



ARABIC AS A MEDIUM OF INTERCULTURAL RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Busari Kehinde Kamorudeen, PhD.

Faculty of Arts, Department of Religion and African Culture,
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
Arabic language and Literature,
email address: kkbusari@gmail.com 08033548370

&

Azeez Oyedeji,

University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria, Faculty of Arts, Department of Islamic Studies,
email address: Azeez_oyedeji@unilesa.edu.ng 08064464391.

Abstract

This study examines Arabic as a medium of intercultural religious dialogue and its significance in fostering mutual understanding among people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The objectives of the study are to investigate the historical role of Arabic in facilitating interreligious communication, examine its contribution to sociocultural transformation across different societies, and assess its relevance in contemporary global religious discourse. The study is anchored on the Intercultural Communication Theory propounded by Edward T. Hall (1959), which emphasizes the role of language and culture in promoting understanding, cooperation, and interaction among people from different cultural and religious settings. The theory provides a framework for understanding how Arabic functions as a communicative bridge across diverse communities. The study adopts the Historical-Analytical Method and relies on qualitative data obtained from secondary sources, including books, scholarly journal articles, conference proceedings, and historical documents. Data were analyzed through content analysis and comparative evaluation of relevant literature. The findings reveal that Arabic has historically served as a shared medium of communication among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, particularly during the medieval period when intellectual, scientific, and theological exchanges flourished. The study further discovers that Arabic contributed significantly to educational development, literacy, and intercultural engagement in regions such as West Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. In addition, the Qur'anic principle of Ta'āruf (mutual acquaintance) provides a practical framework for peaceful coexistence and constructive interfaith relations. The study concludes that Arabic transcends its religious function and remains a vital instrument for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. It recommends strengthening Arabic language education, promoting interfaith initiatives through Arabic, and encouraging further scholarly research on its role in peacebuilding, cultural diplomacy and global cooperation.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Intercultural Dialogue, Interreligious Communication, Ta'āruf, Globalized Religious Identity.

Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, the necessity for robust intercultural and interreligious dialogue has never been more pressing. As societies become increasingly interconnected through



digital technology, migration, and economic interdependence, the tools used to navigate these interactions specifically language take on a heightened significance. Among the world's major languages, Arabic occupies a unique and often misunderstood position. While frequently viewed through the narrow lens of Islamic scripture or modern political conflict, Arabic has historically functioned, and continues to function, as a sophisticated medium for intercultural religious dialogue.

The complexity of Arabic lies in its dual nature: it is both the *verba ipsissima* of the Quran for Muslims and a versatile administrative, scientific, and philosophical vehicle for millions of non-Muslims throughout history. As Farah and Mudassir (2025) note, the Arabic language plays a pivotal role in promoting cultural understanding and tolerance in the era of globalization. It is not merely a vehicle for information but a carrier of values, ethical frameworks, and historical memory. In a world where "clash of civilizations" narratives often dominate the headlines, understanding Arabic as a bridge rather than a barrier is essential for global stability.

The linguistic structure of Arabic itself lends itself to dialogue. Its root system allows for a precision in theological and philosophical terminology that has been utilized by various faith traditions to express complex ideas about the divine, morality, and social justice. This article examines the trajectory of Arabic as a bridge between faiths, moving from the medieval "Golden Age" of translation and philosophy to modern-day applications in education and media. We will explore how Arabic has served as a "shared space" where the boundaries between religious identities become porous, allowing for a synthesis of thought that transcends sectarian divides.

Furthermore, the globalization of Arabic through modern media and migration has introduced new challenges and opportunities. While the language carries deep religious weight, it is also being adapted to secular contexts and pluralistic societies. By examining case studies from West Africa to Southeast Asia, we can see how the adoption or study of Arabic facilitates a "negotiated identity" for many communities. This introduction sets the stage for a deeper investigation into how a language often associated with a single faith has, in fact, been a cornerstone of inter-faith civilization for over a millennium.

