vocabulary, undergoing phonological and semantic

adaptations so that they are easily understood by local language speakers. A real example is the use of Arabic terms in rituals, naming regions, and certain everyday vocabulary (Wahyuni, 2018). The Arabic language learning process in Tidore has two main paths: informal and formal. The informal path emerged through the activity of Reciting the Mat, which was introduced by the Arab Habibs since the 18th century. This activity allows people to learn Javanese Arabic texts, understand vocabulary, grammar, and prayer, as well as instill religious values (Faruq, 2023).

Formal pathways of Arabic language education developed through Madrasah and Islamic Boarding School (Fuadah et al., 2025). In Tidore Islands, there are 16 Raudhatul Athfa, 13 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, 13 Madrasah Tsanawiyah, and 9 Madrasah Aliyah. Arabic is the core subject and means of communication in the pesantren environment, strengthening the sustainability of this language in society (Madrasah, 2023).

The Haritsul Khaeraat Islamic Boarding School in Ome Village is an example of an institution that combines the national curriculum (KMA 183 of 2019) with the Gontor-style pesantren curriculum. In addition, muhadatsah learning encourages students to communicate actively in Arabic, emphasizing communicative and religious functions (Sukardi, 2023). The Arabic language in Tidore is not only ritualistic, but also communicative. In a multiethnic context, Arabic serves as a "bridge" between the local Muslim community and the Arab and Muslim communities from outside Tidore. This can be seen in religious communication, knowledge exchange, and joint worship practices (Amrillah, 2022).

The interaction between Arabic, regional languages, and immigrant languages forms a distinctive multilingual dynamic. Arabic intervened in local vocabulary, while immigrant languages such as Bugis, Buton, and Javanese also influenced the use of languages in Tidore. Indonesian functions as a lingua franca, connecting various ethnic groups while maintaining the existence of the Arabic language (Fokaaya et al., 2014).

The historical transformation of the Arabic language was also seen in the younger generation of Tidore. Many children know Arabic through Islamic names, religious texts, and school or pesantren activities. This shows that Arabic is still alive, even though it is not the dominant language in daily communication. The existence of Arabic in this multiethnic landscape emphasizes the duality of its function: as an Islamizing and communicative language. Islamizing Arabic appears in prayers, rituals, and religious texts; while communicative Arabic is used in formal education, Islamic boarding schools, and cross-community Muslim interactions (Faruq, 2023).

The existence of Arabic in the Tidore region also has a symbolic and social role. This language marks the religious identity of the community, strengthens the legitimacy of Islamic culture, and is an indicator of the historical heritage that connects Tidore with trade and religious networks in Southeast Asia (Amri, 2023). This is what makes Arabic live not as a language of verbal communication, but as a cultural communication and religious rituals.

Discussion

Findings The results of the study show that Arabic on Tidore Island is not only present as a language of worship, but has undergone a significant historical transformation that goes beyond the domain of rituals to the socio-cultural realm inherent in people's lives. This transformation is consistent with the concept of contact language in linguistics, where foreign languages interact with local languages, creating dynamic and sustainable integration.

Linguistically, the phenomenon of Arabic vocabulary absorption in the Muslim community of Tidore is in line with contemporary studies that identify the pattern of influence of Arabic in Malay-Indonesian languages. Arabic vocabulary is not only borrowed verbally but also blended into the cultural and religious communication of the Muslim community of the archipelago, showing that Arabic functions as a structural element in the local linguistic system (Solehudin & Arisandi, 2024) (Khasanah & Fattah, 2021). The historical transformation that occurred in Tidore was a phonological and semantic adaptation when it entered the Indonesian language, including in religious terms relevant to Islamic ritual practices. These findings reinforce the understanding that uptake not only occurs at the lexical level but also changes following new linguistic structures (Dimyathi et al., 2025).

