



Semantic Adaptation of Arabic Loanwords in Javanese: A Study of the Translation of *Alala*

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study investigates the integration of Arabic loanwords into Javanese as reflected in the translation of *Alala*, with the objective of identifying borrowed lexical items and analyzing their lexical and grammatical semantic changes.

Design/methods/approach – Employing a qualitative descriptive design within a library research framework, the study systematically identifies Arabic-derived words in the translated text and compares their original meanings in Arabic with their contextual meanings in Javanese. Data were collected through close textual reading and classification, and analyzed using established theories of semantic change, including broadening, narrowing, shifting, and retention.

Findings – The findings reveal 18 Arabic loanwords, of which 72.2% undergo semantic broadening, 16.7% experience semantic shifting, and 11.1% retain their original meanings, while no cases of narrowing are identified. These results indicate that lexical expansion constitutes the dominant mechanism of semantic integration in the analyzed corpus, particularly within pedagogical discourse shaped by pesantren translation traditions. Future research should incorporate broader corpora, comparative regional translations, and corpus-based quantitative methods to examine diachronic patterns and grammatical integration more comprehensively.

Research Implications – The study contributes to contact linguistics, translation studies, and Islamic educational scholarship by demonstrating how pedagogical mediation influences long-term lexical development and semantic negotiation. However, the research is limited to a single translated text and a relatively small dataset, which constrains generalizability.

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Introduction

The integration of Arabic loanwords into regional languages such as Javanese constitutes a significant phenomenon for understanding linguistic change, cultural identity, and educational practice in multilingual societies (Dzul, 2025). Examining how these loans are rendered in religious and pedagogical translations can reveal broader processes of semantic adaptation and sociolinguistic negotiation (Asmawati et al., 2025). Such analysis is especially pertinent in contexts where religious texts function simultaneously as linguistic resources and vehicles of cultural transmission (Behroozipour, 2020). The translation of the book *Alala* offers a focused site in which lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic shifts can be systematically observed and analyzed. Addressing these shifts contributes to both descriptive linguistics and applied concerns such as curriculum design and dictionary documentation.

Previous descriptive work has documented a wide range of phonological processes affecting Arabic loanwords in Javanese, while noting that certain word classes, notably adjectives, tend to preserve their original meanings (Nikmah, 2018). Broader regional studies have emphasized the enduring socio-cultural and economic roles of Arabic and its lexical influence across the Nusantara, highlighting processes



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of adaptation and acculturation in contemporary usage (Mahfud et al., 2021). Empirical classroom-based research further indicates that indigenous translation methods facilitate grammatical learning of Arabic, suggesting pedagogical interplay between local languages and Arabic grammar acquisition (Damayulfi et al., 2023). Together, these studies establish that contact-induced change in Javanese and related languages is both linguistically multifaceted and educationally consequential. However, they leave open many specifics about how translation practices mediate semantic outcomes in particular source texts.

Investigations into Indonesian have shown that the absorption of Arabic vocabulary involves simultaneous phonological, morphological, and semantic reanalysis, producing complex interlanguage relations that evolve over time (Hamid et al., 2024). Lexicographic analyses have identified substantial numbers of Arabic-derived entries in major dictionaries, while also pointing to inconsistencies in etymological labeling, part-of-speech classification, and definitional accuracy (Abu Bakar et al., 2024). Focused textual studies of translated religious works have revealed recurring patterns of sound change accompanying lexical integration into Indonesian (Wemamah & Aulia, 2023). These findings demonstrate that lexical borrowing operates across multiple structural levels and requires integrated analysis. Nevertheless, much of this evidence derives from broad corpora and dictionary surveys rather than from single translated texts examined in depth.