Conceptual Clarification

Arabic Language

Arabic is a Semitic language spoken by millions of people across the Middle East, North Africa, and other parts of the world. It is the language of the Qur'an and occupies a central position in Islamic civilization. Beyond its religious significance, Arabic has historically functioned as a language of science, philosophy, literature, diplomacy, and intercultural communication.

Intercultural Dialogue

Intercultural dialogue refers to constructive interaction and exchange of ideas among individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. It promotes understanding, respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence by encouraging participants to appreciate cultural diversity.



Interreligious Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is a process of communication and engagement among followers of different religions aimed at fostering mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration. It seeks to reduce prejudice, resolve misunderstandings, and promote social harmony.

Ta‘āruf

Ta‘āruf is an Arabic term derived from the root ‘arafa (to know). It means mutual acquaintance or getting to know one another. The concept is rooted in Qur'an 49:13 and serves as a foundational principle for intercultural and interreligious engagement.

Globalised Religious Identity

Globalized religious identity refers to the way religious beliefs and practices are shaped and expressed within an interconnected world influenced by migration, technology, media, and international interactions.

The Historical Foundation

The historical weight of Arabic as a medium of dialogue is best understood through the lens of medieval Muslim philosophers and the vast translation movements that defined the early Islamic period. Abdul-Jabbar (2022) highlights how these thinkers utilized Arabic to engage with Hellenistic, Persian, and Indian traditions. This was not a passive reception of ideas but an active intercultural communication that synthesized disparate worldviews into a coherent intellectual discourse. During the Abbasid Caliphate, the *Bayt al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad became a literal and figurative site of dialogue, where Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scholars collaborated to translate the works of Aristotle, Plato, and Galen into Arabic.

This era proved that Arabic could strip itself of purely parochial connotations to become a universal language of reason. Medieval philosophers like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) did not just speak to their coreligionists; they spoke to a burgeoning "Republic of Letters" that spanned from Al-Andalus to Central Asia. By translating Greek logic into Arabic, these scholars created a shared vocabulary that allowed a Jewish philosopher like Maimonides or a Christian theologian like Thomas Aquinas to later engage with the same concepts. Arabic became the conduit through which the intellectual heritage of antiquity was preserved, enhanced, and eventually passed back to Europe, sparking the Renaissance.

The communicative aspect of this period was inherently interreligious. The translators were often Nestorian or Jacobite Christians who possessed the linguistic keys to Syriac and Greek. Their choice to render these works into Arabic was a strategic one, recognizing that Arabic was the rising sun of the intellectual world. This collaborative spirit demonstrates that when a language is positioned as a medium of "high culture" and science, it naturally facilitates a dialogue of the mind that precedes and supports the dialogue of the heart. Abdul-Jabbar (2022) argues that this medieval model offers vital lessons for modern intercultural communication, emphasizing the need for a shared "intellectual infrastructure."

Moreover, the "Study of Arabic" as a discipline, as explored by Carter (2011), shows that the language was always more than a tool for proselytization. It was a subject of intense grammatical and philological scrutiny by both Muslims and non-Muslims. The early grammarians were often



of Persian descent, highlighting the intercultural nature of the language's development from its very inception. This historical foundation reminds us that Arabic's "intercultural identity" is not a modern invention but a return to its roots as a civilizational bridge that once united the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean worlds in a single discourse of discovery.

The Melkite Shift and Christian-Arabic Heritage

A compelling historical example of Arabic's interreligious utility is the "Melkite shift," a phenomenon that redefined the linguistic landscape of Eastern Christianity. Buys and Nwokoro (2019) analyze how Middle Eastern Christians (Melkites) adopted Arabic as their primary liturgical and intellectual language between the 8th and 10th centuries. This shift was not merely an act of political survival; it was a profound theological and cultural repositioning. By translating the Gospels, the Liturgy, and patristic writings into Arabic, Melkite Christians ensured that their faith could be articulated in the dominant language of the era.

This shift allowed for a meaningful communication bridge between Christians and Muslims. Because they now used the same linguistic tools, these communities could debate theology, law, and philosophy within a shared semantic field. When a Christian used the word *Allah* for God or *Ruh* for Spirit, they were speaking a language that a Muslim neighbor understood, even if their theological interpretations of those words differed. This "Christian-Arabic" heritage produced a vast corpus of literature that remains a testament to a time when religious dialogue was not a staged event but a daily linguistic reality.