The Arabic-Jawi manuscripts in Tidore are significant evidence of the process of institutionalization of the Arabic language in a local context. Arabic-Malay (Jawi) writing or its variations in various regions of the archipelago reflects the long history of Arabic language adaptation in the context of writing local traditions so as to enrich the cultural knowledge system of the Muslim community (Melinda et al., 2024). This historical transformation is not only the emergence of Arabic vocabulary in society but also a functional internalization, where the use of Arabic reflects social and religious status, not just as a lexical

element. This is in line with the linguistic diagnostics discussed in the study of the influence of Arabic on Islamic learning and communication in Southeast Asia which emphasizes the role of Arabic in strengthening local Muslim social cohesion (Sofian et al., 2025).

Field findings suggest that terms such as Sultan or the naming of local territories have undergone strong linguistic and symbolic assimilation. This shows that the process of historical transformation in Tidore did not only occur in oral communication, but also became part of the symbol of the political and social identity of the people, in accordance with the theory of symbolic identification in language and cultural contact. In a semantic context, the substance of the Arabic language transformation in Tidore shows a pattern that parallels the finding (Khairil Malik et al., 2022) that Arabic absorption words undergo adaptation of meaning according to the needs of local culture, but retain their religious roots. This change in the meaning of vocabulary signifies that Arabic is part of a complex local culture and idiom. This semantic adaptation is in line with the findings (Laila et al., 2025), which show that Arabic vocabulary absorbed in Indonesian undergoes many changes in meaning as well as pragmatic functional changes in Muslim society, reflecting strong socio-cultural influences in everyday use.

The historical transformation of the Arabic language in Tidore is also consistent with the identification of the nativization process, which is when elements of a foreign language are not only borrowed, but are adopted systemically and become a cultural function. This is particularly relevant to the theory of language contact in multilingual regions such as the archipelago, which shows that language that enters through religion is often a medium of education and social life of people.

Phonological adaptations of Arabic vocabulary are also relevant in historical linguistic contexts. (Shah & Mardiah, 2023) argues that Arabic phonology changes when it is absorbed into the Indonesian sound system, which is relevant to the phenomenon found in Tidore—especially in local terms that change their sound but still show Arabic origin as a historical element.

The historical narratives found in manuscripts and traditional documents show that Arabic has transformed into the main tool of transmission of Islamic cultural values, not just as a ritual language. This corroborates the argument that Arabic acts as an intellectual and symbolic medium that forms the social structure of Tidore society. The integration of Arabic vocabulary in religious rituals and local naming suggests that Arabic has influenced aspects of collective identity. The concept of language as identity marker in sociolinguistics reinforces that language is not just a means of communication, but part of the social image and cultural identity of Tidore Muslims.

Compared to other studies in the archipelago, the phenomenon in Tidore shows a more complex pattern, as its transformation involves ritual devices, manuscripts, naming of regions, and historical social structures. It is much more comprehensive than just the common loanword phenomenon that is widely discussed in modern Indonesian linguistic studies. Such historical-lingual integration formed a distinctive Islamic linguistic tradition in Tidore, which not only preserved the Arabic language in the context of worship but also made it a medium of collective knowledge, education, and symbolic practice. This shows that Arabic has become an integral part of the multilingual linguistic network of Muslim communities in the region.

The implication of these findings is that the influence of Arabic in the lives of the Muslim community of Tidore should be understood as a linguistic phenomenon that underwent historical evolution, not simply a passive influence or lexical phenomenon. Learning Arabic as a linguistic discipline in such an area is not only about learning the structure of language, but also understanding the socio-cultural historical context that underlies the process of entering the language.

The results of the study show that the existence of Arabic in the midst of the multiethnic community of Tidore Island is not only present as an Islamic ritual language, but also acts as a medium of communication, a symbol of cultural identity, and a learning tool in the local environment. This role is consistent with the concept *of linguistic ecology* which shows that language can coexist in a multilingual environment without having to be the dominant language in every aspect of life. These findings are in line with the results of recent research showing that in Indonesia's multiethnic Muslim society, Arabic continues to exist through three main channels: formal education, non-formal education, and ritual social spaces. The study emphasizes that Arabic is not static but continues to experience dynamics in heterogeneous community contexts (Rosyadi & Fata, 2025). The existence of Arabic in the context of formal education also confirms that this language is not only a ritual element but also a pedagogical tool. Arabic is still formally studied in Islamic educational institutions in the archipelago as part of the strategy of preserving Islamic culture as well as social adaptation (Salahuddin, 2025).

