Arabic Teaching and Learning in Matriculation Program for Al-Azhar Student's Candidate

Zaki Ghufron, Endang Saeful Anwar, Azizah Alawiyah, Mufrodi
Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Indonesia
Corresponding E-mail: mufrodi@uinbanten.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze Arabic learning material conducted by Pusiba and El-Darosah, which are official institutions for language studies for preparing prospective students who want to study in the Middle East, especially Egypt. This institution prepared language skills, aspects of mentality, and Islamic and national insight based on Al-Azhar's vision. This research was qualitative, using content analysis and sociolinguistic approaches, in which the study of a language was not only limited to the involvement of intrinsic as structure's perceptions, but also extrinsic aspects, such as social, cultural, economic, political and others were done by post-structuralism. This research showed that the Pusiba and El-Darosah institutions as their official representatives have succeeded in explaining the identity of Al-Azhar, that is *wasatiyah* (moderate) Islamic views contained learning texts which were the main axis in learning Arabic such as *al-Islam wa Huriyah al-ʿAqidah, al-ʿAdl fi al-Islâm, al-ʿAdl fi Muʾâmalah Ahl al-Diyânât al-Ukhrâ, Samâhah al-Islam maʾa Ahl al-Diyânât al-Ukhrâ, Mafhûm al-Huriyah fi al-Islam, al-Hiwâr maʾa al-Âkhar,* and *Al-Azhar wa Wasathiyah al-Islam,* which were presented in several steps of Arabic learning books developed by Al-Azhar university.

Keywords: *Pusiba, El-Darosah, matriculation program, Arabic learning*

Introduction

Language is very important in human life as a medium in conveying their intentions, needs, and goals verbally and non-verbally (Manshur, 1982). That way, language is a medium that plays an essential role in human life so that the other person can accept what the speaker wants to convey (Ibnu Jinni, 2007). Furthermore, Arabic is not only a means of communication, a media for self-actualization, but also an identity of a society (Ghufron, 2019). Furthermore, was stated by Paulston that a language in Paulston's view is not just a phonetic, morphological, and syntactic system designed to

express a thought, but also carries cultural identity and social status (Paulston, 1986). Two aspects cause this; First, its determination as a national language. Second, its existence as the language of the Qur'an which is a complete description of Islamic tradition and culture (Benkharafa, 2013). The existence of Qur'an indirectly adds to the priority of Arabic (Dafah, 2012). For this reason, it is not wrong if religion is being the reason of orientation for learning Arabic. Generally, there are three competencies to be achieved in learning Arabic, they are linguistic, communication, and cultural competences (Fawzan, 1425H/2004M).

Wahab revealed that there are at least four orientations for learning Arabic, namely religious orientation; academic orientation; practical and pragmatic orientation; and ideological-economic-political orientation (Wahab, 2007). Furthermore, Thu'aimah and al-Naqah expressed their opinions regarding the objectives of learning Arabic for non-Arabs, that is correct understanding in the form of conscious listening to general living conditions, the use of Arabic as a media of direct communication and expression, its use as a tools for reading, finding meaning, and interacting with Arabic texts, and their use as a means of self-actualization of thought and self in written form. These goals are usually given gradually and adjusted to the student education level (Thu'aimah and al-Naqah, 2006).

Arabic competence owned by students is a benchmark for being accepted at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Based on Sheikh Al-Azhar regulation Number 524 of 2010 M, Al-Azhar University implemented a placement test for every prospective international student from Indonesia. That test is used to determine the extent of Arabic competence of each prospective student and to determine at which level they should follow the language preparation program. It means that every prospective student should take a test whose the results can determine whether they automatically go to college or need to take part in an Arabic preparation program. This regulation has been conducted since 2015 AD (https://pusiba.com/profile/). By those regulations, Al-Azhar established an Arabic language center (Markaz li-Ta'lim Al-Lughah Al-'Arabiyah li- Al-Natiqina bi-Ghayriha), with the main objective for establishing language and scientific competence of every international students, and preparing them for being college students (Faraj, 2013).

