Arabic Problem-Based Learning for Religious Moderation: Classroom Action Research in Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating religious moderation values into Arabic language instruction through a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model refined by Classroom Action Research (CAR). The objective was to enhance students' linguistic competence while fostering moderate dispositions such as tolerance, balance, and non-violence. The study applied a two-cycle CAR design (planning–action–observation–reflection) involving one undergraduate class of Islamic Religious Education. Learning materials and PBL cases were developed around themes of tawassuṭ (moderation), justice, and equity, and implemented through case analysis, group discussion, and role-play. Data were gathered from performance assessments, observation checklists, field notes, and attitude questionnaires, analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic reduction across cycles. Findings indicated consistent improvements from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 in student engagement, reading comprehension, translation accuracy, and the demonstration of balanced reasoning and respectful disagreement in Arabic discourse. These gains were supported by iterative refinements in task design, scaffolded questioning, and structured peer feedback. Conclusion: The study concludes that moderation-oriented PBL, developed through iterative CAR cycles, provides a practical and replicable approach to simultaneously strengthening Arabic language proficiency and internalizing moderation values within Islamic higher education.

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Introduction

Global agendas in education increasingly demand not only linguistic mastery but also civic, ethical, and intercultural capacities, yet how such values are authentically enacted in classroom practice remains underexplored. UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation highlights curriculum and pedagogy as drivers of peace, dialogue, and global citizenship, while in Indonesia these priorities converge with the national policy of *moderasi beragama* (religious moderation) aimed at nurturing tolerance, balance, and anti-violence. (Latif et al., 2023; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Qoumas et al., 2024).

Within Islamic higher education, Arabic plays a strategic dual role as both the language of sacred texts and a vehicle for contemporary academic discourse, making it a culturally resonant site for embedding moderation values. Evidence from Indonesian universities further suggests that Arabic classes, when designed with contextualized tasks, can simultaneously enhance linguistic competence and foster inclusive, tolerant attitudes attuned to local wisdom and plural realities.

This study draws on three complementary strands. First, an education-for-peace and human-rights perspective frames classroom interaction and task design as spaces to practice moderation values such as fairness, non-violence, and dialogue in line with UNESCO's emphasis on intercultural competence and democratic participation (Council of Europe, 2022; Malazonia et al., 2021; Millican & Kasumagić-Kafedžić, 2023). Second, a problem-based learning (PBL) approach emphasizes authentic problems to foster collaboration, inquiry, and reflective judgment, thereby strengthening both language proficiency and socio-moral growth (Guo et al., 2024; Wijnia et al., 2024). Recent meta-analytic evidence in language education reports large positive effects of PBL on achievement (Hedges' g ≈ 1.07) and shows skill-specific gains across grammar, speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary, and reading (Orhan, 2025). Complementing this, quantitative syntheses in language education reveal that PBL significantly outperforms conventional instruction in fostering critical thinking: a meta-analysis reported a random-effects g ≈ 1.08 (Lu et al., 2025), with implications for the promotion of dialogic, evidence-based reasoning in classroom discourse. Third, a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework offers a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, enabling pedagogical refinement and sustained enhancement of student engagement and learning outcomes. Contemporary reviews and empirical exemplars in higher education underscore CAR's appropriateness for student-centred, values-infused pedagogies that must be adapted to local conditions (Jensen & Dikilitas, 2023).

Across international higher-education contexts, PBL has been linked to improved language performance and transferable thinking skills. A recent meta-analysis in EFL settings (36 studies, 41 effect sizes) reports a large, positive overall effect (g = 1.067) and notes that the benefits are robust across delivery modes, including online and blended environments an important consideration for contemporary language programs (Orhan, 2025). Complementary reviews and meta-analyses focusing on critical thinking show convergent results, strengthening the case for PBL as a vehicle for dialogic reasoning and self-directed learning in diverse disciplines (Hafizah et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2025). Evidence from broader higher-education syntheses likewise indicates PBL's favorable impact on student outcomes and engagement, reinforcing its relevance for courses seeking to integrate cognitive and dispositional aims (Erdem et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, policy and research on religious moderation have expanded rapidly. Scholarly and policy reflections document the integration of *moderasi beragama* into national and sectoral plans, framing moderation as a civic virtue that advances social cohesion amid pluralism (Qoumas et al., 2024). Studies in Islamic education signal both opportunities and challenges: while moderation is widely endorsed at the policy level, implementation often concentrates on cognitive understanding rather than lived classroom practice, risking a "surface" treatment of values without dialogic enactment (Chotimah et al., 2025). Within Arabic education specifically, emerging national and institutional studies describe concrete strategies e.g., moderation-themed texts, local-wisdom cases, and community-linked tasks that enhance students' communicative performance alongside inclusive attitudes. Evidence from Arabic-language courses in Indonesian universities and pesantren further suggests that project/problem-oriented designs can boost literacy and motivation, while making ethical content tangible through authentic scenarios (Fikri et al., 2023). At the same time, analyses of Arabic-learning constraints ranging from cross-linguistic interference to limited task authenticity underscore the need for pedagogical approaches that scaffold complex language use while remaining culturally meaningful (Arifin et al., 2024; Sufian et al., 2023).