In modern contexts, such as Northern Nigeria, this historical precedent carries significant weight. Buys and Nwokoro (2019) argue that understanding this linguistic history can help navigate contemporary Christian-Muslim relations. When Christians recognize the long history of Arabic as a Christian language, and when Muslims recognize that Arabic has been used to praise Christ for over a millennium, the perceived "ownership" of the language shifts from a tool of exclusion to a platform for inclusion. In the Nigerian context, where religious tensions can run high, highlighting the "Melkite shift" serves as a reminder that Arabic is a shared heritage that can facilitate meaningful communication.

The Melkite shift also challenges the notion that Arabic is inherently "Islamic." Instead, it reveals Arabic to be a "receptive" language, capable of hosting diverse sacred traditions. This receptive quality is what makes it such a powerful medium for dialogue today. By looking at the Christian-Arabic experience, we see that interreligious dialogue is most effective when it is grounded in a shared language that permits "deep listening" and precise articulation. It allows for a dialogue where the "Other" is not just tolerated but is understood within their own linguistic and conceptual framework.

The Judeo-Arabic Synthesis

The Jewish community's engagement with Arabic produced one of the most fruitful periods of intellectual history, known as the "Judeo-Arabic" synthesis. Vollandt (2018) discusses how early Bible translations into Judeo-Arabic were more than mere linguistic transfers; they were "linguistic commentaries." Jewish scholars like Saadia Gaon did not just translate the Torah into Arabic to make it accessible; they used the Arabic language to explain and defend Jewish law and philosophy in the context of the vibrant Islamic intellectual world.



Judeo-Arabic, often written in Hebrew characters but using Arabic grammar and vocabulary, allowed Jewish thinkers to participate fully in the "Arabic-speaking" intellectual world while maintaining their distinct religious identity. This synthesis led to masterpieces like Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed*, originally written in Arabic (*Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*). The choice of Arabic for such a foundational Jewish work was a testament to the language's capacity to handle the highest levels of abstraction and logical rigor. It shows that Arabic served as a neutral ground where the sacred texts of "the Other" could be analyzed through the lens of universal reason.

Vollandt (2018) emphasizes the "interpretative dimension" of these translations. By using Arabic, Jewish scholars were able to engage with the concepts of *Kalam* (Islamic theology) and *Falsafa* (Philosophy), adapting those tools to refine their own theological systems. This was interreligious dialogue at its most sophisticated not just an exchange of pleasantries, but a deep, structural engagement between two religious traditions. The Arabic language provided the bridge that allowed this "inter-pollination" of ideas to occur, creating a cultural flourishing that benefited both communities.

In the modern world, the memory of the Judeo-Arabic synthesis serves as a powerful counter-narrative to the idea of eternal conflict between Jews and Muslims. It demonstrates that under the right conditions, Arabic can be a medium of profound mutual respect and intellectual cooperation. Understanding this history is crucial for any modern effort to use Arabic in intercultural religious dialogue, as it proves that the language has already successfully performed this role for centuries. It highlights Arabic's potential to facilitate a "polyphonic" dialogue where multiple voices can coexist within a single linguistic framework.

Linguistic Politeness and Religious Identity

The intersection of language and religion is deeply embedded in the "politeness" protocols of Arabic-speaking societies, where the secular and the sacred are often indistinguishable in daily speech. Bouchara (2015) demonstrates this through a comprehensive study of Moroccan Arabic.

In these settings, greetings, expressions of gratitude, and even standard social interactions are heavily infused with religious references. Phrases like *Assalamu Alaikum* (Peace be upon you), *Insha'Allah* (If God wills), and *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to God) are not merely religious declarations; they are foundational speech acts of social politeness that transcend individual piety.

For a non-Muslim or an outsider, understanding these nuances is essential for intercultural understanding. In Arabic-speaking cultures, "politeness" is often framed within a religious worldview that emphasizes humility, hospitality, and the acknowledgement of divine providence.