The placement test is of course intended to make students being able to the attend lectures well at that university, which in fact Arabic is the main language used as the language instruction of teaching. Methods, learning resources, and curricula used to teach Arabic to non-Arabic speakers are constantly evolving. This learning evolution is in line with shifts in the expectations of the time and time of the learner (Nurdianto & Ismail, 2020). For this reason, the existence of this language center is not just a demand or rule from Sheikh Al-Azhar Number 524 of 2010 M but also so that there is development of learning Arabic so that it achieves the intended goal, bearing in mind that Arabic has been studied in Indonesia since MI (Rosyidi, 2014), even though

basically the Arabic language skills taught in Madrasas are currently unable to position Arabic as an international language (Khathir, 1983).

In fact, based on Fuad's research, the Arabic language learning that has been carried out in these educational institutions has not reached the level of "able to master and apply it well", in fact the percentage of success is relatively low (Fuad, 2015), even though learning should function to assist students in the learning process, and usually contains a series of events that are arranged and presented in such a way as to influence the learning process in students (Gagne, R.M & Briggs, 1979). For this reason, various strategies for learning Arabic have been implemented in Indonesia to maximize results while at the same time adapting to the progress and developments of the times so that the objectives of learning Arabic can be achieved, not just learning Arabic which is focused on the grammar (Asse, 2014). And we must realize that Arabic is the main requirement for communication and diplomacy as well as an approach to Middle Eastern people and countries, especially prospective Middle Eastern students (Razak, 2017). As an international politics that Arabic is presently utilized as one of the official diplomatic languages at the United Nations (UN) forum and is acknowledged as an international language. It is even said that Arabic has become an international language which ranks fourth after French (Nisa', 2017). Of course Arabic is one of the world languages that has followed and experienced all the developments of its speakers, both social and scientific (Arsyad, 2003). For this reason, Arabic is not only studied by prospective students who wish to continue their studies in the Middle East, but also studied by others such as diplomats and so on.

The Arabic learning program implemented by that center consists of three levels, they are; beginner *(al-mubtadi')*, intermediate *(al-mutawassit)*, and advanced *(al-mutaqaddim)*. Each level is divided into two classes (A and B), and the time allocation for learning is nine months (three months for each level). In the tenth month, each prospective student is tested to determine which course they can take (Faraj, 2013). Learning Arabic at this institution is a language development. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, coaching means fostering, updating, or processes, actions, ways of fostering, efforts, actions, and activities carried out in an efficient and effective manner to obtain better results (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1993). Therefore, this center is not only used by prospective students, but also for everyone who wants to learn Arabic for various purposes. For that, the Darosah institution reflects balance between concept and curriculum implementation planned, organized with all elements of education and society in harmony, and evaluated in a way continuous (Wijaya, 2017). The material developed by the El-Darosah institution is a combination of various materials related to the acquisition of Arabic language skills, mainly referring to the Al-Azhar Arabic Language Center in the form of text, and being the axis or reference in the implementation of learning. Given that the El-Darosah institution aims to prepare students to continue their studies in Arab countries, especially Al-Azhar, then of course learning Arabic at this institution is academically oriented. However, in essence it is also

religiously oriented because the sources of Islamic teachings in the past, especially in the codification era, were written in this language so that mastery of Arabic becomes absolute for someone who wants to study Islamic sciences from authoritative sources (Muradi, 2013).

In the early stages, learning is focused on oral conversation skills which include listening and speaking competencies. In the perception of the language center, prospective students have already had an experience in Arabic from their country, especially in reading (Arabic text). Basically, they have learned about Arabic but have not learned use it for speaking. Most of them take Arabic lessons for religious reasons. From this perception, the language center of Al-Azhar formulates the objectives of Arabic learning, that is to improve linguistic competence in the form of correct pronunciation, good understanding, and appropriate speed in implementing each language skill (Faraj, 2013). Those goals can be interpreted that each prospective student shpuld be able to understand what they heard, discuss what they listened, read and understand any given material, and write down what they understood from the material.