Taken together, the current body of evidence supports (a) PBL as a high-impact design in language education, (b) CAR as a pragmatic cyclical methodology for continuous improvement in university classrooms, and (c) the policy salience of religious moderation in Indonesia and beyond. However, the empirical intersection of these domains remains underdeveloped. Most meta-analyses of PBL in language education emphasize academic achievement and cognitive outcomes (Koçoğlu & Kanadlı, 2025; Orhan, 2025), but seldom examine shifts in moderation-aligned attitudes or dialogic norms. In contrast, moderation studies often focus on policy narratives or qualitative descriptions (Hanafi et al., 2023; Mukhibat et al., 2024) without integrating systematic, iterative classroom redesigns tied to measurable language-learning outcomes. The scarcity of studies that jointly track pedagogical intervention, attitudinal change, and linguistic performance indicates a critical gap for research at the nexus of PBL, CAR, and educational moderation (Bahri et al., 2025; Saepudin et al., 2023).

Despite policy momentum and encouraging program reports, three gaps remain. First, very few studies in Islamic higher education rigorously co-design Arabic tasks as moral-dialogic problems and systematically evaluate both language performance and enactment of moderation indicators through repeated instructional cycles. Existing accounts of moderation in Arabic tend to be descriptive or based on single-shot interventions, limiting their generalizability and capacity for iterative refinement. Second, evaluation designs seldom integrate multi-source evidence (participation analytics, performance assessments, brief attitude scales) to triangulate whether students are using Arabic to reason moderately in authentic classroom interaction, despite calls in the literature for competency-based, values-rich approaches (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024; Mubin et al., 2024; Yasmadi et al., 2024). Third, while meta-analyses establish PBL efficacy for language and critical thinking, there is limited work situating PBL explicitly within a moderation framework and optimizing it through CAR cycles in Arabic classes at Islamic universities (Erdem et al., 2025; Koçoğlu & Kanadlı, 2025; Yasmadi et al., 2024).

The present study addresses existing gaps by operationalizing religious moderation as observable classroom discourse practices tolerance, balance, justice, and anti-violence embedded in Arabic PBL cases, and by iteratively refining the design through two CAR cycles. Methodologically, the study integrates (1) moderation-themed Arabic texts and moral dilemmas, (2) collaborative tasks demanding evidence-based argumentation in Arabic, and (3) a mixed-evidence assessment package consisting of participation metrics, performance tasks (comprehension/translation/argumentation), and concise attitude measures aligned with moderation constructs. Substantively, it provides practice-proximal evidence on how values-infused PBL can simultaneously enhance linguistic competence and moderation-aligned behaviors, aligning with global expectations for peace- and human-rights–oriented education and complementing prior work on PBL and critical thinking (Kleindienst, 2024; Song et al., 2024). By aligning an internationally validated pedagogy (PBL) with an action-improvement methodology (CAR) and a nationally salient value framework (religious moderation), this study aspires to offer transferrable design principles for values-rich language teaching in comparable faith-based higher-education contexts (Orhan, 2025).

This study aims to (1) evaluate whether integrating religious-moderation values into Arabic language instruction through Problem-Based Learning (PBL), refined via Classroom Action Research (CAR) cycles, enhances students' linguistic performance specifically comprehension, translation accuracy, and argumentation in Arabic; (2) examine whether students' moderation-aligned dispositions tolerance, balanced reasoning, and non-violent conflict resolution are more frequently enacted during collaborative PBL tasks across cycles; and (3) document how iterative CAR reflections

(plan–act–observe–reflect) inform revisions to texts, task prompts, and feedback mechanisms that jointly support language learning and moderation practices in Islamic higher-education settings.