The interaction between Arabic, regional languages, and immigrant languages in the Tidore Islands

Regency reflects the phenomenon of linguistic layering, where several languages coexist and influence each other's structure. Furthermore, local languages such as Tidore, Ternate, and East Makian are still widely used in daily life, but are still contextualized alongside Arabic in the religious or educational domains, in accordance with the multilingual character often found in the archipelago (Fokaaya et al., 2014).

In the context of a multiethnic society, Arabic has a dual role: as an Islamizing language that instills religious values and practices, and as a communicative language that strengthens social relations between Muslim communities in the midst of the diversity of local languages. This reinforces the argument that Arabic in Tidore was not only used for rituals, but also as a tool for active intra-Muslim community interaction.(Faruq, 2023). The historical-lingual aspect also shows that Arabic language learning before formal institutions developed had taken place through the practice *of reciting mats* that were community-oriented. These findings support an anthropological linguistics approach that states that language develops organically in sociocultural practices, not just through formal education.(Faruq, 2023)

The transformation of Arabic in a multiethnic context in Tidore also reflects the support of the theory of multilingual integration, in which languages not only complement each other but also create new functions in specific social spaces. This is in line with the multilingual repertoire approach discussed by Gao (2022), who suggests that multilingual communities often develop flexible linguistic repertoire for different social contexts (Hennebry-Leung & Gao, 2022). The multiethnic context in Tidore also shows a strong pattern of cultural adaptation. Arabic, although not the mother tongue of the majority of local people, is still used as the language of socio-religious identity. This is in line with *the language ideology* approach which states that the social value and symbolic value of a language affect its use in the context of a plural society (Fareeha, 2025).

Other research in Indonesia's coastal Muslim community shows how Arabic vocabulary enters into the interaction of trade activities, prayers, and daily discourse as evidence of how intense the penetration of Arabic is in the social structure of Muslim communities, especially in trading areas such as Tidore. The data found reflect that Arabic has a role as an intercommunity language in the pesantren environment. This is in line with the theory of interlingual communication discovered by Zuhriyeh and Budiman (2025), which shows that Arabic is often used as a medium of communication between Muslim groups of different tribes or origins (Zuhriyeh et al., 2025).

The integration of Arabic in the tradition of normal learning and pesantren shows that this language has a pragmatic as well as a symbolic function in a multiethnic society. This shows that the contact of Arabic with the local language not only provides vocabulary, but creates new patterns of social communication.

The discovery that Arabic is used in conjunction with Indonesian for communication between ethnic groups supports the argument that Indonesian remains the lingua franca, but Arabic is retained in the religious domain as the language of identity and the preservation of Islamic culture, enriching the educational goals of local Islamic boarding schools. The main implication of these findings is that the presence of Arabic in the multiethnic society of Tidore changed from a mere religious language to a language with broad social functions. This shows that the study of language in a plural context looks not only at structural linguistic aspects, but also at aspects of social, symbolic, and historical value of interlinguistic contact.

CONCLUSION

Arabic on Tidore Island has undergone a historical transformation from a ritual language to a broader social language. It is not only used in religious contexts, such as prayers, rituals, and biblical texts, but also as a language of education, social identity, and a means of communication in a multiethnic Muslim society. The transformation took place through the interaction of Arabic with local languages and immigrant languages, thus forming a unique multilingual landscape on Tidore Island, where Arabic became an integral part of the community's cultural, educational and traditional practices.

The results of the study show that the existence of the Arabic language in Tidore is maintained through manuscripts, religious rituals, naming terms and regions, as well as formal and non-formal educational institutions. Although this research is limited to the Tidore region, these findings open up opportunities for further studies on language contact, linguistic adaptation of younger generations, and the development of Arabic language learning curricula based on local culture. Overall, Arabic has proven to play an important role in strengthening the identity of Muslim communities and maintaining cultural traditions in a multilingual society.

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