To realize those goals, the Arabic Language Center has provided a curriculum design which is implemented in the form of a textbook, *Kutub Al-Azhar li-Ta'lim Al-'Arabiyah li-Al-Natiqin bi-Ghayriha*. This book consists of three, according to the level of the programs mentioned and adapted to several aspects; time, the number of vocabulary (for each level), and the goals to be achieved from each level. The book has designed learning objectives for each level, which includes language skills (الاستماع، والتحدث، والقراءة، والكتابة) and Arabic sciences (التراكيب اللغوية والبلاغية) (Faraj, 2013). In this case, the Al-Azhar Arabic Language Center has established a learning curriculum in the form of textbooks and all the materials and the goals to be achieved.

Also, to optimize the role of the Arabic language center, Al-Azhar has established the representatives in several countries, including Indonesia. Al-Azhar has inaugurated the Indonesian branch of Arabic Language Center. On July, 29th 2019, Al-Azhar Alumni International Organization (OIAA) selected the Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies (Pusiba) as the Indonesian branch of the Al-Azhar Arabic Language Center. This center was inaugurated by Deputy Grand Sheikh Al-Azhar, Sheikh Shaleh Abbas and Indonesia Minister of Religion Lukman Hakim Saifuddin (https://pusiba.com/profile/). This center is a choice for prospective students from Indonesia for matriculation, so that later they can immediately attend lectures as soon as they arrive in Egypt. Pusiba's goal is to prepare Arabic language abilities and competencies, overcome potential problems during the waiting period, strengthen mental readiness, and open Islamic and national insights to prospective students according to the Al-Azhar curriculum. The curriculum, methods, and teaching staff implemented at this center follow those of the Arabic language center in Egypt. Thus, Pusiba is an official institution that prepares language skills and includes aspects of mentality and Islamic and national insight according to Al-Azhar's vision.

Concerning the Arabic learning curriculum at the language center, of course it does not only focus on language competency goals through materials on language elements. The curriculum applied certainly contains religious material which is identical to Al-Azhar. So far, Al-Azhar is well known to have integrated moderate philosophy *(wasatiyah)* in its curriculum, through the lectures which can introduce its students to kalam and fiqh. Al-Azhar is also well known as a university which adopt Sunni views and adhere to the *Ash'ariyah* creed as their theological stream (Saat and Zait, 2019).

Based on the background above, this research tries to explain Arabic learning as an identity which is really appropriate to do to prove that the content of a learning curriculum does not only contain subject matter, which usually only consists of skills and knowledge of Arabic. But also, have a strong relationship with the values, messages, and vision of an institution which develops it. In this case, the curriculum of the Arabic program at Al-Azhar will certainly bring Islamic prominence which an institution believes.

Method

This research is a qualitative, it takes sources from Arabic learning information conducted by Pusiba and El-Darosah, as the official representatives of Al-Azhar Arabic Center in Indonesia. In this case, the location of the research was carried out at both institutions. The primary data sources in this study were information obtained from direct observation of the learning process and content analysis of the textbooks given because they contained objectives, materials, and evaluations closely related to Al-Azhar's identity. This study used content analysis and sociolinguistic approaches, where the study of a language not only involves intrinsic as structure perceptions, but also extrinsic aspects, such as social, cultural, economic, political aspects and so on as is done by postgraduate circles. structuralism (Kamil, 2012).

The sociolinguistic approach is used to explain the function of language which can disseminate the institution's vision, in this case the vision promoted by Al-Azhar as an Islamic educational institution. In this research, the analysis used is discourse analysis which was developed to see the messages which become Al-Azhar's vision in the textbooks used in the Arabic Language preparation program for prospective students. The results of that analysis will then be seen based on a sociolinguistic approach (language as an identity) such as Tajfel's point of view, to find the grand vision of Al-Azhar through the programs implemented, including the preparation of Arabic. Meanwhile, the description will be carried out using a descriptive-analytic method which means creating a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts, characteristics, and relationships between phenomena studied (Ainin, 2007).