Methods

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to develop an Arabic language learning model based on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) infused with religious moderation values. The choice of CAR was grounded in its capacity to provide iterative improvement through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting within real classroom contexts in higher education (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2014; Rokmana et al., 2025). The participants were one undergraduate class in the Islamic Education Study Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, comprising approximately 32 students purposively selected based on initial diagnostic findings that indicated teaching remained largely linguistic-textual (grammar/translation) and had not yet optimally incorporated moderation practices such as tolerance, balance, and non-violence in authentic Arabic discourse.

Each cycle consisted of three meetings (±3 × 100 minutes). In the planning stage, the lecturer-researcher and collaborators prepared Arabic texts on moderation themes and loosely structured PBL cases, along with lesson plans, worksheets, analytic rubrics for language performance, and observation indicators of moderation behavior. The choice of PBL was supported by recent Scopus-indexed evidence that critical-thinking-oriented adaptations of PBL such as guiding questions, analytic rubrics, peer assessment, and technological support consistently enhance student performance and cognitive dispositions (Liu & Pásztor, 2022; S. Fuadi et al., 2022; Yu & Zin, 2023; Zeng & Ravindran, 2025).

In the acting stage, collaborative tasks (problem analysis, evidence-based argumentation, role-play, and peer feedback) were implemented in the target language with gradual scaffolding (text excerpts, sentence starters, guiding questions). The observation stage documented participation, Arabic usage, turn-taking, and moderation indicators (tolerance in disagreement, balanced reasoning, non-violent conflict resolution strategies) using structured checklists and field notes (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Shafer, 2025). During reflection, the research team reviewed findings to refine case clarity, scaffold appropriateness, and rubric calibration for the next cycle; this practice aligns with the characteristics of action research in higher education, which emphasizes continuous reflection and contextual adjustment as part of research-based teaching (Jensen & Dikilitas, 2023).

Data were collected from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of learning outcomes and moderation enactment: (a) Arabic language performance assessments, including text comprehension on moderation, translation accuracy, and short argumentative responses, evaluated by two independent raters using an analytic rubric; (b) structured observation checklists and field notes; (c) a brief religious moderation attitude questionnaire administered at the end of each cycle; (d) student artifacts such as worksheets, role-play transcripts, and reflective journals; and (e) post-cycle interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentages of mastery/improvement across cycles) in line with the improvement focus of classroom action research (CAR). Qualitative data were subjected to reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2019) guidelines, and were organized into cross-cycle display matrices to capture iterative patterns of reflection. Instrument quality was ensured through expert judgment and pilot testing. Internal consistency of the attitude scales was reported using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), adhering to methodological recommendations by Taber (2018). Inter-rater reliability for performance ratings was examined using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), with

interpretation based on updated guidelines by Koo and Li (2016). Qualitative trustworthiness was further enhanced by collaborative member checking and a transparent audit trail (Afifurrahman et al., 2025). These methodological safeguards positioned CAR as an empowering mechanism to iteratively evaluate and refine Arabic PBL pedagogy, simultaneously enhancing students' linguistic competence and their enactment of moderation values.

Results and Discussion
Findings
This section presents the findings in the order of the study's objectives and organizes the evidence into three domains: (1) language performance, (2) classroom participation and discourse processes, and (3) moderation-related attitudes and behaviors. Results are reported descriptively and supported by tables and figures following APA conventions. Unless otherwise stated, Cycle 1 (C1) refers to the first action cycle and Cycle 2 (C2) to the subsequent cycle.
Language Performance
Student outcomes in reading comprehension, translation accuracy, and argumentative response in Arabic were assessed across two CAR cycles. Results are summarized in terms of mean scores, variability, and mastery attainment relative to predetermined benchmarks.