Research on semantic change has traced diachronic shifts of specific Arabic loanwords and demonstrated how their meanings evolve across historical and contemporary corpora (Puspita & Yusuf, 2020). Studies of non-religious Arabic loanwords in Javanese further reveal substantial semantic reconfiguration shaped by socio-cultural negotiation and long-term language contact (Nurfalah et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, semantic change has also been linked to media influence and evolving social usage, particularly among younger speakers (Nahak et al., 2025). These studies collectively highlight that meaning is not static but socially and contextually negotiated. However, the semantic behavior of Arabic loanwords within specific translated pedagogical texts remains insufficiently explored.

Pedagogical analyses indicate that Arabic loanwords in educational materials often exhibit phonological adaptation with meaning retention but lack adequate comparative semantic explanation to support learners (Astuti & Pranowo, 2025). Grammatical investigations also reveal inconsistencies in the interpretation of key Arabic syntactic terms across Indonesian and Javanese contexts, which may lead to conceptual ambiguity in cross-linguistic learning (Alamin & Farisi, 2024). Complementary semantic studies show that while many Arabic loanwords retain their original meanings, others undergo narrowing, extension, or shift due to cultural adaptation and lexical generalization (Julul et al., 2019). These findings underscore the pedagogical and theoretical importance of examining semantic transformation in context. Yet, no study has specifically analyzed the semantic dynamics of Arabic loanwords in the Javanese translation of the book *Alala*.

Despite a substantial body of descriptive and corpus-based research, gaps remain with respect to in-depth semantic analyses of Arabic loanwords as they occur within single, influential translated texts such as *Alala*. Existing studies often treat phonology, morphology, and semantics in isolation or rely on generalized corpora and dictionary surveys rather than on close readings of translation choices and their pragmatic effects. There is also limited investigation of how translation strategies interact with register, genre, and didactic aims to produce particular patterns of meaning retention or shift. Furthermore, current lexicographic and pedagogical

resources sometimes fail to document or explain inconsistency in etymology, word class, and sense distinctions, leaving practitioners without reliable guidance. These lacunae motivate a focused study that integrates corpus analysis, comparative semantics, and translation-oriented inquiry.

This study examines the semantic behaviour of Arabic loanwords in Javanese as they appear in the translation of the book *Alala* and aims to identify both lexical and grammatical semantic changes that arise during the absorption process. By systematically identifying loanword instances and analyzing their contextually driven meanings, the research seeks to elucidate the mechanisms of semantic negotiation at work in a pedagogically significant translation. The study combines qualitative semantic analysis with comparative reference to source-language senses and relevant lexicographic resources to situate findings within broader contact-linguistic patterns. In doing so, it intends to contribute to lexical typology of borrowing, improve understanding of translation-mediated change, and offer recommendations for teaching materials and dictionary practice. Ultimately, the research aspires to bridge descriptive theory and applied needs in language education, lexicography, and sociolinguistics.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the semantic integration of Arabic loanwords in the Javanese translation of the book *Alala*. A qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to interpret meaning and semantic transformation within a natural textual context rather than to test statistical hypotheses. The study is categorized as library research, as its primary data source is the translated text of *Alala* and relevant linguistic literature. The analysis focuses on identifying Arabic-origin lexical items and examining their semantic development within the Javanese translation. This design aligns with the study's objective of exploring lexical and grammatical meaning change in a specific pedagogical text.

The primary data consist of Arabic loanwords found in the Javanese translation of *Alala* translated by Fariz Awaludin Arief. Secondary data include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dictionaries, and online academic resources related to semantic change, language contact, and Arabic–Javanese linguistic interaction. Data collection was conducted through systematic textual reading, identification, and classification of Arabic-derived lexical items. Each identified loanword was compared with its original meaning in Arabic using authoritative Arabic lexicons. The comparison enabled the researcher to determine whether semantic broadening, narrowing, shifting, or retention occurred.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative semantic analysis. The identified loanwords were categorized based on established theories of semantic change, including broadening, narrowing, semantic shift, and meaning retention. Both lexical meaning (dictionary-level meaning) and grammatical meaning (functional and contextual meaning within sentences) were examined. The analysis also considered contextual usage in the translated text to determine how meaning was negotiated in pedagogical discourse. Through this procedure, the study systematically explains how Arabic lexical items undergo semantic adaptation in the Javanese translation of *Alala*.