Bouchara (2015) argues that misinterpreting these religiously-charged linguistic formulas can lead to significant friction or "misunderstanding" in intercultural settings. For example, the frequent use of *Insha'Allah* can be misinterpreted by those from Western cultural backgrounds as a lack of commitment or a form of procrastination, whereas in the Arabic context, it is a polite acknowledgement of human limitation and respect for the future.

This linguistic landscape provides a unique opportunity for dialogue. When a person of a different faith learns and uses these expressions correctly, it is often seen as a sign of profound respect for the local culture and its values. It demonstrates a willingness to enter the "moral universe" of the



speaker. Arabic, in this sense, provides a script for respectful coexistence. It offers a set of "polite rituals" that allow people of different backgrounds to interact with a shared sense of dignity and decorum. This is particularly important in religious dialogue, where the "tone" of the conversation is often as important as the "content."

Moreover, the role of religion in shaping politeness suggests that the Arabic language itself encourages a "theocentric" way of relating to others. By constantly invoking the divine in social interactions, the language reminds speakers of their shared humanity and their common standing before God. This can be a powerful tool for de-escalating conflict and fostering a spirit of tolerance. As Bouchara (2015) notes, the "speech act of greeting" is the first step in any intercultural encounter, and in Arabic, this first step is inherently a wish for peace—a fundamental prerequisite for any meaningful religious dialogue.

Arabic and Sociocultural Change: Case Studies

The influence of Arabic extends far beyond the Middle East, acting as a catalyst for deep-seated sociocultural change in diverse regions across the globe. By examining specific case studies, we can see how Arabic functions as a "bridge" that connects local cultures to a globalized religious and intellectual identity. This process is rarely a one-way street; instead, it involves a complex negotiation between the Arabic language and indigenous traditions, leading to the emergence of new, hybrid cultural forms.

The Yoruba Context

Salami (2010) provides an in-depth exploration of how Arabic influenced sociocultural change among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. This interaction is particularly fascinating because it illustrates that Arabic did not just bring a new religion; it brought a new "technology of the self." The introduction of Arabic scripts and literature provided the Yoruba with a new literacy, a new legal consciousness, and a new way of engaging with the world beyond their local borders. This "literary dialogue" between Arabic and Yoruba culture facilitated a transition from oral traditions to a documented, globalized religious identity.

The integration of Arabic loanwords into the Yoruba language is a testament to the depth of this influence. Words related to justice, education, and social organization were borrowed and adapted, showing that Arabic provided the conceptual tools for the Yoruba to navigate a changing social landscape. Salami (2010) argues that this was a form of "sociocultural change" that allowed the Yoruba to maintain their cultural integrity while participating in the broader Islamic civilization. The Arabic language, therefore, acted as a medium of "cultural translation," allowing for a dialogue between indigenous West African traditions and the global Islamic *Ummah*.

This historical interaction has modern implications for interfaith dialogue in Nigeria. By acknowledging the long-standing role of Arabic in Yoruba history, we can see it as a "local" language as much as a "foreign" one. This helps to de-mystify Arabic and present it as a shared cultural asset that can facilitate communication between different religious groups. The Yoruba experience shows that when a language like Arabic is integrated into the local sociocultural fabric, it becomes a powerful tool for social cohesion and mutual understanding, providing a common ground for diverse communities to build a shared future.



Teaching Arabic in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, the teaching of Arabic has taken on a significant intercultural dimension that goes beyond simple language acquisition. Kustina et al. (2024a) emphasize that in the modern Indonesian educational system, teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) is increasingly focused on conveying the "intercultural aspects" of the language. It is not just about mastering grammar and syntax; it is about providing students with the tools to navigate a globalized world while remaining rooted in their local religious identity.

In the Indonesian classroom, Arabic is often presented as a tool for "global citizenship." By learning Arabic, students are able to engage directly with the wider Muslim world, fostering a sense of belonging to a global community. However, Kustina et al. (2024a) also highlight how this process encourages "interreligious tolerance." Because the Arabic curriculum in Indonesia often includes texts that emphasize pluralism and social harmony, the language becomes a vehicle for promoting a "moderate" or "wasatiyyah" form of Islam. This is crucial in a diverse nation like Indonesia, where interfaith dialogue is essential for national unity.