Result and Discussion

The Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies (Pusiba) is a choice for prospective students from Indonesia for having matriculation, so they can immediately attend

lectures once they arrive in Egypt. Pusiba's existence is caused by increasing Indonesian students' interest to study at Al-Azhar University, but this is not always matched by adequate Arabic and financial ability. Meanwhile, since 2015, Al-Azhar has required prospective students to take *tahdid al-mustawá* or placement test, where the ability of prospective Indonesian students who are still under standard should take matriculation in the first year (https://pusiba.com/ profile/).

The curriculum, methods, books, and the teacher's role implemented in Pusiba follow the standards of *Markaz Shaykh Zayd li-al-Ta'lim al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah li-Ghayr al-Natiqina biha*, which is the official center of Al-Azhar in Cairo in implementing Arabic matriculation for prospective Al-Azhar students from various Islamic countries. That matriculation is divided into 4 levels, which the practice are carried out through 7 levels; 1) *mubtadi awwal* (the fisrt beginners), 2) *mubtadi tsani* (second beginner), 3) *mutawassit awwal* (first intermediate), 4) *mutawassit tsani* (second intermediate), 5) *mutaqaddim awwal* (first advance), 6) *mutaqaddim tsani* (second advance), and 7) mutamayyiz (excellence). Each class requires one month which is directly guided by teachers from Egypt, or who have received Arabic language teaching certificates from the Arabic Language Center in Egypt. This is a form of optimizing learning Arabic in preparing prospective Indonesian students who wish to continue their studies in the Middle East because learning optimization is the key to achieving educational goals (Lubis et al., 2022). Therefore, it is very important to fully optimize all the elements that facilitate learning (Sodikin & Gumiandari, 2021). In addition to these elements, other things must be prepared, namely prospective Middle Eastern students (Istiningsih, 2016), of which currently many interested people want to continue their studies in that region. Each element serves as a linked unit to achieve educational objectives (Azkia, N & Rohman, N, 2020).

Based on the results of interviews with the El-Darosah Leaders, they said that at first, El-Darosah was called a *dawrah* (course) for guiding prospective students who plan to study at universities in the Middle East region such as Egypt, Sudan, Morocco and Medina), except providing study management services to Al-Azhar University, Egypt. The *Dawrah* was carried out to prepare prospective students, who are alumni of Islamic boarding schools and high school to deal with the entrance test to Al-Azhar University. So, the original purpose of El-Darosah's existence was to guide and provide information services to prospective Al-Azhar students. In the next step, El-Darosah Azhar was developed into Boarding School Foundation whic is located at Palka Road, KM. 20 Cimoyan villages, Ciomas sub-district, Serang Regency, Banten Province. That development took place on Friday, September 22nd, 2017, coinciding with the 1st of Muharram 1939, and its founder was Ustadz H. Reza Rizki Febrian, Lc, an alumni of Al-Azhar University, Egypt. It seems that the development occurred in line with the increasing number of participants attending dawrah at this institution, so the idea emerged to legalize the institution.

El-Darosah's existence, based on its founder, is due to the lack of institutions that can facilitate prospective Indonesian students who plan to continue their studies in

Arab countries, even though the *ghirah* (strong desire) to study there has been increased lately. There are indeed several institutions, but their focus is only on arranging departures without touching on the quality aspects of prospective students. In the end, they will encounter various obstacles upon arrival in their destination country, both technically and in language adaptation and learning (memorization of the Qur'an). From this problem, El-Darosah Azhar Islamic Boarding School Foundation was initiated to provide change and blessings for the local people. At the next level, the foundation, which was originally a *dawrah* institution, became an Islamic boarding school institution, and succeeded in sending prospective students to Al-Azhar, whose number has been increasing in each year.

In this global era, everyone will easily tend to be affected by negative currents without a strong foundation of religious knowledge, especially among teenagers. Thus, the existence of El-Darosah is expected to hgive change the paradigm of people's thinking, especially for those around. Moreover, El-Darosah Azhar not only develops religious sciences, but also focuses on spreading the *wasatiyah* (moderate) paradigm which is the main goal of Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Then, the establishment of this institution is also based on the 1945 Constitution, that is in the context of educating human resources of Indonesia, as well as supporting the government's 9-year compulsory education program, beside as an institution which concentrate in serving prospective Indonesian students who plan to continue their education to Al-Azhar.