Table 1. Language performance by cycle (N=32 per cycle)

Metric	Cycle 1 (M)	Cycle 1 (SD)	Cycle 2 (M)	Cycle 2 (SD)	Mastery threshold	Cycle 1 % ≥ threshold	Cycle 2 % ≥ threshold
Reading comprehension	72.4	8.9	82.1	6.9	75	56.3	87.5
Translation accuracy	68.1	9.7	77.8	7.2	75	43.8	81.3
Argumentative response	66.7	10.2	76.5	8.4	70	40.6	84.4

As shown, all indicators demonstrated substantial gains from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Reading comprehension increased from M = 72.4 (SD = 8.9) to M = 82.1 (SD = 6.9), with 87.5% of students meeting the mastery threshold. Translation accuracy rose from M = 68.1 (SD = 9.7) to M = 77.8 (SD = 7.2), while argumentative response improved from M = 66.7 (SD = 10.2) to M = 76.5 (SD = 8.4), with more than 80% of students surpassing benchmarks in both domains. Standard deviations decreased across measures, suggesting enhanced consistency among learners. Collectively, these results highlight the effectiveness of iterative PBL-CAR cycles in fostering both linguistic proficiency and higher-order reasoning, particularly in translation and argumentative tasks that align closely with the enactment of moderation values. Figure 1 illustrates these improvements, with Cycle 2 scores consistently exceeding those of Cycle 1.
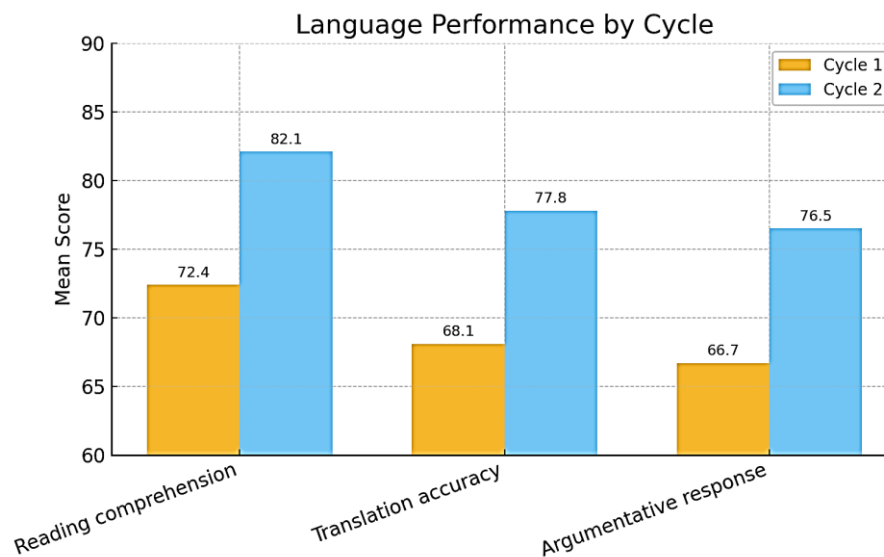
Figure 1. Language performance by cycle.

Inter-rater reliability analysis confirmed that performance ratings were consistent across evaluators. For translation accuracy, the ICC was 0.86 (95% CI = 0.74–0.93), indicating good-to-excellent agreement, while argumentative response yielded an ICC of 0.82 (95% CI = 0.69–0.91), reflecting good agreement. These results confirm that the analytic rubrics ensured stable and trustworthy evaluations, minimizing rater subjectivity.

Table 2. Inter-rater reliability (ICC) summary for rated performance tasks

Rated metric	Raters	ICC (95% CI)	Model
Translation accuracy	2	0.86 (0.74–0.93)	Two-way mixed, absolute agreement
Argumentative response	2	0.82 (0.69–0.91)	Two-way mixed, absolute agreement

As shown in Table 2, ICC values for translation accuracy (0.86) and argumentative response (0.82) fall within the good-to-excellent range, confirming that the rubric produced consistent scores across raters.

Participation and Discourse Processes

Observation checklists recorded indicators of participation and discourse quality during collaborative tasks. The following table summarizes the frequency and percentage of each indicator across two CAR cycles.