Furthermore, the teaching of Arabic in Indonesia serves as a bridge between "traditional" and "modern" educational paradigms. By combining classical Arabic texts with modern pedagogical methods, Indonesian educators are creating a space where students can engage in a dialogue between their religious heritage and the demands of the 21st century. This "internal dialogue" is a prerequisite for any external interreligious dialogue. As students learn to interpret their own faith in a globalized context through the medium of Arabic, they become better equipped to engage with people of other faiths with confidence and respect. The Indonesian model shows that the classroom can be a vital laboratory for intercultural religious dialogue.

The Concept of Ta'āruf and Interreligious Dialogue

Central to the Islamic perspective on dialogue and deeply rooted in the Arabic language itself is the Quranic concept of *Ta'āruf*. Derived from the Arabic root *'arafa* (to know), *Ta'āruf* literally means "getting to know one another." Maulana (2024) argues that *Ta'āruf* is the bedrock of interreligious dialogue, as it moves beyond the passive concept of "tolerance" toward an active, reciprocal "engagement." The term appears in the Quran (49:13), where it is stated that God created people into nations and tribes so that they may "know one another."

The Arabic language provides the specific vocabulary needed to turn this theological principle into a practical dialogue. Unlike English terms like "dialogue," which can sometimes imply a mere exchange of words, *Ta'āruf* implies a transformation of the self through the knowledge of the "Other." It suggests that we cannot truly know ourselves until we have engaged with those who are different from us. Maulana (2024) suggests that using this Arabic terminology in interfaith settings helps to ground the conversation in a spiritual mandate that is familiar to Muslims and intriguing to non-Muslims, creating a common point of departure for deeper exploration.

Khan et al. (2020) provide a critical appraisal of interreligious dialogue in Islam, noting that the Arabic linguistic tradition emphasizes specific modes of communication like *Jidal* (reasoned debate) and *Hikmah* (wisdom). These are not just words; they are "dialogical frameworks." *Jidal*, when performed "in the best manner" (as the Quran commands), is a form of respectful argumentation that values truth over ego. *Hikmah* is the ability to apply that truth in a way that



promotes the common good. When these Arabic concepts are applied in a dialogue setting, the language acts as a medium that encourages participants to find common ground while respecting irreducible differences.

This is echoed by Kaloi, Bhutto, and Akram (2022), who explore English-Islamic paradigms for interfaith dialogue. They argue that the Quranic and Sunnah perspectives, originally articulated in Arabic, provide a universal blueprint for global peace. By translating these Arabic concepts into contemporary "interfaith paradigms," we can create a more inclusive global discourse. Arabic, therefore, serves as the "source code" for a sophisticated ethics of dialogue. It provides the linguistic and conceptual architecture that allows for a dialogue that is both intellectually rigorous and spiritually nourishing. In this way, *Ta'āruf* becomes more than just a word; it becomes a roadmap for a more harmonious world.

Challenges and Controversies

The relationship between Arabic and religious identity has not always been a source of harmony; it has also been a site of intense conflict, negotiation, and even "pious fraud." García-Arenal (2009) recounts the fascinating and controversial affair of the "Lead Books of the Sacromonte" in late 16th-century Granada. In a climate of extreme religious persecution following the Reconquista, Moriscos (Spanish Muslims who had been forced to convert to Christianity) produced "discovered" lead plates written in an archaic form of Arabic. These books purportedly contained a "Fifth Gospel" that attempted to synthesize Islamic and Christian doctrines, presenting a version of Christianity that was compatible with Islamic sensibilities.

This affair highlights how the Arabic language was used as a tool for "religious diplomacy" and survival. By using the prestige and perceived antiquity of Arabic, the Moriscos hoped to validate their presence in a hostile Christian society. They were, in effect, trying to use Arabic to create a "dialogue" that the Spanish Inquisition had made impossible in person. García-Arenal (2009) argues that this case shows the "Religious Identity" of the Arabic language to be a contested space.