The enthusiasm of students to continue their studies at Arab universities, especially Al-Azhar Cairo, is increasing. Egypt still attracts the attention of the Islamic community in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. Beside the ancient cultural history with the existence of the pyramids and the Nile, this country has Al-Azhar university, which is so popular as one of the oldest Islamic universities in the world. As a university, Al-Azhar has succeeded in producing reliable scientists in their fields. In addition, the free lecture system and scholarship offered from several institutions such as Al-Azhar, *Bayt Az-Zakat*, Bayt At-Tamwil Kuwait, and others make it more attractive for prospective students. Moreover, the price of books and renting a place to live in Egypt are relatively affordable compared to other countries. All of those reasons are additional value for Al-Azhar Cairo University.

Based on those easy accessibility, every year, there will bea n increasing number of students who plan to continue their study to Al-Azhar Cairo University. The increasing is also happened in Indonesia based on the data of Al-Azhar entrance test through religion ministry through https://kemenag.go.id/ which consist of; in 2012, there were 2385 participants, in 2013 there were 2799 participants, in 2014 there were 1672 participants, in 2015 there were 2465 participants, in 2016 there were 3162 participants, in 2017 there were 4472 participants. The increasing number of participants happened every year, although the number of candidates accepted was only several. Based on interview done with the leader of El-Darosah, the students who have joined the Arabic program in this boarding school have successfully accepted in several

universities in Arab, and those who are accepted in Al-Azhar university was about 255 students.

The vision of El-Darosah was being an high quality institution sho success in guiding its students and the candidate of mid-east university's students candidate, and have output who are able in memorizing alqur'an (*hafidz* and *hafidzah*) with good knowledge and attitude. It is not surprising that more and more students are interested in studying at this educational institution because Al-Azhar University can be likened to a scientific building that displays the true face of Islam, both from the aspect of reason and also the *naqli* propositions. Al-Azhar uses the perspectives of *al-wasatiyah* and *al-i'tidal* in understanding the Qur'an and hadith and all forms of scholarship that originate from them. This university reinforces the importance of dialogue and the benefits of differences in scholars for its students, so it is challenging if they are shackled to rigid understandings (Ruslan, 2015). This goal clarifies that Al-Azhar is an Islamic university known for its moderate views. Al-Azhar is also an institution that pays great attention to learning Arabic along with its literature and sciences, for every Islamic student with all the differences in the country.

Both Islamic and Arabic Center (Pusiba) and El-Darosah are the instituions who are managed by the alumni of Al-Azhar university, both of them were given authority to establish Arabic Preparation program for prospective students of Al-Azhar from Indonesia. Both of them implemented the curriculum for Arabic Program as same as the curriculum of Arabic Program in Al-Azhar from the the ocjebtives, material, methodology and evaluation. Although, in El Darosah, there was an additional in using textbook *Al-'Arabiyah baina Yadaik* in its teaching learning process. The Arabic Language Center aims to provide language and scientific skills to prospective students, and prepare them to enter university level. Not only that, learning Arabic is also given to those who wish to study Islamic sciences or for special purposes, such as tourism and business. This means that the Arabic Language Center at Al-Azhar will eventually develop in terms of learning Arabic, and not only focus on preparing prospective Al-Azhar students. The specific goals to be achieved in learning are that students can pronounce correctly, understand well, and have a speed that is appropriate to the context of using language skills (Ruslan, 2015). To realize this goal, the language center developed a textbook called Silsilah Al-Azhar Al-Sharif li-Ta'lim Al-Lughah Al-'Arabiyah li-Ghair al-Nathiqin biha, which consists of levels *al-mubtadi', al-mutawassit, al-mutaqaddim,* and *al-mutamayyiz*. Each level consists of two books, except for the al-mutamayyiz level. In addition, each level provides a guidebook for the implementation of learning for teachers. The books developed can be likened to a curriculum, including objectives, materials, strategies, and evaluation. The principles underlying the development of the Arabic language curriculum at the al-Azhar Language Center consist of linguistic, cultural and educational principles.