Table 3. Observation indicators of discourse and moderation by cycle

Indicator	Total observed events (per cycle)	Cycle 1 count	Cycle 1 %	Cycle 2 count	Cycle 2 %
Turn-taking adherence	160	94	58.8	121	75.6
Evidence-backed statements	160	76	47.5	103	64.4
Respectful disagreement	160	71	44.4	97	60.6
De-escalation moves	160	39	24.4	68	42.5

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, all four indicators increased substantially from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. The largest relative gains were observed in de-escalation moves (+18.1 percentage points), indicating stronger adoption of non-violent conflict resolution strategies. These patterns suggest that iterative PBL-CAR cycles not only improved language performance but also fostered moderation-aligned discourse practices.
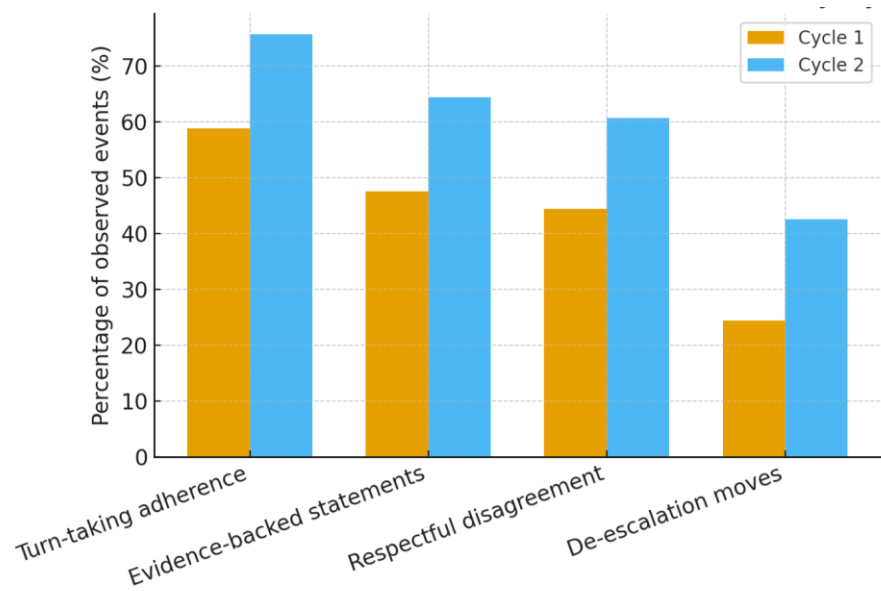

Figure 2. Observed discourse and moderation indicators by cycle.

Figure 2 illustrated the relative frequency of discourse and moderation indicators across two CAR cycles. The bars showed consistent increases from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 for all four behaviors, confirming the quantitative trend reported in Table 3. The most notable gain was observed in de-escalation moves, which rose by 18.1 percentage points, suggesting that students became more adept at managing conflict through non-violent strategies. Respectful disagreement and evidence-backed statements also increased substantially, reflecting stronger engagement in dialogic and reasoned argumentation. Turn-taking adherence reached the highest overall percentage in Cycle 2 (75.6%), indicating that collaborative interaction norms were more consistently followed. Taken together, these improvements suggested that iterative PBL-CAR cycles not only enhanced linguistic participation but also fostered moderation-aligned discourse practices.

In addition to event-level frequencies, qualitative field notes documented excerpts that exemplified how students enacted moderation-aligned discourse practices during collaborative tasks. Selected anonymized instances are presented in Table 4 to illustrate typical utterances corresponding to each coding category, shown verbatim in Arabic alongside their English translations without analytic commentary.

Table 4. Qualitative excerpts of discourse and moderation indicators

Indicator	Excerpt (Arabic)	English Translation

Respectful disagreement	أَنا أَفْهَمُ وُجْهَ نَظَرِكَ، لَكِنَّ الدَّلِيلَ فِي الفَقْرَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ يُشِيرُ إِلَى أَنَّ العَدَالَةَ تَشْمَلُ حِمَايَةَ الأَقَلِّيَّةِ أَيْضًا	"I understand your point of view, but the evidence in the second paragraph indicates that justice also includes protecting minorities."
Evidence-backed statement	فِي النَّصِّ، كَلِمَةُ «القِسْطِ» تَكَرَّرَتْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ لِتَأْكِيدِ مَبْدَإِ التَّوَازُنِ، لِذَلِكَ أُقْتَرِحُ هَذَا الحَلَّ	"In the text, the word *al-qist* is repeated three times to emphasize the principle of balance; therefore, I propose this solution."
De-escalation move	لِنُؤَجِّلْ هَذَا الجُزْءَ المُثِيرَ لِلْجَدَلِ وَنَبْدَأْ بِالنِّقَاطِ الَّتِي نَتَّفِقُ عَلَيْهَا	"Let us postpone this controversial part and start with the points we agree on."
Turn-taking adherence	سَأُنْهِي جُمْلَتِي الآنَ، ثُمَّ دَوْرُكَ لِتَقْدِيمِ الدَّلِيلِ مِنَ النَّصِّ	"I will finish my sentence now, then it is your turn to present the evidence from the text."