To the Spanish authorities, Arabic was the language of the enemy; to the Moriscos, it was a sacred bridge to their past and a potential shield for their future.

This controversy underscores a significant challenge in using Arabic for dialogue: the "burden of history." Because Arabic is so deeply associated with the rise and spread of Islam, it can carry "sectarian baggage" that makes non-Muslims hesitant to engage with it. However, the "Lead Books" also show the incredible creativity that can emerge when a language is used to bridge disparate worldviews. Even if the books were a fabrication, the *intent* was one of intercultural communication.

It reminds us that the "ownership" of a language is always in flux, and its meaning is often determined by the context in which it is used.

In modern interreligious dialogue, we must be aware of these historical sensitivities. Arabic is not a neutral tool; it is a language that has been used to both build and destroy "identity." The challenge for contemporary practitioners is to navigate these historical tensions and recover the "inclusive" potential of the language. Like the Moriscos of Granada, many people today are looking for ways



to use Arabic to articulate a sense of "belonging" in a pluralistic world. Understanding the complexities of cases like the "Lead Books" allows us to approach Arabic-mediated dialogue with a necessary degree of nuance and historical awareness.

Arabic in the Digital and Globalized Age

In the 21st century, the medium of intercultural religious dialogue has shifted dramatically from the manuscript and the classroom to digital platforms and satellite television. Khamis (2007) examines the role of new Arab satellite channels, such as Al Jazeera, in fostering or sometimes hindering intercultural dialogue. The emergence of Al Jazeera English (AJE) was a landmark event, as it sought to "bridge the gap" between the Arab world and the West by presenting an "Arabic perspective" in the English language. This represents a new kind of dialogue, where the "logic" and "values" of the Arabic-speaking world are translated for a global audience.

However, the parent Arabic channel, Al Jazeera Arabic, remains a crucial forum for "internal dialogue" within the Muslim world. It is a space where religious authorities, political activists, and ordinary citizens debate the most pressing issues of the day in the Arabic language. These debates often reach a global diaspora, making Arabic a "transnational medium" of communication. Khamis (2007) argues that these channels have "democratized" religious discourse, allowing for a plurality of voices that were previously silenced. While this can lead to increased polarization, it also creates unprecedented opportunities for dialogue across traditional boundaries.

Furthermore, the "intercultural identity" of Arabic-speaking spaces is explored by Wolf (2012), who questions whether "holy places" can serve as sites for inter-religious dialogue in a globalized world. In the digital age, these "places" are often virtual. Online forums and social media groups dedicated to Arabic language learning or interfaith discussion provide a "holy place" where people from around the world can meet. In these spaces, the Arabic language provides the "atmosphere" and the "historical resonance" that makes such dialogue possible. It allows for a sense of "shared sacredness" that can transcend geographical distance.

The globalisation of Arabic also means that it is being used in increasingly secular and diverse contexts. From "Arabic for Business" to "Arabic Pop Music," the language is reaching audiences who have no prior religious connection to it. This "secularization" of Arabic paradoxically makes it a more effective tool for interreligious dialogue, as it lowers the barrier for entry for non-Muslims. When Arabic is seen as a "global language" rather than just a "religious language," it can function as a truly neutral medium for intercultural exchange. The digital age has expanded the "dialogical potential" of Arabic, making it a vital tool for navigating the complexities of our interconnected world.

Conclusion

Arabic is far more than the language of a single religion or a specific ethnic group; it is a profound civilizational asset that has historically enabled Christians, Jews, and Muslims to think together, debate together, and live together. From the deep philosophical syntheses of the medieval "Golden Age" to the modern classrooms of Indonesia and the satellite channels of the digital era, Arabic has consistently provided a unique linguistic and conceptual architecture for intercultural religious dialogue. It is a language that possesses an inherent "receptivity," allowing it to host the most sacred aspirations and the most rigorous intellectual inquiries of multiple faith traditions.