The materials in the textbook developed by Islamic and Arabic Center of Al-Azhar were in the form of text, which was the basic learning process. The texts in each

book have a significant role in sending the three fundamentals; Language, culture, and education described in each objective above. Each text was used to treat students' language competencies, starting from listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learning Arabic should indeed cover the four interrelated abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, bearing in mind that language is essential for human interaction, especially in the world of education which uses Arabic in delivering its material (Arsyad & Majid, 2010). The texts also contain all aspects of Arab's culture such as the big days, cultures, values, thoughts, and others.

Then, each book was completed with strategies and comprehensive evaluations to improve students' comprehension toward the text. What does make it more interesting? The texts selected were vased on Islamic context and paradigm of Al-Azhar, that was *wasatiyah* or moderate. This is in line with the President's Regulation No. 18, 2020 which stated that religious moderation was officially planned as a national long term program andi was a speacial message of President to Religious Ministry (Efendi, 2021). It became interesting, the paradigm which Al-Azhar established was still being an attention although it's in the context of Arabic Curriculum Development which was intended to prospective students from outside of Arab. It means that Al-Azhar concerned in spreading *wasatiyah* paradigm through anykind of media. As an example, the first book for high school students consisted of texts with the theme (الإسلام وحرية العقيدة).

The second book, there were the text with the temer (العدل في الإسلام) and (العدل في معاملة أهل الديانات الأخرى). The first book of higher education, there were the texts with the theme (الحوار مع الآخر), dan (مفهوم الحرية في الإسلام), (سماحة الإسلام مع أهل الديانات الأخرى). Moreover, the theme (الأزهر ووسطية الإسلام) was on second book of higher education (Ruslan, 2015), it means that prospective students didn't only learn for comprehending language, but also learn about Islamic knowledge as the fundamental of Al-Azhar.

The text (العدل في معاملة أهل الديانات الأخرى) explained that justification is a good attitude and easy to be done if it's correlated to the relationship of one religion or descendants. However, it would be difficult to implement if it was correlated with the difference in religion, and it was expected to make it real. This tekst also explained the verse of Al-Qur'an about justification especially for other people who disliked us. As stated by Allah in Al-Qur'an:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا كونوا قوامين لله شهداء بالقسط، ولا يجرمنكم شنئان قوم على ألا تعدلوا هو أقرب للتقوى، واتقوا الله إن الله خبير بما تعملون.

The justice was a way to get closer to the God-fearing, eventhough for those who were agaisnt. Those texts guided everyone to be fair to those with different beliefs, because Allah would give *mahabbah* for those who did it as Allah said in Al-Qur'an:

لا ينهاكم الله عن الذين لم يقاتلوكم في الدين ولم يخرجوكم من دياركم أن تبروهم وتقسطوا إليهم إن الله يحب المقسطين.

Al-Qur'an actually forbids to do good (تبروهم) and to be fair (وتقسطوا إليهم) with those who had different beliefs, because by doing so, everyone will get Allah's love. The text also explained the hadiths of the Prophet, which strictly prohibits persecuting, taking over others' rights, or adding more burdens to *ahl al-dzimmah* (non-Muslims in Islamic areas), as the prophet said:

- من ظلم معاهدا أو انتقصه حقه أو كلفه فوق طاقته أو أخذ منه شيئا بغير طيب نفس، فأنا حجيجه يوم القيامة.

- اتقوا دعوة المظلوم –وإن كان كافرا- فإنه ليس دونها حجاب.

The first hadith explained that the Prophet would be the defender of those who have received abuse on the Day of Judgment, meanwhile the second hadith stated that Allah SWT would answer their prayers. The theme of those texts contained the basics of justice which written in Al-Qur'an, hadith, and the deeds of friends which could be read by prospective students in the context of acquiring Arabic. This fact showed that they did not only receive materials for language purposes, but also the *wasatiyah* values which they could understand through those texts.