As shown in the excerpts, students not only adhered to turn-taking and expressed respectful disagreement but also increasingly grounded their arguments in textual evidence. These qualitative instances supported the quantitative trend of improved moderation-oriented discourse observed across cycles.

Moderation-related attitudes and behaviors

A brief attitude questionnaire measured three subscales aligned with the moderation framework tolerance, balanced reasoning, and non-violent resolution using a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics by cycle are presented below.

Table 5. Moderation attitude scale by cycle

Subscale	Cycle 1 (M)	Cycle 1 (SD)	Cycle 2 (M)	Cycle 2 (SD)
Tolerance	3.62	0.51	3.94	0.49
Balanced reasoning	3.47	0.56	3.83	0.53
Non-violent resolution	3.38	0.58	3.76	0.55

As shown in Table 3, tolerance increased from M = 3.62 (SD = 0.51) in Cycle 1 to M = 3.94 (SD = 0.49) in Cycle 2. Balanced reasoning rose from M = 3.47 (SD = 0.56) to M = 3.83 (SD = 0.53), and non-violent resolution from M = 3.38 (SD = 0.58) to M = 3.76 (SD = 0.55). These gains indicated consistent cross-cycle improvement in self-reported moderation-related attitudes.

Observation-based behavioral indicators related to moderation were recorded independently of self-report responses. Field notes also documented spontaneous role assignments that emerged during group tasks (e.g., emergent peer mediators), though these were reported descriptively without interpretive commentary.

Taken together, the findings consistently demonstrated cross-cycle improvements across all domains. For Objective 1 (language performance), descriptive statistics from test-based indicators (Table 1; Figure 1) showed higher means in Cycle 2 compared with Cycle 1, along with an increased proportion of students achieving mastery across reading comprehension, translation accuracy, and argumentative response.

For Objective 2 (moderation-related dispositions and behaviors), event-level observation percentages (Table 2; Figure 2) increased in Cycle 2 across all four categories turn-taking adherence, evidence-backed statements, respectful disagreement, and de-escalation moves. Correspondingly, self-reported attitudes (Table 3) reflected higher means in Cycle 2 for tolerance, balanced reasoning,

and non-violent resolution. Representative excerpts illustrated the enactment of these behaviors in authentic classroom discourse.

For Objective 3 (design revision through CAR reflection), cycle records noted three key modifications implemented between cycles: (1) clarification of problem contexts in the Arabic texts (e.g., making stakeholder roles explicit in prompts), (2) additional linguistic scaffolds (e.g., sentence starters for agreement/disagreement and textual evidence references), and (3) recalibration of analytic rubrics to differentiate Basic–Competent–Advanced levels for both language and moderation indicators. All revisions were logged in action records and updated instructional materials between cycles. Additional quality checks supported the robustness of instruments and scoring: internal consistency of the moderation attitude scales exceeded 0.70, inter-rater agreement for performance-based tasks was high (Table 4), and member checking confirmed the accuracy of observation summaries and the clarity of revised prompts.

Discussion

This classroom action research demonstrated consistent improvements across language performance, moderation-related behaviors, and attitudes when PBL tasks were infused with religious moderation values. These gains establish a basis for linking iterative CAR design with broader discussions of PBL effectiveness and values-based education.

The present pattern of gains is congruent with recent international syntheses that have consolidated evidence for PBL's effects on academic and dispositional outcomes. A 2025 meta-analytic synthesis in higher education confirmed that PBL yields broad positive effects on achievement and critical thinking across modalities (Erdem et al., 2025). In medical and clinical contexts, umbrella reviews also demonstrated that PBL enhances critical thinking and domain-specific skills (Ge et al., 2025; Su et al., 2025). Meta-analyses and reviews focusing specifically on critical thinking similarly conclude that PBL outperforms traditional instruction on higher-order reasoning indicators *e.g.* a meta-analysis in higher education found a standardized mean difference (SMD) = 0.640 favoring PBL for critical thinking skills an effect relevant to our argumentative response task and the coded behaviors of evidence-backed statements and respectful disagreement (Liu & Pásztor, 2022). In language-learning contexts, recent studies likewise report significant gains in literacy and communicative competence supported by PBL, including in blended and digital environments. Although most syntheses have focused on English-medium or professional education, the underlying mechanisms authentic, ill-structured problems; collaborative inquiry; iterative feedback; and explicit scaffolding for reasoning closely mirror the design features implemented between cycles in the present study (Han, 2025; Orhan, 2025).