By promoting the foundational concept of *Ta'āruf* (mutual knowing) and providing a shared vocabulary for ethical and philosophical inquiry, Arabic helps to bridge the "clash of civilizations" narrative that so often characterizes contemporary global discourse. The case studies explored in this article the Melkite shift, the Judeo-Arabic synthesis, and the sociocultural changes in West Africa all point to a single truth: when people share a language, they share a world. Arabic offers a "shared world" where the sacred and the secular can meet, and where the "Other" can be understood with precision and respect.

However, the use of Arabic for dialogue is not without its challenges. The language carries the weight of history, and its deep association with religious identity can sometimes be a source of tension. Yet, as the affair of the "Lead Books" and the modern teaching of Arabic in Southeast Asia demonstrate, these challenges also offer opportunities for creative negotiation and identity formation. In an era where global peace depends on our ability to communicate meaningfully across religious and cultural divides, the study and utilization of Arabic as a medium of dialogue remain an indispensable task for scholars, educators, and diplomats alike.

In conclusion, recovered and revitalized, the "Arabic paradigm" of dialogue offers a powerful model for the 21st century. It encourages a dialogue that is grounded in history, enriched by philosophy, and empowered by the digital age. As we move forward into an increasingly pluralistic future, let us look to the Arabic language not just as a subject of study, but as a living bridge a medium that can turn "strangers" into "those who know one another."

Recommendations

- i. Arabic language programmes should be expanded in schools, colleges, and universities to promote intercultural competence and global citizenship.
- ii. Religious institutions should utilise Arabic as a platform for constructive interfaith engagement and peacebuilding initiatives.
- iii. Governments and educational policymakers should support Arabic studies as a tool for cultural diplomacy and international cooperation.
- iv. Scholars should conduct further research on the role of Arabic in conflict resolution, intercultural communication, and global peacebuilding.
- v. Digital platforms and media organisations should develop Arabic-language content that promotes tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural understanding.
- vi. Interfaith organisations should incorporate the Qur'anic principle of *Ta'āruf* in dialogue programmes to strengthen peaceful coexistence among diverse religious communities.

References

- Abdul-Jabbar, W. Kh. (2022). *Medieval Muslim philosophers and intercultural communication*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854133>
- Bouchara, A. (2015). The role of religion in shaping politeness in Moroccan Arabic: The case of the speech act of greeting and its place in intercultural understanding and misunderstanding. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2015-0004>



- Buys, P. J., & Nwokoro, S. (2019). Communicating meaningfully with Muslims: Analysing the Melkite language shift in the light of Christian–Muslim relations in Northern Nigeria. *In die Skriflig*, 53(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i1.2381>
- Carter, M. R. (2011). The study of Arabic. *Diogenes*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192112444981>
- Farah, L., & Mudassir, A. (2025). The role of the Arabic language in promoting cultural understanding and tolerance among people in the era of globalization. *ĪQĀN*, 7(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.36755/iqan.v7i1.457>
- García-Arenal, M. (2009). The religious identity of the Arabic language and the affair of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte of Granada. *Arabica*, 56(6), 495–528. <https://doi.org/10.1163/057053909x12544602282277>
- Goldberg, J. (2002). Review of *Islamitisch recht en familiebetrekkingen in Marokko* by L. Buskens. *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 36(1), 69–70. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026318400044291>
- Kaloi, A. R., Bhutto, S., & Akram, N. (2022). English–Islamic paradigms for interfaith dialogue: A Qur’anic and Sunnah perspective. *The Scholar Islamic Academic Research Journal*, 8(2), 66–82. <https://doi.org/10.29370/siarj/issue15ar4>
- Khamis, S. (2007). The role of new Arab satellite channels in fostering intercultural dialogue: Can Al Jazeera English bridge the gap? In N. Sakr (Ed.), *New media and the new Middle East* (pp. 39–51). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230605602_3
- Khan, I., Elius, M., Mohd Nor, M. R., Mohd Yusoff, Y. Z. B., Noordin, K., & Mansor, F. (2020). A critical appraisal of interreligious dialogue in Islam. *SAGE Open*, 10(4), Article 215824402097056. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020970560>
- Kustina, K., Shodiq, J. M., Syaifullah, M., & Surohman, I. (2024). The intercultural aspect of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia. *Mantiqutayr Journal of Arabic Language*, 4(1), 279–293. <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiquatayr.v4i1.4086>
- Maulana, A. M. R. (2024). Ta‘āruf and its relevance to interreligious dialogue. *Islamic Studies*, 63(1), 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.52541/isiri.v63i1.3003>
- Salami, O. (2010). Arabic and sociocultural change among the Yoruba. In T. Omoniyi (Ed.), *The sociology of language and religion: Change, conflict and accommodation* (pp. 45–57). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230304710_4
- Shahidipak, M. (2023). Paradigm of religious dialogue: Mediterranean period of interfaith studies. *Sociology International Journal*, 7(3), 138–142. <https://doi.org/10.15406/sij.2023.07.00335>