Other evidence is the existence of the texts with the theme (الأزهر ووسطية الإسلام) in both high-level books, which strongly emphasizes Al-Azhar's position in the context of *wasatiyah*. Al-Azhar's consistency in practicing *Wasatiyah* Islam was the reason for its continued existence in the Islamic world. Those view was not only a jargon, but it was implemented in three pillars; First, the obligation to honor all Prophet' friends, who are considered having justice and purity from bad actions, as the text written in the book which read:

وجوب تعظيم أقدار الصحابة والحكم القاطع بعدالتهم وبراءتهم من المطاعن والمثالب، تمسكا بقوله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "لا تسبوا أصحابي" و"أصحابي كالنجوم بأيهم اقتديتم اهتديتم.

Second, keeping verbal (utterance) away from disputes or debates which was resulted from the differences as stated in the text:

أن نكف ألسنتنا عما شجر بينهم من خلاف أو شقاق، أخذا بالمقولة المشهورة عن السلف الصالح "هذه أحداث أبعد الله عنها سيوفنا، فلا نلوث بها ألسنتنا.

Third, growing a sense of caution towards various historical opinions originating from those who were not trusted, by conducting *tarjih* (examination) to find out which is the most correct. These three pillars were the reference for every religious effort carried out by Al-Azhar in the context of *wasatiyah* views.

The middle position taken by Al-Azhar made it to be accept the call for *al-taqrib* (an effort to get closer) with other *madzhab*, as well as efforts to unite Muslims in one word "equality". Unfortunately, political movements made Al-Azhar's efforts difficult to be realized as the text stated:

وبهذا الموقف الوسطى المذهبي تحدد موقف الأزهر التاريخي أمام الفرقاء، على نحو سمح للأزهر —فيما بعد-
أن يتبنى دعوة التقريب بين المذاهب، وأن يعمل على جمع المسلمين على كلمة سواء لولا أعاصير السياسة
الهوجاء، التي أفسدت ما أصلحه الأزهر، وذهبت بجهوده في هذا السبيل كل مذهب.

Political influences prevented Al-Azhar from realizing its efforts to approach schools of thought and share common ideas among Muslims. This was also in Al-Qausi's view that Al-Azhar was not only an educational institution which studies *turats* and so on, but also upholds equality and *wasatiyah* (Al-Qausi, 2023).

Since its inception, Al-Azhar with a *wasatiyah* view has focused on the discourse of unifying the paradigms of revelation and reason, as opinion of Imam al-Ghazali:

العقل كالبصر السليم، والقرآن والسنة كالشمس المنتشرة الضياء ولا غنى لأحدهما عن الآخر.

It means that Al-Ghazali believes that there was no contradiction between shari'ah and thought. In addition, thinking was like a right view, meanwhile the Qur'an and hadith were like the sun which emits light, and there was no conflict between one and another. This view made Al-Azhar well known with educational institutions from two scientific, textual and thought. Its position was clearly different from those who rejected the reason and did not follow rationalists. This has always been the basis of Al-Azhar to present, and has become a scientific center which was students from various Islamic regions intended to.

This is an example of a text that could be used as evidence that the curriculum for learning Arabic is identical to the social identity of the institution which makes it. In addition to the skills and knowledge of the Arabic language which are of concern to Al-Azhar for its prospective students, the material which constitutes the text as a learning axis contains Islamic views which are believed, fought for, and defended by Al-Azhar, called *wasatiyah* according to the word of Allah SWT: (وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا لتكونوا شهداء).

Besides the textbooks the Al-Azhar Arabic Language Center used, El-Darosah added some materials from the book *al-'Arabiyah baina Yadaik*. The reason was the ease and simplicity contained in the book, and the students' response was really support, especially when a comparison was made between *Silsilah* and *Bayna Yadayk*. This book was written by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ibrahim al-Fawzan, Mukhtar al-Tahir Husayn, and Muhammad 'Abd al-Khaliq Muhammad Fadl who were the lecturers at Ma'had al-Lughah al-'Arabiyah (Center for Arabic Language) at King Saud University Riyad, Saudi Arabia in 1422 H/2001 AD, where for the first time, the first printing of this book was published by *Mu'assasah al-Waqf al-Islami* Riyadh.