The UNESCO (2023) recommendation provides a global framework for embedding tolerance, dialogue, and non-violence in education. Recent studies affirm its relevance for higher education, emphasizing the operationalization of peace, intercultural competence, and values-based learning (Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023; Kohl et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2023). The Recommendation emphasizes intercultural competencies, democratic participation, and human-rights-aligned dispositions as explicit educational outcomes; it also calls for pedagogies that make these outcomes observable in classroom discourse. The increased frequencies we recorded for respectful disagreement and de-escalation moves align with the Recommendation's emphasis on dialogic, non-violent conflict navigation as part of learners' skill sets (Saleh et al., 2025; Villarejo-

Carballido et al., 2019). The study's movement from general exhortation to classroom-level operationalization of these dispositions speaks to UNESCO's call for practical, assessable enactment, not merely declarative coverage.

Within Indonesia, scholarship on religious moderation has expanded rapidly, accompanied by efforts to embed moderation within curricula and campus life. Recent empirical work on curriculum development for moderation in Islamic higher education documents program-level designs but also notes uneven implementation when values remain primarily cognitive rather than practiced dialogically in classrooms (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Recent studies in Islamic education argue that strengthening religious moderation requires pedagogical approaches that extend beyond declarative instruction toward experiential and dialogic learning, enabling students to actively practice fairness, tolerance, and non-violence through structured interaction (Haris et al., 2024). In Arabic-education specifically, recent Indonesian studies report that project/problem-oriented designs improve literacy and student engagement, recommending authentic texts and contextual tasks; however, many interventions are one-shot and lack iterative improvement cycles (Luhulima, 2024; Maziyah et al., 2025).

The present research contributes precisely at this intersection: it aligns with national calls for moderation while answering the local methodological gap by using CAR to iteratively refine PBL materials, scaffolds, and rubrics in a real Arabic course. The documented, mid-course design changes clarifying stakeholder roles in prompts, adding sentence starters for polite agreement/disagreement and for citing textual evidence, and rubric calibration mirror the kinds of "practice-proximal" adjustments suggested in Indonesian policy and scholarship but rarely traced across cycles with behavioral and test-based indicators (Haris et al., 2024; Sudeni et al., 2022).

The study foregrounded moderation not as a purely attitudinal construct but as a set of discourse practices that could be operationalized, scaffolded, and counted in classroom interaction. These practices included acknowledging alternative views before rebuttal (tolerance), weighing competing claims with attention to equity (balanced reasoning), and proposing non-violent compromise (de-escalation). By coding and tracking these practices as event-level indicators during PBL tasks, the study contributed an interactional-pragmatic lens to moderation research, complementing curricular and policy-centric perspectives prevalent in the Indonesian literature. In language pedagogy, the findings reinforced socio-constructivist accounts of PBL, which emphasize the role of authentic tasks and collaborative scaffolds in shaping both cognition and discourse (Afify, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978; Zeng & Ravindran, 2025). Carefully sequenced supports functioned as micro-mediating tools that enabled learners to appropriate both target-language forms and moderation practices an instance of "double appropriation" (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). The CAR framework further illustrated a theory-of-improvement logic, whereby structured reflection on process data (observation logs, mastery rates) informed micro-design shifts that coincided with measurable changes in language performance and moderation-aligned behaviors.

Three actionable implications emerged for Arabic language instructors in Islamic higher education. First, problem framing mattered: specifying stakeholder roles and decision constraints in Arabic case prompts supported both textual evidence use and respectful disagreement, likely by narrowing relevance and reducing ambiguity. Second, linguistic scaffolds needed to be value-aligned: sentence starters for agreement, disagreement, and evidence citation in Arabic provided low-threshold supports that allowed students to "do moderation" while using the target language; these

supports could be adapted to proficiency bands and progressively faded. Third, rubrics should integrate dual domains: calibrating analytic rubrics to differentiate levels in both language performance and moderation indicators made expectations transparent and reinforced the inseparability of linguistic form and civic ethos in classroom discourse. Embedding such dual-domain rubrics into assessment handbooks and peer-observation protocols would help ensure that moderation becomes a habitual aspect of instructional design rather than an add-on.