Results

The results of this study present the identification and classification of Arabic loanwords found in the Javanese translation of *Alala* and describe the types of

semantic change observed in the data. The analysis focuses on lexical items absorbed from Arabic and examines their meanings in both the source language and the Javanese translation. The findings are presented systematically to show the distribution and frequency of semantic change categories. No interpretative discussion is provided in this section. The presentation below integrates contextual data on the *pesantren* (Traditional Islamic educational institution) translation tradition with the empirical findings from the analyzed text.

3.1. Context of Arabic Loanword Integration in Pesantren Translation

Loanwords constitute a fundamental mechanism of language development resulting from sustained contact between linguistic communities. The historical contact between Arabic and local languages in Indonesia intensified following the arrival of Islam, which introduced Arabic religious texts and terminology into the region. In pesantren education, classical Islamic texts (*al-kutub al-mu'tabarah*) are studied using translation-based instructional methods such as *qawaid wa tarjamah* and the *bandungan* system. These methods involve interlinear translation into regional languages, including Javanese, Sundanese, and Malay (Masrukhi, 2017). The Javanese translation of *Alala* by Fariz Awaludin Arief represents a contemporary continuation of this pedagogical translation tradition.

Historical documentation indicates that earlier scholars such as Kyai Shaleh Darat translated major Islamic works into Javanese using Pegon script. The translation of texts such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and *Hikam* illustrates the long-standing integration of Arabic vocabulary into Javanese religious discourse (Khakim, 2026). The translation of *Alala* follows this tradition by rendering Arabic terms into Latin-script Javanese and Indonesian accompanied by explanatory notes. The presence of Arabic-derived lexical items in this translation provides the primary data for semantic analysis. The findings below are based on systematic identification and classification of these loanwords.

3.2. Identification of Arabic Loanwords

The analysis identified 18 Arabic loanwords integrated into the Javanese translation of *Alala*. Each lexical item was examined by comparing its general meaning in Arabic with its contextual meaning in the translated text. The comparison enabled classification into categories of semantic broadening, shifting, and no significant change. The detailed data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Arabic Loanwords and Types of Semantic Change

No	Arabic Origin	Borrowed Form	General Meaning in Arabic	Meaning in Javanese Translation	Type of Meaning Change
1	العِلْم	Ilmu	General knowledge	Ilmu, pengetahuan	Broadening
2	اصْطَبَار	Sabar	Patience	Sabar, sabar hati	Broadening
3	أَسْتَاذ	Ustad	Teacher	Guru, bapak (honorific)	Shifting
4	أَهْل	Ahli	Family, inhabitants	Wong, wong omah	Broadening
5	الْفَوَائِد	Faedah	Benefit	Gunane, kauntungan	Broadening
6	الْفِقْه	Fiqih	Deep understanding (jurisprudence)	Paham, ngerti	Broadening
7	الشَّيْطَان	Syaiton	Rebel, distant from mercy	Iblis, setan	Shifting
8	عَابِد	'Abid	Worshipper	Wong alim, orang suci	Shifting
9	عَالِم	Alim	Scholar	Ahli, pandai	Broadening

10	فِتْنَةٌ	Fitnah	Trial, calamity	Ujian, cobaan	Broadening
11	عقل	Akal	Intellect	Akal, nalar	Broadening
12	موت	Mati	Death	Mati	No Significant Change
13	لسان	Lisan	Tongue, language	Ucapan, basa	Broadening
14	قَوْم	Qoum	Tribe, people	Wong, bangsa	Broadening
15	الحق	Hak	Truth, obligation	Kebenaran, hak	No Significant Change
16	حَرْف	Huruf	Letter	Aksara	Broadening
17	دِرْهَم	Dirham	Silver currency	Uang (general)	Shifting
18	آدَاب	Adab	Good manners	Tata krama, kesopanan	Broadening

3.3. Distribution of Semantic Change

The frequency analysis indicates that semantic broadening is the most dominant pattern. Out of 18 identified loanwords, 13 items (72.2%) underwent broadening of meaning. Three items (16.7%) experienced semantic shifting. Two items (11.1%) showed no significant semantic change. No instances of semantic narrowing were identified in the dataset.