The book *al-'Arabiyah baina Yadaik* was not only directs students to know Arabic, but also to be skilled in practicing or speaking Arabic. Language or communication skills were oriented through materials which led students to communicate in Arabic, both oral and in written, and produce word structures correctly. With those two abilities which are the goals of the book, the students are expected to be able to develop both through cultural studies. This aligns with the view that cultural studies should begin through a language approach. Moving on from there, the book began to introduce students to various Arabic cultures, which were added by various general cultures that did not conflict with Islamic values.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the Arabic language learning implemented by Al-Azhar University, which can be seen from its implementation at the Pusiba and El-Darosah institutions as its official representatives, has succeeded in explaining the identity of Al-Azhar called; *Wasatiyah* (moderate) Islamic views which was contained in learning texts as the main axis in learning Arabic such as سماحة الإسلام مع), (العدل في معاملة أهل الديانات الأخرى), (العدل في الإسلام), (الإسلام وحرية العقيدة) (الأزهر ووسطية الإسلام) dan (الحوار مع الآخر), (مفهوم الحرية في الإسلام), (إهل الديانات الأخرى which were presented in several levels in Arabic learning books developed by Al-Azhar university.

The purpose of learning Arabic for Al-Azhar prospective students is not only preparing them to attend lectures at the faculties at Al-Azhar, but also to giving them mastery of the language starting from the sounds, words, structures, and elaboration of Arabic paragraphs with sciences related to Arabic rules such as Nahwu, Sharaf, and Balaghah. All aspects of the language were presented in several steps started from listening, pronouncing or speaking, reading, and writing according to the level of students. Not only those, the students are also trained in several steps to produce language from listening, speaking, reading, and writing by administering comprehensive practice tests which included; before reading (ما قبل القراءة), listening (الاستماع), speaking (التحدث), reading (القراءة), language rules and styles of Balaghah (القواعد والأساليب البلاغية), and writing (الكتابة), The strategy implemented by Al-Azhar curriculum was an audio-lingual approach, because of the view that language was communication and habits which speakers carried out.

By using textbooks provided, learning Arabic implemented by representative institutions of Al-Azhar University in Indonesia always followed the guidelines outlined in those book. The students at both institutions were trained with the stages which have been clearly described in the books. They would be evaluated continuously according to the exercises in it to determine where their level of language ability was. After all ended, they were considered to have ability to directly enter and take part in lectures at the faculties available at Al-Azhar University.

Conclusion

Arabic language learning implemented by al-Azhar University, which in this case can be seen from its implementation at the Pusiba and El-Darosah institutions as its official representatives, has succeeded in explaining the identity of Al-Azhar namely; wasatiyah (moderate) Islamic views contained in the lesson texts which are the main axis in learning Arabic such as (العدل في معاملة أهل الديانات), (العدل في الإسلام), (الإسلام وحرية العقيدة), dan (الأخرى), (سماحة الإسلام مع إهل الديانات الأخرى), (مفهوم الحرية في الإسلام), (الحوار مع الآخر الأزهر ووسطية الإسلام) which are presented in stages in Arabic learning books developed by Al-Azhar university. The aim of learning Arabic for Al-Azhar prospective students is not only to prepare them to attend lectures at the faculties at Al-Azhar alone, but also to give them mastery of the language, starting from the sounds, words, structures, and elaborated Arabic paragraphs with sciences related to Arabic rules such as Nahwu, Sharf, and Balaghah. All aspects of the language are presented, starting from the stages of listening, pronouncing (speaking), reading, and writing, according to the students' stage and level or level. Not only that, students are also trained in stages and stages to produce language from listening, speaking, reading, and writing by administering very comprehensive practice tests which include; the skills of reading (ما قبل القراءة), listening (الاستماع), speaking (التحدث), reading (القراءة), rules and styles of Balaghah (القواعد والأساليب البلاغية), and writing (الكتابة). The strategy implemented by the al-Azhar curriculum is an audio-lingual approach due to the view that language is communication and habits that speakers carry out.

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