At the policy level, the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development provides a global normative anchor for integrating values such as tolerance, dialogue, and non-violence into everyday teaching and assessment (UNESCO, 2023). The Recommendation emphasizes intercultural competencies, democratic participation, and human-rights-aligned dispositions as explicit educational outcomes, and calls for pedagogies that make these outcomes observable in classroom discourse. The increased frequencies recorded for respectful disagreement and de-escalation moves aligned with this emphasis on dialogic, non-violent conflict navigation as part of learners' skill sets. Within Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Moderasi Beragama* framework (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Singgih, 2023; Zaluchu et al., 2025). Similarly stresses fairness, tolerance, and anti-violence as educational priorities. The present protocol PBL cases with explicit stakeholder framing, value-aligned linguistic scaffolds, and dual-domain rubrics tracked via CAR offers a replicable "micro-policy" for program leaders: it translates macro-norms into course-level routines with built-in evidence streams (mastery rates, observation tallies, attitude subscales).

Relative to prior studies, this research makes three key contributions. First, it operationalizes moderation as coded discourse practices within Arabic PBL tasks, enabling systematic frequency tracking rather than relying solely on self-reports or policy narratives. Second, it applies an iterative design logic through documented mid-course refinements clarifying problem contexts, enriching linguistic scaffolds, and recalibrating rubrics linking these adjustments to measurable improvements across cycles. Third, it introduces a dual-domain assessment model that integrates language mastery benchmarks with moderation behavior tallies and concise attitude subscales, providing a compact, transferable framework for values-based language instruction in faith-oriented higher education.

The study's limitations include its single-class CAR design without a control group, locally derived mastery thresholds that may constrain generalizability, potential social desirability in self-reported attitudes, and confinement to one institutional context. Replication across institutions and proficiency levels is recommended to validate transferability.

Future research should experimentally compare alternative case framings, examine optimal scaffold fading sequences, explore longitudinal persistence of learning and behavioral gains, and test cross-institutional and cross-cultural applicability of the dual-domain rubric framework.

Overall, this study advances a practice-proximal account of how values-infused PBL in Arabic can be iteratively enhanced through CAR, yielding concurrent improvements in linguistic competence and moderation-oriented classroom interaction. It operationalizes global calls for peace- and rights-based education into concrete, replicable pedagogical routines for Islamic higher education.

Conclusion

This study examined the integration of religious moderation values into Arabic language instruction through a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model implemented via Classroom Action

Research (CAR). Across two iterative cycles, results showed consistent improvements in students' reading comprehension, translation accuracy, and argumentative responses in Arabic, alongside observable increases in moderation-related behaviors such as tolerance, balanced reasoning, and non-violent conflict resolution. The CAR process—encompassing planning, action, observation, and reflection—enabled continuous refinement of PBL materials, linguistic scaffolds, and analytic rubrics. These findings confirm that an iterative, values-infused PBL framework can simultaneously enhance linguistic competence and civic-moral dispositions, demonstrating the pedagogical potential of moderation-oriented Arabic instruction in Islamic higher education.

Theoretically, this research advances an interactional understanding of moderation as a discourse-based practice that can be scaffolded and assessed through dialogic learning processes. Methodologically, it contributes a dual-domain assessment model integrating language-performance mastery thresholds with behavioral and attitudinal indicators, offering a transferable tool for values-rich pedagogy. Practically, the study highlights that explicit problem framing, value-aligned linguistic supports, and calibrated rubrics can transform abstract moderation ideals into observable classroom behaviors. However, the single-class design, locally defined benchmarks, and limited context constrain generalizability. Future research should adopt multi-site or longitudinal designs to verify persistence and scalability, explore comparative case framings, and test cross-cultural applicability of the dual-domain framework. Overall, the study demonstrates how systematically embedding moderation principles into iterative PBL cycles can bridge global peace-education goals with authentic, measurable practices in Arabic language learning.

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