- Vollandt, R. (2018). Translations as linguistic commentaries? On the interpretative dimension of early Bible translations into Judaeo-Arabic. *Philological Encounters*, 3(3), 253–274. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24519197-12340048>
- Wolf, A. (2012). Intercultural identity and inter-religious dialogue: A holy place to be? *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 12(1), 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.626860>
- Alshammari, A. S. (2025). Arabic language and intercultural communication in contemporary multicultural societies. *International Journal of Arabic Language Studies*, 9(1), 45–61.
- Farah, L., & Mudassir, A. (2025). The role of the Arabic language in promoting cultural understanding and tolerance among people in the era of globalization. *ĪQĀN*, 7(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.36755/iqan.v7i1.457>
- Kustina, K., Shodiq, J. M., Syaifullah, M., & Surohman, I. (2024). The intercultural aspect of teaching Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia. *Mantiqu Tayr Journal of Arabic Language*, 4(1), 279–293. <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqu tayr.v4i1.4086>
- Maulana, A. M. R. (2024). Taʿāruf and its relevance to interreligious dialogue. *Islamic Studies*, 63(1), 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.52541/isiri.v63i1.3003>
- Shahidipak, M. (2023). Paradigm of religious dialogue: Mediterranean period of interfaith studies. *Sociology International Journal*, 7(3), 138–142. <https://doi.org/10.15406/sij.2023.07.00335>
- Abdul-Jabbar, W. Kh. (2022). *Medieval Muslim philosophers and intercultural communication*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854133>
- Kaloi, A. R., Bhutto, S., & Akram, N. (2022). English–Islamic paradigms for interfaith dialogue: A Qurʾanic and Sunnah perspective. *The Scholar Islamic Academic Research Journal*, 8(2), 66–82. <https://doi.org/10.29370/siarj/issue15ar4>
- Khan, I., Elius, M., Mohd Nor, M. R., Mohd Yusoff, Y. Z. B., Noordin, K., & Mansor, F. (2020). A critical appraisal of interreligious dialogue in Islam. *SAGE Open*, 10(4), Article 215824402097056. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020970560>
- Alyami, H. A. (2024). Arabic language education and global citizenship: Challenges and opportunities in multicultural contexts. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 12(2), 112–129.
- Al-Harhi, S. (2023). Language, religion and identity: The role of Arabic in intercultural engagement. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 52(4), 321–338.
- Rahman, F., & Abdullah, N. (2024). Arabic language as a tool for peacebuilding and interfaith understanding in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Islamic Civilization Studies*, 15(1), 57–74.



- Yusuf, M., & Ahmad, R. (2023). Teaching Arabic for intercultural competence in Muslim and non-Muslim societies. *Arab World English Journal*, 14(3), 244–259.
- Hassan, M. A. (2024). Arabic and religious pluralism in the contemporary world. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research*, 8(2), 88–103.
- Mahmood, S., & Ismail, A. (2023). The contribution of Arabic language to interreligious communication in the digital age. *Journal of Religious Studies and Communication*, 11(2), 101–118.
- Alotaibi, F. M. (2025). Arabic language, globalization and intercultural dialogue: Emerging perspectives. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 19(1), 1–15.