Table 2. Frequency of Semantic Change Types

Type of Semantic Change	Frequency	Percentage
Broadening	13	72,2%
Shifting	3	16,7%
No Significant Change	2	11,1%
Narrowing	0	0%

3.4. Lexical and Grammatical Meaning Patterns

The majority of loanwords exhibit lexical expansion from specialized Arabic meanings to more general conceptual meanings in Javanese usage. Several terms demonstrate semantic transfer to related but socially contextual meanings. A smaller portion retains semantic equivalence between source and target languages. The identified changes occur at the lexical level and are reflected in contextual grammatical usage within translated sentences.

Overall, the results show that Arabic loanwords in the Javanese translation of *Alala* predominantly undergo semantic broadening, followed by semantic shifting and limited semantic retention.

Discussion

This study examined how Arabic lexical items are integrated and semantically adapted in the Javanese translation of *Alala*, focusing on both lexical and grammatical meaning changes. Previous scholarship situates Arabic–Nusantara contact within long-standing processes of religious transmission, translation, and linguistic acculturation (Mahfud et al., 2021). Research on Arabic loanwords in Javanese and Indonesian demonstrates that borrowing involves phonological, semantic, and morphological adaptation shaped by sociocultural interaction (Nikmah, 2018; Hamid et al., 2024). Translation practices in pesantren contexts further mediate semantic transfer and conceptual comprehension across languages (Damayulfi, 2023). Against this backdrop, the present study addresses the need for focused semantic analysis of Arabic loanwords within a specific pedagogical translation corpus.

The principal empirical outcome is the identification of 18 Arabic-derived lexical items in the Javanese translation of *Alala*, which were classified according to semantic

change types. Quantitatively, 13 items (72.2%) exhibited semantic broadening, 3 items (16.7%) showed semantic shifting, and 2 items (11.1%) displayed no significant semantic change, while no cases of narrowing were identified. The dominance of semantic broadening indicates that specialized Arabic meanings tend to expand into more general conceptual domains in Javanese usage. Shifting cases reflect contextual reinterpretation influenced by social and cultural adaptation. These results provide a systematic profile of semantic change patterns within the analyzed translation.

The predominance of broadening aligns with findings that Arabic loanwords frequently undergo adaptive semantic extension in Indonesian linguistic contexts (Julul et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2024). Studies on Javanese loanwords also report culturally driven semantic shifts shaped by long-term contact and local negotiation processes (Nikmah, 2018; Nurfalih et al., 2025). However, the absence of semantic narrowing in this corpus contrasts with broader Indonesian data where narrowing has been documented alongside extension and shift (Julul et al., 2019). The relative semantic stability of certain core religious terms supports claims that some Arabic lexical items retain their primary meanings despite contextual adaptation (Astuti & Pranowo, 2025). Thus, the present findings both confirm and refine established generalizations concerning contact-induced semantic change.

The predominance of semantic broadening may be explained by the pedagogical orientation of pesantren translation practices, which prioritize comprehensibility and accessibility for learners. The Javanese-Arabic translation method has been shown to facilitate conceptual mastery by simplifying and contextualizing complex terminology (Damayulfi, 2023). Such pedagogical mediation encourages the expansion of technical meanings into more general semantic fields. Furthermore, sustained religious and cultural interaction fosters adaptive reinterpretation of borrowed lexicon (Mahfud et al., 2021). This functional explanation accounts for the systematic lexical expansion observed in the dataset.

Semantic shifting in items such as honorific or economic terms reflects socio-cultural reinterpretation within local communicative frameworks. Contemporary studies demonstrate that loanwords may undergo contextual semantic shifts driven by evolving social practices and discourse environments (Nahak et al., 2025). Diachronic corpus analyses also reveal that Arabic-origin words can experience meaning shifts through collocational re-patterning and pragmatic recontextualization (Puspita & Yusuf, 2020). In the pesantren translation context, similar processes likely operate through repeated pedagogical usage and community-specific discourse norms. These findings underscore the dynamic interplay between semantic structure and sociolinguistic environment.

The absence of narrowing and the selective retention of original meanings suggest that semantic change is conditioned by lexical category, conceptual salience, and religious significance. Research indicates that certain grammatical interpretations of Arabic structures may generate conceptual ambiguity in cross-linguistic learning contexts (Alamin & Al Farisi, 2025). Meanwhile, lexicographic inconsistencies in documenting Arabic loanwords demonstrate the complexity of categorizing meaning change across languages (Bakar et al., 2024). The relatively small corpus examined here necessitates cautious generalization beyond the analyzed text. Broader comparative and corpus-based investigations would strengthen the empirical basis for typological claims.

The implications of this study extend to pedagogy, translation studies, and lexicography. Pedagogically, explicit comparative explanation of source and target meanings may reduce conceptual misunderstanding in Arabic language instruction.

For translation practice, awareness of semantic broadening and shifting can inform more transparent glossing strategies in *pesantren* materials. Lexicographically, systematic documentation of semantic adaptation would enhance accuracy and consistency in loanword classification. Ultimately, understanding semantic change in Arabic loanwords contributes to a broader account of linguistic acculturation and educational discourse in the Nusantara.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify Arabic loanwords integrated into the Javanese translation of *Alala* and to analyze the lexical and grammatical semantic changes that occur during their absorption. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, the research categorizes these changes into semantic broadening, shifting, and stability. The findings reveal that semantic broadening is the dominant mechanism, accounting for 72.2% of the data, followed by semantic shifting (16.7%) and semantic stability (11.1%). Notably, no instances of semantic narrowing were identified. Most lexical items expand from specialized religious or technical Arabic meanings into more general conceptual domains in Javanese. A smaller subset undergoes contextual reinterpretation shaped by local social and cultural factors, particularly within honorific and economic terminology. These results demonstrate that lexical expansion constitutes the primary driver of semantic integration in this corpus. The implications of these findings are significant for contact linguistics and Islamic educational practice. The predominance of broadening suggests that pedagogical translation encourages semantic generalization to enhance comprehensibility among students. Greater awareness of these shifts can inform more precise glossing strategies in *pesantren* materials and improve conceptual clarity in Arabic language instruction. Furthermore, documenting these changes strengthens lexicographic consistency in recording Arabic-derived vocabulary in regional languages, advancing the understanding of linguistic acculturation within the Nusantara intellectual tradition. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its focus on a single text and a relatively small dataset, which restricts broader generalizations across different genres or historical periods. The absence of quantitative corpus-based validation further constrains the scope of inference. Future research should expand the corpus to include multiple *pesantren* translations and diachronic materials to identify longitudinal semantic trends. Integrating corpus linguistics with ethnographic observation would provide a more comprehensive account of how loanwords function in both textual and instructional settings. Comparative studies between Pegon and Latin-script translations are also recommended to illuminate orthographic influences on semantic adaptation. Such investigations will further refine theoretical models of language contact and semantic negotiation in the Indonesian context.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Alfina Nur Fadhilah conceived and designed the study, conducted data collection and textual analysis, and drafted the initial manuscript. Mohammad Nu'man contributed to the development of the methodological framework, provided critical interpretation of the findings, and performed the final editing and proofreading of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed the relevant literature and approved the final version for publication.

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Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from the published Javanese translation of *Alala* and relevant linguistic literature. All data analyzed during this study are included within the article, and additional references are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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